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Elements of Popular Culture in Virginia Woolf's  
Writings

Doctoral Dissertation

Belgrade, 2020

УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ У БЕОГРАДУ

ФИЛОЛОШКИ ФАКУЛТЕТ

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Елементи популарне културе у одабраним делима  
Вирџиније Вулф

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Белград, 2020.

## ПОДАЦИ О МЕНТОРУ И ЧЛАНОВИМА КОМИСИЈЕ

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Датум одбране:

## Elements of Popular Culture in Virginia Woolf's Writings

### Abstract

The goal of this research is to analyze elements of popular culture in three chosen works of Virginia Woolf which were being written by her in approximately the same time over the span of several years, from the year 1928 until 1931. The writings in question are the two novels *Orlando: A Biography* and *The Waves*, and a critical essay *A Room of One's Own*.

The hypothesis of this academic research is that the majority of the discovered elements of popular culture would be connected to the position of women in a white, patriarchal, capitalist society as the disempowered and subordinated class of said society. The method of the research has been analyzing the elements of popular culture in the texts by comparing popular culture to other cultures such as folk, mass or dominant culture and later applying said findings throughout the texts.

In the very first analyzed text, namely *Orlando: A Biography*, it becomes apparent that the elements of popular culture denoting women as the subordinated and disempowered class of society are greater in number than the rest of the elements such as clothes or popular alcoholic beverages. This continues to be the case throughout the rest of the research and thus the hypothesis has been proven.

These results suggest that this particular element of popular culture is predominant in the works of Virginia Woolf. In conclusion, this should be taken into account when reading the author's texts in correlation with popular culture.

**Keywords:** literature, popular culture, Virginia Woolf, women, disempowered, subordinated, class, society.

**Scientific field:** Literature, Literary Theory, Popular Culture, Literary Science, Anglistics

**Scientific Subfield:** Literature and Popular Culture

**UDC Number:**

## Елементи популарне културе у одабраним делима Вирџиније Вулф

### Сажетак

Циљ овог истраживања је анализирање елемената популарне културе у три изабрана дела Вирџиније Вулф које је писала у приближно исто време у распону од 1928. до 1931. године. Дела која улазе у опус истраживања су два романа *Орландо: биографија* и *Таласи*, као и критички есеј *Сопствена соба*.

Хипотеза овог академског истраживачког рада је да ће већина елемената популарне културе бити повезана са положајем жена у белачком, патријархалном, капиталистичком друштву као обеснажене и потчињене класе тог друштва. Метод истраживања је био анализирање елемената популарне културе у овим текстовима тако што се елементи популарне културе упоређују са другим културама попут фолк културе, културе масе или доминантне културе, а касније се ови налази примењују кроз даљу анализу текстова.

У првом анализираном тексту, наиме *Орландо: биографија*, постаје јасно да су елементи популарне културе који означавају жене као потчињену и обеснажену класу друштва присутнији од осталих елемената као што су одећа или популарна алкохолна пића. Ово се наставља кроз цело истраживање и стога је хипотеза доказана.

Резултати сугеришу да је управо овај елемент популарне културе најзаступљенији у делима Вирџиније Вулф. Намеће се закључак да ово треба узети у обзир када се ауторкини текстови читају у светлу популарне културе.

**Кључне речи:** књижевност, популарна култура, Вирџинија Вулф, жене, обеснажена, потчињена, класа, друштво.

**Научна област:** књижевност, књижевна теорија, популарна култура, наука о књижевности, англистика

**Ужа научна област:** књижевност и популарна култура

**УДК број:**

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## Introduction

In my doctoral dissertation I focus on the various elements of popular culture noted throughout Virginia Woolf's writings. The works included into the selection are the novels *Orlando: A Biography* and *The Waves*, and a critical essay *A Room of One's Own*. I take a moment to present a brief overview of the author's life and the most notable works in this introduction, as many of her works are thought of as carrying an autobiographical note to them, therefore the works presented in this text might do, too.

This study aims to discern which elements of popular culture can most frequently be found in the author's novels and essay by means of analysis of the aforementioned. Virginia Woolf was one of the first authors who wrote about the truth of the psychological state of mind in women living in a world dominated by men. She strived to see the world without illusions and her significance in popular culture does not stem solely from the feminist note her literary works carry, but a copious amount of the elements of popular culture found in all of her writings which are intimately connected and clearly relevant to the issues and topics of popular culture today.

The body of the dissertation starts with a chapter entitled "Popular Culture – Theories, Notions, Definitions", which is a theoretical outline of the concepts and multitude of definitions of popular culture discussed by scholars, authors and critics like John Fiske, John Storey, Judith Williamson, Raymond Williams, etc. Firstly, there is the conceptualization of popular culture being a contradictory culture of the subordinated and disempowered, a culture of conflict and a constant process that evolves and changes, as viewed by John Fiske. Then one faces the critical consideration of Theodore W. Adorno, whose perception underlines the dangerous nature of popular culture and states that it is perilous for individualism. Next, we are presented with definitions by Chris Barker, Tony Bennett and John Storey, in their, seemingly futile, endeavour to find the one and only definition of popular culture, followed by a section about the versatility of popular culture. Lastly, John Fiske, Judith Williamson, Adrienne Trier-Bieniek and Patricia Leavy shed some light on the correlation between gender and popular culture. Seeing how the issue of gender is one of the themes the author constantly comes back to, sometime in an obvious manner like in *Orlando: A Biography* and even more notable in *A Room of One's Own*, and sometimes in a more subtle way, it comes as no surprise that this element of popular culture surfaces again and again.

The second and last chapter of the main part of the dissertation entitled "Elements of Popular Culture Throughout the Writings" concentrates on the pursuit of the elements of popular culture throughout the aforementioned works of Virginia Woolf, starting with her novel, *Orlando: A Biography*, and ending with the essay, *A Room of One's Own*. The detailed summaries by the individual chapters and sections of the literary works of art in question act as an anchor through which the elements of popular are shown in a natural order for each of those chapters, and consequently, the complete texts.

The main hypothesis of this dissertation is that the majority of the elements of popular culture present in the selected works shall be connected to the position of women in a white, patriarchal, capitalist society as the disempowered and subordinated class. For instance, in the first analyzed novel, *Orlando: A Biography*, there are numerous elements of popular culture that, sure enough, belong to this particular group that portrays women existing in a world where the empowered class consists of Caucasian men, the rulers of the capitalist, patriarchal society. The elements are recognized by comparison to different cultures, such as dominant culture, folk culture, mass culture or elite culture, and all of them are cultures to which one compares popular culture so that one would be able to define it<sup>1</sup>. As a consequence, the anticipated results are that, due to the frequent presence of the previously mentioned group of elements of popular culture, the other elements – such as popular type of clothing distinguishable from the clothes worn by the elite, omnibuses, newspapers or a popular alcoholic drink – will be present in smaller quantity throughout

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<sup>1</sup> John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture, An Introduction*, Fifth edition (Pearson Longman, 2009), pp. 5-13

the texts.

In my doctoral dissertation I have aspired towards exhibiting as many of the most prominent theories and definitions of popular culture as possible in an attempt to set an outline for the spectrum containing the elements of said culture, so that those elements would be made clear throughout Woolf's literary works in question.

### ***Virginia Woolf – Life, Work, Popular Culture***

Considering the fact that all of the texts analyzed would be the works of art produced by Virginia Woolf, it is only natural to make an effort to 'get to know' the author before we take our voyage through the sea of incredible stories and skillfully composed characters.

In an essay called *Virginia Woolf: Writer and Personality* published in *Listener* on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1965, her husband, Leonard Woolf, opens with:

*"All human beings are extremely complicated. Virginia Woolf was one of the few people I have ever met who I think was a genius, and geniuses are slightly more complicated than ordinary people<sup>2</sup>."*

Such an opening could be expected from the person who shared a home and life with Mrs Woolf, and it tells us more about her than maybe the rest of the essay. It tells us that she was loved, that she was special and that she was admired. Her life was not one of a happily ever after, a picturesque fairytale filled with laughter and Disney animal sidekicks chirping cheerfully, making everything more magnificent and wonderful. It was a real-life life, filled with turmoil, fluctuations and struggle. Of course there was happiness and love as well, but the sad parts of life were, in retrospect, just somehow greater.

Adeline Virginia Stephen was born on 25<sup>th</sup> January, 1882. She was the middle child among four full siblings and four more step-siblings. Both of their parents had children of their own from their first marriages, so the four eldest were Laura Makepeace Stephen from their father's side and George, Gerald and Stella Duckworth from their mother's side. The four children brought to the world from the union of Sir Leslie Stephen, a historian and author, and Julia Prinsep Stephen (née Jackson), a model for several Pre-Raphaelite painters and also a nurse who wrote a book on the profession<sup>3</sup>, were Vanessa, Thoby, Virginia, and Adrian, respectively<sup>4</sup>. They lived in Kensington, at 22 Hyde Park Gate<sup>5</sup>, Julia being a devoted mother to the point of placing everybody else before herself, and Stephen being a very accomplished and attractive man, formidable and prolific<sup>6</sup>. Virginia's earliest teachers were her parents, who were "enthusiastic but unaccomplished" in their teaching<sup>7</sup>. Since Virginia was denied proper education, in contrast to her brothers who were all sent to Westminster College and Clifton College, her saving grace was the fact that she had open access

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<sup>2</sup> Leonard Woolf, "Virginia Woolf: Writer and Personality" in *Virginia Woolf: Interviews and Recollections*, J.H. Stape (ed.) (Palgrave Macmillan: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1995), p. 147

<sup>3</sup> Biography.com Editors, *Virginia Woolf Biography*, The Biography.com website, A&E Television Networks, <<https://www.biography.com/writer/virginia-woolf>>, (accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> August, 2019)

<sup>4</sup> Panthea Reid, *Virginia Woolf*, *BRITISH WRITER*, Encyclopædia Britannica, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Virginia-Woolf>>, (accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> August, 2019)

<sup>5</sup> Frank Kermode, "Biographical Preface" in Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, Anna Snaith (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. vii

<sup>6</sup> Andrew McNeillie, "Bloomsbury", in *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, Sue Roe, Susan Sellers (eds.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 5-7

<sup>7</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 1

to her father's library<sup>8</sup>.

The stories vary about the relationships between the siblings, depending on the source. Some sources claim that Virginia was sexually molested as a five year old by her step-brother, Gerald, and then later, when she was thirteen, by the other step-brother, George, after their mother's death in 1895<sup>9</sup>. After the death of her mother, her step-sister Stella died, and those two occurrences happened to happen during her early teenage years, so there is no wonder that she had had a number of nervous breakdowns during that time. Luckily, she managed to recuperate, but death strikes again in 1904, when her father dies, leaving Virginia in such a heartbroken state that the next nervous breakdown was so severe she had to be hospitalized. The fact that she and her oldest sister, Vanessa, were molested by their two maternal step-brothers probably added to the overall frailty of her mind and spirit, making it extremely hard for her to cope with difficult situations without any consequences<sup>10</sup>.

She got a fresh start after her father's death within the Bloomsbury group, where she meets a lot of prominent and influential people, among which was Leonard Woolf, her future husband. "Moving to Bloomsbury contributed enormously to Virginia's future as a writer, and Bloomsbury therefore became more than just a place<sup>11</sup>." Now, the happily ever after could have started here, but death claimed another person very near and dear to her heart, her brother, Thoby in 1906. In 1912 she married Leonard Woolf and then tried to commit suicide for the first time grief-stricken due to the loss of her family members over the course of years. Leonard tried to shield her by locking her inside their home far away from the busy London life that she actually enjoyed, and so despite his best intentions, she became more depressed. They came back to London after some time and that was where she met Vita Sackville-West with whom she started a romantic relationship kept in secret<sup>12</sup>. As the years went by, she had many close female friends, and it becomes clearer through her writing that her attitude about the position of women in society becomes stronger in its nature of it being an injustice.

Virginia's death was sudden for everybody around her, aside from her husband, but it came to her as the only way of escaping the depression that took its toll on her so much she could not do the one thing that always made sense and gave her hope during her life – write. On 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1941 she took her overcoat, put stones in its pockets and walked in the River Ouse, never to walk out. "As she waded into the water, the stream took her with it. The authorities found her body three weeks later. Leonard Woolf had her cremated and her remains were scattered at their home, Monk's House<sup>13</sup>." She left a letter to her husband, Leonard, in which she explained that the reason for her killing herself was her depression which started engulfing her mind more and more<sup>14</sup>.

Virginia Woolf's narrative device is categorized as stream of consciousness, more closely as

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<sup>8</sup> Frank Kermode, "Biographical Preface" in Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, Anna Snaith (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. vii

<sup>9</sup> Dragan Lekovic, *Virdžinija Vulf – Preteča feminističke ideologije*, ART mozaik, <<http://draganlekovic.me/2018/01/virdzinija-vulf-preteca-feministicke-ideologije/>>, (accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2019)

<sup>10</sup> S. Lolić, *Ilustrovana biografija Virdžinije Vulf*, Politika, <<http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/240366/Zivot-i-stil/Ilustrovana-biografija-Virdzinije-Vulf>>, (accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2019)

<sup>11</sup> Back to Bloomsbury, Selected Papers from the Fourteenth International Conference on Virginia Woolf, Gina Potts, Lisa Shahriari (eds.) (Bakersfield: California State University, 2008), p. 8

<sup>12</sup> Dragan Lekovic, *Virdžinija Vulf – Preteča feminističke ideologije*, ART mozaik, <<http://draganlekovic.me/2018/01/virdzinija-vulf-preteca-feministicke-ideologije/>>, (accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2019)

<sup>13</sup> Biography.com Editors, *Virginia Woolf Biography*, The Biography.com website, A&E Television Networks, <<https://www.biography.com/writer/virginia-woolf>>, (Online since 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2014, last updated 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2019, accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> August, 2019)

<sup>14</sup> Svetlana Slapšak, "Kamenje u džepovima, ili smrt Virdžinije Vulf", *Peščanik.net* <<https://pescanik.net/kamenje-u-dzjepovima-ili-smrt-virdzinije-vulf/>>, (Online since 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2011, accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2019)

an “idiosyncratic impressionist technique of stream-of-consciousness<sup>15</sup>”. In psychology this term was first used by Henry James’s brother, William James, in his *The Principles of Psychology*. He argues that

“Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as “chain” or “train” do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instances. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A “river” or a “stream” is the metaphor by which it is most naturally described. In talking hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life<sup>16</sup>.”

This imagery of a river winding down its river bed, carrying a multitude of thoughts which can be hectic, as we are all very aware, is a perfect metaphor for the thought process. If one just imagines how many errant thoughts one receives throughout just one hour, let alone their whole life, one could easily imagine the stormy river, with its white water, crashing on the river bank, raging on the river bed. This imagery is consistent with our thinking process, because our conscious and subconscious thoughts silently mix, intertwine, entangle, and sometimes leave us with more questions than answers.

In literature it is defined as “a style in literature that is used to represent a character’s feelings and thoughts as they experience them, using long, continuous pieces of text without obvious organization or structure<sup>17</sup>.” It is exploiting the incoherence of our conscious thinking<sup>18</sup>. The most prominent authors whose works may be considered as the epitomes of the proper use of the narrative device in question are James Joyce, William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf, naturally. Therefore, while enjoying Woolf’s novels, reading what the characters think, one can experience the novel from within, through the prism of main and supporting characters’ point of view. Her literary technique could be described as having a distinct quality of experimentation. For example, in her novel *Flush: A Biography*, the complete story is told from a pet’s point of view – a cocker spaniel of the main character, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. In the novel *The Waves* one can find poetic monologues, while the novel *To the Lighthouse* is characterized by, to put it in mild terms, a unique temporal structure<sup>19</sup>. In *Orlando: A Biography* the main hero becomes a heroine and lives over the span of more than three hundred years. Each of her written works of art challenges and even taunts the idea of traditional way of writing in literature in some way. Her style changed and developed over the years, as any writer’s does, and among numerous motifs the ones that continually resurfaced were women in society, patriarchy and empire, and for example in *Mrs. Dalloway* Woolf shows an undeniable opposition to “imperial patriarchy”, but her focus is not on the imperialism, but the patriarchy itself<sup>20</sup>. This will later serve as a perpetual element of popular

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<sup>15</sup> Anna Krausová, *Virginia Woolf: The Outer and the Inner* (Brno: Masaryk University in Brno, Faculty of Arts, 2008), p. 4

<sup>16</sup> William James, *Principles of Psychology*, (The complete two volumes found in *Classics in the History of Psychology*, an internet resource developed by Christopher D. Green, York University, Toronto, Ontario) <  
<http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/James/Principles/index.htm>>, 1980, p.239 (accessed on 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2019)

<sup>17</sup> Definition of ‘stream of consciousness’ from the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus*, Cambridge Dictionary, © Cambridge University Press 2019,<  
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/stream-of-consciousness> >, (accessed on 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2019)

<sup>18</sup> Sushma Chaudhary, “Style and Technique of Virginia Woolf: A Critical Study”, *Language in India*, Vol. 18, No. 11 (November 2018), p. 314

<sup>19</sup> Adrienne Rivera, ‘Five Interesting Facts About Virginia Woolf’, *Books Tell You Why*, <  
<https://blog.bookstellyouwhy.com/interesting-facts-about-virginia-woolf> >, (online since 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2018, accessed on 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2019)

<sup>20</sup> Ashley Nadeau, Umass Amherst, “Exploring Women: Virginia Woolf's Imperial Revisions from *The Voyage Out* to *Mrs. Dalloway*”, *Modern Language Studies*, Volume 44, No. 1 (Summer, 2014), p. 17

culture in her works. Pamela L. Caughie argues that Woolf's texts are transcendent because they stand the test of time and how the author's works can change the way we observe it with various theories which those texts have not been a part of initially. In her book *Virginia Woolf and Postmodernism* she proves how poststructuralist and postmodernist theories of language and narrative break out already established way of thinking, and thus we read the works of Virginia Woolf in a different way as a reaction to the insights which were provided by post-structuralism<sup>21</sup>.

Virginia Woolf started her writing career in 1905 when she started writing "for publication in the *Times Literary Supplement*", but she considered herself a writer long before that<sup>22</sup>. Woolf's most prominent works include: her first novel, *The Voyage Out* published in 1915, *Night and Day* published in 1919, *Jacob's Room* from 1922, which was based on her late brother – Thoby, *Mrs. Dalloway* released in 1925. Later works encompass novels *To the Lighthouse* and *Orlando: A Biography* from 1928, a feminist essay *A Room of One's Own* based on lectures she had given at various women's colleges from 1929 and novels: *The Waves* published in 1931, "which she described as "a play-poem" written in the voices of six different characters", *The Years* from 1937 which was the last novel published while she was still alive. In 1938 her essay *Three Guineas* is published, which continues to research the feminist themes started by the first one, *A Room of One's Own*, with the addition of themes about fascism and war, since World War II was beginning to spread like a wildfire. *Between the Acts* was her last novel, published after her death in 1941.<sup>23</sup> Her first ever publication was an unsigned review which was printed in the *Guardian*<sup>24</sup>.

Aside from writing novels and the two critical essays, she wrote short fiction as well, and since the British short story distinguished itself during the 1880s, in the time when Virginia Woolf commenced her exploration of the short fiction – the first few decades of the twentieth century – "writing short fiction became a fashionable and even fairly lucrative pursuit", and her short stories are said to often carry the qualities of meta-fiction<sup>25</sup>.

Since Woolf's death her importance and influence as a writer, feminist and a publisher has been explored exponentially in popular culture. Some of the most famous examples would be a play under the name of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* by Edward Albee, later adapted into a film starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, where Woolf's name serves as an intellectual joke. According to Emily Temple, Albee revealed the story of how he came up with the idea of using the author's name with words:

*"I was in there having a beer one night, and I saw "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" scrawled in soap, I suppose, on this mirror. When I started to write the play it cropped up in my mind again. And of course, who's afraid of Virginia Woolf means who's afraid of the big bad wolf...who's afraid of living life without false illusions. And it did*

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<sup>21</sup> Pamela L. Caughie, "Postmodern and Poststructuralist Approaches to Virginia Woolf" in *Palgrave Advances in Virginia Woolf Studies*, Anna Snaith (ed.) (Palgrave/MacMillan, 2007), pp. 157-158

<sup>22</sup> Frank Kermode, "Biographical Preface" in *Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, Anna Snaith (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. viii

<sup>23</sup> Biography.com Editors, *Virginia Woolf Biography*, The Biography.com website, A&E Television Networks, <<https://www.biography.com/writer/virginia-woolf>>, (Online since 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2014, last updated 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2019, accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> August, 2019)

<sup>24</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 1

<sup>25</sup> Elke D'hoker, "The role of the imagination in Virginia Woolf's short fiction", *Journal of the Short Story in English*, Volume 50, Spring 2008, <<http://journals.openedition.org/jsse/692>>, (Online since 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2011, accessed on 21<sup>st</sup> August, 2019)

*strike me as being a rather typical, university intellectual joke*<sup>26</sup>.”

Today maybe the most prominent example of Woolf as an icon of pop culture is a novel by Michael Cunningham called *The Hours, A Novel*, published in 1998 and later adapted into a film starring Meryl Streep, Nicole Kidman and Julianne Moore. Both the novel and the film depict how Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* influenced three generations of women that came in contact with suicide in some way at some point in their lives. Nicole Kidman plays the role of Virginia Woolf in the film. Next, one could find a picture book by Kyo Maclear which carries Woolf's name and is based on the relationship between Virginia and her oldest sister Vanessa. There is a character called the Virginian Wolfsnake in a book called 'The Reptile Room' from a book series *A Series of Unfortunate Events* written by Lemony Snicket. Apparently, one should not let the Virginian Wolfsnake near a typewriter because it uses it to bludgeon people to death with.

The usage of Woolf's name in popular culture does not stop at plays, books and film adaptations, it spreads to music as well. Namely, there is a British metal band from the '80s carrying the name 'Virginia Woolf'. However, there are some more whimsical examples of the author's name being used as a pun in pop culture. To name a few, there are Virginia Woolf Dog Day Care, Virginia Woolf Inn, and A Rum of One's Own which is a cocktail featured in *Tequila Mockingbird: Cocktails with a Literary Twist*, which is a cocktail book by Tim Federle where each recipe is accompanied by a literary pun<sup>27</sup>.

Considering the fact that Woolf was a pioneer of feminist critique it comes as no surprise that a multitude of elements of popular culture sometimes simply pour out of her writings. Since the majority of the elements of popular culture found in the author's texts hold relevance even today, Virginia Woolf remains the icon of popular culture extensively talked about.

## **Popular Culture – Theories, Notions, Definitions**

### ***Searching for the Definition of Popular Culture***

Popular culture is a contradictory term pondered by a number of great minds throughout the years. Many have tried finding the definition of this term, but somehow, none have succeeded in defining it on its own, it remains constantly compared to other types of culture, and changing. Here is why – all of the aforementioned great minds, like a British media scholar – John Fiske, a Welsh Marxist theorist, academic, novelist and critic – Raymond Williams, German philosopher and social critic – Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, a British sociologist and academic – Tony Bennett, Emeritus Professor of Cultural Studies at the Centre for Research in Media and Cultural Studies, University of Sunderland, in the UK – John Storey, etc. have found various definitions. Some of their aspects are similar, overlapping even, but the others are vastly different, so, in order for the definition to be found, or at least for me to try and find it, I shall look at the most prominent definitions given by these eminent scholars at some point in time, ranging from all the way back in 1970s to more recent years, like 2010.

Clinton R. Sanders argues that there are three presiding analytical approaches to studying popular culture and they are vastly used by various analysts, who sometimes use just one of the three most prominent approaches in their research, while other times they use a combination of two or all three. The three approaches are the “interpretive/projective techniques, socio-historical investigation or content analysis<sup>28</sup>.” In his findings Sanders reveals that those researching and

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<sup>26</sup> Emily Temple, *An Incomplete List of Virginia Woolf Puns in Pop Culture, On the 135<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her birth*, Literary Hub, < <https://lithub.com/an-incomplete-list-of-virginia-woolf-puns-in-pop-culture/>>, (Online since 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2017, accessed on 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2019)

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Clinton R. Sanders, “Structural and Interactional Features of Popular Culture Production: An Introduction to the Production of Culture Perspective”, *Journal of Popular Culture*, Volume 16, No. 2 (Fall 1982), p. 66

analyzing popular culture that have a background in literary criticism usually turn to interpretive/projective techniques and models since those center around the notion that popular material has a certain meaning behind it. Analysts with a background in the social sciences are usually in favour of the socio-historical investigation where the research is observed through the context of the environment of the social structure where the focal point is the position of products and the very process of production in said environment. The last method, namely the content analysis, is perhaps the prevailing method used by both aforementioned groups of analysts<sup>29</sup>.

Now, all of the abovementioned methods have their shortcomings, that is one of the reasons why popular culture has not been defined clearly, but all of them combined might just shine a light onto the path of discovery that this research is on. It goes without saying that the models I will be relying on heavily are the interpretive/projective techniques and content analysis.

### **Contradictory Culture of the Subordinated and Disempowered**

John Fiske argues that popular culture is “the culture of the subordinated and disempowered<sup>30</sup>”, that it holds within it traces and signs of the relations between the subordinated and the dominating class, but at the same time, it is trying to resist to the forces of domination and subordination within it, thus being contradictory to itself. Culture is a process, it always evolves and it changes constantly, as the people change so will popular culture because people are the ones making culture, any culture. Therefore, we could easily say that forging of a culture is a social process, as Fiske argues. In order to determine what are the elements of popular culture, we must first list the resources from which disempowered and subordinated people (the “popular” in popular culture) receive those elements. Those resources are **the media** such as television, newspapers, magazines, advertisement... **music** like records, CD’s and tapes... **clothes, language, any form of entertainment** such as video games... They all could have enclosed within them a sense of empowerment, of dominating class of society. And what kind of society are we talking about? We are essentially talking about white, patriarchal, capitalist societies. What does this mean? It means that the culture we are observing and trying to define and determine is made by predominantly white people where men have a saying in everything and it is all about the money. Sounds like an American dream. The values of our society revolve around the money, around the norm, and the status quo.

It is in our nature, human nature, to defy. Defiance is what makes us tick. We are the ones who want it all, we want to beat death, to at least prolong life, we want health and more time, and wealth, etc. At the end of the day, we still claim to be in a classless society, but in fact we seldom are. “During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—and still today—those members of society who were not in control were called the Folk, and the elite studied them—and their admitted merits—as “the folk”—so that they could be recognized as not in control. In the 1960s and 1970s—and today—they were known as “the Masses.” Such people have always been used for their benefits but kept out of control<sup>31</sup>.” The masses are always going to be looked down on by the powerful, the dominant, those who have money – the elite. Fiske states that popular culture is potentially and actually progressive, but not radical, that it is essentially optimistic because in the fervent and vital mind-set of the people composing it, it finds evidence of the motivation for a social change which is unmistakably possible. One of the core ideas about popular culture is that it is “made by the people<sup>32</sup>” and not produced by the industry, it is “always a culture of conflict<sup>33</sup>” and it is, as has

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<sup>29</sup> Clinton R. Sanders, “Structural and Interactional Features of Popular Culture Production: An Introduction to the Production of Culture Perspective”, *Journal of Popular Culture*, Volume 16, No. 2 (Fall 1982), p. 66

<sup>30</sup> John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2010) p. 4

<sup>31</sup> Ray B. Browne, “Inventing Popular Culture by John Storey”, *The Journal of American Culture*, Volume 29, Issue 3, (September 2006), p. 380

<sup>32</sup> John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 19

<sup>33</sup> John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 2

already been stated before, a process and as such its meaning can never be recorded and can never be just one because it evolves and changes constantly. That change depends on the people, those subordinated and disempowered who struggle to get away from the status quo and break away from the norm. Those who form the opposition, which is a vital part of any popular culture.

We should stop and try to define ‘culture’ as a term. According to Raymond Williams there are three ways of defining culture, we could look at it in terms of great poets, philosophers and artists, then from the angle of fine art, poems, statues, paintings, i.e. the work of those aforementioned and finally we could define culture through the development of holidays, literacy, festivals, religion etc. If culture can be the first, the second and the third divided, why it cannot be all of that together? The blooming of literacy and religion, great artists and their work, all of that making one broad term we call culture. Williams offered another definition: “In its earliest senses, in several major languages, the term “culture” always referred to the culture of something: originally the culture of natural products and then, by metaphorical extension, the culture of mental or spiritual faculties.<sup>34</sup>” Culture consists of the meanings we extract from our experience within the society, from which we place ourselves within that society, i.e. find our social identity. Popular culture is the culture of people who do not hold the industry, but do gain something from it, they cannot produce the resources of popular culture, but they use them to create it.

It is often thought that pop culture is made solely of popular music, television shows and brands, that is to say that the industries producing those are cultural industries, but Fiske considers that all industries are cultural industries to some extent. This means that anything can be a cultural text as much as a pop record or a popular TV show. Anything from which people can derive their social identity, such as a pair of ripped jeans<sup>35</sup>.

### **Individualism in Peril – Adorno’s Critical View**

The search for the definition of popular culture could not be complete if one did not mention Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno. Adorno was a German philosopher and social critic who taught at the University of Frankfurt in 1931, then immigrated to England in 1934 as to avoid the fate of many of his fellow Jews who had been, at the time, prosecuted by the Nazis<sup>36</sup>, finding employment at the University of Oxford, moving to the USA in 1938, where he taught at Princeton and Berkeley, respectively, only to come back to the University of Frankfurt in 1949<sup>37</sup>. His writings encompass topics of sociology, psychology and musicology. His critique of the Western popular culture is not the only topic Adorno presents through his interdisciplinary research including, but not being limited to, papers on popular culture, jazz, the culture industry, radio, film, television, theory of pseudo-culture etc., but it is the one most pertinent to this dissertation, so that is what we shall focus on.

Adorno’s view of popular culture in all its shapes and forms was not favourable, to say the least. Be it radio, television, newspapers, CDs and CD players, film, etc., any element of popular culture suffered his scrutiny. Where most people would find those elements, albeit entertaining, useful and a tool that would bring them together, harmless, Adorno, who took all art extremely seriously, saw danger in such thinking – danger for individualism. “He insists on treating popular

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<sup>34</sup> Raymond Williams, “On High and Popular Culture”, *The New Republic, Digital Edition*, <<https://newrepublic.com/article/79269/high-and-popular-culture>>, (Published on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 1974, accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> August, 2019)

<sup>35</sup> John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010) pp. 4-21

<sup>36</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Theodor-Wiesengrund-Adorno>>, (Online since 20<sup>th</sup> July, 1998, last update on 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2018, accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2019)

<sup>37</sup> Lambert Zuidervart, “Theodor W. Adorno”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2015 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2015/entries/adorno/>>, (Online since 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2003, last revised 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2015, accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2019)

culture as a deadly serious business, as something that is ultimately toxic in its effects on the social process.<sup>38</sup>” Since his notion of the terms ‘popular culture’ and ‘popular art’ conveyed an association of something stemming from the people, he turned to the terms ‘mass culture’ and ‘culture industry’ instead, focusing on the inconsistencies, imbalance and downright inequality between the disempowered and those who belonged to the dominating class, which mainly came due to the capitalistic nature of the society he was observing. In his opinion, the products of popular culture or ‘culture industry’, as he referred to it,

*“did not come from the people, were not an expression of the life-process of individuals or communities but were manufactured and disseminated under conditions that reflected the interests of the producers and the exigencies of the market, both of which demanded the domination and manipulation of mass consciousness.”<sup>39</sup>”*

Now there are those who would argue that he was behind times or that his own works were so, to say the least, because of his “unilinear” and “totalizing” social theory<sup>40</sup>. But his clarity came from this straightforward form of observing said theory, therefore, it would not be as influential as it is if his views were any different.

Adorno’s musings of popular culture were not favourable even before his arrival to the USA, but finding himself in the midst of western mass culture vastly differing from the popular culture in Europe before World War II,

*“he claimed that capitalist popular culture – jazz, cinema, pop songs, and so on – manipulates us into living lives empty of true freedom, and serves only to distort our desires. Popular culture is not the spontaneous expression of the people, but a profit-driven industry – it robs us of our freedom and bends us to conform to its needs for profit.”<sup>41</sup>”*

Therefore, his apprehensiveness towards popular culture, especially entertainment industry being the bedrock of society on a daily basis, comes as no surprise. Furthermore, said mistrust is explained by his view of the media of pop culture, such as jazz, television, pop songs..., being a pivotal reason of the individual’s regression and formation of “regressive and dependent personality<sup>42</sup>”.

One of the focal points of Adorno’s criticism of popular culture was his opinion that due to its elements the capitalist society lost its subjectivity. Capitalism walked over individuality, spontaneity and initiative, turning individuals into cogs of a well-oiled proverbial machine referred to as ‘the system’, where the bourgeois society is the elite, those empowered and in control, and the people are the subordinated and disempowered. But the bourgeois are not going unscathed in his opinion, because the contradiction of the bourgeois society “is the conflict between individual

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<sup>38</sup> Robert W. Witkin, *Adorno on Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003 first edition, this edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004), p. 1

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 2

<sup>40</sup> David Cunningham, “A TIME FOR DISSONANCE AND NOISE, on Adorno, Music, and the Concept of Modernism”, *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, Volume 8, No. 1 (London and New York: Routledge, April, 2003), p. 66

<sup>41</sup> Owen Hulatt, *Against Popular Culture*, Aeon, <<https://aeon.co/essays/against-guilty-pleasures-adorno-on-the-crimes-of-pop-culture>>, (Online since 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2018, accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2019)

<sup>42</sup> Robert W. Witkin, *Adorno on Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003 first edition, this edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004), p. 5

freedom and societal constraint<sup>43</sup>.”, thus making even the bourgeois an element of popular culture, if one considers Fiske characterizing popular culture as contradictory to itself. Throughout his papers, one can clearly see Adorno’s attempt of analyzing “the ways in which the subject, and subjectivity itself, is undermined by the rising tide of popular culture and popular entertainment<sup>44</sup>.” Adorno’s oversight lies in the fact that he did not consider how cultural industry can both serve the “organized capital” and provide multitude of opportunities for individuals and groups to be creative – which is one of the focal points of cultural studies<sup>45</sup>. That creativity is what arguably allowed them to retain their subjectivity.

### **Barker, Bennett, Hall, Schudson, Storey – Multiple Definitions**

*“Traditionally, the idea of popular culture has referred to that which remains after the canon of high culture has been established and/or as the mass produced commodity culture of consumer capitalism. Here popular culture has been regarded as inferior both to the elevated cultures of Art or classical music on the one hand and to an imagined authentic folk culture on the other<sup>46</sup>.”*

This is the first definition we see in Chris Barker’s *The SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies*, after which he further explains that those who insist on the difference between popular culture and high culture do so due to their conviction that there is a vast difference between the two in the aesthetics. High culture is being characterized as “subtle, complex and adequate”, whereas popular culture carries the marks of “standardization and a levelling down that encourages, and indeed demands, conformity<sup>47</sup>.” Tony Bennett explains that “as it stands, the concept of popular culture is virtually useless, a melting pot of confused and contradictory meanings capable of misdirecting inquiry up any number of theoretical blind alleys<sup>48</sup>.” Stuart Hall says how popular culture, “looks, in any particular period, at those forms and activities which have their roots in the social and material conditions of particular classes; which have been embodied in popular traditions and practices<sup>49</sup>”, while Michael Schudson argues that popular culture is viewed in broad terms as objects through which the beliefs and practices are organized and widely spread<sup>50</sup>. John Storey reveals how when the thought of studying popular culture occurred to him for the first time, everywhere he looked it seemed to him like everybody knew exactly what it was<sup>51</sup>. Nevertheless, he argues that popular culture is almost always defined in contrast or alongside other cultures, such as mass culture, dominant culture, folk culture, high culture etc., meaning that we cannot define it on

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<sup>43</sup> Robert W. Witkin, *Adorno on Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003 first edition, this edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004), p.10

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15

<sup>45</sup> Simon During, “Editor’s Introduction” to “Chapter 2, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer THE C U LTUR E INDUSTRY Enlightenment as mass deception” in *The Cultural Studies Reader: Second Edition*, Simon During (ed.) (London and New York: Routledge, 1999 second edition, this edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2001), p. 32

<sup>46</sup> Chris Barker, *The SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies* (London: SAGE Publications, 2004), p. 147

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 147-148

<sup>48</sup> Tony Bennett, “Popular culture: a teaching object”, *Screen Education*, Volume 34 (1980), p. 18

<sup>49</sup> Stuart Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘The Popular’”, *People’s History and Socialist Theory*, R. Samuel (ed.) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 234-235

<sup>50</sup> Michael Schudson, “The New Validation of Popular Culture: Sense and Sentimentality in Academia”, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, Volume 4, Issue 1 (March 1987), p. 51

<sup>51</sup> John Storey, *From Popular Culture to Everyday Life* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 4

our own without some kind of comparison. He demonstrates this in an extensive research that produced one of his greatest books ever written - *Inventing Popular Culture: From Folklore to Globalization* where multiple chapters dive deep into the connection of popular culture with folk culture, mass culture, “other” of high culture, postmodern culture, global culture, even mass art, etc.<sup>52</sup>. In Storey’s *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* he basically does the same thing, only on a slightly smaller scale. He does not offer us just one definition of popular culture, but six. His first definition is a quantitative one, where “popular culture is simply culture which is widely favoured or well liked by many people<sup>53</sup>.” But this definition, Storey points out, is flawed in a sense that no matter how high a number we statistically gather in one or more of many ways, it does not automatically mean that it is popular culture in its core. For example, in literature we have the classics like *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, etc., which certainly do not belong to popular culture but rather high culture, and still those books are being sold all over the world be it in their original language or numerous translations, film remakes are being made, and there are multitudes of people enjoying them, so, the mere quantity cannot possibly be a sufficient definition for popular culture. His second definition has a residual quality defining it as an inferior culture because it states that popular culture is “the culture which is left over after we have decided what is high culture<sup>54</sup>.” The insufficiencies of this definition lie in the notion that the distinction between popular and high culture is crystal clear and crisp, sharp and very finite, that the elements of popular culture are things created for the masses by the masses, whereas one can easily determine an element of high culture thanks to it being a work of art produced by an individual, and that *that* distinction is not only clear as day, but also constant, perpetual and “fixed for all time<sup>55</sup>”. In insisting on the severity of the difference between the two types of culture and its inability to be crossed, the fault falls with the inconsistencies, because what is nowadays seen as being an undeniable element of high culture, such as any work of William Shakespeare or Charles Dickens, was at an earlier time, for example the nineteenth century, considered popular culture. Therefore, what was once part of the ‘inferior’ popular culture is now considered high culture, and that is why this definition cannot be taken as a sole meaning of what popular culture is, but just a small part. The third definition evens up the terms popular culture and mass culture. Those who equalize the two terms point out that

*“popular culture is a hopelessly commercial culture. It is mass produced for mass consumption, its audience is a mass of non-discriminating consumers. The culture itself is formulaic, manipulative<sup>56</sup>.”*

In a nutshell, this definition is unyielding in nature and that is what excludes it from being ‘the one and only’, because what is mass-produced does not necessarily mean that it automatically becomes popular because mass culture is something that the masses ‘consume’ no questions asked, but people are not that gullible or passive in choosing what they are spending their money on. The case might be that a fortune is spent on advertising a mass-produced item, only for it to be crushed under the low ratings and reviews, thus not becoming popular. The fourth definition John Storey presents equalizes popular culture with folk culture. It states that “popular culture is the culture which originates from ‘the people’,[...]It is a culture of the people for the people<sup>57</sup>.” “As the ‘culture of the people’, popular culture is determined by the interactions between people in their

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<sup>52</sup> John Storey, *Inventing Popular Culture: From Folklore to Globalization* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2003)

<sup>53</sup> John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture, An Introduction, Fifth edition* (Pearson Longman, 2009), p. 5

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* p. 8

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* p. 9

everyday activities: styles of dress, the use of slang, greeting rituals and the foods that people eat are all examples of popular culture<sup>58</sup>.” The erroneous nature of this definition is that one cannot really say who determines the members of ‘the people’, and furthermore, how to distinguish who does not belong to that group as well. Another problem arises in the form of commercialized resources that make up culture. The fact stands that culture is not made by individuals using raw materials that they, themselves, have made, but rather materials “commercially provided.” Storey then goes on to explain this utterance by giving an example of a conversation he witnessed where a speaker said that Levis, being a commercialized part of mass culture, could never use a song from the Jam, which belong to popular culture. Someone else pointed out that Levis have already used a song from the Clash, “a band with equally sound political credentials”, and that is why this definition of popular culture cannot be ‘the one and only’<sup>59</sup>. The fifth definition claims that popular culture is “a site of struggle between the ‘resistance’ of subordinate groups in society and the forces of ‘incorporation’ operating in the interests of dominant groups in society<sup>60</sup>.” This definition stems from Antonio Gramsci’s view on hegemony where his political analysis considers hegemony to be a way for the dominant class to make the subordinate willingly relinquish control, to give their consent. Holt N. Parker notices that Gramsci and other theorists such as Benett and Williams, elucidate that hegemony leans on and uses “methods of mass communication” and that Gramsci in actuality does not “offer a definition of what constitutes popular culture<sup>61</sup>.” He further states that hegemony is in no way, shape or form a classification, but a process, and so it fails to achieve the title of ‘the only definition’. Storey’s last definition leans on postmodernism and the relationship it has in regards to popular culture and the main point he insists on is that “postmodern culture is a culture which no longer recognizes the distinction between high and popular culture<sup>62</sup>.” In the light of all six definitions, the drawn conclusion is that the real definition of popular culture maybe lies somewhere in-between all of them. Parts of them do indeed define the notion of popular culture, but others exclude one another, and so the all-encompassing definition of popular culture remains undiscovered. One of the most vibrant examples of the fickleness of defining said culture might be Storey’s own example of how if a lot of people see a soap opera about a young man suffering from AIDS or having HIV, that soap opera is never just offering to us things that we know, but it most probably shapes our understanding of the things we know and quite possibly our future reactions to similar information. “But how this works will be seen as different depending on our assumptions about popular culture derived from how we define it<sup>63</sup>.”, he concludes.

### ***The Versatility of Popular Culture***

Popular culture is not just its elements, for example music groups like ABBA or The Doors; the city of New York being recognizable in the whole world under its nickname – The Big Apple, or some car brands like Cadillac; books later adopted into films such as Doctor Who, Doctor Zhivago or Dracula; a legend like Bigfoot<sup>64</sup>, or CDs, TV, jeans, etc. To some extent, the cinema, football or any other sports, the music hall, science fiction as a whole film or literary genre or even

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<sup>58</sup> Tim Delaney, “Pop Culture: An Overview”, *Philosophy Now*, Volume 64 (November/December, 2007), p. 6

<sup>59</sup> John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture, An Introduction*, Fifth edition (Pearson Longman, 2009), pp. 9-10

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 10

<sup>61</sup> Holt N. Parker, “Toward a Definition of Popular Culture”, *History and Theory* 50 (Wesleyan University, May 2011), pp. 156-157

<sup>62</sup> John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture, An Introduction*, Fifth edition (Pearson Longman, 2009), p. 12

<sup>63</sup> John Storey, “Popular Culture and the Dissemination of Knowledge” in *Handbook of Popular Culture and Biomedicine*, A. Görge et al. (eds.) (Springer International Publishing AG, part of Springer Nature, 2019), p. 94

<sup>64</sup> Sara Pendergast, Tom Pendergast, *St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture* (St. James Press, 2000), pp. 4, 748, 246, 406, 739, 740, 760, 251

motorcycle gangs are as much popular culture as any other of its elements, but the problem lies in popular culture shifting and changing with time. In addition to that the supplementary difficulty in determining the field of study of popular culture is that there are many other academic branches which may come in contact with it, but do not really place it in the centre of their study<sup>65</sup>. As an example of this, Angela McRobbie in her work *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* argues that popular culture is analyzed better if the one analyzing it uses debates on post-modernism, due to postmodernism's consideration of images relating to one another and across one another<sup>66</sup>.

In the early 2000s there was a question of whether popular culture, youth culture, low culture, trash culture, media culture, mass-produced culture and culture in general, among other descriptors are describing one and the same<sup>67</sup>. The conclusion never came, because popular culture touches so many things and areas, and yet it is perpetually slipping through the fingers of those trying to analyze it. Furthermore, popular culture, or at least some of its elements like popular music for example, could be utilized in the scope of Cultural Studies in both researching and teaching<sup>68</sup>. This in turn spreads to educational system where teachers in Elementary Schools and High Schools could use elements of the popular such as lyrics of popular songs or even films in order to make a certain part of their school curriculum more accessible and fun.

Although there are some elements of popular culture that were made by one person, for example a singer who is both the singer and the song-writer for the songs they are performing, there are some other parts of popular culture that are made by a group. It could be a group of artists working on a street art together, or a piece of popular art painted by a group of artists, but with only one signature on it, sold at "starving artist" sales, or a group of people working on a script for a comedy TV show. One will more frequently see people collaborating like this in popular culture than in high culture, and perhaps it is due to popular culture not relying on "stylistic idiosyncrasy", and even on the very artists and creators who sometimes think themselves as a part of the machine<sup>69</sup>. Whether this is true or not remains to be seen, because popular culture is still not clearly defined.

It is virtually impossible not to come into some sort of contact with popular culture because of the vastness of the area that it covers<sup>70</sup>. One of the latest studies of popular culture show how it could be used as a sort of "soft power" in the areas of public diplomacy, foreign policy and international relations, but that its use has been limited. Soft power is a term used to explain the phenomenon of one country having cooperation of other countries without paying in any way shape or form, or threatening them. "While 'soft power' creates a useful opening for considering popular culture in world politics, much of the literature avoids making popular culture the substantive topic of its analyses", and it even remains ignored by the rest of international relations<sup>71</sup>. One of the

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<sup>65</sup> Bernard Waiters, Tony Bennett, Graham Martin, *Popular Culture, Past and Present: A Reader*. (Routledge; Croom Helm in association with the Open University Press, 1982), vi

<sup>66</sup> Angela McRobbie, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994 first edition, this edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005), p. 12

<sup>67</sup> Bethany Ogdon, "Review: Why Teach Popular Culture?", *College English*, Volume 63, Issue 4 (March, 2001), p.502

<sup>68</sup> Catherine Driscoll, "On popular music: Teaching modernist cultural Studies", *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, Volume 24, No. 4 (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 520

<sup>69</sup> Gary Alan Fine, "Popular Culture and Social Interaction: Production, Consumption, and Usage", *Journal of Popular Culture*, Volume 11, Issue 2 (Fall 1997), p. 457

<sup>70</sup> Gary Day, "Introduction: Popular Culture – The Conditions of Control?" in *Readings in Popular Culture, Trivial Pursuits*, Gary Day (ed.) (New York: The Editorial Board, Lumiere (Co-operative) Press Ltd, Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), p. 1

<sup>71</sup> Christina Rowley, Jutta Weldes, *From Soft Power and Popular Culture to Popular Culture and World Politics* (School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies University of Bristol, Working Paper No. 03-16, 2016), pp. 3-6

examples of states using popular culture for their own gain were “posters and other media forms” which “were famously deployed to define nations and their enemies in WWI”, while the “North Vietnamese posters similarly constituted the US enemy in the ‘American War’<sup>72</sup>”. This shows how innocent and inconspicuous elements of popular culture like said posters or various types of media could be used for a sole purpose of shaping world politics, if all corners of international relations would include popular culture as a part of their scope. After these pieces of information, the conclusion is that the versatility of popular culture is greater than just in literature or sociology, but it is still not being fully utilized.

Popular Culture can be found intertwined with New Media, touching the lives of millions of people who engage with these new forms of media which allow “the circulations of popular culture” due to their infrastructure<sup>73</sup>. One of those types of media is the Internet and various applications, dating sites and social networking services that go hand in hand with it. The other type of new media are various e-readers such as Kindle, which allow for a reading of an e-book<sup>74</sup>. This type of reading would be unimaginable at the beginning of the twentieth century, for example, but books were and are elements of popular culture if they carry within them a text belonging to the scope of popular texts, therefore, no matter if the book is written on paper or is being read via a type of a new media, it is still an element of the popular. The books that spring to mind as great examples of popular culture are J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* and Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, and although they are vastly different in genres, it is argued that they are “as definitively *popular culture* as much as the films of Steven Spielberg, or the songs of Oasis or Britney Spears<sup>75</sup>.” The year that arguably changed it all was 2001 when the Internet and how people use it changes forever. Up until that point people have been passively receiving the content that was online, but from that point on the popularization of social networking services, blogs, online stores and more brought interaction between the people and the Internet<sup>76</sup>. With this kind of correlation between the people and the Internet allowed them to create their own stories, music and even art and share it in the world where they would become the elements of the popular.

Popular culture is so widespread, adaptive and flexible, it is even found in connection to law. Both the law and popular culture engage with each other. The engagement of popular culture in law is by films and TV shows about various aspects of the law, where the spectrum falls anywhere “from fictional police dramas, detective series, law-firm centred dramas etc., to fact-based documentaries, usually focusing on criminal issues [...]” and films like “*Young Mr Lincoln* (1939) to *Legally Blonde* (2001)<sup>77</sup>”. This engagement is also shown by usage of popular culture as a sort of a teaching tool. Not only that, but by showing a video evidence during trial is a direct example of using an element of popular culture, namely the TV and VCR, that would benefit the law, that is, showcase the potential proof of a crime. In turn, law polices popular culture and the area which is most heavily done so is pop music with “the regulation of dissemination on grounds of censorship; intellectual property disputes that may also have the effect of preventing production and dissemination of material and contractual disputes<sup>78</sup>”, which might be there to protect the artists, but

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<sup>72</sup> Jutta Weldes, Christina Rowley, “So, How Does Popular Culture Relate to World Politics?” in *Popular Culture and World Politics: Theories, Methods, Pedagogies*, Federica Caso, Caitlin Hamilton (eds.) (Bristol, UK: E-International Relations, 2015), pp. 13-14

<sup>73</sup> David Beer, *Popular Culture and New Media, The Politics of Circulation* (Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 1-2

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. p. 13

<sup>75</sup> Tony Bennett (et al.), *Culture, Class, Distinction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 94

<sup>76</sup> Marek Sokolowski, “Mass Culture Versus Popular Culture” in *Proceedings “New Dimensions in the Development of Society 2011”*, Gunārs Brāzma (ed.) (Jelgava, Latvia: Latvia University of Agriculture, 2012) pp. 309

<sup>77</sup> Steve Greenfield, Guy Osborn, *Readings in Law and Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 4

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. p. 5

can sometimes have a completely different result of limiting the artists in expressing themselves in full. There is a certain “blurring of the lines” when it comes to popular music, for example one can be a consumer listening to music and an artist making and producing music on their own computer<sup>79</sup>. So, the conclusion that arises is that even though these two areas intertwine in some way, they can be both beneficial and limiting for one another, which is predictable and expected for popular culture.

Now, there is a fine line between popular culture and mass culture, some would argue that those are one and the same, but “mass culture refers to popular culture which is produced by the industrial techniques of mass production, and marketed for profit to a mass public of consumers. It is commercial culture, mass produced for a mass market<sup>80</sup>.”, according to Dominic Strinati. The conclusion which therefore asserts itself is that every part of popular culture could become mass culture if produced for a mass consumption, but not all elements of mass culture are automatically popular culture, and therein lies the difference.

Another definition about popular culture by Ioan Davies in his book *Cultural Studies and Beyond, Fragments of Empire* states that studying it “is not really about the ‘people’ but about intellectuals<sup>81</sup>”, which contradicts everything that has been said so far. This is then explained through an example that the correlation is the same as when there were anthropological researches during the course of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century “about the Trobriand Islanders or the Nuer”. The aim of the researches was not to see how those people lived, but how the intellectuals that colonized those areas tried to find themselves in a foreign world<sup>82</sup>. This then implies that popular culture is not actually about the people but about the intellectuals trying to find their place inside this new culture that is ever-changing. Even though that might be the case, there is an overwhelming amount of information challenging this, and so Ioan Davies came to a conclusion that:

*“Popular culture is, ultimately, about allowing us to make our own fictions, either collectively or alone, and then standing back and wondering why we were given such freedom<sup>83</sup>.”*

This contradictory definition about the aim of popular culture is what makes it an actual element of the popular and that is why one can easily understand it and prefer it to the one stating it is about the intellectuals. That is to say that intellectuals can certainly be a part of it, the problem lies in the statement that it is all about them. Speaking about intellectuals, a line can be drawn between popular culture and the writer, Charles Dickens, who “regarded popular entertainment as culture, not simply popular culture<sup>84</sup>”, and virtually obliterated the lines between high culture and low culture. He wrote many essays advocating that art forms which were popular at the time and considered low culture as a result of its popularity, as vital for the culture of his time. He believed that popular culture spreads education even to working classes and his vision of popular culture was the amalgamation of both cultures – high and low<sup>85</sup>. He was one of the rare writers who tackled the

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<sup>79</sup> Steve Greenfield, Guy Osborn, *Readings in Law and Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 6

<sup>80</sup> Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture, Second Edition* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 10

<sup>81</sup> Ioan Davies, *Cultural Studies and Beyond, Fragments of Empire* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995 first edition, this edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005), p. 104

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* p. 104

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* p. 113

<sup>84</sup> Juliet John, “The Novels and Popular Culture” in *A Companion to Charles Dickens*, David Paroissien (ed.) (Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 142

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* p. 144-145

question of culture in such a way, and even though his upbringing was of a semi-educated and urban character, he had “unrivaled success at straddling academic and popular culture<sup>86</sup>”, and in that way transcending his disempowered upbringing and elevating himself to being a member of the dominant class of society.

Popular Culture offers us a virtual community and the safety of “social force”, but those parts of it are rarely noted. Football, thriller and detective novels, digital games, *Sex and the City*, *Ally McBeal*, police series, and even children’s television are all elements of popular culture that Joke Hermes uses as a foundation for proving the benefits that popular culture offers and the cultural citizenship it provides<sup>87</sup>. It has already been noted how popular culture is the strive of the subordinated to overcome their subordination and become equal with the dominant, and Hermes provides three attributes that corroborate the notion that it provides us with our own virtual city of culture. She argues that it “makes us welcome and offers belonging”, then there is the adoration and our sense of being fascinated by its many elements like pop music, TV series, popular fiction and numerous websites which are dedicated to all of them, online and offline computer games, and more, because through them we can project and live vicariously, and the last attribute is that popular culture allow us to merge our public and private lives no matter our background, marital status, race, gender or any other trait<sup>88</sup>. Thus the sense of community is confirmed and another use for popular culture is added to the list of social areas which are somehow influenced by it.

The versatility of popular culture is such that it could be found in the Russian avant-garde. It was a beacon of energy for the artists who aimed to separate themselves from the competitors in the West during the period of the first couple of decades of the twentieth century. It offered them new notions, new image and observations, which in turn changed how others perceived them. Alas, it was not to last because “[...] the avant-garde was an exotic species, distant from the society that it satirized or served and intolerant of deviant taste. It was a species that could be appreciated only by the connoisseur and by members of the same club that romanticized —and misunderstood —the common man, whose common culture they praised and advocated<sup>89</sup>.”, but the Stalin Era that followed the Russian avant-garde restored the classical way of painting, sculpting and architecture, and so the avant-garde was overthrown with fine arts flourishing once more alongside popular culture<sup>90</sup>. This contradiction of this particular artistic movement experimenting with the previous ways of making art places it at the centre of popular culture. Even though the avant-garde did not survive the rule of Stalin, popular culture did, like it always does and always will because it is constantly transforming and changing, keeping up with the times.

Popular culture is so multifaceted that it could be found virtually anywhere, even Christmas. Christmas is that time of the year when everything is suddenly red and green, there is Christmas music playing in every store, in every supermarket and on the numerous radio stations. Some countries don’t celebrate Christmas as a religious holiday because they do not believe in Jesus Christ as a deity, like for example Japan, some do not celebrate it because they are Communist, like China or Cuba, but still, somehow, in Japan Christmas is being celebrated as a part of popular culture that has spilled over the continents and sailed over the open waters, reaching the island of Japan, in China and Cuba during Christmas time one can see “the Coca-Cola Santa and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer”<sup>91</sup> which have nothing to do with the birth of Christ that Christmas is in a

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<sup>86</sup> Juliet John, “The Novels and Popular Culture” in *A Companion to Charles Dickens*, David Paroissien (ed.) (Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 155

<sup>87</sup> Joke Hermes, *Re-reading Popular Culture* (Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 1-2

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* p. 3

<sup>89</sup> John E. Bowlt (et al.), *Modern Art and Popular Culture: Readings in High & Low* (Abrams: The Museum of Modern Art, 1990), p. 151

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 151-152

<sup>91</sup> *Christmas, Ideology and Popular Culture*, Sheila Whiteley (ed.) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 2

nutshell, but are just some of the elements of popular culture that have been merged with traditional Christmas symbols. The popularization of Christmas is heavily connected to the elements of popular culture such as TV shows which almost always have a Christmas Special, an episode where everything is about Christmas, and a multitude of Christmas films which are undeniably all about sharing joy, goodwill and having a Christmas spirit. With the whole world being exposed to these media, it is no wonder Christmas is becoming a part of popular culture more and more.

During my research I was somewhat surprised, to say the least, when I found the connection between lycanthropy, also known as the transformation of a man into a wolf – a werewolf, and popular culture. Of course, I was aware of the popularity of vampires and werewolves, and the never-ending competition, antagonism and rivalry between the two groups, in films such as *Dracula* or *The Twilight Saga*, which were popular books first and foremost, and popular TV series like *True Blood*, but what surprised me was the information that the belief in humans being genetically linked to dogs and wolves is present in popular culture even outside of the movie theater<sup>92</sup>. When thinking about it, it came to mind that the appeal of a werewolf or a vampire might stem from the image of them being the alpha males, the protectors, assertive and dominant. However, there are also films like *The Wolves of Wall Street* in which a werewolf hero kills the one who turned him and becomes human again, and *Blood and Chocolate*, and *Vamps and the City*, where the roles of the dominant superhuman creatures belong to women and they even reject their monstrous nature so that they would be with their human heroes<sup>93</sup>. This shows that popular culture is indeed evolving, and that the appeal of the monsters is waning, and someday, they might not belong to popular culture at all.

### ***Popular Culture and Gender***

‘Gender’ is an extremely wide term encompassing Women’s Studies, Queer Studies and Masculinity Studies, and that can be found in literature while “discussing Shakespeare, class, poetry, Chaucer or contemporary film<sup>94</sup>.”

The notion of ‘gender’, which is socially constructed, often gets mistaken by the notion of ‘sex’, which is a biological characteristic. We are born either male or female, that is our biological sex, whereas whether we will continue to display said male or female characteristics and be perceived by other members of the society as being feminine or masculine is up to us. Gender “consists of the ideas we have about masculinity and femininity and how we apply these notions to people based on their designated sex assignment. [...] So, if your biological sex is male, you are expected to enact masculinity as defined by your society in a given historical time<sup>95</sup>.” Putting this in simpler terms, this means that our sex, that is, whether we are born as male or female, decides if we shall be placed into a column A or a column B, whether we should behave as strong boys that never cry, go off to war and are good providers, or if we should like frilly, girly things, be emotional (some would even dare say overly emotional), and stay at home to be good wives and mothers.

It has already been said that the social system we observe is a white, patriarchal, capitalist, that means that the dominant ones are white men who create and run industries, and the subordinates are women who are consumers, women whose role is private, to stay at home, take care of the children and the house, go shopping and consume what men have created. Earning is viewed as typically masculine trait, whereas spending is consequently portrayed as a feminine trait. Hence, the values that society imposes on us are divided into the masculine and feminine group,

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<sup>92</sup> Heather Schell, “The Big Bad Wolf: Masculinity and Genetics in Popular Culture”, *Literature and Medicine* 26, no. 1 (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Spring 2007), p. 112

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* p. 121

<sup>94</sup> *Teaching Gender*, Alice Ferrebe, Fiona Tolan (eds.) (Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 1

<sup>95</sup> Adrienne Trier-Bieniek, Patricia Leavy, “Introduction to *Gender & Pop Culture*” in *Gender & Pop Culture, A Text-Reader*, Adrienne Trier-Bieniek, Patricia Leavy (eds.) (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2014, pp. 1-25), p. 2

where the men are the ones who work, who are in public, who earn, produce, who are empowered and are free, and the women are kept in private, are viewed as creatures of leisure, spending money men earned, consuming the products men made, and are disempowered and consequently are slaves because they are not free. Not free to think, not free to make decisions. So what does all of this have to do with popular culture? Well, in this case, women are the subordinated, disempowered and they make shopping in the shopping malls their way of crossing “the boundaries between the public and the private<sup>96</sup>”, the way of taking a small part in the world of men, and not just taking part – taking control. It is all about control in the world of popular culture. Judith Williamson states that “the conscious chosen meaning in most people’s lives comes much more from what they consume than what they produce<sup>97</sup>”. She then goes on saying that in the type of society we are observing, a capitalist one, ownership is the legitimized form of control. It is not such a hard concept to grasp, then, why women feel empowered by the act of shopping. It is their way of feeling in control and being the ones who pull the strings and can have it their way, for a change. That is why one of the elements of popular culture is shopping, as much as watching a blockbuster movie or wearing certain kind of clothing.

From the middle of the 1990s onwards, the rise of single, heterosexual ladies in popular culture is visibly notable. One example of this would certainly be the apparent “celebration” of single, white women of certain backgrounds in a vastly popular television series *Sex and the City*. While single women are maybe no longer vied as a burden to society because they are self-sufficient, it seems that the media is constantly pushing stories “of fear about ‘lonely hearts’ and ‘solitary singles’ ”, and even though ‘spinsters’, namely women who have never been married, widows and divorced women all fall under the category of single women, for some reason the greatest thorn in society’s side are those who have never been married<sup>98</sup>. This in turn show that even though women might not be as disempowered as they have been in the past, they are still a very active and copious element of popular culture.

## **Elements of Popular Culture Throughout the Writings**

### ***Orlando: A Biography – 1928***

Writing *Orlando: A Biography* came easily for Virginia Woolf in comparison to her following novel, *The Waves*<sup>99</sup>, which will be the next analyzed text in this academic research as well. She wished to escape the constrictions of form and simply let her pen do all the work, to be free and to have fun<sup>100</sup>. The novel’s main character is based on Woolf’s friend and sometimes lover, Vita Sackville-West, and the whole novel is filled with people from Vita’s life, with the addition of the names being changed, of course<sup>101</sup>.

*Orlando: A Biography* is directly addressing the part of popular culture which underlines the difference between men and women and the power each gender holds. The whole novel revolves around a boy who grows up to be a man just to magically be transformed into a woman when being thirty years of age. Mrs Woolf incorporates herself into the storyline as the all-knowing and all-seeing biographer whose gender we do not know, and portrays the life of Orlando as *he* and later *she* goes through the numerous wondrous transformations of his/her unusually long life.

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<sup>96</sup> John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 22

<sup>97</sup> Judith Williamson *Consuming Passions: The Dynamics of Popular Culture* (London: Marion Boyars, 1986), p. 230

<sup>98</sup> Anthea Taylor, *Single Women in Popular Culture, The Limits of Postfeminism* (Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 1-2

<sup>99</sup> Merry M. Pawlowski, “Introduction” in Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Wordsworth Classics, 1995), p. v

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.* p. v

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.* pp. vi-vii

Throughout each of the six chapters that describe with a certain dose of irony the life, deeds and course of thinking of our main character, the reader finds that the plot serves as a kind of a vessel through which Woolf explores the issue of unequally divided power and roles between the genders. Her views and observations are cleverly hidden in plain sight under the guise of Orlando's train of thoughts.

## **Chapter One**

In the first chapter the reader gets acquainted with the leading character, a teenage boy named Orlando. He is a nobleman's son and the first time the reader is introduced to him, they find him shooting arrows at the head of a beheaded Moorish soldier hanging from the ceiling, and then it is explained how that was a common fate of the enemies of his father's, grandfather's and ancestors' time. The boy is described as a sixteen-year-old with great legs, fine teeth, good looking, but a bit awkward and clumsy. This clumsiness is what makes him awkward near the ladies, and it stems from his introverted personality, love of poetry and animals, rather than people. He writes poetry every day and he dreams of becoming a renowned poet someday, even though the only thing nobles should do is wine and dine with other noblemen and royalty. The strong symbol that paints Orlando's life and starts in this chapter but is present in every other in one way or another is an oak tree. The oak tree is his safe haven, it is the one place where he can see the grandeur of his father's estate and under this oak tree he dreams of the vast majority of things that he wants to do. He can imagine anything under that tree and it brings him joy, security and comfort<sup>102</sup>.

Next, the reader finds out that Queen Elisabeth I is coming to Orlando's home, and he rushes down the hill to meet her, he is late in presenting himself to Her Majesty, and although she could see only his head, that is all she needed to see to take a liking to him immediately because all she needed in the midst of her life full of war and threats is a bit of innocence and purity represented in the shy and clumsy Orlando. When he turned eighteen, Her Majesty invited him to stay with her at Whitehall and after some time he was in possession of a few titles such as a Treasurer, Steward, and part of the Order of the Garter. She also kept him close, never letting him go to war because he was precious to her; she loved him. After some time, Her Majesty saw Orlando kissing some young girl in the mirror and let out all of her rage through a sword swinging it at the aforementioned mirror. Instead of reprimanding Orlando, the biographer simply states that it was only natural, even expected of him to "pluck" as many young girls as he could, being a young nobleman of the Elizabethan era. The girl's name the reader is not given because, the biographer states, even Orlando did not know it, and here the biographer takes a break from Orlando's "noble" deeds in order to tell the reader that he had always enjoyed the company of commoners and that he took a liking to conversing with innkeepers, sailors and other people who are certainly not of noble lineage. After some time though, Orlando got bored of this new company he had been keeping and decided to come back to the world of the Court, but now the throne belonged to King James. Being the young, handsome nobleman, he was received with great acclamation and so he swiftly returned to the world he had known since birth<sup>103</sup>.

Here the reader learns from his sonnets that Orlando had three girls that almost married him – Clorinda, sweet and gentle, but tried to reform him and release him from his sins which he took offence at, and so great was his repulsion that he broke off the engagement and even said that he was not even that much sorry that she died of small-pox soon after. Favilla was brutish in his eyes because she ordered a spaniel to be whipped since it tore one of her stockings, and Orlando being an animal lover could only but break yet another engagement with a young lady. The third lady was Euphrosyne. She is described in short as "a perfect wife for such a nobleman as Orlando<sup>104</sup>" and all

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<sup>102</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Wordsworth Classics, 1995), pp. 5-8

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 8-14

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15

was heading straight towards the joining of the two wealthy families, but then something unexpected ensued – the Great Frost.

Let us take a look at Orlando's behaviour towards women. They say that actions speak louder than words, and one had all but seen only the descriptions of his actions but that was enough to form some conclusions and opinions. The patriarchal nature of the society imposes very different gender roles on each gender. It promotes that men can and should have multiple sexual partners whereas the women must stay chaste and pure, that kind of differentiation had never been completely annihilated. Throughout the centuries men have used and abused their power, not all men of course but, as it has already been stated before, the society imposed such a role on them leaving women uneducated, with no rights to own their own land and basically not being able to survive without a man by their side, whether it be their father, brother or a husband. Getting back to what is the strongest element of popular culture in this novel – the struggle of women as “the weaker sex” and less worthy sex as thought of by many men over the centuries. Basically this is the first time the reader feels this element bobbing its head out of the thick layer of snow that the storyline presents. But it is swiftly overrun by the Great Frost, so with no further ado, let us go back to where the story had been left off.

The Great Frost is described as the harshest winter that has ever ruled England, so to speak. As this is a work of fiction the reader does not really mind the implausibility of such a season, but simply carry on with the plot as nothing out of the ordinary had passed their sight. Therefore, what happened next was that the biographer informs the reader that everything had instantly become shrouded in ice, the river Thames was frozen solid, the whole of London (and presumably the rest of the United Kingdom) was in great peril, and what did the King do? He proclaimed a holiday, the river was turned into a carnival ground, with nobles having a marvelous time skating, seeing the frozen ships or a poor woman ready to sell some apples to customers being in a petrified state like an ice sculpture – she was frozen solid<sup>105</sup>. The woman selling apples is another element of popular culture, aside from being a woman she belongs to the lower class of society and therefore is disempowered and subordinated, which is only intensified by the image of her being a frozen statue and no members of the high society caring about that.

The following part of Orlando's life started when he saw a skater coming out of a Muscovite Embassy, at first he could not decide if this creature was of male or female gender due to the Russian fashion, but then he started arguing how a woman could not possibly skate that good, but on the other hand no man could make him feel such lust. The exact words Woolf uses to describe Orlando's thoughts are that “no woman could skate with such speed and vigour<sup>106</sup>”. This is the first instance of the main character showing the reader his opinion of women as the lesser sex, less capable in this instance. And in that small fragment of a sentence Woolf paints the picture of what will stick out like a sore thumb throughout the years and years to come (for the timeline at the time is King James's rule which puts the storyline at the beginning of the seventeenth century) considering the issue of gender roles and prejudice which cocooned it. At this point the reader has come face to face with the main issue of the novel, but they are yet not aware of it. Furthermore, with Orlando not being able to decide whether this lovely and elegant creature was a boy or a girl touches the idea that we are in fact not different as men or women, but as individuals, as people, though the main character would at this point never even dream of thinking let alone uttering such an idea lest he be scorned by the society and norm.

Returning to the plot, Orlando fell madly in love with that woman, for it is now revealed to the reader that she is in fact a woman, it turned out that she was a Russian princess of the name Princess Marousha Stanilovska Dagmar Natasha Iliana Romanovitch, whom he called Sasha for short. They bonded over a dinner at the English Court when the princess had the utmost misfortune of being seated between the two young lords who spoke not a word of French, and she speaking

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<sup>105</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Wordsworth Classics, 1995), pp. 15-16

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17

only Russian and French. The hero of the novel had the advantage of speaking French fluently and that is how the two became acquainted and started their friendship which very soon turned into a relationship in spite of the fact that Orlando had had a fiancée. Up to this point the reader has all but forgotten about the poor Lady Euphrosyne whom Orlando had forgotten about as easily as his previous two betrothed ones. He was utterly in love with the Princess, worshiping and adoring her, indulging her any way he could, alas, that love was not meant to last. In spite of his adoration and devotion those feelings were not reciprocated, and one learns this when the main character stands alone in front of the inn they had previously agreed upon to make their runaway rendezvous spot while the rain is pouring down ruthlessly. After a two hour wait he decided to mount his trusty steed and gallop off to the river. With the first drops of rain came the end of the Great Frost, and now he was witnessing the breaking of the ice with the first morning light and the destruction the water had brought upon the carnival grounds. In the distance he saw the Russian ship sailing away, away from him towards the sea<sup>107</sup>.

## **Chapter Two**

Indeed, the destruction the thawing of the ice unleashed could be easily transferred to the shattering of Orlando's heart, and that leads the reader straight into the second chapter of this novel where Orlando decided to shroud himself in solitude due to the ostracism executed by the society and vengeful spirit that burned in the hearts of his ex-fiancée and her family, thus he opted out to enjoy the company of himself, hidden from the world and its scornful eyes, deep inside his home. On Saturday of June 18<sup>th</sup> the novel's hero does not wake up and further more continues to sleep throughout the whole week. No one could wake him up, but eventually he did wake and the only thing different about him was that he denied any recollection of him being present while the Great Frost was raging throughout London. The mere mention of the Princess, ships or even Russia sent him into a fit of depressive and brooding mood, but the doctors had no explanation or remedy for the nobleman's condition and they decided that he had simply had a really long good night's sleep. Obviously, nothing was as it had been, but the servants loved Orlando and they all cursed the Russian princess for it was all her fault, naturally. Almost all of them felt that he should be outside, doing what every nobleman did at that time, and not bathe in his feelings of depression and mourning<sup>108</sup>.

However, at this point the main character started indulging in the things of death and decay, spending almost all of his time in the tomb of his ancestors, at one point he takes a skeleton hand and wonders if it is the right or the left hand, and whether it belonged to a man or a woman, young or old? "Had it urged the war-horse, or plied the needle? Had it plucked the rose, or grasped cold steel<sup>109</sup>?" And here I ask a question in return, why not both? This is continuation of the massive gender roles inequality that is a part of the popular culture argument, so if it were a woman's hand it certainly could not wield a sword, and if it were a man's could it not have plucked a rose at some point? Why was it so hard to imagine that men could have an innocent and sweet soul, and women to be strong and independent? It all comes to the one big and essential element of popular culture, the American dream. As Fiske presents in his work *Reading the Popular*, in the patriarchal societies the American dream, where you have a man who is working, earning a living and has his freedom and is the dominant part of the society and a woman who takes care of the house and the children and spends the money a man has earned consequently not having her freedom and being the disempowered part of the society, is what that kind of society holds as valuable and right<sup>110</sup>. Thus in this case, with the Orlando not knowing what kind of hand it was brings the reader to the conclusion

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<sup>107</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Wordsworth Classics, 1995), pp. 17-30

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 31-33

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.* p. 34

<sup>110</sup> John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 18-22

that in no way should they continue to indulge the notion that men and women are essentially different, because, what could be more essential than bones, the very essence that we leave behind, and considering the hand, a layman cannot possibly distinguish whether the hand in question belonged to a man or a woman, young or old, royal or poor, to one of the empowered or disempowered, dominant or subordinated.

Now the story is being interrupted by the biographer and they are informing the reader that Orlando has a disease, and not just any disease, “he was a nobleman afflicted with a love of literature<sup>111</sup>.” And in his “sickness” he would read books and, even more horrifying, start writing poetry. The will for writing would consume him so that he would forget all his possessions and wealth, all of his servants and who he was supposed to be (by the standards of society a nobleman, considering the fact that poets were regarded as lesser creatures at that time, which is yet another element of the popular). And so Orlando did what any poet starting their literary journey did – he wrote and it seemed marvelous, then read it back and it looked horrible, dull and unimaginative, and so he tore and trashed, and did it all over again, and his style changed “now preferred the heroic and pompous; next the plain and simple<sup>112</sup>,” and with this this hero was indecisive and contradictory to himself, showing one of the main traits of popular culture which is contradictory in its nature, and slowly becoming the epitome of the aforementioned culture.

The plot continues with Orlando deciding to be the first renowned poet of his family, he pondered how whereas it was true that his ancestors had killed many in the name of various wars, they were still rotting away in the tomb, but poetry was immortal. And in his thinking he invited a certain poet named Nick Greene to come and stay with him. When the poet came the hero of the novel had a disappointing knot forming in his stomach seeing that this poet looked nothing like his fancy led him to presume. The poet was average, to say the least, and during dinner both of them were trying to make the other believe that they are just like the other. However, at the end of the evening Orlando tried to subtly bring up the topic of poetry in hopes that Mr Green would, as a poet, be adequate judge of his work. At the mere mention of poetry Nick Greene launched into an insufferable rant about how poetry in England was dead because nobody was worthy of the title of a poet except for the Greeks. When Orlando asked how could poetry be dead with Shakespeare, Marlowe, Browne etc., Mr Greene started tarnishing their names and work, revealing his ill opinion on everything and everybody but the great Greeks. Although Orlando enjoyed Greene’s company there was always something amiss, his dog bit him, and it is a known fact that dogs can be a great judge of character, and the servants did not particularly like him, but none the less Greene stayed with Orlando for six whole weeks and in that time Orlando learned that poets are not some divine creatures he thought them to be, but womanizers and drunks (according to Greene of course, but then what does it say about him?). At the end of Greene’s visit Orlando gave him one of his plays called *The Death of Hercules*, which the poet promised to take a literary inspection upon only when Orlando promised to pay him a pension. Despite Orlando’s hospitality and generosity Greene decided to betray him gravely and then proceeded to write a grossly outrageous pastiche about Orlando, his home and particularly his play *The Death of Hercules* which was published in a popular pamphlet and of course soon somehow had got into the hands of the leading character. Upon reading the piece of writing in question Orlando had another earth shattering experience, he had been betrayed again and this time by a poet, therefore Orlando decided that he is “done with men” and issued an order to his servant to fetch him some elk-hounds to keep him company. Even though Nicholas Greene brought such a storm of ridicule upon Orlando’s work and style of writing poetry, he still paid him the pension he had promised and then burned everything he had ever written except for *The Oak Tree*, surrounding himself with nature and his elk-hounds. His favourite spot was in fact under the oak tree situated on the hill from which he could see the majority of his estate, the one from his childhood, for the biographer had told the reader that Orlando was thirty

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<sup>111</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Wordsworth Classics, 1995), p. 35

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* p. 39

years old by now, and the one from the only piece of his writing that he had actually saved. It is perfectly safe to say that Greene's ridicule had hurt Orlando just as much as Sasha's rejection and abandonment which subconsciously changed his way of writing. The only poem he constantly worked on was *The Oak Tree*, over and over again<sup>113</sup>.

Orlando decided to redecorate his home and throw a couple of over the top parties for his neighbours, but always slipped out and secluded himself to his private room to work on the aforementioned piece of writing. On one such an evening the novel's hero saw a lady flash before his window, she was a stranger to him, but he did not give it much thought, after it had happened for the third time he decided to follow her and that is how he made an acquaintance with the Archduchess Harriet Griselda of Finster-Aarhorn and Scand-op-Boom in the Romanian territory. From that point on he and the Archduchess had seen each other a few times and when she fastened a golden shin case to Orlando's leg to prove her point in an argument they had been having at the time, he could not contain the flood of feelings that had slammed into his heart and storming out the room he called the footman to fetch a carriage for the Archduchess<sup>114</sup>.

And here commences a rather elaborate battle between Love – the Bird of Paradise and Lust – the vulture. One is connected to the other and those are in Orlando's mind the two faces of Love actually, one pure, beautiful and light, the other dark, horrible and menacing. The biographer informs the reader that it was not the other face of Love that made Orlando rush out of the room, but Lust, that vulture in all its menacing fury. And here is where one should recall a piece of history which was conveyed to us throughout all those elements of the popular such as books, films, TV shows, CDs and many, many more, and that is that Love, apparently is for the popular, and Lust for the nobility, and after all, Orlando was a nobleman. He thought that what he felt was Love, but what he actually felt was just plain lust and with Archduchess Harriet's constant pursuit for him Orlando decided to run away by pleading with King Charles to send him away as an ambassador to Constantinople which happened and with this the second chapter ends<sup>115</sup>.

At the end of this chapter the reader finds that elusive element of the popular – love. Populous, the people, commoners, have always had the privilege of marrying for love, the nobles had no such luxury in general, and with Orlando being perpetually convinced that he is in love and not thinking about it as lust moulds him into the contradictory image of popular culture. Orlando had always had an affinity towards the common folk and had never felt like a nobleman completely and thus Woolf gives the reader even in the early stages of this book the notion of contradiction and popular in Orlando the character.

### **Chapter Three**

The third chapter starts with the biographer informing the reader that there are no unscathed records about this portion of Orlando's life and continues to use imagination, legend and rumors to decipher this chapter in the history of Orlando. After two and a half years of doing the great job that he had been doing King Charles decided to give Orlando the title of a Duke. Upon the very moment our hero put his new crown on his head all hell broke loose in Constantinople, adding yet another devastating moment in Orlando's life. That night Orlando went to sleep and in the morning nobody could wake him up yet again. Among some business papers and *The Oak Tree* writings a marriage certificate between Duke Orlando and a gipsy dancer Rosina Pepita was found. After a week the Turks started a revolution and when they ran into Orlando's room and found him sleeping they simply assumed he was dead and left him there. After Purity, Chastity and Modesty pay a visit to the sleeping hero and have a discussion with the Truth, the Truth wins and Orlando wakes up. And this is a turning point in the novel when Orlando looks at his reflection in the mirror and finds out

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<sup>113</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Wordsworth Classics, 1995), pp. 39-55

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 55-57

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.* p. 57

that he is a woman<sup>116</sup>. This mysterious change shifts everything, but not at first. The biographer described Orlando as having the form that combined “in one the strength of a man and a woman’s grace<sup>117</sup>.”, and in turn this description serves as the main issue that is addressed in this novel – the duality. Even though Orlando was now a woman she had all of her previous memories and abilities, so basically the change had been merely physical, the mind stayed a man’s, but could we simply say man’s, it is not a man’s mind, it is Orlando’s, and she was now a woman therefore it was a woman’s mind. This duality, this unisexuality in mind is what the subordinated layer of the patriarchal society – women – always try to prove. One of the biggest issues with the popular considering this layer of society is the struggle for the piece of dominance and women, being almost constantly looked down on, had been trying to prove that they are equal to men, the subordinated equal to the dominant, for quite some time, and this transformation of the main hero into a heroine is a beginning of this train of thought in the novel.

Back to said heroine, she was living with some gypsies with whom she took refuge from the revolution in Constantinople and they received her as one of their own, and so the outline of the society in the novel changed considering that the gypsies had their own rules, they were not bound to any land and they were very practical people. Orlando was a man and a nobleman in England, at the top of the dominant class, now she was a woman living with the gypsies in a foreign land so basically at the bottom of the subordinate. Furthermore, even though one could consider gypsies as a part of the subordinate one could also consider them outcasts of sorts and that is not viewed as popular or cultural at all, nonetheless, at this point the reader finds out that the gypsies here had their own social system and that all of the things which were considered good, decent and desirable in England’s society, among the gypsies held no value and was even considered shameful<sup>118</sup>.

*“Looked at from the gipsy point of view, a Duke, Orlando understood, was nothing but a profeteer or robber who snatched land and money from people who rated these things of little worth, and could think of nothing better to do than to build three hundred and sixty-five bedrooms when one was enough, and none was even better than one<sup>119</sup>.“*

Within these words the author compels the reader to understand that popular culture changes depending on the society and what that society holds valuable. The gipsy saga ended for Orlando after she had had a vision of England, her homeland. She realized she missed home and all of the familiarity it brought with it and after saying her farewell to the gypsies, she went on a journey home thus finalizing the third chapter of this novel<sup>120</sup>.

#### **Chapter Four**

The reader plunges into the fourth chapter with Orlando being on the ship to England and playing with the thoughts of the advantages and disadvantages of her sex. She was now the epitome of controversy, with her thinking like a man but at the same time trying to fit into society like a woman and revelling in the notion of the power her current sex appeared to wake up in men, and therefore the main element of the popular in this novel. The author paints the picture of the society, culture and women as representatives of popular culture through Orlando’s thoughts of how even though she knew how to swim, the wardrobe that she was wearing was disabling her in doing so

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<sup>116</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Wordsworth Classics, 1995), pp. 58-67

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. p. 67

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. pp. 67-72

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. p. 72

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. pp. 72-74

and she had to be saved by a man whose wardrobe enabled him to swim, and when she was offered a piece of beef by the captain of the ship she refused and after seeing him frown accepted and witnessed his mood improving in an instant. Her thoughts went in a different direction from a woman who had been a woman all her life, the biographer noted that Orlando was like a child having a new toy, and thinking some more she came to a realisation that she was supposed to “respect the opinion of the opposite sex, however monstrous<sup>121</sup>“ she thought it was.

*“She remembered how, as a young man, she had insisted that women must be obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely appareled. ‘Now I shall have to pay in my own person for those desires,’ she reflected; ‘for women are not (judging by my own short experience of the sex) obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely appareled by nature. [...] she was man; she was woman; she knew the secrets, shared the weaknesses of each<sup>122</sup>.”*

From these thoughts Orlando had had on the ship on the way home one can deduce that Orlando understood now that men had used and abused their power and that they had taught the same values to their sons and daughters and she understood how ridiculous that had been, but still decided to comply because, really, what other choice was there? After a stop in Italy and a quick trip ashore with the captain Orlando decided that she liked being a woman for now she did not have to rule the world, have an affinity towards power of actually be educated<sup>123</sup>. And here one should note how the main character’s opinion changes erratically with every change of the wind’s course. And that is because she was in a constant battle between a man and a woman and how she used to think and act and how she was supposed to think and act no matter her own desires, but the nature of the popular is strange, the whole point of popular culture is for the subordinated to strive to have the power of the dominant, but never really reaching, just having a small portion, an illusion really of reaching a part of it, being defiant. And that is exactly what had been happening with the main heroine throughout the whole chapter.

Upon seeing the English shore Orlando pressed her hand on her breasts where she had concealed her writing of *The Oak Tree*, and soon forgot about everything except poetry, and on seeing all the landmarks of London she started crying and at first she wished to restrain the tears so eagerly, but then remembering it was perfectly acceptable for a woman to cry, let them flow. When she reached her town house she found a number of lawsuits against her and now the only place she could go to was the country house she grew up in. The servants recognized her and had no doubt that she was their lord now lady, her elk-hounds beat everybody in rushing to meet her and later on in the chapel, she was contemplating faith and hers was of peculiar kind – faith in poetry. The next day Orlando encountered an old friend, the Archduchess Harriet who revealed herself now to have always been the Archduke Harry. Originally the Archduke saw Orlando’s photograph and fell irrevocably in love with him despite the fact that Orlando was a man, but now that the Archduke discovered that Orlando was a woman made the man fall on his knees and propose to Orlando and start crying when Orlando gave no response<sup>124</sup>.

*“That men cry as frequently and as unreasonably as women, Orlando knew from her own experience as a man; but she was beginning to be aware that women should be shocked when men display emotion in their presence, and*

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<sup>121</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Wordsworth Classics, 1995), p. 76

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. pp. 76-77

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. p. 78

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. pp. 79-88

*so, shocked she was*<sup>125</sup>. ”

As it can clearly be seen here, the main character had adapted herself to her role, but not completely, she did what she thought was expected of her, what was the norm, what was laid out as one of the rules of society. From that moment on, the Archduke visited Orlando every day and professed his love for her, but other than that the conversation between them was scarce and so Orlando proposed for them to play a betting game called Fly Loo. After days of doing the same thing over and over again she grew tired and bored and started cheating seeking for a bit of excitement. She originally thought that the Archduke would know from the start, but it was not until she made it plainly obvious that she had been cheating that her gambling partner found out about it. Then he went into a fit of rage, but calmed down because she was a woman and even apologized for his harsh words upon which Orlando drop a toad down his shirt and laughed at him. That was the last straw for the Archduke and he then left her home. She grew lonely after some time and ordered for a carriage to go into town with<sup>126</sup>.

Here Woolf argues through the pen of the biographer that the clothes change how people see us and how we perceive others, as John Fiske stated in his work *Understanding Popular Culture* that: “culture [...] is concerned with meanings, pleasures, and identities rather than efficiency. [...] The functionality of jeans is the precondition of their popularity, but does not explain it.” And that “jeans have been taken into the popular culture of practically every country in the world, and, whatever their local meanings, they always bear traces of their Americanness<sup>127</sup>.” Therefore, this principle could be found here at this point in the novel that not just jeans, but any clothes which can both distinguish us and make us fit in the mass is an element of popular culture, in this instance it is the way in which women’s clothing distinguished Orlando among men and at the same time made her fit in with the women’s set of mind.

The next part of the novel considers the peculiarity of Orlando, as she looks like a woman, but sometimes acts like a man, but not quite as a man because they cannot place her at either category with certainty. And this part proves that it is not men and women we should look ourselves as, but rather as people, a certain person will hold certain characteristics and personal traits no matter their gender.

Since Queen Anne was the monarch at this point in the novel Orlando got into a bit of trouble for walking the street alone, the gallant Archduke Harry came to the rescue, but it only made Orlando angrier at her position. Society had strict rules about public behaviour at the time and Orlando started visiting with various ladies of high society. Alas, she could not escape herself for

*“she was apt to think of poetry when she should have been thinking of taffeta; her walk was a little too much of a stride for a woman, perhaps, and her gestures, being abrupt, might endanger a cup of tea on occasion*<sup>128</sup>. ”

All of these were the traits which Orlando had possessed as a man, and when she was a man and a member of the empowered it was considered charming, and now seeing her as a member of the disempowered it was considered unladylike and was frowned upon. The course of events that followed had little amusement to Orlando, she went to a party held by a famous lady of the highest society, and she only went because it was conveyed to her that only the wittiest people go there, after a few times sitting there not hearing anything witty she met Mr Alexander Pope and swayed by him uttering three astonishingly witty remarks and being a poet she invited him to come home with her. When she reached the house the sun was already high in the sky and she grasped her

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<sup>125</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Wordsworth Classics, 1995), p. 88

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. pp. 88-91

<sup>127</sup> John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010) pp. 1-3

<sup>128</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Wordsworth Classics, 1995), p. 95

foolishness and soon after became disappointed for the second time about poets for now she spent her time with Pope, Swift, Addison, etc., and she realized that they were not more human than anybody else.

Her writing changed and some time passed, the heroine remembered what a condescending attitude towards women these geniuses she poured tea for at her home held. After plopping a sugar cube into Mr Pope's tea, he took great insult and wrote a satire towards all women in response. After seeing the draft, she contemplated under a willow tree until it was night and then decided to go outside dressed as a man. On her stroll around the town she befriended a prostitute called Nell and Orlando enjoyed the company of Nell and her friends<sup>129</sup>. The author points out at this point that men were convinced that women cannot enjoy the company of other women because they are dependent on men<sup>130</sup>, and with this attitude the whole process of the subordinated grasping for a piece of the dominant comes to mind. At some point Orlando had unnerving thoughts swirling around her head considering her changing of the clothes from those worn by women to those worn by men and vice versa, but clothes are what gives us our sense of identity, very much like jeans in America. But why should the extent of popular culture stop at jeans? In Orlando's case she changed her sex, or rather the notion she had of herself with the set of clothes she was wearing. She belonged to both women and men, to the subordinated and the dominant being somehow a perfect metaphor for popular culture which is contradictory to itself, because how can anyone be a man and a woman at the same time? One night, after the stroke of midnight the whole atmosphere changed as the nineteenth century began<sup>131</sup>.

## **Chapter Five**

The penultimate chapter of the novel holds great changes in the society of England. The division of men and women came to be harsher than ever, women were giving birth numerous times, it seemed like it was all they ever did, and Orlando stayed inside her home not wanting to be a part of it, but one cannot get away from the society. One afternoon early in the century while she was driving through St James's Park she saw a scene where an enormous pile of things not having anything in common was standing tall beside a "female figure clothed in flowing white" and "a portly gentleman wearing a frock-coat and sponge-bag trousers"<sup>132</sup>". The image of a couple ready to be married and a pile of things of that magnitude casts a light to the issue of consumerism and shopping malls that Fiske addressed in his work *Reading the Popular*. Furthermore, we can narrow down the demography of the consumers in this instant – it is a woman for all of the things piled up are standing next to her. This small paragraph of this entire novel shoots the arrow of consumerism and plants it straight into the center of the subordinated layer of society – women, brides soon to be wives, even<sup>133</sup>. With this one scene Woolf soundlessly, effortlessly and quite cunningly weaves this part of popular culture into the storyline. Back to Orlando, passing the Buckingham palace she bowed her head and saw with astonishment that she was wearing black breeches and flushed crimson for now she was beginning to feel like a woman more and more, and women did not wear black breeches. Seeking for the elements of the popular in this chapter, we come across Orlando's wish for a beer instead of the tea she had been having at the time, and beer is a popular drink in the whole world, it unites the masses and makes friends out of the enemies and strangers. As the times changed Orlando did and did not at the same time, for despite all of her outward changes internally she stayed the same, she still possessed the same personality traits, still loved animals and still loved poetry. The point of this detail is that it had nothing to do with her gender, she was essentially still

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<sup>129</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Wordsworth Classics, 1995), pp. 95-108

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* p. 108

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 108-111

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* p. 114

<sup>133</sup> John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 18-24

Orlando. The spirit of the age pressed upon her to take a husband, and despite her wishes she decided to do so, for the nature of that spirit was such that it “batters down anyone who tries to make stand against it far more effectually than those who bend its own way<sup>134</sup>”. And it should be noted that this spirit of the age comes from the society, and what is more, from the dominant layer of that society for those are the ones who pull the strings – men, and she was not a man, therefore she had to concede. Some time passed and the heroine still had no husband, one day while she was walking picking up wild birds’ feathers she tripped and broke her ankle and lying there decided to take nature for her husband which translates to her being dead<sup>135</sup>.

Just as she had decided that she would die, Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, Esquire showed up and swept her off her feet which resulted in them being engaged. Both of them accused the other of being of the opposite sex and both of them protested they were not. After some time, the word came that Orlando’s lawsuits were finalized and it was decided that she was a woman and her descendants had the right to her possessions. At the end of this chapter the two were married and as soon as the ceremony ended Shelmerdine rode off to Cape Horn as he had been assigned to serve there<sup>136</sup>.

## **Chapter Six**

The last chapter of this novel provides the reader with numerous realizations by Orlando, such as that she had yielded to the spirit of the age, had got herself a husband and now was seeking approval, but none came, the spirit of the age was silent, and why was that? Well, one could argue that the spirit of the age is the norm which society pushes on us so that we could fall into check. It is that which tells us which social category we belong to, it is the elite, the dominant, the powerful. And as Orlando pondered what marriage was, the spirit of the age decided that it was satisfied that she was married and went away<sup>137</sup>.

The second big realization of the main character was that she had been in this world for an unusually long amount of time. She had been cooped up in her study working on *The Oak Tree*, and all that time the world continued spinning. She came to realize that it would go on even when she died, and so another thought plagued her mind, a thought that someone should read her masterpiece because finally it was done. She ordered a coach into town, but her servant pointed out that they had had trains at that point in time, which serves as yet another element of the popular invoking the image of the busy consumers and capitalists rushing to work on the Tube. Orlando traveled by train unfazed by the machine for she was in deep thought and when she came to London she was welcomed by a chaos on the streets. Among that bustle she somehow met Nick Greene, now a Professor and a Knight. He stayed the same throughout the years in his character, his outer layers changed, but his personality stayed the same. What once had been the great Greeks now were Shakespeare, Jonson, Marlowe, Dryden, Pope, and Addison, who once were the subordinated ones and the disempowered according to Mr Greene, and the contemporary geniuses were described as the previously stated gentlemen. During their lunch her manuscript fell out of her blouse and once Sir Green had read it he immediately started making plans on publishing it. After they had parted ways and she had sent a telegraph to her husband, Orlando came across a very peculiar (for that time) type of shop – a bookshop. Now, among the texts that the books in the shop held in them there were works of Shakespeare, and Pope and all the poets she had known once upon a time. And here we come across yet another element of the popular, all those books. For example, All of Shakespeare’s work was in a pocket edition and had cost only half a crown, therefore it was something of a popular read, and not regarded as a part of the high culture as it is today. His work

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<sup>134</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Wordsworth Classics, 1995), p. 120

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. p. 122

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. pp. 122-129

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. pp. 130-131

always addressed issues such as defying the norm and society, and as Fiske said “popular texts can ensure their popularity only by making themselves inviting terrains for [the struggle for meanings]<sup>138</sup>”, and it is safe to say that the Work of Shakespeare hold precisely that characteristic<sup>139</sup>.

When Orlando exited the bookstore and went to Hyde Park, she made the text of her telegraph to Shel into a singsong, repeating it over and over again. Some of the people present at the park looked at her as if she had been insane, but as soon as they noticed her pearl necklace they decided she was not<sup>140</sup>. And yet again the power of clothing and prejudice people have because of it comes into light. Later on, when our main character returned home she found it swarmed with parcels of books from the bookshop which she had ordered earlier. After reading about twenty or so of these books it is only natural that Orlando had had a multitude of conclusions about the works of great writers of the Victorian Age, but the biographer put all of those into a small paragraph due to economic reasons, and since, as Fiske argues, there are two types of economies considering the culture industry – the financial and the cultural, where the former “circulates wealth in two subsystems” and the latter “circulates meanings and pleasures<sup>141</sup>” there is no question whereas to which economy the one the biographer is referring to belongs, the cultural economy, of course. In this type of the economy, the audience is who produces the goods (meanings and pleasures), therefore the biographer being a representative of the audience and the producer of meanings behind Orlando’s actions and thoughts applies to this part of popular culture here.

The next element of the popular comes forth slightly hidden. It is a scene in the novel right after Orlando had read all of the books that she could and had made all of those conclusions, she came to a window and looked outside deep in thought, and the biographer wished for the company of Purity, Chastity, and Modesty, but they were otherwise engaged, therefore the reader is left with the sound of organ to fill the void. After the music stopped Orlando gave birth to a son<sup>142</sup>. And just like that the reader is witnessing a scene from a film or a popular television show developing and growing in front of them with every word written by the author.

The last few pages of the novel passed in Orlando taking a walk down memory lane. She was thirty-six years old and she called upon her other self which eluded her stubbornly, at some point her other self which she had been calling and searching for came and she finally felt complete. Everything had changed, at the time it was 1928. The reader is told that there were cars and airplanes now, elements of the popular in their own right, we saw all of her memories through her eyes, we saw her standing under the oak tree, her oak tree, and the story of Orlando ends with her husband jumping off a plane to her and as the last stroke of midnight with it being Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1928<sup>143</sup>.

### ***The Waves – 1931***

Virginia Woolf’s novel *The Waves* is considered to be her most “experimental” novel, and attesting to that is the fact that the author herself did not regard it as a novel, but a “playpoem”. The author was not entirely pleased with her finished work, but despite that the book was “a commercial success at the time of its publication<sup>144</sup>”, which only goes to show that authors can be overly critical of their work.

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<sup>138</sup> John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 5

<sup>139</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Wordsworth Classics, 1995), pp. 131-140

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 140-143

<sup>141</sup> John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 21

<sup>142</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Wordsworth Classics, 1995), pp. 144-146

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 146-1162

<sup>144</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 238-239

*The Waves* tells a story of six friends: Bernard, Susan, Rhoda, Neville, Jinny and Louis through their narration in Woolf's all-familiar technique of stream of consciousness. We follow this group of narrators, together with their friend by the name of Percival, through their lives, their interpersonal relationships and their emotional growth from a very young age when they were just innocent, wide-eyed children, to adulthood and finally old-age. The novel is divided into nine sections, each preceded by a page or few of a seashore landscape brought to our attention at a certain time of day from dawn to dusk. These descriptions serve as petite prologues to each of the virtual chapters and set the tone for the aforementioned parts of the text as a single day at the shore looking out towards the horizon is playfully and intricately made to serve as an allegory for the human life-span, bringing sometimes an air of foreboding considering the main heroes and heroines.

## **Part One – Early Childhood**

### **Prologue One**

The first prologue, and with it the first part of the first unofficial chapter, starts at twilight, that elusive time of day when “the sun had not yet risen<sup>145</sup>.” The author paints a picture of the dark sky and the dark sea being indiscernible from one another, with the addition of the sea looking like a slightly wrinkled fabric. She weaves an image of the earliest part of the day foreshadowing the age of the six narrators in the primary chapter – the early-age childhood. The picturesque seascape starts changing as the first rays of sun creep slowly on the horizon and the water starts to display a livelier energy, the waves coming to the shore. The sun starts to rise “as if the arm of a woman crouched beneath the horizon had risen a lamp and flat bars of white, green and yellow spread across the sky like the blades of a fan<sup>146</sup>.” Even though this representation could be there purely in a metaphorical sense of the twilight hours, one could argue that this nameless woman holding a lamp and casting streaks of light of yellow, white and green could be the representation of the Statue of Liberty which was, is, and arguably always will be, one of the most popular symbols for the United States of America. The pure nature of her ‘Americanness’ is enough for her to be described as an icon of pop culture, and with that, the first element of popular culture in this book.

American popular culture spread throughout Europe via film, media, music, etc. Lady Liberty was a beacon of the New World and as such she made an appearance in many elements of popular culture, for example during World War I and immediately after the end of the war that should have ended all wars one could see posters featuring Lady Liberty as an unequivocal symbol of America. Amongst those posters there was a “Hebrew poster in support for the allies cause. [...] Poster designed by Charles Edward Chambers in 1917<sup>147</sup>.”, a 1918 poster by Z.P. Nikolaki calling for “liberty bonds to support the allies in World War I<sup>148</sup>.”, and a 1919 immigration poster bearing the title “Come To America<sup>149</sup>”. Following that the Statue of Liberty features in “Alfred Hitchcock’s *Saboteur* (Universal, 1942)<sup>150</sup>”. In 1960 there was “a civil-rights rally around the Statue of Liberty<sup>151</sup>”, and bearing in mind that is always a “part of power relations; it always bears traces of the constant struggle between domination and subordination, between power and various

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<sup>145</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 3

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. p. 3

<sup>147</sup> *Media, Popular Culture, and the American Century*, Kingsley Bolton, Jan Olsson (eds.) (Fälth & Hässler, 2010), p. 14

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. p. 17

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. p. 12

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. p. 10

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. p. 23

forms of resistance to it<sup>152</sup> [...]” it could easily be pointed out how a civil-rights rally could be a perfect example of popular culture, especially the one being held around Lady Liberty. Venturing further on, in 1970 Mike Sarne, a British actor, producer, writer and director, wrote a screenplay and directed a film carrying the title *Myra Breckinridge*. There was a publicity still attached to it where Mae West, an American actress, comedian, playwright, screenwriter, singer, and sex symbol, posed as a “striped Statue of Liberty<sup>153</sup>”. In each of these instances the Statue of Liberty was depicted in an element of popular culture, making her an element of the very same as well.

Coming back to *The Waves*, the woman holding a lamp, casting the green, yellow and white rays over the sky may or may not be Lady Liberty, but it cannot be denied that the imagery is quite reminiscent of her, especially the colour scheme used. The green reminding us of the changed colour of the copper statue which once had a deep yellowy-golden tone, her hand outstretched high above her head, holding a torch. That torch representing the glorious yellow of fire illuminating the way to the Promise Land. In her left hand there is a tablet with the date inscribed - July 4, 1776. This date is one of the most significant dates in the entire history of the United States of America – the date when the Declaration of Independence was adopted. What drives the point home is the crown of our fair Lady with rays of sunshine spread behind it like a fan, which completes the picture that was laid out in the text of the novel at hand.

Continuing on, the rays of sunshine change colour as the rim of the sun becomes visible, peaking in the distance, which in turn transfers onto the surface of the salty water. The attention is drawn to the trees in the garden, the leaves on the tree branches, the birds in the treetops, the house, the white blinds, the bedroom window, respectively. With that, the introductory prologue, the first prologue, concludes and the first chapter commences.

### Introducing the Narrators

The reader plunges into the earliest section of the text amidst a chaos containing all of the six narrators’ monologues. At first it is not clear if the main heroes and heroines are actually talking to each other or to themselves, but as the chapter progresses it comes into focus that they might not be talking at all, but thinking, the narrations being their inner monologues, also perceived as their individual streams of consciousness. Each of them wake up to a different sight or sound and immediately after that their attention is drawn to an image individually appointed to each of the six main characters. They go about their own daily routines and we can tell that we are privileged to peak into the minds of children since the phrases they use and descriptions they offer seem more like imagination than reality. At some point one of the girls sees one of the teachers, Mrs Constable, „pulls up her thick black stockings<sup>154</sup>“. It can be noted here that the colour of the stockings and the girth of them is rather important because it clearly shows that the lady in question does not belong to the high class of society. “The upper classes would wear white or coloured stockings, whilst the lower classes would wear black<sup>155</sup>.”

Following that, the picture of Mrs Constable putting on her black stockings indicates that the woman in question belongs to the lower class, therefore being a representative of the subordinated and disempowered. In addition, the mere fact of her being a woman also places her in that category, strengthening and at the same time doubling the elements of popular culture in this tiny part of the analysed text. The first element being the black stocking of course, and the second one, unfortunately, the gender of the supporting character – namely, Mrs Constable. Just a tad bit further

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<sup>152</sup> John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 17

<sup>153</sup> *Media, Popular Culture, and the American Century*, Kingsley Bolton, Jan Olsson (eds.) (Fälth & Hässler, 2010), p. 27

<sup>154</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 6

<sup>155</sup> Susannah Conway, “INDY/LIFE”, *INDEPENDENT, UK’s Largest Quality Digital News Brand*, <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion-the-history-of-hosiery-life-before-lycra-1177530.html>>, (Online since 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1998, accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2020)

down one of our three heroes, Neville, sees somebody named Billy scraping “the fish scales with a jagged knife onto a wooden board<sup>156</sup>.” And so it is clear that this person also belongs to the disempowered class of the society, obviously being a member of the help in Neville’s house, who is a son of a gentleman. At this point it is only hinted that said Billy is a member of the staff at Neville’s, but not outright spoken, or rather thought, but it shall come later in the text when this image will be revisited briefly.

Following this image of the lowbrow black stocking of Mrs Constable and a servant scaling a fish, an opposing one ensues when Rhoda sees a “tablecloth, flying white along the table,” with “rounds of white china, and silver streaks beside each plate<sup>157</sup>.” In their contrasting ways, they tell the tale of popular culture which always needs to be compared with other cultures in order to be recognized. John Fiske argues that there is “no social difference without power difference, so one way of defining the popular is [...]”, as Stuart Hall does in his ‘Notes on Deconstructing ‘The Popular’ in *People’s History and Socialist Theory*, edited by Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) “[...] to identify it by its oppositionality to “the power block”<sup>158</sup>.” Namely, because the two scenes stand in comparison and contrast to each other we can unquestionably comprehend the duality of the two and the slight contradiction in them being so close to each other in the text; especially because at this point we are still trying to discern whether all of these events are happening at the same time in the same place, or they are six instances occurring at the same point in time but in different, separate places, and finally, if these depictions are just figments of children’s imagination. The conclusion that arises is that the black stocking of Mrs Constable and the member of the staff of the gentleman’s house scaling a fish are elements of popular culture, it being the culture of the disempowered – the poor, made so by the close and sheer proximity of the opposing white tablecloth and china with silver cutlery next to each of the plates, representing the elements of the elite culture, it being the culture of the empowered – the wealthy.

This imagery of opposing elements continue in Jinny’s thoughts of how she burns and shivers, “out of this sun, into the shadows<sup>159</sup>.” With these words, or rather, thoughts, of how she burns and shivers, Jinny contradicts herself and makes herself a brief element of popular culture, furthermore, she brings forth the idea of the sun being high in the sky and shining brightly, burning away, as perhaps a metaphor for the elite, and the shadows holding onto the ground, not being able to escape it, cold and dark, as a potential metaphor for the subordinated. Following this, Louis breaks into a rather longish monologue about him being left all alone in the garden, plucking up a flower, holding the stem and feeling as if he were the stem itself. He describes his roots going deep into the ground which is hard and dry and wet and damp “through veins of lead and silver<sup>160</sup>.” Here again in like manner, the concept of duality could be noted in lead being the dark, ordinary metal, and silver being the bright, precious one. Correspondingly, Louis continues with his opposing imagery by saying that he is “a boy in gray flannels with a belt fastened by a brass snake up here.”, and that beneath the ground his eyes are “the lidless eyes of a stone figure in a desert by the Nile<sup>161</sup>.” Now, even though at first glance one could argue that the brass belt buckle in a shape of a snake could be the sign of wealth, when compared to the stone figure in the Sahara desert by the Nile could be any number of priceless stone statues carved in Egypt for any of the pharaohs or Egyptian deities, it does not seem as valuable as it did. Therefore, in Louis’s mind, he hints of not belonging to the elite, but to the disempowered class in the real world, but when he imagines himself as a mighty plant, he can see himself compared to a stone figure of an Egyptian pharaoh or

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<sup>156</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 6

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7

<sup>158</sup> John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 24

<sup>159</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 7

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7

one of the ancient gods. Since the author does not offer the exact name of the country Louis is thinking of, an argument could be made regarding it being another country like Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda etc., but only one country is near the desert by the river Nile and having world famous lidless stone figures, and that is Egypt. Furthermore, the lidless part should not, perhaps, be taken at face value, or literally. It might be an allusion to the all-seeing eye of the ancient Egyptian god Horus.

*“Due to its powerful protective powers, the Eye of Horus was popularly used by the ancient Egyptians, both the living and the dead, as amulets. Even today, the Eye of Horus continues to be used as a symbol of protection<sup>162</sup>.”*

An equivalent with the Eye of Horus could be seen in the American Eye of Providence that can be seen on the United States one dollar bill closely and frequently associated with Freemasons. “It is a symbol recognized by Freemasons everywhere as a beautiful representation of the watchful care of the Supreme Architect<sup>163</sup>.” Even though it is said that the Eye of Providence has its roots in Christianity, an argument could be made that it is the same symbol as the Eye of Horus. The Supreme Architect the Freemasons speak of could be any god, Jesus, Allah, Buddha, Jahveh, Zeus, Horus, Jupiter, etc. the point is that ‘the Supreme Architect’ is not defined by any religion, so it could be rationalized that the Eye of Providence and the Eye of Horus, and after all the lidless eyes of the stone figures in the previously analyzed text are the one and the same.

On the whole, the contrasting elements of the two opposing cultures, namely the popular culture of the subordinated and disempowered and the high culture of the dominant and empowered elite, pave a way to the next scene where Louis says: “I see women passing with red pitchers to the river; I see camels swaying and men in turbans<sup>164</sup>.” Turning one’s attention to what is being said, one can realize how much is being said by that sentence. The only distinguishable feature of women in his mind’s eye is that they are carrying red pitchers to gather water from the river, so they are the work force, while the men are adorned with turbans upon their heads, so they are not depicted working, but rather having a piece of clothing ascribed to them, shielding their heads and minds. Naturally, one could not help but immediately think of how women in popular culture are one of the main elements of the very same; them being poster children for the subordinated and disempowered class throughout the centuries. And this very part of popular culture is the spine of the hypothesis of this doctoral dissertation. Amongst all the other elements of popular culture, the element of women being the constant representatives of the disempowered and subordinated class of the white, capitalist, patriarchal societies, whether they be members of the elite or the lower class, they are all subjects to the power of men. The degree of subordination may vary, but ultimately, the white, wealthy man always comes on top.

Reverting back to the text, Louis continues his monologue, which has been the longest uninterrupted train of thought so far, with a depiction of four out of five other narrators, Bernard, Neville, Jinny and Susan, respectively– emphasizing that Rhoda is not shared in their play – catching butterflies with their nets, calling his name, beckoning him to join them. In this part we see, first and foremost, that the other narrators are divided into boys first and girls following them, and moreover, one of the girls being completely excluded for some reason yet unknown. This in

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<sup>162</sup> Dhwty, *Eye of Horus: The True Meaning of an Ancient, Powerful Symbol*, Ancient Origins, Deconstructing the Story of Humanity’s Past, < <https://www.ancient-origins.net/artifacts-other-artifacts/eye-horus-0011014>>,, (Online since 18<sup>th</sup> Nov., 2018, accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Feb., 2020)

<sup>163</sup> Shawn E. Eyer, *The Eye of Providence: A Journey into Masonic Symbolism*, The George Washington Masonic National Memorial, < <https://gwmemorial.org/blogs/news/the-eye-of-providence>>,, (Online since 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2015, accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2020)

<sup>164</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 7

turn strengthens the fact that the female sex is a subordinated class compared to the male sex. Louis then continued to be as still as a plant and continued imagining being a green stem. The very next moment he sees a flash of pink and feels somebody seeing him and that breaks the spell. He realizes he is a boy in a gray flannel suit because the girl in the pink dress has seen him, she has found him and gave him a kiss at the nape of his neck and so the spell is broken.

### **The Kiss**

The next long monologue commences a chain reaction between several of our main characters, and the first are the thoughts of one of the girls – Jinny. She was the girl in the pink dress and she saw Louis in the bushes and thought he might be dead because he was so still, so she decided to give him a kiss wanting to help. That kiss leaves her with a quickened heart-rate and in a moment she starts shaking and quivering and she gives him a hug finishing her monologue with “I lie quivering flung over you<sup>165</sup>.”

The next piece of monologue belongs to Susan who saw that Jinny had kissed Louis through that very same hedge behind which Louis was standing concealed from them, contemplating what it felt like to be a plant. It is revealed here that Susan is jealous of Jinny and Louis kissing and so she decides to run into the beech trees with her “anguish” and “agony” bottled up and “wrapped inside her pocket handkerchief<sup>166</sup>”. In the true nature of the pain of the first unrequited love, she contemplates staying in the beech forest and ends her train of thoughts with extremely strong dark emotions swimming around her mind, the finality of the situation being best viewed in the culmination of her monologue: “I shall sleep under hedges and drink water from ditches and die there<sup>167</sup>.” This reminds me of Orlando’s agony when Princess Marousha Stanilovska Dagmar Natasha Iliana Romanovitch of Russia broke his heart. He (for he was still a *he* at that time) started wallowing in his sorrow and even slept throughout the entire week, but what makes his situation so similar to Susan’s is that he started contemplating death and decay, and started spending time in the family crypt. However, while the society frowned upon Orlando showing or even showcasing his feelings of woe with him being a man, in Susan’s case we see a self-imposed bottling up of the woeful feelings which is the very thing a man should do. Namely, women have the commodity of releasing their feelings and openly displaying them, while men should exercise stoicism.

The last monologue of this chain reaction is Bernard’s. He saw how upset Susan was, he took notice of her hands holding tight her scrunched up ball of a pocket handkerchief and recognized something primal in her eyes even though she did not cry and thus decided to go after her and told so to Neville. This is not the first instance when the blurry line between the stream of consciousness and the actual dialogues gets even more so, but by now the feeling of the monologues being predominantly innermost thoughts and just sometimes words said out loud has settled in and one can easily discern that the only thoughts said aloud are the ones when the person speaking says the name of the person they are talking to. They are usually brief sentences seamlessly woven into the inner monologues of the six main characters. Gently following behind her, he wanted to be there for her in her moment of need thinking that she might feel all alone. He describes her trying to appear calm and composed thinking that nobody noticed her suffering, and when she thought she was safe she started running towards the beech forest and upon reaching it she spread her hands wide on either side of her and tripped, falling on the ground by the tree roots where she starts crying, opening her heart and letting it all out in the open.

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<sup>165</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 8

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.* p. 8

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.* p. 8

## Bernard's 'Elvedon'

What ensues is a slight shift in narrative style because Susan starts telling Bernard how she saw Jinny kissing Louis, how she saw her dancing in “flecked with diamonds light as dust<sup>168</sup>.” Alas, in comparison: “And I am squat, Bernard, I am short. I have eyes that look close to the ground and see insects in the grass<sup>169</sup>.” During her little monologue we more feel than see the shift from outspoken words back into thoughts, but it happens, and Bernard is in turn overcome by his thoughts of Susan running past the tool shed, crying, him leaving Neville to go after her, his own untidy hair, and the sense that her sorrowful feelings will cease, and a realization that they are sitting close to each other and that she can hear him breathe. Susan then presents us with a glorious and unequivocal, unwavering element of popular culture – contradiction. “I love, and I hate<sup>170</sup>.” Seeing how popular culture is always a culture of conflict<sup>171</sup> and is so deeply contradictory that it contradicts itself<sup>172</sup> it is clear how the abundantly opposing feelings of love and hate being felt at the same time contradict each other, making Susan's ordeal an element of popular culture, representing the first instance of this element of popular culture in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*. Susan continues to describe how her eyes are hard, set on their target and how Jinny's “break into thousand lights”, Rhoda's resemble the “pale flowers to which moths come in the evening” and Bernard's “grow full and brim and never break<sup>173</sup>.” Within this part of the text the author manages to transfer to the reader the feeling that Susan considers herself to be of lesser value than the other two girls and even Bernard because they have prettier eyes than her. She puts herself at the bottom of their little group, feeling disempowered by the previously realized contradictory feelings of love and hate and this feeling of being found lacking, even though it is purely by her own design, within her own thoughts.

Bernard thinks talking in phrases would make Susan feel better although we can see in her mind that she is concentrating on nature, and so in this first section of the novel we are given a hint of what would grow to be a concrete and unmistakable spiritual entanglement with nature where Susan is concerned. Bernard breaks out into another long monologue conjuring up Elvedon, a presumably magical kingdom where everything is alright. Bernard's articulation, eloquence and seemingly endless imagination starts right here for the reader, at this very moment when he tries to take Susan away from her anguish to Elvedon, “he uses his talent of storytelling to dissolve the barrier between their separate selves<sup>174</sup>[...]” and one grasps another featuring characteristic of yet another narrator. Elvedon means ‘elf-Eden’, the heavenly garden of elves, and given the fact that elf is a term usually denoting fairy smaller in stature, this magical fairyland is a perfectly sized world for a child and Bernard emphasizes three times that they are the first ones in Elvedon<sup>175</sup>. Through his story about how the real world morphed and not so gradually but rather suddenly and unexpectedly transformed in the Eden of elves, a few elements of popular culture emerge in the shape of people belonging in some way, shape or form to the disempowered class, specifically “the stable boy clattering in the yard in rubber boots” as a member of the working class oppressed by the rich and powerful, and the ladies in the ladies' garden who “walk at noon, with scissors, clipping

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<sup>168</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 9

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. p. 9

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. p. 10

<sup>171</sup> John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 2

<sup>172</sup> John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 4

<sup>173</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 10

<sup>174</sup> Joseph Allen Boone, “THE MEANING OF ELVEDON IN ‘THE WAVES’: A KEY TO BERNARD'S EXPERIENCE AND WOOLF'S VISION”, *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 27, no. 4 (1981), pp. 629–637. JSTOR, <[www.jstor.org/stable/26281075](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26281075)>, (Accessed 15 Feb. 2020), p. 630

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. p. 631

roses<sup>176</sup>” representing the female gender in a stereotypical light. In spite of them being ladies of stature, belonging to the upper – and in that sense empowered – class, they are still members of the fairer sex and due to that are, in Bernard’s imagination, portrayed as taking a stroll at noon cutting flowers as proper ladies should and are expected to. Then he continues with the imagery of the sound of a giant toad in the grass and shrubbery and the sound of a fir falling to the ground to rot and encourages Susan to step on a rock so that she could look over the wall that apparently surrounds Elvedon and take a look at what is happening on the other side. There, over the wall, is a lady sitting “between two long windows, writing<sup>177</sup>” and the gardeners sweeping the lawn. He warns Susan not to make a sound because should they stir the gardeners they would shoot them. Susan accepts Bernard’s game and acknowledges the lady writing and her gardeners, but her thoughts are still lingering on death, and so we are aware of the intensity of her feelings. They imagine they are being seen by one of the gardeners and consequently run back to the beech woods and after a while they stop talking and playing together and the narrative style seamlessly reverts back to the all-too-familiar stream of consciousness. They slowly come back to the garden of their school and they see their friend Rhoda and with that, their game of sorts is over and Rhoda’s monologue starts.

### **Rhoda’s Solitude, Neville’s Desire for Neatness and Louis’s Australian Heritage**

Rhoda is playing with white petals, pushing them around in a basin, imagining they are ships. She noted that Susan and Neville are not there, and that Jinny is possibly doing something with Louis, that she is alone, but that does not bother her, on the contrary, she feels freed by her solitude. She continues playing with her petal boats, her tiny armada, rocking the basin and crashing and sinking all of her ‘boats’ but one, and that ‘boat’ that sails alone and perseveres is her ‘boat’ she decides. Her thoughts are interrupted by Neville asking where Bernard is. Rhoda does not actually answer him, and he does not seem to care because immediately following his question is his own little monologue about how Bernard took his knife when he ran after Susan. Because of that, he compares Bernard with “a dangling wire, a broken bell pull”, something that is unreliable. “He leaves me in the lurch<sup>178</sup>[...]” Towards the end of his monologue he states: “[...] if Susan cries he will take my knife and tell her stories. The big blade is an emperor; the broken blade a Negro. I hate dangling things; I hate dampish things. I hate wandering and mixing things together<sup>179</sup>.” One unmistakably notices the unambiguous elements of the popular here in Neville’s musings of the big, strong, powerful blade being the emperor, and the broken one being an oppressed, subordinated African slave, and on top of that he shows his tendency to keep things proper and in order, clean and just the way they are supposed to be.

Immediately after Neville’s narration we hear from Louis again. He breaks into a monologue about his father being “a banker in Brisbane” and he himself speaking in Australian accent. That gives him a slight sense of insecurity and so he decides to wait for Bernard and copy his schoolwork because he is English, but then again, all of his other friends are English. “Susan’s father is a clergyman. Rhoda has no father. Bernard and Neville are the sons of gentlemen. Jinny lives with her grandmother in London<sup>180</sup>.” The one constant theme through this miniscule part of the complete text is that men, namely their fathers, are defined by their jobs, but women are either defined by their age, as is the case with Jinny’s grandmother, or not important enough to even be mentioned, as is the case with Rhoda’s mother. It is more important that she has no father, than what her mother does or if she even exists. On the hierarchy of the typical society that is observed

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<sup>176</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 10

<sup>177</sup>Ibid. p. 10

<sup>178</sup> Ibid. p. 12

<sup>179</sup> Ibid. p. 12

<sup>180</sup> Ibid. p. 12

in correlation with popular culture, Bernard's and Neville's fathers are the crème of the crop, on the very top as gentlemen, then comes Louis's father – the banker, then the clergyman father of Susan, then Jinny's grandmother that lives in London, which might be considered a sign of wealth due to the fact that it is the capital of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and at the very bottom is poor Rhoda with no father. And through it all, a sense of longing comes through Louis's monologue. Even though his father is wealthy, he still feels that he lacks something in comparison to all of his friends because he is an Australian, he speaks with an Australian accent and therefore cannot pass as a gentleman, or an Englishman at that. His insecurity comes into view. Following his insecurity is his ambition.

*“Bernard has a chip in his hair. Susan has a red look in her eyes. Both are flushed. But I am pale; I am neat, and my knickerbockers are drawn together by a belt with a brass snake. I know the lesson by heart. I know more than they will ever know. I know my cases and my genders; I could know everything in the world if I wished<sup>181</sup>.”*

Due to this observation of his, he is more presentable than Bernard, who is the son of a gentleman, and Susan, whose father is a man of God, both very respected in the society. He feels like he belongs to the subordinated, but strives to break from the class ascribed to him and become the part of the elite. His insecurity and the ambition following it and quite possibly stemming from it, do not come from within Louis in their entirety, but from his friends as well because all of his friends but Rhoda “bind themselves into a thong with which to lash me. They laugh at my neatness, at my Australian accent<sup>182</sup>.” By this point in the novel they are sitting in a classroom, so he decides to try and imitate Bernard's soft lisping of Latin, and their school day begins, shifting their thoughts towards the Latin words and what they represent for each of them. For Susan, the words in Latin are white and they represent pebbles on the beach by the sea which corresponds with her connection to nature. For Bernard, who loves phrases, they are their own living things behaving sort of like pets, wagging their tails, and like birds moving in all kinds of directions and in all sorts of ways, embodying his relationship with the words, literacy and showcasing his gift of the gab. Jinny, who has proven to be quite bold in a sense of a physical relationship for a girl living in the time presented in the book, those “are yellow words, those are fiery words<sup>183</sup>,” and they ignite a wish in her to have a dress just like that “to wear in the evening<sup>184</sup>.” So, let us stop here for a moment and discuss Jinny as an element of popular culture, because even though her inner monologue and conscious or maybe even subconscious thoughts guide her towards desiring a pretty dress to wear for the evening, as any lady should, her boldness in kissing Lucas earlier is contradictory to this ladylike thinking, and so, at this moment, she is popular culture personified. Neville's thoughts correlate his deep-set aspiration and almost yearning for order, “there are distinctions, there are differences in this world<sup>185</sup>,” he says. With his uncompromising attitude towards meshing of different classes of any kind, he represents the elite, those oppressing and dominating over those who are on the lower step on the great big ladder of the white, patriarchal, capitalist societies of the world.

The next part belongs to Rhoda, and she reveals how she dreads mathematics. All of her friends are writing down their answers to the problem, but to her, those numbers and symbols are just figures. She does not understand them. Because of that, she is not allowed to go home. The

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<sup>181</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 13

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13

other narrators and even the teacher by the name of Miss Hudson go home, and Rhoda is “left alone to find an answer<sup>186</sup>.” She is looking at the blackboard and numbers written on it and finds herself daydreaming about the clock ticking inside the classroom. Her mind wanders off to a different dimension of sorts where the clock hands are alive and in a desert, one looking for an oasis, journeying ahead, searching for water, the other one slowly trailing along. She imagines it will die in her imaginary desert. Then her imagination takes her a step back, towards the figures on the board, they seem to fill with time, and in the end she feels like the entire world is one great big loop of time and she is on the outside and cannot join in. this scene portrays the way Rhoda escapes reality with her daydreams, and how she feels like an outcast, even greater outcast than Lucas, who feels like an outcast because of his Australian accent. Thus Rhoda, being of female gender, and a kind of an intellectual outcast, considering mathematics at least, slides right into the category of an element of popular culture.

Rhoda’s unfortunate situation is witnessed by Louis and in seeing how her mind wanders off faced with a task she does not understand, or maybe cannot fathom, he feels better about his own shortcomings. “And I, who speak with an Australian accent, whose father is a banker in Brisbane, do not fear her as I fear the others<sup>187</sup>.” it has already been mentioned that the only thing known about Rhoda’s family up so far is that she has no father. It is viewed as a kind of a handicap or a great misfortune and her mother is not even mentioned. She finds herself at the very bottom of the hierarchy in their little closed society, where one cannot show anything for themselves, but they need to define their worth by what their fathers do and what they wear and with whom and where they live.

### **Bernard’s Phrases and the Impending Separation**

Bernard’s inner monologue comes up, front and center, and he breaks into another colourful monologue full of wonder and sometimes really opposing images. He sees a maggot-infested elephant, the poor dead creature is so filled with maggots that it is white because it is covered in them, and he makes a point of saying that eagles and vultures are eyeing the carcass and the maggots. Those birds attack a worm that was actually a cobra in disguise and they leave it with an angry brown scar “to be mauled by lions<sup>188</sup>.” Taking Bernard’s picturesque inner thoughts as a metaphor, or better yet, metonymy of animals presenting classes of the society, it is safe to acknowledge that the maggot-infested elephant carcass which was shot down with an arrow by a hunter, presumably, and the worm turned hidden cobra left to the lions belong to the disempowered, while the invisible and implied hunter, the birds of prey and the aforementioned lion are the dominating ones. Moreover, an argument could be made that the hidden cobra in the “skin” of the worm might be an element of the subordinated and disempowered trying to even out the odds because “popular culture always is part of power relations; it always bears traces of the constant struggle between domination and subordination, between power and various forms of resistance to it or evasions of it<sup>189</sup>, [...]” Bernard’s thought finish on a notion that that wondrous world is theirs, a world with lights made out of stars and a semi see-through purple petals blocking their view serving as some sort of windows, how strange everything there is. “Things are huge and very small<sup>190</sup>.”, seeing enormous flower stems and humongous leaves, and after all that he says that they are “giants, lying here, who can make forests quiver<sup>191</sup>.” The first and foremost noticeable element of popular culture here is the contradictory quality of Bernard’s inner speech because there are

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<sup>186</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 14

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.* p. 14

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15

<sup>189</sup> John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 17

<sup>190</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 15

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15

things that are small, tiny, miniscule and huge, grand, massive; them seeing enormous flowers and leaves, and yet, them being giants at the same time. The second thing that can be noticed here is how this type of a scene is reminiscent of children's books like *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, written in 1865 by Lewis Carroll<sup>192</sup>, where Alice could become big or small depending on what she eats or drinks, seeing wonderful and extraordinarily fantastic creatures and plants, meeting interesting people and creatures. If one did not read the book, one did at least once in their life see one of the Disney film adaptations of the book. Bernard's Elvedon is also evocative of *Gulliver's Travels*, originally known as *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World*, published anonymously in 1726 by Jonathan Swift<sup>193</sup>, where Gulliver is considered a giant or a miniature person, depending on which "remote nation" he visits. These books were both published before Virginia Woolf was even born, so it is quite plausible to consider that those were books she read as a child, and thought would be a great reference of what kind of a world a child's imagination could conjure up. On top of that, *Gulliver's Travels* is "a parody of the then popular travel narrative, [...]" that "[...] combines adventure with savage satire, mocking English customs and the politics of the day<sup>194</sup>.", a fact which makes it a perfect candidate for a popular text of the time, and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* "became one of the most popular works of English-language fiction<sup>195</sup>".

Further on, Jinny entertains a thought about how this time is in the present, because soon they will be separated, going to different boarding schools, boys to one and girls the other. Bernard's thought intercept with them having to stand in a line two by two because they will go for a walk. Jinny finds that extremely boring. Susan notices that Louis is made to be the leader because the teachers find him alert and not to be a slacker.

Neville is perceived as "too delicate to go with them<sup>196</sup>", owing to the fact that he gets sick when he gets tired, and he gets tired very easily. Therefore, he decides to spend the hour ahead of him not talking, in solitude and silence. He remembers a time when he heard about a man dying while he was on the staircase he was currently occupying.

On their way back from the walk, Susan saw Florrie hanging laundry out to dry and Ernest in his "green baize apron, cleaning silver<sup>197</sup>" Florrie and Ernest both belong to the subordinated and their passionate kiss awakes something in Susan. While they set the table for the afternoon tea she feels embarrassed, but not afraid. She takes notice of what her friends are doing, and each of them exhibits behaviour in accordance to their main characteristics.

The following part of their day is singing hymns from the Bible recounted by Louis. At the end of his train of thoughts he says that they are all "afraid of much<sup>198</sup>", he of his accent, Rhoda of the mathematics, "yet resolute to conquer<sup>199</sup>." In their determination of overcoming their fears, they

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<sup>192</sup> Patricia Bauer, Cathy Lowne, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, NOVEL BY CARROLL*, Encyclopædia Britannica, < <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Alices-Adventures-in-Wonderland>>,, (Online since 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2018, last revision on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2019, accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2020)

<sup>193</sup> Patricia Bauer, Vybarr Cregan-Reid, *Gulliver's Travels, NOVEL BY SWIFT*, Encyclopædia Britannica, < <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Gullivers-Travels>>,, (Online since 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2011, last revision on 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2018, accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2020)

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Patricia Bauer, Cathy Lowne, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, NOVEL BY CARROLL*, Encyclopædia Britannica, < <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Alices-Adventures-in-Wonderland>>,, (Online since 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2018, last revision on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2019, accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2020)

<sup>196</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 15

<sup>197</sup> Ibid. p. 16

<sup>198</sup> Ibid. p. 17

<sup>199</sup> Ibid. p. 17

stand up to the oppression of the society, and in turn, yet again, become embodiments of the elements of popular culture. Immediately after this, Bernard goes into yet another long narration of how they prepare to go to bed, then Rhoda thinks about her decision not to strive to be like Jinny or Susan, so she stretches and in doing so, grounds herself by touching the foot of her bed. Her imagination takes over and she goes into another daydream which soon turns onto a full on dream and the first chapter ends with her dreaming of being tossed and turned and tumbled by the great waters and waves of her subconsciousness.

## **Part Two – Boarding Schools**

### **Prologue Two**

As it has been mentioned previously, the second part of this novel has its own prologue, but it is almost half the size of the first one. It is a continuation of the seaside landscape that has been described before from the very point it cut off. Now it is explained to us that “The sun rose higher<sup>200</sup>.”, that the waves are coming onto the shore more strongly, the sea foam sporadically making shallow pools and once they pull away the wet sand takes on a darker hue. The reader’s attention is then drawn to the yard in front of the little house and we are certain it is morning now in its full splendor because the dew on the blades of grass and flowers in said garden are sparkling under the rays of sunshine. The birds are chirping more rapidly “like skaters rollicking arm-in-arm<sup>201</sup>”, and then suddenly they become quiet. In the midst of this extraordinarily dazzling scenery where we can all but hear the salty waves, smell the sea breeze and feel the sun on our skin, Virginia Woolf interjects with a picture of skaters gliding lively, exuberant. It can be presumed that the author means ice skating, since the birds reminded her of that sport because their “breasts were specked with canary and rose<sup>202</sup>”, and anyone who has ever seen an ice skating competition either live or over TV knows the costumes are frequently of a vibrant colour or multiple colours, nowadays with gemstones and at least some sparkle. In order to corroborate the popularity of Ice Skating as a sport and its place in popular culture, I need to say a little bit more about it, and, of course, start from the past. According to Scott Hamilton, the first mentioning of figure skating as such was in a book by Robert Jones<sup>203</sup>, *A Treatise on Skating*, published in 1772, even though some speculate that the Scandinavian people had been skating before Christian era, but it was not a sport. They were made most probably of animal bone in order to make travel across the ice more comfortable<sup>204</sup>. In the middle of 1860s Jackson Haines introduced a more liberal and dance-like style to the sport. In the 1908 Olympics Irving Brokaw finished in the 6<sup>th</sup> place, and by this time, the expressive style of Haines’s was accepted worldwide<sup>205</sup>. Fast-forward to today, ice skating as a sport is a big part of popular culture represented in films such as *I, Tonya* from 2017 starring Margot Robbie, *Blades of Glory* from 2002, a comedy starring Will Ferrell and Jon Heder, and all the way to a film from 1992 under the title of *The Cutting Edge*, featuring D.B. Sweeney and Moira Kelly in the leading roles. These are just at the top of the list of ‘Most Popular Figure Skating

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<sup>200</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 19

<sup>201</sup> Ibid. p. 19

<sup>202</sup> Ibid. p. 19

<sup>203</sup> Scott Hamilton, *Figure Skating*, *SPORT*, Encyclopædia Britannica, < <https://www.britannica.com/sports/figure-skating>>, (Online since 27<sup>th</sup> May, 1999, last updated on 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2019, accessed on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2020)

<sup>204</sup> James Greiff, *Ice Skating*, Scholastic, <<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/ice-skating/>>, (Accessed on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2020)

<sup>205</sup> Scott Hamilton, *Figure Skating*, *SPORT*, Encyclopædia Britannica, < <https://www.britannica.com/sports/figure-skating>>, (Online since 27<sup>th</sup> May, 1999, last updated on 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2019, accessed on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2020)

Movies and TV Shows' according to the Internet Movie Database (IMDb)<sup>206</sup>. Due to the popularity of the sport and usage of the same in an obvious element of popular culture such as films and TV shows, it cannot be denied that it is an element of popular culture skillfully woven into the words of Virginia Woolf.

Continuing on, we see the sun casting its rays in a wider range on the previously mentioned house, there is a flash of emerald green in the window. "It sharpened the edges of chairs and tables and stitched white tablecloths with fine gold wires<sup>207</sup>." As the house depicted here is not one belonging to a nobleman or other member of the elite, the tablecloths, albeit of white colour and white stitching, are an element of popular culture, being the tablecloths of somebody of a lower class. According to Rabbit Goody and Jill Maney, in the nineteenth century the tablecloths of people belonging to a high-class had white tablecloths embroidered with white stitching, but the manner of the said stitching was pivotal in discerning whether you belong to the empowered or the disempowered class of the society. Namely, the more elaborate the design, the wealthier you are, and the white tablecloths with white stitching of a simpler design was reserved for the lower classes, those who simply could not afford the whitest of linens and tablecloths<sup>208</sup>, hence the tablecloths as yet another element of popular culture in this second prologue of the novel. The fact that the edges of those "stitched white tablecloths" and the aforementioned tables and chairs are being "sharpened with fine gold wires<sup>209</sup>", symbolizes the constant struggle of the disempowered and subordinated to bridge the gap between them and the elite, because "popular culture is the culture of the subordinated who resent their subordination<sup>210</sup>". Following that, our attention is directed towards the flowers in the garden opening under the sun's warmth, and in a roundabout way we come back to the set table, where it seems that all became somehow gentler and started losing its shape, "as if the china of the plate flowed and the steel of the knife were liquid<sup>211</sup>". This picture of china and cutlery becoming shapeless also alludes to the resentment of the subordinated class towards their subordination. The second prologue concludes with the waves crashing on the shore "with muffled thuds, like logs falling<sup>212</sup>". Those logs skillfully interjected by the author invite an image of a lumberjack cutting down trees and in turn adds to the spectrum of the elements of popular culture, seeing how no member of the high class would ever cut down a tree for logs themselves; that would be left to the staff, the lower class, the subordinated.

### **Bernard, Neville and Louis Departing for School**

The second main part starts off in the same manner as the first one did, with a stream of consciousness narration from one of our six main characters. Much like in the first one, Bernard launches the second section of the novel off, although this time it is not just a sentence, but a full inner monologue. And it comes as no surprise, because this way of expression has already been well established all the way throughout the first part of the complete text. It is time for him to go to school away from home for the first time and that is a cause for various reactions on the part of his

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<sup>206</sup> *Most Popular Figure Skating Movies and TV Shows*, IMDb, <<https://www.imdb.com/search/keyword/?keywords=figure-skating>>, (Accessed on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2020)

<sup>207</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 19

<sup>208</sup> Rabbit Goody, Jill Maney, "Setting the Table in Early America", *Early Homes*, Summer 2007, pp. 66-70, Google Books, <<https://books.google.rs/books?id=zTQEAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PA69&dq=stitched%20white%20tablecloth%20social%20class&hl=sr&pg=PA69#v=onepage&q=stitched%20white%20tablecloth%20social%20class&f=false>>, (Accessed on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2020), p.66

<sup>209</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 19

<sup>210</sup> John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 9

<sup>211</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 19

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.* p. 19

parents and their servants. The first element of popular culture that we encounter is a simple taxi cab vehicle and neither us nor Bernard see it, he simply states “The cab is at the door<sup>213</sup>.” Now, it is not the cab in the sense that one usually thinks of, the bright yellow car with the glowing sign reading ‘TAXI’ on the roof, this one is one of the first cab vehicles there were. In the year 1891 a man by the name of Friedrich Wilhelm Gustav Bruhn invented the taximeter, and that is where the ‘taxi’ in the ‘taxi cab’ stems from, the ‘cab’ comes from ‘cabriolet’ which denotes a carriage<sup>214</sup>. “While carriage-based transportation services were popular in Paris and London for years, the taximeter was installed in the Daimler Victoria in 1897”<sup>215</sup>. After that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the demand for horse drawn carriages subsided and there was a greater one for the motorized taxi cabs. In 1907 Harry Nathaniel Allen, a businessman, “brought over the first fleet of gas-powered taxi cabs from France to New York City<sup>216</sup>”. And so the cab we encounter through Bernard’s narration is one of the oldest of models which must have been extremely popular at the time, but, their popularity stayed throughout the years. “Today, many automakers have released innovative electric, hybrid, and tech-outfitted vehicles to keep the taxi cab program on the cutting edge, and to compete with ride-share programs like Uber and Lyft<sup>217</sup>.” Therefore, this cab is a clear element of popular culture, firstly, due to its popularity, and secondly, because cab driving, like any other job, is done by people belonging to the subordinated class of society. Next, our attention is shifted and steered towards Bernard’s “huge box” which is so heavy that it “bends” a servant’s “bandy legs even wider<sup>218</sup>.” Here, as before, we witness the gap between the power of the powerful and the subordination of the subordinated. The weight of Bernard’s trunk is representative of the power he as a nobleman’s son possesses; even being a child, his power is greater than the servant’s who is obviously struggling to mount it onto the cab. Immediately following that, he describes how everybody’s giving him tips and saying their goodbyes, how his mother is crying and his father is shaking his hand, and he underlines that he “must go on waving” until they, presumably he and the cab driver, disappear around the corner and are thus concealed<sup>219</sup>. He calls these occurrences ‘ceremonies’ and it is clear that the people depicted here, namely his mother and father, respectively, are perfect representatives of what a usual member of their gender is supposed to act like in such a situation. The mother, being a woman, is emotional and the father, being a man, is shaking his son’s hand, showing no emotions, especially not those that would depict him as weak. It has already been mentioned in the first part of this doctoral dissertation when there was a discussion about gender and popular culture that gender is a social construct, how it is a number of notions we have about how we should act as male or female, presented to us by our society<sup>220</sup>. People “learn gender norms through interactions with people and cultural texts and objects<sup>221</sup>.” And so these images of Bernard’s mother sobbing and his father not showing any such emotion are representations of what popular culture encompasses regarding gender roles.

<sup>213</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 20

<sup>214</sup> *A Brief History of the Taxi*, The News Wheel, < <https://thenewswheel.com/a-brief-history-of-the-taxi/>>, (Online since 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2016, accessed on 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2020)

<sup>215</sup> *A Brief History of the Taxi*, The News Wheel, < <https://thenewswheel.com/a-brief-history-of-the-taxi/>>, (Online since 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2016, accessed on 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2020)

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 20

<sup>219</sup> Ibid. p. 20

<sup>220</sup> Adrienne Trier-Bieniek, Patricia Leavy, “Introduction to *Gender & Pop Culture*”, *Gender & Pop Culture, A Text-Reader*, Adrienne Trier-Bieniek, Patricia Leavy (eds.) (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2014) p. 2

<sup>221</sup> Ibid. p.2

Soon enough, the ceremonies, as Bernard denotes these situations, are finished and done with, and he sighs a sigh of relief because the whole situation is just a farce for him, it would seem. He feels that all of them are rushing their actions, it seems urgent to him, it is like all of them are doing things they think are supposed to be done and are expected of them, like they are following rules enforced by the society. And it seems to him that they are doing all of that one time only, just because the moment requires so. The whole household knows that he is off to school for the first time, he notes a housemaid cleaning steps, another well-established element of popular culture, the maid being a member of the disempowered and subordinated class, and she vocalizes that that is his first time going to school. Immediately after that he thinks, maybe orders himself, or perhaps warns himself: “I must not cry. I must behold them indifferently<sup>222</sup>.” This falls straight back to the gender roles and gender in popular culture in general. It is required of him as a boy not to cry in a situation when crying is not such a horrible or wrong or uncommon thing to do. He is going away from home to a school where he will be flung into a completely different environment, and it is expected of him not to cry about such a situation, because boys do not cry according to society norms. Moreover, not only must he not cry, but also he must regard them in an indifferent fashion. He shows us how afraid he is in reality, he experiences the portals of the station as ‘awful’ and ‘gaping’, he feels like the big clock at the station is watching him and he stresses that he needs to make phrases, as he so often does, so that those phrases would be something concrete and structured, a shield of sorts that he would place between himself and the looks the maids are giving him and the station clock, between the faces staring at him and the ones being indifferent. He simply must do so, or he “shall cry<sup>223</sup>”. The faces that stare at him most probably belong to women, his mother and the housemaids, while the indifferent faces belong to men, the servant, George, who was heaving his trunk, and his father, who did not show any emotions and just shook his hand. Next, he sees his male friends and the two other protagonists of this novel, Louis and Neville, and he notices that they “are composed”, but at the same time “they look different<sup>224</sup>”. An argument could be made that all three boys must have gone through a fairly similar experience at their respective homes, and that is why Louis and Neville look different to Bernard, but, it also might be the case that Bernard’s vision of the world at that moment is clouding his judgment, and colouring it in his colours, so to speak. “The major agents of socialization – family, peers, education, religion, and media – teach us gender norms and the potential consequences if these norms are challenged<sup>225</sup>.” And it is crystal clear that it is forbidden for boys to cry, either in public or when they are alone, because even though Bernard was alone for some time in the cab, he steeled himself not to cry and he put his phrases between the things making him emotional and himself. His role model is his father, being seemingly indifferent, and so he should be indifferent, too.

The first portion of Bernard’s train of thoughts is finished with him seeing his two best friends, and that point in time continues with a shift in narration. Now it is Louis’s turn, and he commences his inner monologue by noticing Bernard’s arrival to the train station. He takes note of Bernard’s composure and that “he is easy<sup>226</sup>”, and he fortifies that and explains his observations by Bernard’s swinging his bag while walking towards Neville and him. Louis has earlier established Bernard as a sort of a role model when he ‘spoke’ of himself having an Australian accent and then waiting and copying Bernard because he is English<sup>227</sup>, therefore it comes as no surprise when he

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<sup>222</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 20

<sup>223</sup> Ibid. p. 20

<sup>224</sup> Ibid. p.20

<sup>225</sup> Adrienne Trier-Bieniek, Patricia Leavy, “Introduction to *Gender & Pop Culture*”, *Gender & Pop Culture, A Text-Reader*, Adrienne Trier-Bieniek, Patricia Leavy (eds.) (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2014), p. 4

<sup>226</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 20

<sup>227</sup> Ibid. p. 12

says: “I will follow Bernard, because he is not afraid<sup>228</sup>.” Louis thinks of Bernard as the leader, the one he will follow, maybe even foreshadowing Bernard’s role in the novel, seeing how the last part of the text, the ninth part, is told in its entirety from Bernard’s point of view. He chooses Bernard as the leader and his role model because Bernard ‘is English’ and ‘he is not afraid’, respectively. Now, Louis has put himself in the subordinated role in comparison to all the other main characters of this novel simply because of his Australian accent, hence, in comparison to Bernard, he belongs to the subordinated and the disempowered, while Bernard belongs to the empowered and the dominant. In saying that he ‘will’ follow Bernard, he purposefully chooses to elect Bernard as his leader, but in order to beat his own fears, it seems, because Bernard is somebody whose behaviour Louis wants to emulate in order to transcend to Bernard’s class, and due to this he adds to his character being one of the main elements of popular culture in Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves*.

### **The Train Ride and the Arrival**

Next, the boys board the train, and they set off to school. Bernard plays knucklebones on a rug, which is a game also known as “jacks”, where the player or multiple players toss and catch some small objects. Those objects can more often than not be animal knucklebones, hence the name of the game<sup>229</sup>. Neville is reading, and Louis is watching London fade away behind them. He describes the capital slowly shifting to the scenery of hills and then towards the end of the first part of his narration he mentions two boys, one red and the other one blue, squabbling over who has the more important relative, since one’s uncle is ‘the best shot in England’, and the other’s cousin is ‘the master of Foxhounds’, apparently. With regret, Louis yet again remarks internally how he cannot ‘boast’ like those two boys can because his father is just a banker in Brisbane and he himself speaks with an Australian accent<sup>230</sup>. This is the already well established and, at this point in the novel, well-known complex of Louis’s. His self-esteem is constantly suffering because of this. It has been mentioned before that this places him in the disempowered class of society in his own views. He feels like he is less – less worthy, perceived as less, by his friends and the society, even though none of his friends think of him as less at all and have not shown any signs of perceiving him as anything but their equal. This constant struggle of his has by now become a notable element of popular culture, and it will continue to be so in future parts of the novel.

The story of boys going away from home and travelling from London to some place and arriving at school continues from the Neville’s point of view. His first thought is that after all the noise of the travel they have arrived. The reader experiences for the first time their school through his eyes. He explains how he arrives at school “like a lord to his halls appointed<sup>231</sup>”, establishing himself in his mind’s eye as a member of the empowered, him being the son of a gentleman and all, but at the very next moment noticing the statue of the founder of their school and saluting the statue, which could be interpreted as him paying his respect to the founder, but also in doing so, placing himself as being somewhat subordinated in comparison to the statue of the founder since that statue represents and exudes the power the founder of the school holds. Due to this, he is relatively contradictory to himself in feeling like a lord who is coming to his estate and the very next second saluting to the said statue, and so his contradictory behaviour places him into the ever growing spectrum of elements of popular culture in the text. This opposing nature of his spirit continues in him explaining further how he will be studying in the library, reading poets like Virgil, Lucretius and Catullus, and then offering the contrasting image of him lying “in the fields among

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<sup>228</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 20

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.* p. 214

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.* p. 21

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.* p. 21

the tickling grasses<sup>232</sup>” and lounging under the elm trees, enjoying life and spending time with his friends.

Next, Neville sees the headmaster and immediately finds the man’s appearance ridiculous. In his eyes the headmaster is overly sleek, shiny and black and that he resembles a “statue in a public garden<sup>233</sup>”, and on top of it all Neville sees a crucifix hanging on the headmaster’s waistcoat. Here the statue, the mentioning of the public garden and the waistcoat are all arguably elements of popular culture. Let us start from the public garden since it is the most obvious one considering that it is open to the public, the populous, the people, hence its inclusion into the list of elements of popular in the novel. Then there is the image of the headmaster resembling a statue in the aforementioned public garden, being a statue in such a place makes it a part of that place and an element of the popular, but more than that, it is the subordinate nature of this poor imaginary statue in comparison to the glorified statue of the school’s founder from the beginning of Neville’s monologue that seals its fate as being one of the elements of popular culture. Finally, there is the crucifix that hangs on the left side of the headmaster’s “drum-like waistcoat<sup>234</sup>”, and the said waistcoat is taut and it is not elegant looking, but rather looks like a drum on the headmaster. The tarnishing of the headmaster’s waistcoat on Neville’s part puts the sorrowful garment into the category of the elements of popular culture because it shows the lower stature of the headmaster who should be somebody any student should look up to and respect, but Neville does not; he finds numerous faults in the headmaster’s looks, and with his silent commentary places himself above him on the great ladder of society.

Following the rather unflattering description of the headmaster from Neville’s point of view, the reader has the opportunity of seeing the headmaster from Bernard’s perspective. He starts by calling the headmaster the Old Crane, and even though it sounds profound, soon it is revealed that Bernard does not seem to feel like the headmaster’s words, albeit sonorous and tremendous, which he like very much, are not truthful in the sense that the man really means them. The headmaster leaves the room, all of the other teaches going after him, and Bernard closes his musings with a remark that this would be their first night apart from their three female friends, whom he calls sisters.

### **Susan’s, Rhoda’s and Jinny’s First Night at School**

Differently from the boys’ situation where the reader is privy to the complete experience from the morning of their departure, to the description of their journey and whatever happened on the first day of school, the girls’ school experience starts on their first night. Susan misses her home and her father and her eyes well up with tears that sting them<sup>235</sup>. She continues on thinking of every little detail that she misses and then notes that everything is untrue, pretentious and gaudy for her taste. Her friends and the two other female narrators, Rhoda and Jinny are seated far away from her looking at their teacher who is reading from a book. She also notices “a blue scroll of needlework embroidered by some old girl<sup>236</sup>.”, and furthermore says that if she does not worry her handkerchief and does not purse her lips that she will cry. Here we see the clear distinction between Bernard’s: “I must not cry<sup>237</sup>.” and her more freeing: “If I do not purse my lips, if I do not screw my handkerchief, I shall cry<sup>238</sup>.” In Bernard’s care it is forbidden to cry in public or cry at all simply

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<sup>232</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 21

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.* p. 21

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.* p. 21

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.* p. 22

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.* p. 22

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.* p. 20

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.* p. 22

because he is a boy, but in Susan's case, it would be acceptable to show emotions due to the fact that such emotional outbursts are tolerated when it comes to girls. This slides right in line with other elements of popular culture in this text, and certainly is one of the biggest ones in Virginia Woolf's opus. The embroidered needlework is another detail showing what is expected of someone of female sex to possess as a skill, and it just strengthens the already well established element of popular culture, namely women as the disempowered and subordinated class of the white, capitalist, patriarchal society, such as the one represented in Woolf's *The Waves*.

Following Susan's inner narration is Rhoda's. She observes their teacher and the classroom, but soon it is apparent to the reader that she is troubled and feels extensively out of place saying: "But here I am nobody. I have no face. This great company, all dressed in brown serge, has robbed me of my identity<sup>239</sup>." In this instant one can see and almost hear Adorno's view of popular culture robbing both the subordinated and the bourgeois alike of their identities<sup>240</sup>, just like Rhoda had said that their school uniforms did to her. She struggles with her emotions towards the new and unfamiliar environment and at the end of her little speech she vows that she will find a place where she would freely display her possessions, and she promises this to herself so that she would not cry. Here again there is a connection with Bernard's notion of not crying, but again, it is not that stern 'I must not', but rather 'I will not', and therefore it is exactly the same situation as was in Susan's case, and another instance of this particular element of popular culture in this novel.

Immediately after Rhoda's voice the reader hears, so to speak, Jinny, the last of the girls. She describes a certain "dark woman, with high cheekbones<sup>241</sup>" and the dress that woman is wearing, and she immediately notes to herself that the type of a dress that the dark woman, presumably a woman of African descent but it is not unequivocally stated, is wearing would be "nice for summer", but that she would prefer "a thin dress shot with red threads that would gleam in the firelight" for winter. She then carries on daydreaming of what she would do with her pretty dress in the evening and finishes her musings by remarking how their teacher's dress is "opaque" and that it does not make a flower shape, but cascades from the white ruffle of the skirt<sup>242</sup>. Her elitism comes into view once more, and the feeling of slight scorn at the choice of their teacher's dress shows how Jinny, albeit a girl and a child on top of that, still feels superior even to their teacher because she lives with her grandmother in London, and their teacher has dark complexion and an opaque dress, which puts her into the category of the subordinated.

### **The Boys' Headmaster and the Introduction of Percival**

We are brought back to the boys' storylines with Louis taking the lead this time. He guides us through their prayer time and it is fairly noticeable that he holds their headmaster in high regards, unlike Bernard and Neville. He regards him as Dr. Crane, while Bernard says Old Crane, and Neville refers to the man just by his title – the Headmaster. It can be argued that this stems from the already validated notion of Bernard and Neville thinking highly of themselves because they are the sons of gentlemen, and Louis feeling like being less and being worth less because his father is a banker and he himself speaks with an Australian accent, of course. This is further underlined with him remembering how he did not have a present for Christmas and he was given one out of pity, which angered him gravely.

Neville resumes the 'talking' with sharp words about their headmaster. He finds him somewhat fake and his words dishonest. He remembers travelling to Rome with his father at Easter, but all that fades away once he starts contemplating how he would pretend to scratch an itch just to

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<sup>239</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 22

<sup>240</sup> Robert W. Witkin, *Adorno on Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003 first edition, this edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004), pp. 5-10

<sup>241</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 22

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.* p. 23

see their new friend, Percival, better<sup>243</sup>. This foreshadows how in the next part of the novel it would be more than apparent that he has fallen in love with this new friend of theirs'. This kind of unconventional love is how Neville contributes to the ever growing list of elements of popular culture in the novel.

Bernard follows suit, continuing with his inner monologue, observing their headmaster's awkward shuffle of a walk which all of the other teachers will try to imitate. This uncomfortable 'Follow the Leader' game is another element of popular culture where those subordinated and disempowered try to bridge the gap between them and the dominant one, in this instance the headmaster. Bernard's thoughts soon turn to various phrases, as they more often than not will and he reveals that he might someday write a novel<sup>244</sup>. The mere mentioning of a novel is a small but no less significant element of the popular. He concludes his thought process with some more of the phrases that he finds useful for his potential novel.

Louis continues the storyline, they have some free time outside of school because it is a kind of a holiday with it being the Duke's birthday, and it is presumed that the duke is the founder of the school<sup>245</sup>. Some of the other boys play cricket and Louis is watching from the comfort of long grass. He, too, takes notice of Percival and observes how everybody follows him. He is contradictory in his observations because he finds him clumsy, and yet magnificent. He says:

*"My heart turns rough; it abrades my side like a file with two edges: one, that I adore his magnificence; the other I despise his slovenly accents – I who am so much his superior – and am jealous<sup>246</sup>."*

He contradicts himself with his conflicting feelings and therefore adds another well-known element of popular culture into the mix.

Neville starts thinking of Bernard always telling stories. Everybody and everything is a story to Bernard. He does not particularly mind Bernard's storytelling, he simply lets it wash over him while he looks at everything around him. There is an unsettling moment when Bernard wants to finish his stories, but Percival says no, and so the stories are left unfinished because Bernard fell silent. Immediately following this moment, Louis thinks how he resents Percival's power<sup>247</sup>. That power comes from Percival's size, he is taller and bulkier than all the other boys at school, so that is what places him amongst the empowered and the dominant in their little society of school boys. He notes how they are making a perfect circle, but Percival disrupts that by walking away and the smaller boys following in his footsteps. And yet, Louis admits that he needs Percival "for it is Percival who inspires poetry<sup>248</sup>." The contradictory nature of Louis's feelings resurfaces in this instance, and reinforces its role as one of the elements of popular culture in the text.

## Girls' School Experiences

Some time passes, and this is discovered through Susan's, Jinny's and Rhoda's narratives where they each in turn explain what the school life is for them. Jinny compares herself to her two friends saying that she does not simply "stand lost" crying because she misses her home like her childhood friend, Susan, does, nor does she "lie, like Rhoda crumpled among the ferns<sup>249</sup>". Her friends are daydreaming, and she does not do that, she prides herself on being rational and in the

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<sup>243</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 24

<sup>244</sup> Ibid. p. 24

<sup>245</sup> Ibid. pp. 25, 214

<sup>246</sup> Ibid. p. 25

<sup>247</sup> Ibid. p. 26

<sup>248</sup> Ibid. p. 27

<sup>249</sup> Ibid. p. 28

moment. The three girls have some difficulties amongst themselves, the dynamics of their friendship has shifted, and all three of them note that. Jinny continues on her path of becoming a proper lady of the upper class with her “clean white stockings<sup>250</sup>” that she puts on for playing tennis. Every part of her clothing is meticulously thought through for the single purpose of appearing perfect. “Not a single hair shall be untidy<sup>251</sup>.” The white stockings Jinny pulls on immediately jump in contrast to the thick black ones that their kindergarten teacher, Mrs Constable, was wearing in the previous part of the novel<sup>252</sup>. And due to that contrast, where the black stockings were an element of the popular, these white stockings showcase Jinny’s dominance, placing her in the column of high culture, and that is tremendously important since we know that one of the theoretical guides for defining popular culture is if we compare it to other types of cultures, namely, folk, dominant, high, mass, working-class culture, and so on<sup>253</sup>, therefore, Jinny’s decorum, her etiquette, becomes a guideline for comparison.

Rhoda still feels lost and faceless, and much like Louis feels inferior to Bernard and Neville, she feels the same about her place with Susan and Jinny, she notes that if a member of the school household passes the other two, they would regard them with respect, but when they would pass her, she would laugh at her. Where Jinny and Susan know how to act, Rhoda first needs to see what others do and then do so herself, follow somebody’s example. It is very similar to Louis’s position, and so Rhoda’s insecurity becomes one of the multitude of the elements of the popular in the text. But she does make a distinction between her two childhood friends, she admires Jinny’s certainty, but she likes Susan’s demeanour much more “for she is more resolute, and less ambitious of distinction than Jinny<sup>254</sup>.” She feels that both girls detest the fact that Rhoda imitates what they do, but while Jinny keeps everything for herself, Susan sometimes try to teach Rhoda how to do some of the things that are required of them as proper ladies. In this instance, Jinny would be a representative of high culture, the dominant, the empowered, Rhoda would fall into the category of the disempowered and subordinated – popular culture, and Susan would be a bridge between the two, and since sometimes popular culture could be viewed as a strive of the disempowered to bridge the gap between themselves and the dominant, she would fall into the group of elements of the popular as well.

The girls continue playing tennis, which can in and of itself be an element of popular culture nowadays, since it is one of the most popular sports on the planet, and even though it is not an overpowering element of popular culture, like many major sports it can be found in films, such as *Wimbledon* from the year 2004 starring Kirsten Dunst and Paul Bettany, and *Match Point* from 2005 featuring Scarlett Johanson and Jonathan Rhys Meyers in main roles, and television series such as “Tennis the Menace” episode of *The Simpsons* sporting some big names from the world of tennis like Pete Sampras, Andre Agassi, Venus Williams and Serena Williams. Furthermore, a set of songs about some of the world’s finest tennis players have been written by the band *Binge* and they were broadcasted during the U.S. Open that year<sup>255</sup>.

Coming back to *The Waves*, Susan reveals how miserably she has been feeling. She misses her home and her father, and she wishes she could bury everything, even the “oily portraits of old men – benefactors, founders of schools<sup>256</sup>”. Here, again, it is noticeable how only the oily paintings

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<sup>250</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 29

<sup>251</sup> Ibid. p. 29

<sup>252</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 6

<sup>253</sup> John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture, An Introduction*, Fifth edition (Pearson Longman, 2009), p. 1

<sup>254</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 29

<sup>255</sup> Dan Martin, *The Best and Worst of Tennis in Popular Culture or a Column about Nothing*, TENNIS X, <<https://www.tennis-x.com/xblog/2009-12-19/2802.php>>, (Online since 19<sup>th</sup> December, 2009, accessed on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2020)

<sup>256</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 30

of old men are on the walls because only men could possibly be benefactors and founders of schools, even an all girls school such is the one our three female narrators are in. this is another string connecting to one of the major elements of popular culture in this novel, where it is clear that men are the dominant class in the society depicted in the text.

### Observing Percival

In this second part of the novel the narratives of boys and girls are alternating, and so next we can see Louis speaking some more about the life in their all-boys school. He describes how there are some boys there who are always bragging about what their brothers, fathers and possibly other family members have achieved or are capable of. Those boys are the school bullies of sorts, and yet, Louis and Neville wish they could be them<sup>257</sup>. Louis sees their uniformity, and he longs to be a part of their group. Then we hear from Neville, his narrative is mainly about Percival and he says: “He despises me for being too weak to play (yet he is always kind to my weakness). [...] For he cannot read. Yet when I read Shakespeare or Catullus, lying in the long grass, he understands more than Louis<sup>258</sup>.” With such a contradictory image of Percival, that same boy becomes an element of popular culture because of it. In just a couple of sentences more it is clearly shown that Neville is in fact in love with Percival, and he shows regret over the fact that Percival will get married someday and that Neville cannot live with him. This forbidden love, as has previously been stated, serves as yet another element of popular culture in a sense that it gives Neville feelings that only a woman should have towards a man, and his anger that he cannot live with Percival is disempowering for him because there is nothing that he can do about it, the society would frown upon it.

The following narration belongs to Bernard, and this one is still a monologue, but it is not an inner monologue, but rather a speech that Bernard is saying to Neville out loud. He is speaking in his phrases, telling one of his stories, this time about Doctor Crane, their headmaster. At some point he describes how the headmaster will retire in two years and that he “shall clip yew hedges in a West Country garden<sup>259</sup>”. He lays out the headmaster’s thoughts as if he could read them, but at the end of his speech he simply states that he cannot resume talking about the headmaster’s story because the “stories that follow people into their private rooms are difficult<sup>260</sup>”. Here we can observe two elements of popular culture, the ordinariness of the Headmaster’s plans for retirement, namely, clipping yew hedges, and the contradictory nature of Bernard’s story. By stating that the stories that follow people into their bedrooms are hard after talking about the headmaster’s inner thoughts is contrasting, opposing, and hence belongs to the group of the elements of popular culture. Bernard finishes his story and Neville does not respond directly to him, but retrieves the former form of the narrative, stream of consciousness, and thinks how he cannot confide in Bernard about his intense feelings for Percival because that, too would become one of his stories. And he cannot talk to Louis because he thinks that Louise is too calculating, “cold” and “universal”. He does not even feel like he would find solitude in nature, so he wishes for “firelight, privacy and the limbs of one person”, presumably Percival himself<sup>261</sup>. This whole section is riddled with Neville’s feeling of almost aimless wandering, his disempowerment and his forbidden love towards another boy. These are all signs of popular culture, well established, acknowledged, rooted in the text.

This part of boys’ school life concludes with Louis standing in front of the door of one of the teachers and contemplates the now constant element of popular culture, his “colonial accent”. He states that he is the best pupil in school in terms of academics, but that does not stop others from laughing and teasing. He carries that chip on his shoulder – not being the son of a gentleman and

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<sup>257</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 32

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.* p. 32

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.* p. 34

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.* p. 34

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.* p. 35

having an Australian accent. He dreams of something bigger, of accomplishing a successful bridge between himself and the upper class<sup>262</sup>.

### Girls Going Home

The next bit is Susan's inner monologue where she unveils that it is almost the end of July and the school would be out. She fantasizes about what she would do when she gets off the train and sees her father "in his old hat and gaiters<sup>263</sup>", and the reader is immediately reminded how Susan's father is a clergyman<sup>264</sup>, and in turn alludes to the double reason why Susan's character is one of the main elements of popular culture in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, first and foremost, she is a girl, therefore, she automatically belongs to the category of the subordinated and disempowered, and her second 'handicap' is that her father is not a nobleman. She continues thinking about all the things she will do once she gets home and in the middle of all that her narrative shifts toward how she does not want to be admired, unlike Jinny, that she does not want people to look at her with admiration as soon as she walks into the room, and that all she wants is "to give and be given<sup>265</sup>". This comparison serves twofold, firstly, the reader can see how Jinny is perceived as being vain and conceited, and it is only reinforced by almost all of Jinny's silent statements, since the majority of her thoughts are about clothes, appearance and status that is shown through the previously mentioned, and that status puts her higher on the hierarchy pyramid than Susan in this instance. Secondly, in opposition to the previous fact, Jinny's 'high and mighty' behaviour reserved a kind of a demurrer on Susan's part, which contradicts its nature, to some extent, and places this picture that Susan is describing into the group of elements of popular culture. Immediately after the short but powerful detour in her narrative, Susan just as swiftly returns to her daydreaming about what she will do once she returns home for the school break, and her inner monologue ends once her thoughts are interrupted by the ringing of the school bell<sup>266</sup>.

The next narrator is Jinny. She reveals to the reader how she does not like the dark, night time and sleeping. She wishes for the whole week to be one uninterrupted day full of light and sunshine. Contrary to Susan, who strongly dislikes the ruckus that commences each day in the morning, Jinny thrives in it. She soon thinks about being scolded often for not paying attention in class and for laughing, and adds that even as one of her teachers is annoyed with her "carelessness", something draws her attention away from the unpleasantness of her angry teacher, a "sight of something moving – a speck of sun perhaps on a picture, or the donkey drawing the mowing machine across the lawn; or a sail that passes between the laurel leaves<sup>267</sup>[...]", and her spirits are lifted and she feels free to dance behind the aforementioned teacher, twirling, as they go to pray. Jinny's inner monologue concludes with her revealing she is fifteen years old now, which means that all the other narrators are as well, and imagining what is in store for her as they will soon leave their school and she muses how she "shall wear necklaces and a white dress without sleeves at night<sup>268</sup>." She also fantasizes about one man, not anyone in particular yet, but just a single man, who will like her more than her friends and who "will find some quality, some particular thing<sup>269</sup>" in her, but she decides not to be married right then and there because she does not want to be

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<sup>262</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 35-36

<sup>263</sup> Ibid. p. 36

<sup>264</sup> Ibid. p. 12

<sup>265</sup> Ibid. pp. 36-37

<sup>266</sup> Ibid. p. 37

<sup>267</sup> Ibid. p. 37

<sup>268</sup> Ibid. pp. 37-38

<sup>269</sup> Ibid. p. 38

restrained, and does not wish to belong to any one person<sup>270</sup>. As before, her choice of clothing and accessories show her elite status, but her rebellious side peeks through in her not wishing to be married right away and not belonging to just one person, and that slight contradiction is what makes this an element of popular culture in this part of the text.

This section of the girls' narrations ends with Rhoda. She fantasizes about nature and feels inhibited by other people when she does so, she does not feel free to let her imagination grow, and yet, it runs wild when she imagines herself being an empress as she washes her hair. She says that she "will let the Russian Empress's veil flow about my shoulders. The diamonds of the Imperial crown blaze on my forehead", and that she hears the angry cries of the people below her balcony<sup>271</sup>. The empress in question is Alexandra Fedorovna who was the wife of Tsar Nikolai II Alexandrovich Romanov. While they reigned in Russia there was the Revolution of 1905<sup>272</sup>. Here, Rhoda's alleged powerlessness to let her imagination run free is immediately contradicted by her daydream of being the Empress Alexandra, and yet, just a few moments later she is crushed by reality, namely, she says that her daydream is just that – "a thin dream<sup>273</sup>". All these contrasting moments unquestionably give off a feeling of the popular. Rhoda continues her narration with a revelation that as soon as she sees her teacher the mere sight of her makes her daydream go up in smoke and disappear. She goes to the school library and takes out a book of poems and notes a "poem about a hedge<sup>274</sup>", and she goes on to weave numerous phrases from the poem into her narration which is a perfect example of Virginia Woolf's skill to present her character's train of thoughts. This particular poem is actually 'The Question' written by Percy Bysshe Shelley who was one of the greatest poets of the English Romantic era<sup>275</sup>. It comes as no surprise that this poet's song spoke to Rhoda's soul because Romanticism introduced many new concepts into the English poetry. The poetry of the previous periods, namely the Classicism and Neoclassicism in particular, focused on what was rational and material, while the Romantic era celebrated nature feelings, imagination, subjective moods, etc<sup>276</sup>. With this, Rhoda's turbulent narrative ends, and the reader is transferred over to the boys and their school life.

### Boys' Last Day at School

Louis is the first to speak about the end of their school life, he explains how their headmaster is giving the graduation speech and comments how "On his lips quotations from the Bible, from *The Times*, seem equally magnificent<sup>277</sup>." And here is another element of popular culture, *The Times* daily newspaper. It is a small one, but it inevitably is an item on the list of elements of the popular, as are the television shows, CDs and music records, for example. It is also being compared to the Bible, which actually holds the first place on James Chapman's list of the most popular books in the world, according to Jennifer Polland. She adds that the writer "created a list of the most read books in the world based on the number of copies each book sold over the last

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<sup>270</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 38

<sup>271</sup> Ibid. p. 38

<sup>272</sup> Ibid. p. 215

<sup>273</sup> Ibid. p. 38

<sup>274</sup> Ibid. p. 38

<sup>275</sup> Ibid. p. 215

<sup>276</sup> *Blejk – Berns – Vordsvort – Kolridž – Bajron – Šeli – Kits, POEZIJA ENGLESKOG ROMANTIZMA*, Aleksandar V. Stefanović (ed.), Dragan Purešić (trans.) (Belgrade: IJIATO books, 2010), p. 9

<sup>277</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 39

50 years<sup>278</sup>.” Those 50 years now stand at 58 due to the list having been compiled in 2012, but the list was still valid according to Jared Fanning from the website *Visually*<sup>279</sup>, so it stands to reason that not much has changed in one year. Due to this, it comes as no surprise that the Bible is another element of popular culture, even though Louis’s comment might allude that the Bible is held in a higher regard than *The Times*. Moving on, he thinks about how all three of them, namely, Bernard, Neville and him, are going to go their separate ways, but still will be tied by their memories and adventures from their childhood.

Further on, it is Bernard’s turn. He tells the same scene of their graduation ceremony, but he notices different things. He focuses on the feelings, his own and his fellow graduates as well. He ponders how they “are all deeply moved; yet irreverent; yet penitent; yet anxious to get it over; yet reluctant to part<sup>280</sup>.” Amidst those feelings of touched by the ceremony, and yet not taking it seriously, feeling remorseful, wishing for the ceremony to be over, and yet not wishing to be so, those sentiments contrast, collide and, of course, contradict, showcasing that quality of popular culture. As did Louis, Bernard notes how the three of them will part, but unlike Louis, Bernard does not share his point of view that they are forever bound by their childhood.

Differently from his two childhood friends, Neville’s regret about them leaving school forever is not that they will part, but rather that he will never see Percival again. At this point the reader is absolutely sure that Neville is utterly and irrevocably in love with Percival. He does not seem to notice any of the things Louis or Bernard do, he might notice them briefly, but it is a fleeting feeling because his mind constantly comes back to Percival. At the end of his speech he takes his seat and shields his face with a book so that he could shed a tear and one last time peer from behind it at his beloved Percival<sup>281</sup>. These are all already well-established elements of popular culture with boys not being allowed to cry because that is what girls are expected to do in emotional situations, and the homosexual love being frowned upon.

## The Summer Holiday

The summer holiday commences and the first to talk about it is Susan. She hated school and is delighted to see the hills and hay and cows again. But as much as she hated school, she almost as much has disdain for London, the big city, England’s capital. She thinks about how Jinny lives there and takes her dog for a walk there and how people here do not talk to each other and just walk briskly on the streets, they look at shop windows and they all seem the same and the houses and streets and people and doors all seem gaudy and ostentatious, too glittery and lacey. But as soon as the train leaves London behind she sees nature again and “women hanging washing<sup>282</sup>”. Some time later, she get closer and closer to her home and notes that now “women kiss each other and help with baskets<sup>283</sup>”. Very soon she sees her father “talking to a farmer<sup>284</sup>”, her father who is “in gaiters<sup>285</sup>” and she trembles and cries, and her stream of consciousness end there for now. Her

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<sup>278</sup> Jennifer Polland, *The 10 Most Read Books In The World [Infographic]*, Business Insider, <<https://www.businessinsider.com/the-top-10-most-read-books-in-the-world-infographic-2012-12>>, (Online since 27<sup>th</sup> December, 2012, accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2020)

<sup>279</sup> Jared Fanning, *Top 10 Most Read Books in the World*, Visual News, Visually, <[https://visual.ly/community/Infographics/education/top-10-most-read-books-world?utm\\_source=sendgrid.com&utm\\_campaign=website&utm\\_medium=email](https://visual.ly/community/Infographics/education/top-10-most-read-books-world?utm_source=sendgrid.com&utm_campaign=website&utm_medium=email)>, (Online since 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2019, accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2020)

<sup>280</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 40

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.* p. 41

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.* p. 42

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.* p. 42

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.* p. 43

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.* p. 43

dislike of the glamour of the city of London and her feeling more relaxed in surroundings where the classical elements of popular culture such as women doing chores and being familiar with one another simply because that is what is expected of them to do solely on the grounds of them being women shape Susan to become another element of the popular herself. She sees that which is elite as showy and because of that having lesser value than that which is natural and green. On top of it all, we are yet again reminded that her father is a clergyman because he is wearing gaiters which are a part of the traditional Anglican bishops' clothes, and even though the fact that he is not a nobleman might be considered a non-desirable, in Susan's opinion he is somebody that sits on top of the world and who she holds in highest regards possible. For her his value is infinite. On the other hand, Jinny's narration is filled with her noticing the opposite sex, be it a man in the train compartment, or workers in the field, her body and mind are awakening in that sense of being seen in a passionate way by men, and she daydreams about the lavishness of a "lamplit room with chairs"<sup>286</sup> where she takes a seat and her dress is all around it. Her sense of being a young lady belonging to high society has stayed strong throughout her school days and if anything that time in her life has only strengthened her notions of having pretty dresses and jewellery, being pretty for men and trying to be noticed by men, because, what else is there for a lady to do?

Rhoda's thoughts are consumed by nature. She feels it, she breathes it, and her thoughts seem more like a dream than reality, and somehow in the midst of it all she says: "Women in the fields are surprised to be left behind there, hoeing"<sup>287</sup>." This single sentence carries in itself an element of the popular, firstly, there are women hoeing, secondly, they are surprised that they were left there to do so. Women doing manual work in the fields was not unusual for the lower class and that is why that image falls into the elements of the popular category, the fact that those women were surprised is another one because that shows the resistance of the subordinate towards the dominant, which could be either men or high class society. Rhoda also notices how they are travelling over the moor and how just "a few wild sheep live here; a few shaggy ponies; yet we are provided with every comfort; with tables to hold our newspapers, with rings to hold our tumblers"<sup>288</sup>." These opposing images are clashing, oozing the contradictory property of popular culture, and with this, the girls' summer holidays officially begin and their narration in this second part of *The Waves* ends.

The last three paragraphs of the second part of this novel end in Louis's, Bernard's and Neville's narrations, respectively. Louis talks about how all of his schoolmates are off to their respectful colleges or some of Europe's cities, like the capital of Italy or France, while he is off to find a job so that he would "make money vaguely"<sup>289</sup>." He feels overshadowed and insignificant once again because he is the son of a banker and thus has to find work while other boys are sons of gentlemen and therefore can freely go to college or travel all over Europe. It has been stated before that this element of popular culture, namely his feeling of being worth less because he is an Australian and not of gentle bloodline, will stay with him throughout the whole novel, and so it comes as no surprise that it bobs its head here as well. After a while he states:

*"I force myself to state, if only in one line of unwritten poetry, this moment; to mark this inch in the long, long history that began in Egypt, in the time of the pharaohs, when women carried red pitchers to the Nile"<sup>290</sup>."*

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<sup>286</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 43

<sup>287</sup> Ibid. p. 44

<sup>288</sup> Ibid. p. 44

<sup>289</sup> Ibid. p. 45

<sup>290</sup> Ibid. p. 45

This is a throwback to the similar train of thoughts that Louis had in the first part of the novel on page 7 when he imagined women working, carrying those red pitchers and men being adorned by turbans. Due to this one is reminded again of how women were poster children for the subordinated and disempowered class throughout the centuries, and how this is one of the most prominent elements of popular culture in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* and other writings. Coming back to the text itself, Louis's narration shifts its focus slightly, he acknowledges how he is sitting in "a third-class railway carriage", and he talks about "the boasting boys" whose names never change, they are the same boys always, and he thinks of Bernard's stories and Neville being alone or with a single friend surrounded by books and not boasting<sup>291</sup>, and then he says that he "shall grow bitter and mock at them [...] envy them their continuance down the safe traditional ways [...]" while he will be associated with "cockneys and clerks<sup>292</sup>". Here we have the elements of the subordinated and disempowered, a third-class train carriage, Louis's lack of boasting material, his inability to do anything about it and consequent bitterness and his association with cockneys and clerks. Furthermore, his opposing feelings of envying the boasting boys and mocking them at the same time add that extra quality of the popular to the aforementioned.

Bernard's thoughts are, as always, filled with phrases making whatever is happening around him into a story, he watches at how his two best childhood friends are silent, he observes a traveller coming into their compartment and immediately thinks of a story about him. At first he perceives the man as "elderly and apparently prosperous", and he wishes to approach him instantly, but the very next moment his desire to approach the man dissipates and he dislikes that the man is "cold, unassimilated" among the boys. He again mentions how he does not "believe in separation", and that we, humans, are connected<sup>293</sup>. This notion of humans, presumably of all classes, being connected is a direct contrast to Neville's view of hating to mix things together from page 12 in the first part of the novel, therefore Bernard's point of view here finds its way onto the list of elements of popular culture. His contradicting feelings of immediately wishing to get close to the traveller and then almost instantly disliking his presence is another one. He goes on to think of a whole story about the man and he is not as prominent throughout the rest of the story as he seemed to be for that one fleeting moment when Bernard liked the man. There is a junction and Bernard changes trains so that he could go to Edinburgh.

The last narration of the second part of the novel belongs to Neville, and he starts off by offering the reader a view of Bernard. He thinks him unfeeling and selfish because he would talk to anybody, for example a plumber or a horse-breeder who represent the lower class, the disempowered and subordinate, as easily as he would to Neville and Louis. Neville likes clean lines between classes and does not like mixing things together, as it has been stated before on page 12 of *The Waves*. He admires Bernard for the way he tells his story and says that he tells the story of the people around him "with extraordinary understanding, except of what we most feel<sup>294</sup>". He finds Bernard pitiable, and yet lovable. These contradictory feelings towards Bernard serve as yet another element of popular culture in the novel. Then the train leaves and they cannot see Bernard anymore and vice versa. Neville's focus shifts to his book, but he cannot "read in the presence of horse-dealers and plumbers", he considers it beneath him to even be in the presence of such people. Then his thoughts continue in that contradictory fashion with thought that he "will consume them entirely", and then that they are "immortal" and that they "triumph", then he decides he would go to a university and go to Greece and in the next moment he says how it is better to be a horse-dealer and live in a villa than to be a lecturer. He even discloses how they are eighteen years old now, and that he thinks how his victory lies in the likes of those like the horse-breeder and the plumber hate

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<sup>291</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 45

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.* p. 46

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.* p. 46

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.* p. 48

him because he is not like Louis who carries a chip on his shoulder due to him being the son of an Australian banker<sup>295</sup>. After those opposing thoughts his mind wonders towards Percival. Soon after, they slowly arrive in London and as his narration draws to a close he offers to the reader through his point of view a few of the elements of popular culture, some of which have been mentioned before, like taxi cabs, and others like mail vans, porters, and the second part of the novel concludes with Neville clutching his handbag feeling overwhelmed by the uncertainty of what awaits him.

### **Part Three – Young Adulthood**

#### **Prologue Three**

The third prologue opens up with a determined: “The sun rose<sup>296</sup>.” It all but foreshadows the determination of our main characters as they transcend from childhood into young adulthood, because we are never more determined than when we are young. Not as young as children, but not as old as experienced people who have lived through half of their life expectancy and who had learned throughout their years here on Earth of the unpredictability of life. This simple, three-word sentence signifies that the morning has long since begun, but the sun has not risen above the horizon, yet. It is morning, unmistakably, but not yet day. The astoundingly beautiful seascape is more vibrant than ever. The yellow and green rays of light are now saturating the shore, the rotten boat on it and the surrounding sea holly, i.e. eryngium, so the whole scene exudes the beauty of the hues. The sun is yet again personified as a girl. “The girl who had shaken her head and made all the jewels, the topaz, the aquamarine, the water-coloured jewels with sparks of fire in them dance, now bared her brows and with wide-opened eyes drove a straight pathway over the waves<sup>297</sup>.” In the first prologue of this novel, “a woman crouched beneath the horizon<sup>298</sup>” lay a significant resemblance to Lady Liberty with a lamp in her hand casting those green, yellow and white rays of sunshine in the sky. The Statue of Liberty is thought of as the core of the USA’s culture, it might even be characterized as American popular culture personified, due to its ‘americaness’, as it has been stated earlier in this text. Now the woman became the girl, and whether that was intentional or not, it must be concluded that the age of this lady of green, white and yellow light bars is indiscernible and, moreover, not important. It then casts a light on another question of why is a Mr always a Mr, whether he is a bachelor or a married man, and there is a clear distinction between a married lady who is a Mrs and an unmarried lady who is a Miss? To be fair, lately there has been an improvement in that department with a hybrid of Ms which is an equivalent of the Mr, but the fact that there was a distinction in the first place shows the inferiority of women in white patriarchal societies. This small and possibly unintentional shift in description in Woolf’s depiction of the lady of light from a woman to a girl then becomes a transcending element of the popular in the text, and it becomes so only here, when the shift is apparent.

The reader’s attention is then steered towards the birds harmonizing their song and now singing together, flying together and possibly looking at the same thing together in unison. At some point, a cook throwing cinders and startling them is mentioned, and this cook belongs to the ever-growing cluster of elements of popular culture, being a servant, somebody who belongs to the disempowered and subordinated. A point is made in describing how something must have frightened them, maybe a black cat that was in the bushes. These opposing places within the circle of life where the cat is the predator and the birds are prey serve as another showcasing of the elements of popular culture with birds’ position of those in danger, those who have no power but can easily be overpowered by the powerful black cat being the focal point. Next, there is a shift in the animal kingdom and the birds which have been those in peril, the ones without power, acquire it

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<sup>295</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 48-49

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.* p. 50

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.* p. 50

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.* p.3

fairly soon when one of the birds swoops down and punctures “the soft, monstrous body of a defenseless worm<sup>299</sup>” and then taking a few repeated pecks once more, it leaves the poor decaying body there to rot away. Now the birds are those empowered, dominating the worm who is ‘defenseless’, and the same turn of events would be turned once again if there was a point in the text where the worm had chomped on a leaf which is even more subordinated than the worm in the great circle of life. There is always somebody more inferior, and there will always be somebody superior to us. The contradiction of the birds in this segment, with them being the prey and then preying on something inferior just a moment later strengthens the popular in them being a strong element of popular culture in this segment.

The rays of sunshine are now reaching deeper into the house that overlooks the breathtaking seascape, and there is a live flower in the window sill, and its mirror image can be faintly discerned in the glass of the window. This ‘phantom flower’ is a diluted, shadowy form of the live one, but “the phantom was part of the flower, for when a bud broke free the paler flower in the glass opened a bud too<sup>300</sup>.” Another point for the elements of popular culture, the phantom flower, while obviously being the inferior one, has all the features of the real, live flower that is in the window sill, drinking up the sunshine, but it is argued that the phantom flower is a part of the real flower because it mirrors everything that the superior one does. And so depicted here is another characteristic of popular culture, namely that it is a culture of the subordinated resenting their subordination<sup>301</sup> and consequently striving to bridge the gap between the two classes of society.

The last part of this third prologue describes how the waves started crashing down with an elevated force due to the uprise of the wind. And that low sound of the waves crashing onto the shore paints a picture of the “turbaned warriors” advancing onto the aforementioned shore in order to conquer “the white sheep<sup>302</sup>”. It could be argued here that the imagery of the white sheep, those sheep being meek, fluffy and terribly gullible, represents the white man being slaughtered by the dark-skinned warriors in their turbans. History teaches us that the white man is the apex predator, the one who conquers and enslaves the black man, or the red man, or the brown man in turbans, so how did these turbaned men become the ones who wish to conquer the white sheep? The answer may lay in a single event, in 1906, when then young Virginia visited Constantinople and was shocked by the cultural differences between East and West<sup>303</sup>. While she was in Turkey she did not write much about those differences, but the questions of “racial difference, imperialism, and Orientalism” crept their way into Woolf’s novels more than twenty years later<sup>304</sup>. It has already been noted in the third chapter of Woolf’s novel *Orlando* that there was a savage revolution by the Turks in the very same Constantinople. At that time the Turks were the ones having all the power and a white Englishman was the one who had no power at all and furthermore, fell asleep and woke up as a woman. So Turks being the dominant ones and an English nobleman transforming into a woman served as a pivotal element of popular culture at that point in the novel, and so here as well, warriors in turbans (presumably Turks) advance on the meek white sheep on the beach, and are once more the dominant ones, making the English white people an element of popular culture once more.

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<sup>299</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 51

<sup>300</sup> Ibid. p. 52

<sup>301</sup> John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 9

<sup>302</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 52

<sup>303</sup> Urmila Seshagiri, *Orientalism in Virginia Woolf: Race, Aesthetics, and Politics in ‘To the Lighthouse’*, *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, Volume 50, Number 1 (Johns Hopkins University Press, Spring, 2004), p. 58

<sup>304</sup> Ibid. p. 59

## College – Bernard and Neville

The main part of the text is told through Bernard's narration. He reveals that he is in college now and he is pondering about life, has many questions and his philosophical side shines brightly. As he is leaving his dorm room and observing the world around him it dawns on him that he is "not one and simple, but complex and many. Bernard, in public, bubbles; in private, is secretive<sup>305</sup>". This contradiction of him being at the same time bubbly, outgoing and secretive, maybe even demure, makes him eligible to join ranks with other main characters and become the first element of popular culture in the main text of the third part of this novel. He then goes on to ponder how nobody truly knows and understands that, how he needs to watch for several other boys in college that try to be him. He explains how he is exceptionally aware and how whenever he reads a book he cannot not ask "Is he a builder? Is she unhappy<sup>306</sup>?", and this book, presumably a novel of some sorts, is another element of the popular, and the fact that he is wondering about the man's profession, and the woman's emotional state reverts back to the all too familiar and unquestionable element of popular culture where men are the providers, those possessing all the power, those dominant, and women are the subordinated and disempowered, sometimes slaves to their emotions, not defined by what they do, if they work at all, but by their emotions. He then continues thinking about one of his friends at college who failed to make a connection with the girl he likes because of a pimple on his face, and so Bernard invited him to dine with him out of compassion, and then he breaks into a daydream where there is a biographer that is narrating his life and starts quoting the said biographer: "But 'joined to the sensibility of a woman'[...]'Bernard possessed the logical sobriety of a man<sup>307</sup>.'" This narration within his narration only strengthens and intensifies the previously underlined element of popular culture of women belonging to the disempowered and subordinated class of society. His thoughts run towards remarking that all his other friends from school including Neville are just "fish in midstream", but his self, which is a separate entity now apparently, understands how there is more to Bernard than what he had been saying that night at dinner. That on the inside, when he is "most disparate", he is also "integrated", furthermore, he muses how he "sympathizes effusively", but also inertly and coldly, rationally receives whatever may come his way, and that very few people that are now talking about him have that elusive "double capacity to feel, to reason"<sup>308</sup>, which in turn again enforces Bernard's contrasting nature and his place within the scope of elements of popular culture. Then he notes how all of his friends are single-minded and preoccupied with their crush or a girlfriend or something else, save for Neville and himself because they are "complex"<sup>309</sup>.

Immediately after his inner monologue about the contrasting nature of his complex being that is both feeling and rational, to prove his point he takes off his coat, hat and stick, which all signify him as a young gentleman and thus belonging to the elite, and promptly starts writing a letter to a girl, and it is not clear if this girl actually exists or if she is a figment of his imagination, or maybe somebody he hopes to meet sometime in the future. The truth might be somewhere in-between all of those, but, for now, it is not revealed. After some trial and error way of thinking, he gives up on the whole idea and decides to write tomorrow and plunges into daydreaming.

In his daydream, he arrives at a house of a "military gentleman" and after some pleasantries, the host leads him into the drawing room where he sees his beloved. He notes that she had been hunting and that she now "munches sandwiches like a tomboy". This tomboyish antics of the nameless girl is an obvious element of popular culture since she is demonstrating unladylike demeanour, which he finds attractive, and with it is contradictory to the rules of society of the

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<sup>305</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 53

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.* p. 53

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.* p. 53

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.* p. 54

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.* p. 54

period. The scene goes on in a cordial fashion and it slowly morphs into him admiring his own sense of immersion in his characters. In his opinion, some other novelist would not “integrate” so much in his stories and characters, as Bernard does<sup>310</sup>. At this point it can be deduced that the previously mentioned girl might just be one of his characters, and quite possibly it is this tomboyish young lady munching on sandwiches after a hunting exercise. With him thinking of how dedicated he is to his stories, his daydream concludes and he recaps the day so far.

### **Neville’s Unrequited Love and Bernard’s Sense of Self**

Next narration belongs to Neville and the change in his attitude is fairly noticeable, to say the least. His view of the world around him is hued by the rose-coloured glasses, for he is “in love with life<sup>311</sup>”. It is as if that overwhelming sense of uncertainty with which the previous part of the novel concluded never even existed. His inner monologue is vivacious, joyful and utterly filled with glee. He notes some young men “listening to the gramophone<sup>312</sup>”, and so it cannot go unnoticed that vinyl records were then what CDs are for popular culture of the late twentieth century. Therefore, a conclusion asserts itself that the image of those young men listening to the gramophone playing music on a vinyl record is a strong element of popular culture in the text.

Everything Neville sees seems beautiful to him. Observing the scenery his thoughts reveal: “[...] I see behind the leaves the grave, yet eternally joyous buildings, which seem porous, not gravid; light, though set so immemorially in the ancient turf<sup>313</sup>.” These contradictory descriptions of the buildings being at the same time grave yet joyous place Neville’s state of mind and consequently himself as another element of popular culture in the text. He continues describing how he feels such inspiration, how he surely is a great poet, he feels and sees everything and his eyes fill with tears, but he does not shed them because in spite of him feeling all of that, his excitement becomes insincerity, or it just seems to – to him<sup>314</sup>. The mere fact that his eyes fill with tears from feeling so much joy at beholding such beauty touches on the omnipresent element of popular culture of feelings, and one’s state of being moved by them, belong to the fairer sex, i.e. – women. He, being a man, cannot let himself shed a tear and that is possibly why he feels that the “frenzy” he feels transforms into insincerity, falsehood and artifice. His narration ends with him pondering how when we meet our friends we are not ourselves, but mostly ourselves and part what those friends perceive us to be. This notion comes to him as Bernard approaches and he asks Bernard a question: “Who am I<sup>315</sup>?”

Bernard’s narration takes place and continues more where his first inner monologue stopped than Neville’s has, nevertheless, it feels more like Bernard is talking to Neville, than to the reader because he describes how he holds *Elegy*, a poem by an English poet by the name of Thomas Gray, its full title being *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, which was written in 1751<sup>316</sup>, and eating a greasy crumpet with his other hand. He knows how this apparent disrespect for the poet’s work irks Neville, as it has been displayed in the previous chapters, and even at the beginning of the novel, when they were very young with him noting how he hates damp things and how mixing things together and wandering displeases him<sup>317</sup>. Neville thrives in order and seeks beauty and refinement. Coming back to Bernard, he sees how this action of his, namely disrespecting the great

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<sup>310</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 55-56

<sup>311</sup> Ibid. p. 57

<sup>312</sup> Ibid. p. 57

<sup>313</sup> Ibid. p. 57

<sup>314</sup> Ibid. pp. 57-58

<sup>315</sup> Ibid. p. 58

<sup>316</sup> Ibid. p. 215

<sup>317</sup> Ibid. p. 12

poet's writing with a greasy crumpet "offends" Neville, and so he decides to cheer him up by describing how he woke up Percival, describing in great detail the whole scene, which undoubtedly puts a smile on Neville's face, since he is in love with Percival and it is presumed that love is what made him so joyful at the beginning of his narration. Bernard actually does not know that it is the subject of his little story that has put a smile on Neville's face, but rather he is convinced it is because he is such a good storyteller, he thinks it is due to his excellent, eloquent phrasings. Bernard's story grows more and more in grandeur and finally he realizes that Neville has actually stopped listening. Bernard then imagines that this is some form of a cry for help by his friend, and so he continues his narration by "making" Neville, because Neville has done the same for Bernard. He recaps for Neville his earlier statement that he, that is Neville, wants to be a poet and a lover but his superior intellect forbids him, stops him, and how Neville does not "fog" his clarity with "rosy clouds, or yellow", but the reader knows that observation to be false simply because of Neville's exceedingly obvious change of manner of thinking, which Bernard is not privy to<sup>318</sup>. It then occurs to him that the pair of them should go to his room in order to get away from the distractions of the outside such as "these pert shop girls, disdainfully tripping, these shuffling, heavy-laden old women; these furtive glimpses of some vague and vanishing figure – it might be Jinny, it might be Susan, or was that Rhoda disappearing down the avenue<sup>319</sup>?" Over and again the element of popular culture that is women being viewed as rather something than someone and subsequently belonging to the disempowered and subordinated class of the white patriarchal society comes into play. The non-descriptive pert shop girls and old women, and even their old childhood friends are perceived as distractions, rather than actual people. The fact that all of them are just going about their business is besides the point, and the only thing that is evident is that they are in the way of the two of them, the two young gentlemen, creating poetry and phrases. In the end, Bernard sees that Neville is preoccupied with his own thoughts and leaves him be.

Following Bernard's train of thoughts, Neville goes back to thinking about those "grave, yet eternally joyous" buildings and how much it displeases him that there are shop girls gossiping and chatting, how offensive he finds it that they should even be near those buildings, purely because they are distracting him in his jubilation<sup>320</sup>. He describes going with Bernard to his room where Bernard reads poetry of Lord Byron and how their tastes differ in marking which parts are important, and then Neville remarks inwardly how even though Bernard fancies himself to be like Lord Byron, he displays a very ungentlemanly manner of making tea because there is a pool of tea on his table from where he has spilled the tea, and it is staining the nearby paper and Bernard's books. Furthermore, Neville discloses how Bernard mops up the mess with his pocked handkerchief and then stuffs the dirty handkerchief into his pocket. He remarks how Bernard changes his role model frequently and thinks how he will cry when Bernard dies, but should Bernard ever go to Paris and come back completely changed under the French influence, he would stop being his friend, and the reader can all but feel the disapproval in his tone. And while Bernard is talking about Lord Byron's epic satire *Don Juan* now, Neville throws his poem at for him to read and leaves<sup>321</sup>.

Bernard's inner monologue continues at the precise moment Neville's has left off, and he is astonished by his friend saying to him that he is himself and not Lord Byron. He is not offended, he just thinks that he is both himself and Lord Byron and something more. He feels relieved by being alone in his room. He concludes how we are more than our friends think and tells a story about Neville brooding in his room, which he imagines to be true. His thoughts turn to Louis who was "the best scholar in the school", but now works in an office. He notes how Louis always talks of his father, the banker working in Brisbane, even though he is ashamed of him<sup>322</sup>. Bernard does not say

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<sup>318</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 58-59

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.* p. 60

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.* p. 60

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 60-61

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 62-64

whether he approves or disapproves of Louis's not being of noble birth and not being an Englishman, but the mere fact that he noted how he was the best pupil in their school might be showing his respect for him. He thinks how all of them have many layers to them, even though Neville does not see it, and notes how he is "indulging in unwarranted emotions<sup>323</sup>". With this already well-established element of popular culture of men not being permitted to show emotions, or even feel those emotions which are not 'approved' to be felt by a member of the male gender, due to the fact that those are reserved for member of the female gender, those who are allowed to stoop to such things, those who are perceived as being of weaker mind and inferior to men, Bernard's train of thoughts ends.

### **Louis in the Middle**

The last male narrator in this part of the novel is Louis. The omnipresent chip on his shoulder about not belonging to either high class or lower class puts him in a lurch once again. He gives us a picture of people passing by in motor cars, vans and motor omnibuses, and all of those could be placed inside the group of elements of popular culture for the same reasons taxi cars do. These vehicles were commodities, and those were made popular by everybody as the years went by, and even now they are more of a commodity than a necessity. John Fiske argues that where it concerns industrial societies, popular culture is "contradictory to its core" because it is both industrialized, which means that the commodities produced are made and sold for a singular reason, so that the company would earn money, and it is at the same time "of the people", whose goal is not to earn money for the industry. So, in order for a commodity to become a part of popular culture it must contain both, interests of the industry and the people<sup>324</sup>. This can certainly be applied here, where cars, taxis, vans, omnibuses and any other kinds of vehicles served both interests, to be sold so that the company would profit, and to make life easier for the people. No matter if you belonged to a high class or a low class of society, some kind of vehicle would be at your disposal, and thus as a commodity belonging to popular culture.

Coming back to the text, Louis describes how he sees people passing by in vehicles and then he unveils that he is in a restaurant and has a conundrum, he tries hard "to look like the rest", and somehow fails to do so. He repeats to himself a kind of a mantra: "I am an average Englishman; I am an average clerk<sup>325</sup>." But still he glances at men sitting at the table next to his in order to check if he is doing things in the same manner as they do in order to fit in. his predicament lies in the fact that he is not a gentleman's son, he has no wealth, but at the same time, he has great schooling and, as it was made known to the reader by Bernard at the end of the previous narration, he was the best scholar in their school. So these contrasting sides of Louis's leave him in a kind of a limbo where he is equivocal, both rich with knowledge, but not noble by birth, and with that, yet again, an element of popular culture. He continues on, offering the image of waitresses serving "the average men" at the restaurant, they all do the same, eat the same food, talk with the same accent, but if he tries to imitate them, he thinks they listen carefully for him to speak again so that they could better discern if his accent is Canadian or Australian. He still feels rejected because of his accent and his heritage and ancestry. He thinks of his education and how he is familiar with the works of Virgil and Plato, and so he refuses to be like the rest of them, just aimlessly passing, and he dislikes the gilded and overly decorated women's hats that he sees on the street, he takes a moment to remember Susan, his childhood friend he respects a great deal, how she would wear just a simple "straw hat on a summer's day", and he then embarks on his usual daydream of being one with nature and having roots that go deep into the ground<sup>326</sup>. The picture of women's hats bobbing up and down the street

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<sup>323</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 64

<sup>324</sup> John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 19

<sup>325</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 65

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 65-66

touches on the already all-too-familiar element of popular culture, women being vain and only caring about being pretty, only caring about spending the money that the men in their lives have earned, their fathers, brothers, husbands. Through shopping women become empowered and dominant and transcend their subordination<sup>327</sup>. Returning to Louis, he almost detests the gilded hats, and respects the plainness of Susan's simple straw hat. Even though he does not see her in one, he is confident she would wear just that, and he admires her for it.

As it has previously been stated, his mind takes him on a familiar journey of him being a plant and his roots running deep, and then the daydream morphs to a memory when all of them were but small children, when Jinny kissed him on the neck while they were playing in the garden. The memory yet again morphs with the reality and his subconscious mind invites an image of Neville and Bernard, how they will inherit everything he wishes he would. He then thinks of Susan again and repeats his respect for her because he imagines her stitching, sewing "under a quiet lamp" in a house that makes him feel safe. His inner monologue takes him on another path, he is the youngest among them and he thinks the weakest, and whilst he imagines all of his friends "protected" in some way, he feels exposed. He notes how the waitresses deal with customers in a manner one would deal with one's siblings, and he decides to hide the tip he knows is too much under his plate so that he would not hear her laughter, her scorn for him doing so<sup>328</sup>. This constant sense of inadequacy and contradiction of not fitting in with neither class, the dominant or the subordinated, strengthens his place at the table of characters fitting the role of elements of popular culture, like all of his friends do, each in their own way.

### **Susan – Domestic Nature, Jinny – The Life of a Party, Rhoda – A Wallflower**

The next part is told from Susan's point of view. She is still at home, on a farm, enjoying nature and taking claim over it in her mind. She asks the question that Neville asked Bernard, only she asks herself who she is. She shares that she is almost twenty years old. She does not know who she is as a person, at one point she says that she likes when shepherds in the fields look at her and gypsy women suckling their children in a ditch beside their cart do the same. And she imagines one day her lover will come and ask her to marry him and she will say yes and get married and have children<sup>329</sup>. She then ponders:

*"I will have maids in aprons; men with pitchforks; a kitchen where they bring the ailing lambs to warm in baskets, where the hams hang and the onions glisten. I shall be like my mother, silent in a blue apron locking up the cupboards<sup>330</sup>."*

This unquestionably patriarchal scene perfectly portrays the mindset of that time, and adds itself to the ever-growing group of elements of popular culture concerning the position of women in this novel, and other writing of Virginia Woolf that have been and will be analyzed. Susan's whole inner monologue is continuation of this scene with her doing various farm work and enjoying nature and making meals for her father and in the evening she sits and sews while thinking of her two female childhood friends, Jinny and Rhoda. She thinks of all of them being in London and of Jinny kissing Louis, much like he thought of it himself towards the end of his narration, and with that, Susan's train of thought cuts off.

Going forward, the reader gets a glimpse into the mind of a young lady – Jinny. She explains how the day is coming to an end, but the night has just begun. She is all ready for a night out with her silk pantyhose, a necklace with gems in it, uncomfortable heels. Everything a proper

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<sup>327</sup> John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 20

<sup>328</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 66-67

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 67-69

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.* p. 69

young lady must have for a party. She does everything that she should, she sits in a car in such a way so as not to undo her hairdo, which is “swept up in one curve”, and her lips being “precisely red”. She joins others who look and act exactly the same. “All is decided and ready;”, she says. She enters the ballroom, notices that everything is just as she imagined it would be. She notices “women stand upright the bodies of men”, the scene unfurls and she takes a moment to describe how the men are very young and how they wish to make a good impression. When she turns, so do they, and she beckons one to come and to the other she says ‘no’. The pale young gentleman with dark hair and Jinny start dancing. “Our bodies, his hard, mine flowing [...]”, she says. The dance ends and they go towards the chairs. She tries wine for the first time and likes it. After a while she decides she likes blond men, too, and her stream of consciousness narrative ends with her dancing with another young man<sup>331</sup>. This whole section only underlines and strengthens the element of popular culture that women should be pretty and delicate, but it is also a bit contradictory with Jinny being a flirt and changing partners very quickly. It foreshadows how later in the novel she would take multiple lovers.

The last narrator for this whole part is Rhoda, who happens to be at the same party as Jinny, but has a vastly different experience, and it is hard to believe that they are at the same place, at the same time. For her the party does not hold even an ounce of charm and appeal. The people there are smiling “to mask their cruelty”, and she does not know if she should accept the offer of one young man to dance or not<sup>332</sup>. She feels constricted in her party clothes and is envious of a cat she spies out of the nearby window because the cat is free to stretch. She feels exposed, much like Louis. In the same way he felt exposed while he imagined his childhood friends to have some sort of invisible shield as protection, Rhoda feels exposed at this dance party. She sees Jinny and how easily she flirts and tells the truth, while Rhoda feels like she is lying simply by being there. Her mind tries to remind her that as a child she imagined herself to be the commander of her brigade, but in this room with these people she feels utterly lost and notes that what she says “is perpetually contradicted”, which in turn immediately places this little image of her struggling to make conversation and being contradicted every time over and again an element of the popular, because she lives with her mother and we remember that she has no father from the first part of the novel, she does not want to be at this party, and yet, she is, contradicting her inner self, and that concludes the third part of the novel.

## **Part Four – The Dinner**

### **Prologue Four**

The fourth part of the novel commences with yet another prologue, as all of the nine parts do, and the opening sentence starts with a description that the sun has completely risen and none of it is hidden behind the horizon anymore. It has risen above it and is now fully visible in the sky, which signifies the more mature adulthood that the six narrators will have entered in this part of the novel. At this point, the rest of the scenery surrounding the seascape are revealed, doused by the strong rays of sunshine. There are woods, hills, cornfields, rivers and lawns all around the little beach, and all of them now gleam with vibrant colours, brought forward by the sun.

The birds that were singing in unison and harmony in the prologue of the third part of the novel were now scattered and singing each on its own not even caring if their song is competing with the song of another. Therefore, the previously subordinated, turned dominant participants of the bird group have now scattered to be on their own and are feverishly singing. They are once again united when the leftovers are thrown out of the kitchen and when they see some snails. The poor snails get eaten and take the place of the worm from the previous part. The snail is now the disempowered one and it is more than apparent in the description of the birds’ feeding frenzy. The author describes how the birds “swooped suddenly from the lilac bough or the fence. They spied a

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<sup>331</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 70-73

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.* p. 73

snail and tapped the shell against a stone. They tapped furiously, methodically, until the shell broke and something slimy oozed from the crack<sup>333</sup>.” This level of savagery is then connected with the turbaned warriors from the third prologue, and the birds are definitely seen as the dominant ones, while the poor snail dies, with no power to defend itself and left with nothing but a way to succumb into subordination.

The rays of sunshine breaches further into the house and everything comes alive and seems bigger and more dangerous than it is or should be. The plate on the table resembles a lake and the nearby knife looks like a dagger made out of ice. Those docile, passive objects suddenly give off an air of grandeur and peril. They transcend their subordination by being touched by the golden rays of sunshine. Soon it is revealed how the chairs and the whole table have come into the light and their presence is now known and all the quirks and details of the room and the objects within it are now visible, sharp, emphasized, like the grain of the wood, or the fine veiny patterns of the china. This prologue concludes with everything being “without shadow”, and those shadows being chased away by the light, forced to hang in folds and dwell in the background<sup>334</sup>.

### **The Importance of Trousers**

The main portion of the fourth section of Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves* opens with Bernard once more, and that will continue happening throughout the whole novel more often than not. He describes travelling by train towards London. On the train are other men, and while they hurry towards the capital of England, he takes notice of other men at other train stations holding on a little tighter to the newspapers they are presumably reading or just carrying along while the train passes them by. The newspapers are a fairly obvious element of popular culture because the texts in the newspapers are popular texts. And what constitutes a popular text? According to John Fiske in his *Understanding Popular Culture*, a popular text has to have a “producerly” quality. That means that those texts are closed, not open for discussion and analysis in a sense that a literary text is, the reader is required to receive the text as is, “it offers itself to popular production”, and it can be contradictory in nature, as the very culture it belongs to<sup>335</sup>. Given all of this, it can be easily argued that the many texts in newspapers conform to such a description.

Returning to the text, the author offers to the reader an image of Bernard on a train with some other men, observing the men with their newspapers, and Bernard reveals that he has gotten engaged. There is some glee in his thoughts, but not in the same way that there has been in Neville’s at the beginning of the previous part of the novel. This comes as no surprise due to the fact that he is not Neville and that here, he is older than the two of them were in the third part, when they were in college. He feels a sense of unified goal amongst him and his travel companions, to arrive at their destination, namely – London, but at the same time he does not wish to reach the destination because he is sure the camaraderie between them will dissipate as soon as they do arrive in London and the exit doors open. His wish comes true and at the same time does not because of its contradictory nature, and so they all reach their destination and the mutual appreciation vanishes<sup>336</sup>. This slight contradiction of wishing to reach his destination and at the same time not wishing to do so intensifies his character as being one of the main elements of popular culture in the novel.

Further on, he continues on foot and remarks just how much “depends upon trousers; the intelligent head is entirely handicapped by shabby trousers”, which is another element of popular culture. In the capitalist society appearances are everything. If one possesses all the knowledge in this world, but does not look the part, nobody would listen to what they have to say, and the situation has not really improved that much nowadays. I have recently watched a British TV show *The*

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<sup>333</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 77

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.* p. 77

<sup>335</sup> John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 83-84

<sup>336</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp.78-79

*Graham Norton Show*, where an actress, Jodie Whittaker, explained how she was waiting for a train on an Oxford platform holding an empty glass mug for a coffee to go. She was dressed in ordinary clothes, nothing to write home about, and an elderly gentleman started approaching her. She obviously thought he recognized her, seeing how she is portraying The Doctor in the British TV series *Dr. Who*, which is extremely popular all over the world, but the gentleman had his hand outstretched while approaching her, and when she asked him what he was doing he explained how he thought she was homeless and was reaching over her glass mug in order to give her some money<sup>337</sup>. So, even though she is a famous actress, the way she was dressed and the fact that she was on a subway station and holding an empty coffee cup was enough to make the older gentleman conclude how she is homeless and is asking for money. Thus one must come to an inevitable conclusion that the notion of appearances being extremely important has survived and is “alive and kicking” even today.

Bernard continues with his train of thought about clothes being very important and muses how the people in the street are all “impelled by some necessity. Some miserable affair of keeping an appointment, of buying a hat, [...]”<sup>338</sup>, and this thought is a continuance of the one where trousers are extremely important. These notions are undisputable elements of popular culture in the novel because, as Judith Williamson argues, to obtain and consequently own a product gives the people a sense of control, and it is “the only form of control legitimized in our culture”<sup>339</sup>. John Fiske then adds how money equals power in the capitalist societies, and thus the act of making a purchase gives people sense of empowerment and dominance<sup>340</sup>, and Gareth Stedman-Jones states in his study of members of the working class in nineteenth and early twentieth century London that it was apparently more important to spend money on things so that those would be shown, than actually save money and that when “money was available which did not have to be spent on necessities, it was used to purchase articles for display rather than articles of use”<sup>341</sup>. So, for example, those who were born into a working class family could buy things that could easily be found in a home of somebody belonging to a middle class society, and with that appear to be a middle class family, rather than a working class. With that, they would briefly bridge the gap between the two classes and place themselves into the empowered class out of the two.

### **Bernard’s Observations**

Bernard’s stream of consciousness continues and he describes what is happening around him diverging from this topic only to insert a few philosophical questions here and there, until he asks himself if he should accept the people around him amongst whom there are “errand boys and furtive and fugitive girls who, ignoring their doom, look in at shop windows”<sup>342</sup>. And here, once again, boys have jobs, they are running errands for somebody and will be compensated for it, but the girls are feeling guilty and they have gone astray and yet they look through the glass of shop displays, presumably wishing to buy something. The boys already have power, they belong to the dominant class out of the two genders, but the girls wish to assert themselves through shopping, which has already been stated previously, so this scene attaches itself to the group of elements of popular

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<sup>337</sup> FULL *Graham Norton Show* 6/12/2019 Dwayne Johnson, Kevin Hart, Jodie Whittaker, Harry, Michael Palin, YouTube.com < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJZGwscFpg>>, (Online since 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2019, accessed on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2020)

<sup>338</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 79

<sup>339</sup> Judith Williamson, *Consuming Passions: The Dynamics of Popular Culture* (London: Marion Boyars, 1986), p. 231

<sup>340</sup> John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 26

<sup>341</sup> Gareth Stedman Jones, “Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870-1900; Notes on the Remaking of a Working Class” in *Popular Culture: Past and Present*, B. Waites, T. Bennett, and G. Martin (eds.) (London: Croom Helm/Open University Press, 1982), p. 101

<sup>342</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 80

culture that expands and grows bigger with each part of this novel, the elements of the popular that have already proven to be prevalent in the previously analyzed novel – *Orlando*.

He continues with his narration and ponders how his children will visit that part of the town in the future. He declares himself “emptied of ambition”, how he does not remember his talent for making phrases or even what he looks like, and at the same time he says that a person’s identity is not something that can be extinguished, that he is not a part of the street but an observer observing it<sup>343</sup>. Once again, that equivocal, contradictory streak rears its head during a narrator’s inner monologue. Bernard has already been placed in a group of characters exhibiting this feature from as far as the first part of the text when he talked about the huge plants in Elvedon, but at the same time him and Susan being the giants, or like Louis with his constant striving to belong to both classes of society the high class and low class or the time when he at the same time found Percival clumsy but at the same time the one who is an inspiration for poetry, or Susan feeling the contradictory feeling of love and hate at the beginning of the novel, or Neville feeling like a lord coming to his estate at the beginning of the second part and saluting the statue of the founder of his school, and Jinny’s contradictory behavior of a flirt at the party and at the same time striving to be a proper young lady her whole life up to that point from the third part of the novel, even Rhoda’s playing with her petals where she is the commander of the armada, a traditionally masculine job which is contradicted by her being a girl. All of them have exhibited some contradictory trait and with it have become elements of popular culture in the novel. And each time they contradict themselves or contribute to an opposing situation, it only strengthens their place at the round table of the elements of popular culture in Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves*.

Continuing from that point in the text when Bernard declared himself an observer, he then does just that, observes. Observes people in the street and, as per usual, thinks up stories about them, saying his phrases as he goes. At some point his thoughts turn quite philosophical once more and he notes that he is good at talking in phrases about others, but needs “the illumination of other people’s eyes<sup>344</sup>” in order to be himself. He thinks of his five childhood friends, his five oldest friends, and how he feels safe in speaking freely in front of them. He is grateful for the opportunity to have dinner with them that night at some French restaurant. He reveals to the reader that it is Percival’s departure to India that is the reason for them dining together<sup>345</sup>. The mere mentioning of India, which was a British colony at the time, brings up the notion of popular culture because a colony in and of itself is a whole country of subordinated people, and therefore a strong and undeniable element of popular culture. During the time that India was colonized by the British Empire “Indians had to follow fixed rules set for them<sup>346</sup>” and “E.M Forster writes in “A passage to India” that Indians and dogs were not allowed in their colonies and clubs (1924)<sup>347</sup>.” Such behaviour can often be seen from those who hold all the power and in such a way show their dominance, thus India becomes another element of popular culture in the novel.

A little more of Bernard’s inner monologue goes by and he starts itching for a conversation and so he states that he would speak to anybody, the sweeper, the postman, the waiter in the restaurant, the proprietor who has mixed a salad for a special guest. And he would ask this proprietor what he was saying “to the lady in earrings” and whether she is a friend or a customer<sup>348</sup>. Once more, the inescapable element of popular culture of women not being described by their occupation, if they even have one, but by their beauty and accessories, like the aforementioned lady

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<sup>343</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 80-81

<sup>344</sup> Ibid. p. 81

<sup>345</sup> Ibid. p. 82

<sup>346</sup> Wahid Pervez, “British Raj in India: A Postcolonial Critique of the novel “Burnt Shadows””, *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies*, Volume 5, Issue 11 (2018), p. 43

<sup>347</sup> Ibid. pp. 43-44

<sup>348</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 82

in earrings, comes into view. All the men are referred to by their positions, but the lady, even though is a lady and should automatically be the dominant one in society, is nothing more but a random woman who has notable earrings. This element of the popular, the subordinated and disempowered class of society, perpetually arises throughout the novel.

### **Expecting Percival, Talking about the Past**

As Bernard's train of thoughts comes to a close, the author shifts the reader's attention to Neville who has come early to the restaurant and has sat at the designated table in anticipation of seeing Percival. Neville's every waking moment from the very second he has placed himself at the table is overwhelmingly filled with thoughts of Percival, where he is, when he will come, why he has not arrived yet, and so on and so forth. He feels like every look he receives from complete strangers is like a whiplash. "The normal is abolished," he declares, and this sentence is somehow opposing to his intense desire for neatness, making it an element of popular culture, of course. The next second the door which have been opening and closing constantly with other people entering the restaurant open again attracting Neville's attention in hopes that this time it really would be Percival, but it is Louis. Neville describes him as having a "strange mixture of assurance and timidity", how he is amongst other things difficult and domineering, but because his eyes contain laughter he also inspires respect<sup>349</sup>, and this, too, being a contradictory trait, fortifies Louis's place within the elements of the popular in the text, adding one more reason why he is so to the ever-growing list.

At this point in the novel the inner monologues of the main six characters start overlapping and following one after another as they successively arrive to the restaurant, each narrator announcing the next one that comes through the door. Therefore, as Neville announced Louis, so Louis announces Susan. He notes how she "has not dressed because she despises the futility of London", and how her walk, once she started moving through the restaurant, are cautious and surreptitious, and yet strong and confident<sup>350</sup>. Louis's admiration for Susan's simple and non-gaudy style has already been introduced in the previous chapter, but this contradictory description of her moving in a careful, cautious manner, and at the same time moving with confidence and strength reinforces her as being one of the elements of popular culture in the novel, as all of the six main characters have become so far, in some way. At the end of this portion of Louis's narration he thinks about how sometimes a wish awakens in him to be loved by Susan, how that notion is not off-putting in the slightest. Then he sees Rhoda, she is reluctant to come over, and yet she does so and joins them at the table. Neville looks at the door that have opened and closed again, expecting Percival, but he is not there, he has not come yet.

Susan introduces Jinny as she stands in the door. Susan perceives Jinny as being a bright star that everybody is drawn to. She notes how everything seems to have stopped and when she came to the table everybody changed, Louis straightened his tie, Neville rearranged the forks in front of him, Rhoda is nervous and Susan is at once aware of her "shabby dress" and her "square-tipped fingernails" which she promptly covers with a tablecloth<sup>351</sup>. This scene resembles profusely the one from their early childhood at the beginning of the book. The dynamics of the group was almost exactly the same. Jinny was the expressive one Rhoda and Susan felt inferior to and envious, respectively. Later on in the book it was made known that both Jinny and Rhoda have attended the same party, even though they have had vastly different experiences. Louis received a kiss from Jinny when they were kids and now he wants to look presentable. The reader finds out that Neville is not interested in girls, but is in love with Percival, and that is most probably the reason why he is fidgeting with the forks on the table and not because of Jinny, as Susan thinks. Now, Susan's inferior clothes and non-fashionable shape of nails are enough to make her feel like she is the one of

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<sup>349</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 83-84

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.* p. 84

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.* p. 85

a lesser worth than Jinny who is positively radiant looking, and that is exactly what happened in the first section of the novel when Susan explained to Bernard: “My eyes are hard. Jinny’s eyes break into a thousand lights<sup>352</sup>.” She has placed herself below Jinny and with that has lost her power and became the subordinated one, strengthening the already placed trait that has put her among the elements of popular culture in the text.

Susan’s narration is replaced by Neville’s and he really only thinks about how Percival has not arrived yet. He looks towards the door once more and sees Bernard coming towards them. He remarks how even though Bernard has a coat and a shirt, his hair is messy and he does not see that him and Neville are different. He says that he half-knows everybody, perhaps because he constantly thinks of stories about complete strangers and easily falls into a conversation with a total stranger, as it has been demonstrated when they were travelling back home from their boarding school; but at the same time, because of all of that, Neville states firmly that Bernard does not actually know anybody. This contradictory image of Bernard having the gentlemanly clothes but not really looking the part because his hair is not combed, and the fact that he half-knows everybody, but actually does not know anybody, is the perfect example of why Bernard is an element of popular culture himself.

Neville’s train of thoughts is interrupted by Rhoda’s inner monologue. She observes the people in the restaurant, thinking how they are perfect strangers and how she feels faceless in comparison to Susan and Jinny because when people see them they adjust their posture or change their expression, but nobody does that for her. In this facelessness of hers she considers herself to be on a lower hierarchy scale than her two other childhood friends, and thus falls into the category of the elements of the popular, because she has no power like that. But even when she feels disempowered, she actually attributes her feeling lost and disoriented to “Neville and his misery”. She was observant enough to realize that Neville is expecting Percival and is perpetually disappointed when it turns out that it is not him at the door. She discloses how Neville cannot bring himself to look openly at the door in his expectance, but then steals a glance and when it turns out that it is not Percival, he murmurs “He has not come.”, but then Rhoda sees him, the one Neville is looking for, the one he is waiting for. Neville is instantly calmer, his world makes sense again and the rule of chaos is over for him. Jinny notices Percival as well and she makes a remark how he has not dressed for the occasion, much like Susan has not<sup>353</sup>. The importance of clothing has already been analyzed at the beginning of this section of the novel, and it resurfaces again. Even though Percival is a desirable young man and is going off to India for work, the first thing that Jinny notices is his lack of sophisticated clothing for such an occasion. But that is not strange considering how Jinny is all about being a properly clothed and groomed young lady of stature. What is unusual, to say the least, is that Neville, who desires neatness and order and does not like “mixing things” does not mind at all that Percival lacks in the appropriate clothing, even though he did mind the unkempt look of Bernard’s hair. This is just an additional contradictory trait of Neville’s, placing him front and center of the group of elements of popular culture in the text, at least for the time being. Earlier on, it had been Louis with his desire to be like Bernard, but at the same time not knowing how to overcome his father, the banker from Brisbane, and his Australian accent.

The next narrator is Bernard, he, too, notices and announces Percival, but he does not comment on Percival’s clothing, on contrary, he speaks of Percival as a hero, he thinks back on their school days and how all the boys followed Percival, he was a leader and he still is, what with him going to India. He reveals to the reader that the oldest of them is not yet twenty-five years old and thinks of the ways in which they have changed over the years. The tension in the group eases up and slowly dissipates as Percival takes a seat next to Susan, “whom he loves”, according to Bernard, and the dinner officially commences. They start talking about their early childhood, and at this point it is not clear if they are actually having a conversation, saying these thoughts aloud, or have the thoughts remained inside their individual minds. In the course of their conversation they

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<sup>352</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 10

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.* p. 86

revisit the all-too-familiar elements of popular culture like Mrs Constable, the boot boy and the scullery maid who kissed in the kitchen garden, the slaughtered man that lay in the gutter, the sweepers with their brooms and the woman reading at Elvedon, the cab that took Bernard to the train station and then their “unmanly tears” as they set off for school, and multitude of other servants and educators that all of them have encountered throughout their years at their respecting boarding schools. The conversations then covers all of the instances that they have crossed paths, up to the end of the last chapter with Rhoda and Jinny meeting at the same party<sup>354</sup>.

### **Dining with Percival**

Bernard steers the conversation back to the present. He ponders how they have all some together and are there now because they love Percival, but immediately changes his mind because it seems to him like that is not enough. Then Neville remarks how everything is real and on display, as are they, so that they could talk. Louis commences a narration that is a bit longer and this signifies that it is again his inner monologue. He thinks of how different they are, but mainly how he differs from everybody. He remarks on his smoothing his hair on the way to the table in hopes that he would look like them. He thinks of his early childhood, and the women at the Nile, how he has led a thousand lives, and now the man they see before them is just a glimpse of what he once was. How he did not eat any lunch that day so that Susan would perceive his as especially thin and that Jinny might feel sympathy for him. He also notes how he likes Susan and Percival, but hates everybody else because he does all of those silly things for their sake, making his hair smooth and trying to conceal his accent. And so once again, Louis’s complex about his Australian heritage rears its ugly head<sup>355</sup>. This is a well-established element of popular culture and, as it has been said before, will remain a chip on his shoulder throughout the entirety of Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves*. Louis’s narration ends with him explaining how he needs to shroud and shield himself in poetry when he is in that restaurant from the previous part of the novel, eating his lunch.

The next narration is Jinny’s, and she revels in all of them being intimidated by her. And the controversy of her being a woman, and yet holding such power over all of them, men and women, her friends and complete strangers in the restaurant, makes her a perfect element of the popular, but at the same time, she does not dazzle with her mind, but her body, which conforms with the notion of women in the white patriarchal societies, that women should be always well groomed and pretty, things to be looked at, and nothing more.

Neville’s inner monologue starts off focused on Jinny and how she stood at the door “demanding admiration”, and then shift to everybody and how they have not noticed him because he has come early in order to sit beside the one he loves, namely Percival. He is desperate because he will never have Percival’s love, maybe friendship, maybe admiration, but never love, and he suffers greatly for it, but at the same time manages to think about his dignity in his suffering and compare himself to Louis who makes a spectacle out of his suffering, which Neville does not appreciate in the slightest<sup>356</sup>. His unconventional love towards Percival has already made him into an element of popular culture in the second section of the novel, and his contrasting behaviour of desiring and demanding neatness and order, and yet again wreaking havoc around him with his negative energy, namely unsettling Rhoda earlier in the text while waiting for Percival to arrive, only ensure that he remains so.

The reader gets a glimpse into Rhoda’s innermost thoughts next. She discloses how she is still afraid of all of them, much like Louis is envious of all of them, just like they both had been as children. She notices that all of them have their goals, but she feels lost and has “no single body [...]” for her “[...]to follow”, and again she makes a remark about her facelessness. She wishes to belong, so she remembers imitating the way Susan and Jinny dressed and how she still waits for

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<sup>354</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 86-88

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 89-90

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 90-91

other people to speak and only then speaks herself imitating them, and she reveals how she did not come to the restaurant so that she would see them, but to imitate the way they live<sup>357</sup>. The same elements of popular culture which have been established at the beginning of the novel resurface here, not just for Rhoda, but all of the main characters. Her sense of utter submission makes her a pure member of the disempowered and subordinated, but by imitating them, she wishes to overcome her subordination and become their equal, which is one of the main characteristics of popular culture.

Following Rhoda's narration is Susan's recounting of when she arrived to the restaurant, how she disliked the smell of the city and would much rather be at home in the field. She does not understand the pretense of talking in phrases because she likes to talk in simple terms with emotions of love, hate, rage and pain. She then thinks about how lovely it will be when she experiences motherhood and everything that entails. How she would then "possess more than Jinny, more than Rhoda" by the time she dies. She fantasizes about what she would do for her children and has her whole life planned, at least where her future children are concerned. At the same time she feels jealous of Jinny's being well kempt and how the one she loves escapes, and we are left to wonder who among the four young men preset it is<sup>358</sup>. Susan's traditionally domestic nature is a perfect element of the popular with the American dream of men being the breadwinners and women the housemakers coming straight to mind. The addition to her character belonging to the elements of popular culture at the same time stems from her being inherently traditional but at the same time being jealous of Jinny's appearance, contradicting her very nature.

After Susan's train of thoughts ends for now, Bernard commences his narration stating how he detests solitude and is nothing without his phrases. He notes how Louis thinks best when he is alone "and will write some words that may outlast" them all. He also notes Rhoda's love of solitude, but he thinks of himself as existing only "when the plumber, or the horse-dealer, or whoever it may be" says something that sparks his imagination. Therefore, he is what other people influence him to be, while the others are influenced solely by themselves, or so he thinks. Because of this he wishes to sit next to fifty different people and not just one like Neville and Susan do. "I am not gross; I am not a snob.", says Bernard, continuing how when he succumbs to the pressure of society he more often than not manages to put "something difficult into the currency", meaning that with his phrases he breaks the status quo. But even after all of that he admits to losing something in the midst of it all, he is convinced how he would not be remembered by any of his friends when he dies<sup>359</sup>. This notion of his is a bit ironic considering the fact that at the end of the novel, the last chapter is told solely from Bernard's perspective, but nobody can think him ironic because how could he have known that he would be the last narrator of Woolf's *The Waves*? With him thinking how his character is influenced by the people around him, and stating firmly how he is not a snob, he places himself right in the middle of the group of elements of the popular because him being the son of a gentleman and with it a young gentleman himself, he should be at the top of the social hierarchy, but because he thinks he will not leave his mark and due to his being so down to earth and not thinking himself better than anybody else, just different, he loses some of the power and becomes an undeniable element of popular culture once more.

Rhoda, Jinny and Louis share their thoughts about the senses of sight and sound merging, and Louis offers the, by now, well-known elements of the popular like motor cars and omnibuses, as well as some new ones like drunkards and merrymakers, who are those society ostracizes and because of that they belong to those subordinated and disempowered. All the while all Neville thinks about is how Percival is going to India and does not really pay attention to much else<sup>360</sup>.

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<sup>357</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 91-92

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 92-93

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 93-94

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 94-95

India has been established as an element of the popular at the beginning of this section of the novel and will continue to be so throughout it and the following one.

Bernard cannot resist coining a story around Percival's trip. He imagines India as a place with decaying, fragile buildings, natives wearing loincloths, a sour smell, a pair of oxen that have been dragging a low cart which is now stuck in mud and an elderly man who is in a ditch observing his navel<sup>361</sup>. But then Percival, a hero, a leader rides in on a flea-bitten mare, and it is very important to underline here that the mare that Percival is riding does not in fact have fleas, but that it is a special type of a horse which has a light coat with spots or streaks that are darker than it is<sup>362</sup>. Bernard imagines Percival shouting at the oxen, making them pull the cart out of the mud, fixing the problem, which in turn makes the natives think him God<sup>363</sup>. This picture of a rotten country with savagely clothed natives who would think of a white male as a God is nothing more than another element of popular culture, which is just a continuation of Neville's mentioning of India.

Rhoda thinks about how Percival being there anchored all of them and mentions India again, that overpowering element of the popular in this fourth part of the novel. Susan and Jinny think of hate and love and love and hate, respectively, at the same time, and the contradiction lies that those two are "almost indistinguishable" as Jinny points out, which is the same element of popular culture from the first section of the novel when Susan hated and loved at the same time when Jinny kissed Louis in the garden<sup>364</sup>. Neville eats his food but does not taste it because of India. Rhoda goes into one of her daydreams of the sea and nature, like she always does when she wants to escape the confines of society. Neville once again relives the torture he has put himself through while waiting for Percival to arrive. Jinny thinks of the party from the previous section of the novel and how the young man she was with succumbed to her every word, which is a nice representation of the contradiction of popular culture because the women are supposed to be the ones who are subordinated and disempowered, but in Jinny's case she uses her beauty as a weapon<sup>365</sup>. Then Louis and Rhoda engage in a private conversation observing others at the table and this is the inception of the romantic relationship that the two of them will have later on in the novel. They soon discuss where they would go next, and then Bernard announces his engagement. Susan acknowledges silently how Bernard's engagement is a big change for the dynamics of the group. Louis and Rhoda are still discussing the rest of the group. Bernard turns his phrases and notices multitude of other people in the restaurant and wonders what are their stories. And here again we see some women who are having dinner alone and Bernard is asking himself why are they alone, alone meaning unaccompanied by a man, then there is a young man from the country who is having dinner with a friend of his father, and the fact that they have no women at their table is not something that crosses Bernard's mind as strange as the women who are dining alone did. He notices a lady that has powdered her nose three times during a conversation and his thoughts are that she is concerned by the state of her nose. There is one man sitting alone with an eyeglass and a lady who is alone and drinks champagne. And here as before in the novel the women are the ones who are not supposed to be alone, who are thinking of their looks first and foremost and who are drinking if they are alone, but it is completely ordinary and usual to see men dining alone and they are characterized by some other characteristic and not their drink of choice if they are sitting alone<sup>366</sup>. This kind of portrayal of the genders inside of the white, capitalist, patriarchal societies perfectly and undeniably showcases that women are an irrevocable element of popular culture in the novel.

As they pay the bill and prepare to leave the table, Louis is thinking how all of them have

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<sup>361</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 95

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.* p. 216

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.* p. 95

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.* p. 96

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 97-98

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 98-101

come together after such a long time and how they have a sense of community once again. Their personal little coterie. “Something is made<sup>367</sup>.”, he says, and in that one simple little three word sentence Woolf manages to put this sense of fellowship. At the beginning of this thesis, in the first chapter where theories and definitions about popular culture are presented, in a part under the versatility of popular culture there has been a part where Joke Hermes’s notion of popular culture provides a virtual community, where people actively enjoying or contributing to popular culture are cultural citizens because popular culture “makes us welcome and offers belonging”, and among other things it allows us to freely blur the lines between our public lives and our private lives<sup>368</sup>. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Louis’s musings about the renewed connection of their little group spills over to Jinny’s short inner monologue where she reveals that that companionship of theirs is all because of Percival. One by one all of them contribute to the bubble of fellowship that was gifted to them by Percival’s presence<sup>369</sup>. Percival then becomes an element of popular culture in and of himself, by doing nothing, by just being present. He is like a beacon that shines in the night, a lighthouse guiding the ships, inactive, but influential.

Bernard in his philosophical way sees the future in Percival, but then asks himself “What is to come<sup>370</sup>?”. He ponders how they all added “to the treasury of moments” and lays out a succession of elements of popular culture:

*“We are not slaves bound to suffer incessantly unrecorded petty blows on our bent backs. We are not sheep either, following a master. We are creators. We too have made something that will join the innumerable congregation of past time. We, too, as we put on our hats and push open the door, stride not into chaos, but into a world that our own force can subjugate and make part of the illuminated and everlasting road<sup>371</sup>.”*

Bernard’s train of thoughts here covers a multitude of elements of popular culture like the poor slaves who are the original disempowered and subordinated class of society, then sheep which follow a shepherd, who is their master, but he uses the word mater rather than a shepherd, which might indicate that the sheep could be people, and if we focus our attention to one of the previous prologues, namely the third one, we will remember the author using an imagery of white sheep to depict the Caucasian people who are being attacked by the warriors in turbans. The denouement would be that those sheep and Bernard’s imagery of them not being those sheep belong to the same flock, and are indeed an undeniable element of the popular. Further down this part of Bernard’s inner monologue, he states that they are creators, how they shine a light on their own way and together make order out of chaos, which directly draws a connection between Hermes’s notion of popular culture bringing a sense of community and furthermore a notion of Ioan Davies that, as he states, popular culture allows us to, either collectively or individually, make our fictions<sup>372</sup>, which Bernard clearly does here, and the reader could perceive others as doing so as well with their previous additions to the bubble that has been brought on by the presence of Percival.

The evening comes to a close and they all say goodbye to each other and to Percival, and the fourth section of the novel concludes with Neville announcing that the cab, another already

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<sup>367</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 101

<sup>368</sup> Joke Hermes, *Re-reading Popular Culture* (Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 1-3

<sup>369</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 102

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.* p. 102

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.* p. 102

<sup>372</sup> Ioan Davies, *Cultural Studies and Beyond, Fragments of Empire* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995 first edition, this edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005), p. 113

established element of the popular, comes, receives Percival and takes him away<sup>373</sup>.

## **Part Five – After the Dinner**

### **Prologue Five**

The fifth part of the novel is prefaced with the sun that has “risen to its full height<sup>374</sup>”. Yet again, the girl that was grouching behind the horizon and that personified the Statue of Liberty is mentioned. She is now laying on her bed which is the green sea, so the colour green is still there, and she is still illuminating everything. There is a shift and the focal point becomes the sun. “Now the sun burned uncompromising, undeniable<sup>375</sup>.” After this revelation, it is explained how the sun rules over all things in its path, it becomes the ultimate sovereign and with it the undisputable dominant and empowered entity in prologues. In describing everything the sun touches and influences, there is a part when the sun shines upon the old women who are kneeling and washing clothes by beating them on the stones. This is a classic and well-established element of popular culture of women being the subordinated one, and clearly so due to the submissive posture of them kneeling in the river bed and washing the clothes manually, by beating them on the stones<sup>376</sup>. It is their job to be submissive, to work around the house, to be good girls, good daughters, good wives and good mothers. Another element of popular culture is in the steam boats that the sun touches next. The picture painted by the author’s words reveals the empowered passengers lounging on the deck, enjoying the sun or shielding their faces from it, and the subordinate steam boat which carries them day after day in a monotonous dance, disempowered and constricted by “its oily throbbing sides<sup>377</sup>”.

The scene follows the sun and everything in its path, the hills, the river beds and the women kneeling there, washing clothes, and the mules trying to find the right way through the stony path. It is noon and the sun is very hot, it scorches the hills in warmer climates and smooths those belonging to countries with milder ones. The sun continues waking everything up and the scenery keeps growing.

Once again the birds sing their songs but stop abruptly. Now they start making their nests and that reminds the reader of the idiom ‘to build a nest egg’ when people save up in order to spend their savings for a particular thing or an occasion. It foreshadows the seriousness that the six main characters obtained in their lives in their later adulthood. The whole garden is alight with the colours of the flowers and the birds, who now we are certain represent the main characters in this intermittent allegory that are the prologues, perch on top of their nests and enjoy the view, much like people enjoy their life when all the studying has been done and over with and when they find jobs and settle down.

The sun now shines brightly on the whole house, not just one room, and we can see more of the aforementioned room. The shadows are still there, even though the room is fuller due to the light that has revealed yet another set of things inside of it. But the ambivalence of the shadowy corner, the equivocal nature of it, makes for a strong element of popular culture. In that shadowy portion there “might be a further shape to be disencumbered of shadow or still denser depths of darkness<sup>378</sup>”. The fifth prologue ends with the scene of waves crashing against the shore and falling back into the sea.

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<sup>373</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 103

<sup>374</sup> Ibid. p. 104

<sup>375</sup> Ibid. p. 104

<sup>376</sup> Ibid. p. 104

<sup>377</sup> Ibid. p. 104

<sup>378</sup> Ibid. pp. 105-106

## The Death of Percival

The main part of the fifth section of the novel takes place not long after the dinner they all have had with Percival when he was going to India. That section was concluded with Neville's short narration while he was watching Percival, his unrequited love, go away in a taxi cab. This fifth part of the novel commences with Neville's narration once more, only this time Neville is not looking at the world through the rose-coloured glasses like he did while they were in college, but he simply and devastatingly says: "He is dead<sup>379</sup>.", and the reader all but guesses immediately who he is talking about. Percival. Neville received a telegram in which it is explained how the horse Percival was riding at the time stumbled and so he got thrown off and died where he landed. Neville tortures himself by imagining in great detail the way in which this occurred. Of course he wishes it was not so, he wishes it was a lie, but it is not. He feels like the world has stopped and he, himself, stopped where he is and cannot move an inch, forwards or backwards.

The beginning of Neville's narration reveals what the fifth section of the novel is exploring – how some of the main characters are dealing with Percival dying. The first narration, of course, belongs to Neville, then Bernard's will come and at the last one will be Rhoda's.

Coming back to Neville in his desolation, he notices how there are women who go past the window without a care in the world, like there are no obstacles, which, to be fair, there are not, but he feels like the whole world has disappeared and therefore expects everybody else to notice it, too. He then becomes angry because of their apparent cluelessness and concludes that people "deserve to be tripped by molehills"<sup>380</sup>, which is an allusion to the way king William III, also known as William of Orange who ruled England from 1689 until his death in March, 1702. His horse tripped on a molehill throwing William III off his back in February, 1702 at which time he broke his collarbone, which in turn led to his death the following month<sup>381</sup>. He thinks of how people go through their lives with their eyes shut and then changes his train of thoughts for a quick second with a notion: "But why should I submit<sup>382</sup>?" and by submit he thinks why should he go through his life with shut eyes, like everybody else does? This defiant sentence is yet another element of popular culture in the novel, because he does not want to be in the flock of conformity, he does not want to conform to the norm, and he exhibits this with the sentiment following his proclamation of not submitting. "Why try to lift my foot and mount the stair? This is where I stand; here; holding the telegram<sup>383</sup>." Here a couple of previously familiar elements of the popular intertwine, in particular, there is the wish not to do as one is told, not to be the one who is subordinated by being made to follow the rules, then there is the notion of being free to show emotions, to show that he cares, that he is crushed by Percival's death, which is perceived as unmanly and therefore not suitable for a man to do, and lastly, there is the simple telegram as the media which inadvertently brought these elements of popular culture together. It brought the unfortunate news to Neville and upon reading it, Neville's reacting actions and thoughts ensued.

After his proclamation of not being submissive to the norm, he then has a flashbacks of the time he spent with Percival and reveals how he has only three letters of his. He does not disclose what is in them, just that he has it. Instead, he thinks of what could have been. He thinks of how if somebody, anybody really, has just tightened Percival's strap a little bit tighter he would not have got thrown off and would continue on being a hero<sup>384</sup>.

Naturally, everywhere Neville looks he sees potential hazard. He sees people on omnibuses, which are another already well-known element of popular culture, holding for dear life the rails of

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<sup>379</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p 107

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.* p. 107

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.* p. 216

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.* p. 107

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.* p. 107

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 107-108

them. He then inwardly decides: “I will not lift my foot to climb the stair<sup>385</sup>.” This is no longer a question of why should he do that, but a strong defiance, almost spite. As his sorrow slowly consumes him, he sees “women shuffle past with shopping bags” and “people keep on passing”, and he fully embraces the pain and he starts sobbing<sup>386</sup>. At this point in the text, once again one can find the perpetual element of popular culture which are women, and not just women as the subordinated and disempowered class of society, but women carrying shopping bags. There is a special connection between shopping, women and popular culture. It has already been mentioned throughout this research that women feel empowered when shopping. In this way they transcend their disempowered status and become the dominant ones for the duration of the shopping experience. John Fiske shares a story of a lady who was shopping with her mother when she was a little girl. Her mother would take her shopping for shoes and would spend hours and hours trying on numerous pairs of shoes. During this time, she would make the shop assistant run back and forth continually, incessantly, and in the end she would take one chosen pair home. What Fiske’s “informant” then reveals is that the story would not end there, her mother would then take the shoes back the next day insisting that there was something wrong with them, or that they did not fit right, or something else along those lines, and with that the shoe shopping escapade would end<sup>387</sup>. Fiske then discloses how the daughter, or rather, the woman he was speaking with, understood that her mother was basically bullying the shop assistant in this way, but that it was from a perspective that was on a “personal level”, but that the mother was on a completely different level. She was “operating on the level of the system” and that the relation between her and the shop assistant was one of the consumer and the producer and/or distributor. He concludes with a notion that the pleasure which she felt during those shoe shopping sessions was one brought upon by power which she had in the position of a consumer<sup>388</sup>. So, here, the fact that Neville is seeing women with shopping bags is an obvious element of popular culture with those women having just finished going shopping, carefree and relaxed, content, passing by his window. They are in a complete and utter contrast to his feelings of loneliness and loss. It can even be argued that him sobbing is another element of popular culture because it is unmanly to show emotions, a real man should be big and strong and stoic, apparently, but Neville is presumably in his home, therefore nobody should be there to see him, so if one is not witnessed behaving in an unmanly fashion, was he ever unmanly? The conundrum is the same as when a tree falls in the forest and nobody is around to hear it, does it make a sound. But then again, Neville being the son of a gentleman and a young gentleman himself, it is quite possible, expected even, for some servants to be around, and so, the conclusion is that this is an element of popular culture, after all.

### **Bernard’s Joy and Sorrow**

The next narration is Bernard’s. he is torn between joy and sorrow, he proclaims how he does not know which is which, and with such a contradictory utterance, plunges straight into the pool of elements of the popular. He then explains how his son has been born and how he knows about Percival’s death, and that is why there are contrasting, opposing feeling brewing inside of him, making him feel the feelings from the two ends of the spectrum at the same time. He then takes the time to give himself one hour to walk about and think about the influence of death on his world<sup>389</sup>. But immediately after saying how he should look at the impact of Percival dying on his world, he shifts and says: “This then is the world that Percival sees no longer. Let me look<sup>390</sup>.”

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<sup>385</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 108

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.* p. 108

<sup>387</sup> John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 26

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.* p. 26

<sup>389</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 108

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.* p. 108

Therefore, he is not comparing what has happened to his world, but rather what has happened to the world in general, without Percival. With the 'Let me look.' notion, he distances himself from the world and therefore, it cannot possibly be his world that he is observing. He sees the butcher delivering meat, and two old men stumbling in the street and sparrows that take flight, he hears some machine springing to life and then decides that he has no part in the workings of said machine because Percival does not see it anymore. Out of all of these, it could be argued that the butcher, being a member of the subordinated and disempowered class of society both by belonging to the working class and being a distributor and/or producer is one of the elements of popular culture in the section, the machine springing to life could be the second one signifying consumerism, which is an element of the popular<sup>391</sup>.

Bernard then decides he needs to ascertain what is "of great importance" and that he should be careful in doing so and "tell no lies". He then discloses how he thought of Percival as the one who was in the centre of everything and how that place is empty now because he died<sup>392</sup>.

Bernard's inner monologue then turns to the random passers-by in the street, more precisely, "men in felt hats and women carrying baskets<sup>393</sup>". He tells them in his mind about the great loss that they have all suffered and are not even aware of. How all of them have lost a leader and one of them has lost their "happiness and children", because Percival, who would have brought that to them has died and so as a consequence the person who would have married him will never meet him and will never have him as a husband, feel happiness with him or have his children. The image of men being adorned by felt hats and women carrying baskets is reminiscent of the image Louis had of women carrying red pitchers and men in turbans<sup>394</sup>. Here, once again, the women are those who work, and men are adorned with their hats. This element of popular culture where it is clearly shown how women are considered to be the subordinated class of society was the most prominent in the previously analyzed novel of Virginia Woolf, namely *Orlando*, and it resurfaces more and more in this text which is currently being analyzed, that is *The Waves*.

Coming back to Bernard, he has a hard time riding the rollercoaster that are his emotions, and so he thinks how "One cannot live outside the machine for more perhaps than half an hour<sup>395</sup>." His train of thoughts and the sadness he has been feeling for the death of his friend and the pure joy he has been feeling because of the birth of his son get interrupted by various things happening and existing around him. And he thinks of the society and the rules it imposes on an individual. He sees a newspaper title on the front page stating how "a famous actress has been divorced" and he instantly wonders which famous actress that would be. But he stops himself from buying the paper and finding out the identity of the divorced actress, because he cannot allow himself to be interrupted yet<sup>396</sup>. In this small portion of Bernard's narration one can clearly see the three attributes corroborating her notion of popular culture providing cultural citizenship, namely, being a cog in the machine is something which can arguably make someone feel like they belong, then there is the fascination by popular public figures like the famous actress depicted here, and finally it allows the blurring of the lines between the public and private life of an individual<sup>397</sup>, exactly like the intertwining of his thoughts where he is at the same time thinking about life and death, wondering about the famous actress who has got divorced and then consciously steering his thoughts back towards finding out what is the nature of his feelings considering the death of his friend.

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<sup>391</sup> Sara Pendergast, Tom Pendergast, *St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture* (St. James Press, 2000), p. 589

<sup>392</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 108

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.* p. 109

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.* p. 109

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 109-110

<sup>397</sup> Joke Hermes, *Re-reading Popular Culture* (Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 1-3

Bernard's narration takes another turn, he now speaks to Percival directly, he says how he would share with him new discoveries, like for example if he were to discover a new vein, he would ask Percival for his opinion, but then he thinks now after some time there would be many changes that he could not explain, for instance, his son. He did not have a son the last time when all of them were at dinner, and Percival died before finding out that Bernard has a son, therefore, it is something Bernard could not explain to Percival, in Bernard's opinion. While thinking about it, it seems to him like everything has returned to "the usual order". But the very next moment he voices his resentment for that very order<sup>398</sup>. His declaration goes like this:

*"I will not let myself be made yet to accept the sequence of things. I will walk; I will not change the rhythm of my mind by stopping, by looking; I will walk. I will go up these steps into the gallery and submit myself to the influence of minds like mine outside the sequence"<sup>399</sup>.*

Bernard's wish to defy the order and resist the urge to "accept the sequence of things" is fortifying his character being an unyielding element of popular culture. And here once again the notion of cultural citizenship pointed out by Joke Hermes<sup>400</sup> comes into play. He does not let himself get drawn into the usual order of things because he wants to feel, to think about Percival some more and then, presumably, be done with it. Both him and Neville refuse to do what is required of them by the rules of society, however, they do it in completely opposite ways, Bernard by not stopping, perpetually walking, moving, going up the steps into the gallery, and Neville by not moving, not taking that one step onto the step in his home and not passing the tree in the distance, that tree is the invisible barrier he cannot pass. So both of them restrain themselves in their own way, and those ways are as far apart as the earth they walk on and the sky they look at.

Returning to Bernard, his proclamation of going to the gallery so that he would submit himself to the influence of minds like his which are outside the sequence might be an allusion about the type of people visiting the gallery, which is not all that likely, I would argue that he thinks about the great artists who thought outside the box, or as he put it "outside the sequence". All things considered, it could be surmised that gallery and the art pieces displayed there, even though at first site belonging to high culture, because of Bernard's utterance that he escapes from the rules of society there and can be in the presence of the minds like his own, become the sanctuary where Bernard can blur the lines of his public image – being a nobleman visiting an art gallery, and his private thoughts – thinking of Percival's death and showing emotions which correspond to those thoughts. In this way the elements of high culture like the gallery and consequently all the art it contains become elements of popular culture.

Bernard's narration turns inwards again and surrounded by the art of the gallery he comes to a realization – Percival was Bernard's opposite. Not in a nemesis sense, just his opposite. While Bernard loves his phrases and telling stories, Percival was "naturally truthful" and saw no point on exaggerating, like Bernard does. He ponders some more about the lives of painters and poets and how they differ, then suddenly has a thought, a realization even, that "something is added" to his "interpretation". He feels something deep inside of him, but even though he thinks about exploring it, he decides against it, and lets it lay where it is, for now. He renounces researching it further, but keeps in mind that he might go back to it, but for now he cannot widen it because that idea breaks in his hand, like all ideas break and fall over him<sup>401</sup>.

Bernard's mind slowly comes out of the need for sorrow, and now he searches his mind for an information about with whom he could talk about Percival and laugh about the funny situations

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<sup>398</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 110

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.* p. 110

<sup>400</sup> Joke Hermes, *Re-reading Popular Culture* (Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 1-3

<sup>401</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 110-112

they were in. He acknowledges that Neville loved Percival, therefore he is aware that he cannot talk to him, then again, he cannot go to Susan because Percival loved Susan, thus his mind turns to Jinny, and he ponders how he could talk to her about how one day he refused to go with Percival when he asked him to go to Hampton Court, and he thinks that deserves penance<sup>402</sup>. Hampton Court Palace was once a royal palace from the thirteenth century situated in Richmond upon Thames in the south-west of London, redeveloped by Cardinal Wolsey and then acquired and redeveloped further by Henry VIII, which it is famous for; and nowadays is a major tourist attraction<sup>403</sup>. The argument imposing itself is that this Hampton Court is actually another element of popular Culture because it is such a popular tourist attraction nowadays and open to the public.

After his decision that he could speak freely with Jinny he calls a taxi, another already firmly established element of the popular, and goes to her place so that he could talk to her about Percival dying and all the times he thinks he did him wrong. With this decision Bernard's inner monologue concludes.

### **Rhoda – Out-of-Body**

The last narrator for this section of the novel is Rhoda. Her whole inner monologue has a feeling of an out-of-body experience, and she calls it that herself. She opens with an image of a "puddle" that she "can't cross", and how each and every thing that she can touch has deserted her<sup>404</sup>. In her not being able to cross that puddle her reaction to Percival dying is the same as Neville's, but in a sense that she is having a sort of an out-of-body experience and with it is mobile is much like Bernard's reaction, therefore, her response to the death of their friend stands somewhere in-between the two and due to this, merges them in a matter of speaking.

So she feels like she cannot go back to her body because she has nothing to ground her and so her spirit flies, but those are in fact just her thoughts, wondering free, trying to cope with Percival's death. In the midst of her pondering the world around her a different thought arises. "I will go to Oxford Street and buy stockings for a party. I will do the usual thing under the lightning flash<sup>405</sup>." This lightning she speaks of is the one she imagines while walking down Oxford Street. It is a portrayal of the state of her mind faced with the death of her friend. And in the middle of exploring the world around her in a way which is unique for her, a completely ordinary thought comes of her buying some stockings for a party no less, because there is always a party in London in the evenings. It is expected of young ladies to be presentable and impeccable at such events, so she will do something which society rules demand, at a time when she does not really feel like it, when the lightning is scarring the sky, meaning that her mind is in turmoil, like when there is a storm approaching. This absolute element of popular culture is faultlessly evident among her observations which she explains like an out-of-body experience.

Her train of thoughts then turns to how she will pick violets in a little bouquet and "offer them to Percival", those would be her gift to him, and then she ponders how Percival has given her something already, but it is not a palpable gift. Rhoda chooses to understand him dying as a gift, because now she looks at the world in a completely different manner. Her inner monologue offers to the reader another element of the popular, namely, the cars which "roar and hunt us to death like bloodhounds<sup>406</sup>", and she feels "alone in a hostile world", but it does not bother her because she would like "publicity and violence", as she puts it, and then offers more elements of the popular like cranes, lorries and factory chimneys, which she all likes. She has had enough of "the prettiness" and

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<sup>402</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 112

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.* p. 216

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.* p. 112

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.* p. 113

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.* p. 113

“privacy”, and she feels like she will drown alone, with no one to help<sup>407</sup>. Basically, Percival’s dying has left her with a new outlook on the world and life, and she considers it a gift, for the moment.

She enters the shop where stockings are sold and then the contradictory feeling of beauty is set free there for her, even though just a moment ago she has said how she has had enough of the “prettiness”. This, of course, in turn, strengthens her character in being an element of popular culture even more.

She pays the bill and takes her leave, but the following section of this fifth part of the complete text is a first occurrence. Not only does Rhoda think about in which way has Percival’s death had an impact on the other main characters, but she also presents the reader with an imagery for each of the remaining five. She starts by imagining how Louis would gladly take on the role of the leader which belonged undoubtedly to Percival. She imagines him with various elements of popular culture – “reading the sporting column in the evening newspaper”, scared that he would be made fun of, presumably because of his Australian heritage, like he has been all his life<sup>408</sup>. She imagines how he would say something along the lines of should they “submit” to his leadership, he would make an order out of that chaos which had been brought upon by the death of their friend. With this notion of them submitting and therefore automatically placing themselves willingly below him, he would achieve his goal of being the empowered one, the dominant one, and all of them the subordinated and disempowered, ready for him to step up to the plate, ready to follow the leader. Then Rhoda’s thoughts turn to Bernard, whom she imagines in an armchair with eyes red because he would be crying after the loss of Percival. She imagines Bernard taking out his notebook and thinking of phrases to use when another friend is dead, and consequently writing those phrases down. For Jinny, she imagines her twirling across the room, perching on the arm of Bernard’s chair and asking if Percival loved her more than he had loved Susan. In this way it is hinted how Jinny’s goal in life is to be a flirt and upstage the other two girls, just like when they were in all-girls boarding school together. The whole scene with Bernard and Jinny would then be placed in a telegram and sent to Susan who would be enraged by the notion and slam the oven door with her foot. She would also be “engaged to her farmer”, cooking, hence the slamming of the oven door with her heel. Susan’s portrayal of a perfect housewife once again hits a homerun as one of the strongest elements of popular culture of women being the disempowered and subordinated class of society, which has been extensively analyzed so far. Further down the line, Rhoda imagines how Neville will cry and then after a while fall in love with another pretty boy. And so her “tribute to Percival” are dried, darkened violets<sup>409</sup>. With that, her imaginative presentation of how each of the main characters would deal with Percival’s death, what their respective reaction would be, ends. Louis’s

After the conclusion to her ponderings about the reactions of her friends, she starts thinking about where she could go in order to find beauty and order again. Her decision is between a museum and Hampton Court, another element of popular culture which has first been introduced earlier in this section of the novel, in Bernard’s inner monologue<sup>410</sup>. She goes on to envisage the whole scene at Hampton Court where two more elements of popular culture are threaded in her narration. She imagines somebody passing by with a bag, presumably a shopping bag which leads to the notion of shopping being used as a weapon, especially when women are concerned, and then she sees a gardener pushing a wheelbarrow, which is an element of popular culture because the gardener is a member of the working class<sup>411</sup>. At first, it is not clear where Rhoda went, but it is

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<sup>407</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 113

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.* p. 114

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.* p. 114

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 112, 216

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.* p. 114

soon revealed in a roundabout manner that what she is witnessing is the opera. She joins herself with the crowd and describes them all as:

*“Decorous, portly – we have white hair waved under our hats; slim shoes; little bags; clean-shaven cheeks; here and there a military moustache; not a speck of dust has been allowed to settle anywhere on our broadcloth<sup>412</sup>.”*

This description of the people preparing to enjoy in the performance that is about to begin, with all of them sharing the traits characteristically belonging to both male and female gender, respectively, portrays the feeling of amalgamation. Due to this, Rhoda’s speech is an obvious element of popular culture for several reasons. First and foremost, the mere fact that the audience has characteristics of both men and women at the same time is contradictory, in a sense that Rhoda starts her illustration with a pronoun “we”, sets the tone of it as if each and every person in there looks exactly the same and each and every one of them are like perfect copies. This fusion serves as a cornerstone of why her evocation of the opera visitors is a part of popular culture. The merging of male and female physical traits comes about as a bridge where women, the subordinated and disempowered class of a white capitalist patriarchal society, blur the lines between them and men, the empowered and dominant class of the very same society.

Rhoda continues describing the musical cries of the female opera singer who opens the first scene of the opera. She describes the musicians accompanying her. Her thoughts veer towards Percival and the gift his death has given her. Rhoda’s inner monologue is still connected to the opera unravelling in front of her, but at the same time, it observes the world around her through her new eyes gifted to her by Percival. The musicians lead the audience with their music and the audience follows suit, and here is another unassuming element of popular culture in this very scene<sup>413</sup>. Namely, the fact that the opera goers are obviously people belonging to nobility and some military men, according to Rhoda, they should be *crème de la crème*, the cream of the crop, and with it, the dominant ones and the ones holding all the power. But with the musicians leading them with their music the status quo changes and the empowered and dominant start following suit, submitting themselves to the music and become, for the moment, those who are disempowered and subordinated. But Rhoda does not see this subordination as something bad, quite on the contrary, she says: “This is our triumph; this is our consolation<sup>414</sup>.”

Rhoda decides to go to Greenwich and take the trams and omnibuses, which have already been placed into the category of the strong elements of popular culture, and in the midst of the crowd in said trams and omnibuses, she is “flung upon” a woman and a man but she does not mind touching them. She goes through a farmers’ market and then on her way home sees “ships that sail to India”, which of course is another element that has already been inserted firmly into the list of popular culture. She decides to take a stroll by the river and finding solace in the world around her which now she sees with different eyes, she throws her tiny bouquet of violets into the river, saying goodbye to her deceased friend<sup>415</sup>.

## **Part Six – Maturity**

### **Prologue Six**

In this preantepenultimate part of the novel the prologue commences with the beginning of the sundown. The sun is not in the middle of the sky and the afternoon is settling in. This signifies full maturity of the six heroes and heroines. The reader is presented with another marvelous

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<sup>412</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 115

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.* p. 115

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.* p. 115

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.* p. 116

depiction of the seascape, this time the sun setting sets the sea and the sky ablaze. There is no more dashing wind, just a light, random breeze and the leaves on the trees rustle with it, but only slightly.

The birds that were all aflutter, singing away and not caring of their loudness are now silent and they observe their surroundings peacefully. Everything slows down, the grave peacefulness settles over the wilderness and the nearby cattle. Even the water slows down, the one in the river and the one from the tap<sup>416</sup>.

The inside of the house is now full of “cracks” made by the shadows cast by the window blinds and the inside of the room is slowly getting filled with more of the dark, shadowy shapes. “Light driving darkness before it spilt itself profusely upon the corners and bosses; and yet heaped up darkness in mounds of unmoulded shape<sup>417</sup>.” Another contradictory scene giving birth to one more element of popular culture in the text. This prologue ends with the image of the waves crashing fervently on the shore. The more the day goes by, the harder they crash. They wet the walls of a previously dry cave and leave stranded fish in pools on the beach. Those fish are subordinated to the will of the dominant waves and they have no power of their own to even try and overpower them<sup>418</sup>.

### Louis’s Climb

The sixth section of the novel is opened by Louis’s inner monologue. He ponders how he has already put his signature twenty times. He admires his name, his signature, describing it as “clear”, “firm” and “unequivocal”, and he considers himself to be the same, that is “clear-cut” and “unequivocal”<sup>419</sup>. But, at the same time, he feels as if he has the knowledge, wisdom and experience of a person who has lived “thousands of years”, a person with as many layers as there are stars in the night sky, and thus he is contradictory to himself because how could a person have such sagacity, such understandings and still be unambiguous at the same time? Thus he reaffirms the quality of his character being an element of popular culture. He then proceeds to explain how at noon Miss Johnson, presumably his secretary, brings him his letters, and so the reader is once again faced with that obvious and undeniable element of popular culture, women as subordinated and disempowered class of society. Louis does not mention the poor woman in any way other than her being the one bringing him his letters, and he does not describe her at all, her only role is to bring him his letters and documents to sign and he continues admiring his signature.

He ponders how all of his many lived lives are now stored in the aforementioned writing of his name. He says:

*“I, now a duke, now Plato, companion of Socrates; the tramp of dark men and yellow men migrating east, west, north and south; the eternal procession, women going with attaché cases down the Strand as they went once with pitchers to the Nile; all the furred and close-packed leaves of my many-folded life are now summed in my name; incised cleanly and barely on the sheet<sup>420</sup>.”*

In Louis’s depiction of the life containing thousands of years’ worth of knowledge and wisdom, a few of the elements of popular culture can undoubtedly be discerned. First and foremost, by depicting himself as “the tramp”, that is, someone who wanders from place to place, possibly

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<sup>416</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 117

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 117-118

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.* p. 118

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.* p. 119

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.* p. 119

begging for food and money, often having no place to live and/or no job<sup>421</sup>, he places himself as a member of the lowest class of society and with it the unmistakable affiliate of the subordinated and disempowered. Then there comes the description of that wanderer belonging to, or being of the group of “dark men”, presumably people of African descent who were enslaved and therefore once again being the ultimate subordinated and having no power of their own; and “yellow men”, presumably people of Asian descent, who were not slaves, but were thought of as having a lesser worth than those who were the conquerors, those of Caucasian descent. Lastly, his mentioning the women carrying the cases in which one stores documents, walking down the Strand, which is a thoroughfare in Westminster<sup>422</sup>, like the women carrying red pitchers to the Nile from the beginning of the novel, serves as another element of the popular where women are the subordinated and disempowered class of society. Just like those women which were described and defined solely by carrying those red pitchers, the women here, coming down the Strand, are described and defined exclusively by carrying the attaché cases. Nothing else is said about either of the groups of women because nothing else is needed to be known about them, they serve a purpose and once said purpose has been served, the reader all but forgets about them. They are as easily forgotten about as Miss Johnson, Louis’s secretary.

Louis’s narration follows the course of him thinking about his many lives which poured into the one and only now that he is all grown up now, and he is particularly charmed by his many appliances and pieces of furniture. For example: the typewriter, the telephone, letters, cables, the table made of mahogany with “smooth-running drawers”, the calendar and the engagement book, but also he loves the accessibility of those things and what they do for him, “the telephone with its lip stretched to my whisper” or “brief but courteous commands on the telephone to Paris, Berlin, New York,” in particular<sup>423</sup>. A parallel could be drawn between this obsession with the telephone and what it offers to Louis, and the modern mobile phones of the twenty-first century. Namely, in any modern film depicting busy businessmen and businesswomen of the world of today, there is almost always a point made that their lives revolve around their gadgets. They constantly type away on their virtual keyboards on their touchscreens sending texts, emails and even social network direct messages containing commands of what, how, when, where and by whom should certain things be done. Thus, these appliances, being so heavily depicted in the obvious elements of popular culture like films and television series, become elements of the popular themselves. Furthermore, their ability to ease the communication of people around the world, but in this particular case the relationship of a boss and their subordinates, is directly linked to how Louis is almost enamoured with what a telephone gives him, the sense of power.

Immediately after making such an effort to think, in not an overtly manner of course, about how powerful and dominant the appliances make him feel, he shares a thought about how he simply loves it when one of his superiors, Mr Burchard, calls him to his private room and asks him about the progress that he has made about their dealings in China<sup>424</sup>. This, in turn, is completely contradictory to the previous state of empowerment when dealing with his own subordinates and the pleasure he had from those dealings. For how can one like being dominant and being dominated by somebody else at the same time? This feeling of liking what he does and what is essentially being done to him is another notch on the belt of Louis’s character being contradictory to itself and placing him as a firm element of popular culture in the text. Now, it should be mentioned that the underlying motive for Louis to like being called into the boss’s private room and asked about the progress which he has made so far in his job is the fact that he hopes “to inherit an armchair and a

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<sup>421</sup> *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*, Della Summers (ed.) (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, Third Edition, 2005), p. 1474

<sup>422</sup> Walter Thornbury, “The Strand: Introduction”, *Old and New London: Volume 3* (London, 1878), pp. 59-63. *British History Online* <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/old-new-london/vol3/pp59-63>>, (accessed on 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2020)

<sup>423</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 119-120

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.* p. 120

Turkey carpet<sup>425</sup>”, which basically means that he hopes to become the boss one day, to climb to the top at his company. He hopes to have a position of prime minister or something along those lines, because, in his mind, if he works hard he will be “where Chatham stood, and Pitt, Burke and Sir Robert Peel<sup>426</sup>”, all of whom were prime ministers, except for Edmund Burke, who was the Irish Whig statesman supporting the emancipation of the rebel colonists during the eighteenth century<sup>427</sup>. In his strive to reach his goal, he effaces certain circumstance and events from his life which he considers to be “stains”, such as, the inevitable Australian heritage of him, complete with his accent and his father – a banker at Brisbane, that woman who had given him a flag from the top of a Christmas tree when they were in boarding school, then the boys which were constantly boasting with their fathers, uncles, older brothers and other prominent men in their lives, and so on and so forth. His list is filled with all those elements of popular culture which have already been explained and that are closely knit to the fabric of Louis’s character which is a vessel carrying them all with it.

He then spends his lunch in his usual seat at his usual table in that same little restaurant from before, observing people, but this time he does not feel like an outcast, mainly due to him climbing steadily in the company he works at. The next part of his speech is both filled with separate elements of popular culture and carries a note of contradiction, which makes it an element of the popular as well. He says:

*“I like to hear the soft rush of the lift and the thud with which it stops on my landing and the heavy male tread of responsible feet down the corridors. So by dint of our united exertions we send ships to the remote parts of the globe; replete with lavatories and gymnasiums. The weight of the world is on our shoulders. This is life. If I press on, I shall inherit a chair and a rug; a place in Surrey with glasshouses, and some rare conifer, melon or flowering tree which other merchants will envy.*

*Yet I still keep my attic room. There I open the usual little book; there I watch the rain glisten on the tiles till they shine like policeman’s waterproof; there I see broken windows in poor people’s houses; the lean cats; some slattern squinting in a cracked looking glass as she arranges her face for the street corner; there Rhoda sometimes comes. For we are lovers<sup>428</sup>.”*

Let us take a moment and deconstruct first the multitude of elements of popular culture in this section of the novel. Just like it has been the case with the mobile phones being characterized as elements of the popular through them appearing in multitude of films and television series, it is the case with the lift. It might not be an element of the popular on its own, but due to its presence in film and series, it could be argued that they can take on the quality of the popular. Some films even have the titles carrying the name of this device, like a Dutch science-fiction horror film *De Lift* from 1983 written and directed by Dick Maas, starring Huub Stapel, Willeke van Ammelrooy and Josine van Dalsum, where strange and inexplicable accidents start happening in a new office building and they are all connected to the lift in the building<sup>429</sup>; then a horror and thriller film from 2011 carrying a simple title *Elevator*, written by Marc Rosenberg, directed by Stig Svendsen and starring Christopher Backus, Anita Briem and John Getz, where nine strangers get trapped in a Wall Street

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<sup>425</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 120

<sup>426</sup> Ibid. p. 120

<sup>427</sup> Ibid. p. 216

<sup>428</sup> Ibid. p. 121

<sup>429</sup> *The Lift (1983)*, *De Lift (original title)*, IMDb, <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0087622/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0087622/?ref=fn_al_tt_1)>, (Accessed on 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2020)

lift, i.e. elevator, one of whom has a bomb, and where, among other things, racism and “corporate greed” start overlapping<sup>430</sup>. And then there is a web series under the title *Lift* from 2019, written by Juliet Johnson, directed by Venita Ozols-Graham, starring Brigitte Graham and Dan Sykes, which is a romantic comedy in seven parts playing out completely in a lift<sup>431</sup>. All of these are clear examples that lifts are elements of popular culture, one way or another.

After Louis’s mentioning of the lift and how he likes the way it soars while defying gravity and even more so when it stops on the floor where his office is, there is a depiction of the sound made by him as a man and his male colleagues while they go up and down various corridors in the company. If this were just him describing how they walk it would not constitute as an element of popular culture. What makes this part of his inner monologue the aforementioned is the fact that he describes the heavy male treading as responsible, as if the women working for them being great secretaries and doing their jobs in as much of a responsible manner as the men do is not responsible at all. They are not even mentioned. What Louis does mention is the fact that all these men, including him of course, make a collective effort to send the ships overseas. It is as if there are only men involved with the company and its well-being, when in fact the reader knows that there is at least one woman working there, Louis’s secretary – Miss Johnson. It is known that she brings him his letters and documents to sign, therefore it is not a far-fetched notion that every man in that company has a secretary for himself. But their efforts are not being noted down. They have no power, they do not dominate, their place is behind men, underneath men and serving men, which has been distinguished as one of the strongest elements of popular culture in Woolf’s *The Waves* and has been proven to be the most prominent element of popular culture in her novel *Orlando*, which has previously been analyzed throughout this research. Moving on from the responsible treading of the corporate men, but still staying on the track of men being the powerhouse behind all the success of the company, Louis declares how they, namely those men, carry the weight of the world on their shoulders, and with that, the second element of popular culture in this part of his narration concludes.

The third element of the popular in this part of his speech comes with him reiterating how should he stay the course and prove to be the best worker in the company, he would receive the chair and the Turkish rug from the private room of his boss’s, and living quarters in Surrey with glasshouses containing within them some other perks which would make other people in his line of work feel jealousy. The rug, the chair, the place in Surrey and the glasshouses that would go with it all present wealth and Louis’s unyielding desire to be at the top, to be viewed as a gentleman, since he had not had the fortune of being born a gentleman’s son, like Bernard and Neville had. This craving of his to blur the lines of his unfortunate Australian heritage with the wealth and status that wealth would provide is the third element of popular culture in this little piece of the whole inner monologue.

And then the wishful thinking and hoping merges with daydreaming because the sentence “Yet I still keep my attic room<sup>432</sup>.” comes between the two, making a bridge, but only for a moment, because then the wishful thinking and the daydream simply disappear making the way for the reality. In the reality section of this part of Louis’s speech he offers broken windows in houses of poor people in his neighbourhood and a harlot preparing for work, fixing up her makeup looking in a cracked mirror. All three of these are signs of poverty and those who are subordinated and disempowered, making them elements of popular culture.

Even though all these elements are genuine, there is one underlying element of popular culture throughout this whole part of Louis’s narration, and that is the contrasting feelings and images inside of it. First there are the opposing scenes of wealth and poverty, then the link which link the two together and that is the notion that he would still keep the little attic room even after he

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<sup>430</sup> *Elevator* (2011), IMDb, <<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1728975/>>,, (Accessed on 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2020)

<sup>431</sup> *Lift* (2019), IMDb, <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9218302/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_2](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9218302/?ref=fn_al_tt_2)>,, (Accessed on 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2020)

<sup>432</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 121

would presumably get a place in Surrey, then there are powerful men and a beaten down lady of the night. All of these substantially contribute to the overall contradictory quality of Louis's words, reinforcing the depiction of his character as an element of popular culture yet again.

After revealing that he and Rhoda have become lovers, which has been foreshadowed in the fourth part of the novel when they were all together with Percival at dinner, Louis brings the reader up to speed on the lives of some of the rest of their group. He notes how Percival had died, which has already been revealed to the reader, but these are his private thoughts, therefore he cannot be faulted for that. Then he reveals how Susan is a mother now and how Neville is progressing fast in his line of work, although it is not disclosed what it is. He does not say anything about Bernard or Jinny, but rather his thoughts turn back towards him and his desire to climb to the top in his company. Everything has become sort of a ritual for him and he thinks that if he does not act a certain way, all will have been for nothing. Miss Johnson is mentioned once more in a sense that on his way to his desk he would make some small talk about the movies, which is another element of popular culture in the novel, and of course, Miss Johnson being the now recurring element of the popular.

He continues his inner monologue by explaining what happens when it is time for him to go home, that is to say he makes a polite gesture towards the commissioner by touching his hat, and he does this because he has a profound and constant wish to be accepted, but at the same time to struggle as well, and while he does just that, struggle against the wind he says how he wishes "that a little typist would cuddle on my knees.", and after thinking about his favourite dish and everything that he sees while he walks home, it is finally revealed that all of it was a daydream while he was signing his name time after time, and with it his narration ends<sup>433</sup>. This last section of his inner monologue carries contradiction within itself with Louis wanting to belong and to struggle, for when we belong we feel safe and relaxed, and when we struggle we are stressed, therefore those contrasting feelings are contradicting one another. Then there is the gesture of him touching his hat to the commissioner, somebody who has bigger authority than him, he shows his subordination with this gesture and plunges straight back into the pool of element of popular culture. The fact that he can freely desire for a little typist to sit in his lap while being in a relationship with Rhoda shows the power he as a man possesses over women, which, naturally, is another already well-established element of the popular, and finally, on his way home he always passes by numerous taverns or beer pubs, which are elements of popular culture themselves considering how popular it is to go out for a drink either by oneself or in company.

### **Susan's Motherhood**

Susan's narration begins with her singing a lullaby to her baby, and it is presumed that the baby is a baby girl at this point because it is "curled under a pink coverlet<sup>434</sup>". It is a widely spread and known fact that pink is the colour traditionally associated with baby girls while blue is the colour associated with baby boys. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the reader should assume that the baby inside the cradle is a girl. This is the first element of popular culture in Susan's inner monologue. Her revelation could be that the coverlet is white, or tan, or any other "neutral" colour, but by it being the colour pink which correlated strongly with the female gender, it becomes the element of the popular by it being connected to the patriarchal view of the relation of this colour to the gender the society considers to be fairer, but, ultimately, weaker. Of course, nowadays the colour pink is worn by all genders, but the underlying rule of thumb is still that the colour pink should be ascribed to those belonging to the female category of gender and that blue should be ascribed to those belonging to the male gender category. I purposefully wrote "all genders" in order not to exclude anyone, including people identifying as transgender, genderfluid, non-binary, and more, but the society views gender as binary, namely – male or female, and throughout this research

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<sup>433</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 121-122

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.* p. 122

I shall follow that distinction for the purpose of being concise.

Returning to Susan, her narration continues with her pondering how she would virtually destroy anyone who would dare to disrupt her baby's sleep. It is unimpeachable that her maternal instinct is in full swing with her being so caring, loving and tender in taking care of her child, and at the same time harboring such aggression towards anyone who would dare disturb her baby's slumber. The feeling of tenderness and aggression are contradictory in correlation to each other, and that is why Susan's character, once again, is reaffirmed as being an element of popular culture itself. Then Susan says:

*"I pad about the house all day long in apron and slippers, like my mother who died of cancer. Whether it is summer, whether it is winter, I no longer know by the moor grass, and the heath flower; only by the steam on the window pane, or the frost on the window pane [...] I feed my baby. I, who used to walk through beech woods noting the jay's feather turning blue as it falls, [...], go from room to room with a duster<sup>435</sup>."*

In this small portion of her narration it is expressed how she does what her mother did because she is now a mother and her memories of what her mom did when she was alive are her only guide for how to be a mother. The society rules imply that a woman should stay at home and take care of the house and kids, which Susan does. This element of popular culture is emphasized by her walking quietly around the house in slippers, taking care of her child, making sure not to wake the baby, feeding it, and in apron, taking care of the house, cooking and cleaning with a duster. Throughout her narration, though, the reader sees how she is conflicted. She does everything a mother should do according to the arbitrary rules of society, but at the same time she feels trapped and somehow hollow, for she once, before she was married and had her child, used to enjoy nature, used to take long walks outside in the woods, used to notice numerous things, but now she almost has no concept of time passing to the point that she does not care what month it is and the only way in which she knows what season it is, is if there is steam on the window pane or if there is frost on the window pane.

Susan's desire to protect her child so that no evil shall befall it is somehow in constant comparison to the life she once led, before she became a mother. At some point she starts thinking of Percival and how once she shuts her eyes, his will see and then she shall see India, how then he will come home and bring her presents and riches, because they loved each other, but his death somehow made her what she is today. India is another previously explained and already well-established element of popular culture. The mere mentioning of the British colony invokes the images of people being subordinated and disempowered, submissive and submitted to the will of the white patriarchal capitalist society of the great British empire, the dominant ones, those in control, those holding all the power.

Susan veers back to her life and how it is vastly different from when she was able to roam free and see the wonders of nature. Now she is confined to the house and doing things that need to be done for the house and the pantry. "The butcher calls; the milk has to be stood under a shade lest it should sour<sup>436</sup>."

This narration of Susan's ends on an ambivalent note, to say the least. She says how she is "glutted with natural happiness", but how she knows that she will have more children and expects more happiness to come. At the same time, this happiness is placed in sheer contrast to her life when she was unmarried and not yet a mother. She "speaks" of those times with lightness and freedom, and when she "talks" about her motherhood the reader gets a feeling that she is trapped and overwhelmed by her confinement. It reminds me of a song by William Blake called *Song* or

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<sup>435</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 122

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.* p. 123

'How sweet I roam'd from field to field'. In this poem of his one could say that, at a first glance, the poet describes how a nightingale, who once roamed free "from field to field", feels when it is being imprisoned, but, in my opinion, it could also be the case that a nightingale is actually a young girl who feels imprisoned by her feelings towards her "prince of love" who turned out to be a cruel monster who imprisoned her and now mocks her "loss of liberty"<sup>437</sup>. This poem reminded me of Susan and how her inner monologue gives off a feeling of being trapped, but at the same time being happy about it, of course turning the entirety of her narration into an element of popular culture due to its contradictory nature. There is no doubt that she adores her child and would do anything and everything in her power to keep the baby safe and sound, content and always happy, but even though she claims that she is filled with happiness, one cannot shake the feeling that she misses her days of roaming free in the beech woods, noticing quirks and details of the world around her, enjoying nature, just like the nightingale/young maiden in Blake's *Song* "roam'd from field to field". While the hero/heroine of Blake's poem was imprisoned by somebody, Susan has been imprisoned by motherhood, it would seem, and while no one "mocks" her "loss of liberty", there is no denying that the two scenes closely resemble each other.

Susan's train of thoughts have a distinct quality of her being the disempowered and subordinated one because she does everything in her power to serve the needs of the farm, the house and her child and possibly future children, making her an element of popular culture once more. Her inner monologue ends with her daydreaming about London's busy streets and Jinny beckoning her to come with her, but then just as swiftly as the daydreaming began it ends with Susan coming back to reality and singing a lullaby to her child<sup>438</sup>.

### Jinny's Many Lovers

The next part of this sixth section of the novel is an inner monologue that belongs to Jinny. She appears to be spending time with somebody who she has just met for the first time ever. She thinks how she would travel with that person from Piccadilly to someplace else no questions asked. They play kind of a game watching other people and imagining what their lives are like, and it is not clear if they are really playing a game or simply gossiping. At one point Jinny discloses how her companion told her about a man who has a great deal of china pots and how his ex-girlfriend, who lives in Rome, broke his heart and that is why he buys china pots which are thousand pounds apiece. He surrounds himself with expensive things in order to forget his lost love. Jinny finds the state of this man strange "for one, as a young man, he sat on damp ground and drank rum with soldiers"<sup>439</sup>." This part of her narration has elements of high culture, namely, the expensive china pots, and at the same time the fact that he is collecting them to such an extent that he is virtually drowning in them leads to a conclusion that he is a hoarder, using his hoarding as a coping mechanism. A hoarder is a person suffering from a hoarding disorder, which is "a persistent difficulty discarding or parting with possessions because of a perceived need to save them"<sup>440</sup>". These things that a hoarder collects do not necessarily have any value at all sometimes, but the point is that collecting them is a coping mechanism for them, which is definitely the case with the gentleman in question. Now, hoarding is a phenomenon which could be considered an element of popular culture for a simple reason that there is an ongoing reality television series, a documentary carrying the title *Hoarders*. It started in 2009 starring Matt Paxton, Robin Zasio and Dorothy Breininger. The show follows various hoarders and how they live and cope with their collections<sup>441</sup>.

<sup>437</sup> *Blejk – Berns – Vordsvort – Kolridž – Bajron – Šeli – Kits, POEZIJA ENGLESKOG ROMANTIZMA*, Aleksandar V. Stefanović (ed.), Dragan Purešić (trans.) (Belgrade: IJIATO books, 2010), p. 36

<sup>438</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 123

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.* p. 124

<sup>440</sup> Mayo Clinic Staff, *Hoarding Disorder*, Mayo Clinic, < <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/hoarding-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20356056>>., (Accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2020)

<sup>441</sup> *Hoarders*, (2009- ), IMDb, < <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1497563/>>., (Accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2020)

This is not the only time hoarding has been a main part of a television series. Another ongoing television series, which began in 2013, deals with people with obsessive-compulsive disorder clean houses of hoarders. It is called *Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners*, starring Hayley Leitch, John Thomson and Kelly Waite<sup>442</sup>. What I have learned from the show is that a person who is characterized as being obsessive-compulsive is someone who “tends to repeat particular actions in a way that is not necessary, because they have strong anxious feelings: *obsessive-compulsive behaviour*<sup>443</sup>”. That kind of behaviour can range from tapping the table a certain number of times or opening and closing the door a certain number of times to cleaning the house several times a day. The conclusion is that the hoarding nature of this nameless man’s china pots purchases is an element of popular culture in the novel because hoarding has been a theme of at least two reality television series.

The next element of popular culture in this part of Jinny’s narration is that the woman, i.e. the girl from Rome, is not described in any way, shape or form, aside from being a catalyst for his hoarding, which is not unusual considering how this element of popular culture, namely women being the subordinated and disempowered class of society, has already been explained in great detail throughout this research so far. Even though it could be argued that the woman here is the one with all the power and the one dominating this man’s life, there must be a distinction between somebody actively doing so and somebody who does not even live in the vicinity of the person in question. Because she is not characterized as anything else but the one who broke his heart and happens to live in Italy, she is actually in a submissive position because nobody can hear her side of the story. What if he had been mean or abusive to her? What if they never dated, but it was all constructed in this man’s mind? It is all hearsay, but, because he is a man his word is taken as the truth and nobody is even bothering to ask the aforementioned questions.

The last element of this section of Jinny’s narration is the sentiment that it is strange that this man should collect so many expensive china pots because he was once young and he drank rum with soldiers. Consuming alcohol is very popular, rum in particular can be seen as being drunk or talked about in numerous films and television series, especially those portraying lives of pirates or lives of bartenders.

After this, Jinny’s inner monologue turns to that man which is crushed by his lost love that he is hoarding, but still stoops over everything and everybody, even some old woman who “wears diamonds in her ears, and, bundling about her estate in a pony carriage, directs who is to be helped, what tree felled, and who turned out tomorrow<sup>444</sup>.” Therefore, even though this old woman is very rich and has an air of dominance about her, this hoarder man is still bending over her, in some way, and being the one holding the power for some reason. Then Jinny reveals how she is now in her thirties and how she is not settling down with anyone, has not settled down yet and does not plan on settling down in the future. She has had many lovers and plans on having more. This type of unladylike behaviour is in direct contrast to Jinny’s desire to look like a proper lady, much like that time at the party when there was Rhoda as well in the third section of this novel, thus this element of popular culture is rearing its head once more.

Jinny and her acquaintance continue sharing what they know about the people around them, and so there is a judge, a millionaire, a gentleman with an eyeglass who shot his governess when he was only ten years of age and then travelled a lot collecting information on his family tree on his mother’s side<sup>445</sup>. All very influential, powerful, dominant men. Then there is a man small in stature who has a withered hand and a blue chin, and Jinny wonders why his hand is withered, but nobody

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<sup>442</sup> *Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners*, (2013- ), IMDb, < <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2675448/>>., (Accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2020)

<sup>443</sup> *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*, Della Summers (ed.) (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, Third Edition, 2005), p. 966

<sup>444</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 124

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.* p. 124

knows. He represents the lower class of society. After him, Jinny's partner reveals how a certain woman who has pearl pagodas was a mistress of one of the statesmen and that after that statesman died she adopted a child of African descent and turned towards being a fortuneteller. Simply put, she was a mistress and after her lover died she sank to the lower class of society and even adopted a "coffee-coloured youth"<sup>446</sup>. Both of these characters belong to the ever-growing pool of elements of popular culture. Last, but not least is a man who was a scoundrel but got converted on a train by somebody reading the Bible to him. Here, the obvious element of popular culture is the Bible, which has been explained earlier in this research, and finally, there is the overall conclusion that the men in this little game or gossip session of theirs are portrayed mainly either as very powerful or enjoying in debauchery only to be saved by the faith, with the exception of the little man with a withered hand, but he is a mystery because nobody knows how his hand withered in the first place, and the women are portrayed as either annoyingly bossy in the case of the lady with the diamond earrings, or somebody who had fallen out of grace of the society, mixing with the "coffee-coloured" kind and reading cards, possibly scamming people<sup>447</sup>.

Jinny and her gossiping or gaming partner continue talking about life and at some point in her narration she breaks from her partner and seduces another man who follows her, and so her game of not settling down, flirting with many men and taking many lovers continues, and she still thinks about her appearance. She wonders if her "yellow scarf with the strawberry spots"<sup>448</sup> floated in the wind and gave a signal to the man following her. Her self continues being one of the strongest elements of popular culture in her desire for dominance, but playing at being perfectly clothed and seeming submissive in nature because that is what is expected of a young lady.

### **Neville's Love**

Neville's inner monologue commences with him explaining how everything in his surroundings changes once his lover comes. He is once again in love and hence sees the world through the rose-coloured spectacles. It is not the exact same type of love he had for Percival, it is a bit different because the world is not seen through the love spectacles all the time, but just when his lover is there. He explains how he does not believe in his lover's faithfulness once he leaves his sight. Considering the fact that his lover is a man, it comes as no surprise that they talk about people suspecting their relationship, and how a room where they can be alone and they can be themselves and talk freely is their center. At least it is the center of their relationship for Neville<sup>449</sup>. He likes order, he hates quivering priests and an old woman on an omnibus holding a basket. He does not like anything that disrupts beauty and so he says: "Everything must be done to rebuke the horror of deformity"<sup>450</sup>. The omnibus, the priests signifying Christianity which forbids homosexuality, and a woman holding a basket are all elements of popular culture, some of which have been explained before. The omnibus as a popular means of transportation, an old woman carrying a basket is an element simply by being a woman and of course carrying a basket means that she is not a lady of any stature, especially because she travels by an omnibus, and finally Christianity is an element of popular culture because, as everything nowadays, it is constantly present not just in the most read book in the world, also known as the Bible, but it has been at the centre of some of the most successful films and television series throughout the years such as *An Interview with God*, *An*

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<sup>446</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 125

<sup>447</sup> Ibid. pp. 124-125

<sup>448</sup> Ibid. p. 126

<sup>449</sup> Ibid. pp. 126-127

<sup>450</sup> Ibid. p. 128

*Unfinished Life and Samson*, to name a few<sup>451</sup>.

Neville still has not got over Percival's death, that much is apparent through his thinking of him, but he takes solace in his current lover being himself and not being Percival. He concludes his inner monologue with a notion that should his current lover abandon him in any way, he will simply find another and be on his way, but for now he will enjoy the company of the man beside him<sup>452</sup>.

## **Part Seven – Aging**

### **Prologue Seven**

The seventh prologue brings with it the even lower sun, the sunset is advancing, progressing. The six narrators are in their midlife and as they grow older so the day closes to an end in the prologues. The sun has been shielded by the clouds that grew in size by clustering together. Because of this – darkness befalls the little picturesque seascape. The waves have stopped their trashing on the shore and the sand has turned white and smooth.

The birds are not chirping anymore and they fly round and round until they descend and settle in the treetops. One solitary bird perches itself on the white stake, giving one flap of its wings upon settling there. The flowers in the garden look dreary, macabre. Some petals have fallen off, some leaves have been lost, and everything just feels slow and full of sadness. The scenery of the nearby hills and the cows habituating there have a brighter, richer hue awarded to them. They are bathed in gold by the setting sun, but even with that, everything is slow. The room does not feel as full or as ravenous as it had during midday, now the setting sun brings with it a tinge of brown and red and it does not do justice to the objects inside the room.

The seventh prologue ends with the feeling of “uncertainty and ambiguity” spreading through the whole scene<sup>453</sup>, which almost touches the contradictory nature of popular culture, but not quite.

### **Bernard**

The main part of the seventh section of the novel is opened once again by Bernard's inner monologue. This is the part of the text in which the reader will once again hear from all of the six main characters, Bernard, Susan, Jinny, Neville, Louis and Rhoda, respectively. This has not happened in two sections seeing how the fifth section is set immediately after the death of their friend, Percival, and the sixth is still on some level showing the ramifications of his death and of them maturing and having adult responsibilities.

The reader is introduced to the scene of Bernard remembering shaving the previous week and how one drop fell off his face. Now, it is not clear if this drop had been a drop of blood, or soap or water or soapy water. The only thing that had actually been noted is that the drop in question had dropped. The mere falling of this drop was the thing that set Bernard off on a contemplation about how he shaves automatically, out of habit, really, and so he “congratulated” his hands on doing such a good job on their own, basically. He then proceeds to go about his day, but for the entirety of that day, he would reflect on how everything is “over and done with”, and at the end of the day he proclaimed to everybody present, if there were in fact people present at his work, “I have lost my youth.” in a dramatic way<sup>454</sup>.

Now, let us stop here for just a moment and go back to the unescapable and purposefully placed image of Bernard shaving. The act of shaving is not a sensational thing in and of itself,

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<sup>451</sup> Elissa Sanci, Adele Rayburn, *The 21 Best Christian Movies on Netflix To Watch Tonight*, Woman's Day, <  
<https://www.womansday.com/life/entertainment/g25244107/best-christian-movies-on-netflix/?slide=2> >., (Online since 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2019, accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2020)

<sup>452</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 129

<sup>453</sup> Ibid. pp. 130-131

<sup>454</sup> Ibid. p. 132

however, an argument could be presented that it is an element of popular culture due to its connection with commercials and the entire process that surrounds them. There is no shortage in commercials by multitude of brands such as Gillette, owned by Procter and Gamble, Barbasol, Old Spice, etc. depicting razors, shaving foam, shaving cream, shaving gel or maybe a shampoo/body wash/shower gel all in one product, as is “NIVEA MEN Shower & Shave Body Wash”, advertised as a “convenient 3-in-1 product [...]” which “[...] can be used to shower, shave and shampoo<sup>455</sup>”. All of these commercials depict men shaving and, when one thinks about it, shaving became popular possibly through commercials. Nowadays there are all kinds of shaving styles and even more products with which one can style their facial hair, and all of those products can thank commercials for being popular. The public is constantly and continuously exposed to the images of suave men shaving and it could be said that the point of the commercial is to buy their product, and they achieve this with hiring actors whose looks are above average, to say the least, therefore, ‘men, if you buy our product and shave with our razor and then combine it with our shaving gel, you just might look and feel like the impossibly handsome man in the commercial, which you see every single day, multiple times a day, while watching television’. The mere fact that commercials are sometimes as long as a short cartoon (at least they were in Serbia only a few years back), the fact that they influence popular culture and might as well be elements of popular culture is not that unimaginable and unfounded. Commercials have storylines, scripts, they are like a short film, thus they fall into the category of elements of popular culture both because they influence it and are influenced by it and sometimes use its elements and therefore become the elements of the popular themselves. In her online article about commercials and pop culture, Diana Guta offers just some of the examples when commercials have used elements of popular culture in order to better sell their products, and so one can see, for example, a minimalistic picture of Adolph Hitler’s hairdo and unmistakable mustache and right next to it the same minimalistic image with the addition of a hat which depicts Charlie Chaplin.

*“Hut Weber, a German hats company introduced their product in this ad in a creative way with the promise that a hat can change not only your appearance but your whole character too. “It’s the hat<sup>456</sup>.”*

*Lego* have used the popular TV show *The Simpsons* to advertise their already insanely popular *Lego* block puzzles, or *Lego* blocks. The commercial depicts the whole Simpson family built out of the said blocks. And this is not the only company who used the aforementioned TV show in order to boost their sales, a motorcar company Renault depicted them sitting in their new Renault Kangoo Family, watching television. Among the numerous pop culture references in Ms Guta’s article there are Robocop, Einstein, the Incredible Hulk and even Disney princesses<sup>457</sup>. This all goes to show how commercials are sometimes using elements of popular culture and with it become elements of the popular as well.

This being said, let us come back to Bernard, shaving. This simple, yet iconic action is an element of popular culture by association with commercials and television.

Continuing on, Bernard ponders how the phrase about him losing his youth is something that keeps coming back in his life, even at this point in his life when a drop falling off his face while shaving has nothing to do with his youth and the loss of it. He contemplates the passing of time and how he sometimes has these “sluggish” episodes when he does not even finish his sentences, and while thinking of it all, he discloses how on such an occasion, while he was passing a travelling

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<sup>455</sup> NIVEA, Products, *NIVEA MEN Shower & Shave Body Wash*, Copyright © Beiersdorf 2020

<<https://www.niveausa.com/products/shower-and-shave-721401203440079.html>>, (Accessed on 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2020)

<sup>456</sup> Diana Guta, *Creative Advertising Meets Pop Culture: Creative Ads That Pop*, Bannersnack blog,

<<https://blog.bannersnack.com/creative-advertising/>>, (Online since 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2019, accessed on 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2020)

<sup>457</sup> Ibid.

agency office, he strolled in and bought himself a ticket to Rome<sup>458</sup>.

And so, the reader is finally privy to the information that Bernard is at the present moment in Rome actually. He is sitting on a stone bench, no phrases come to his mind, he feels ruined like London is in crumbles, how it “consists of fallen factories and a few gasometers<sup>459</sup>”. It feels to him he only knows words consisting of one syllable and that is completely out of his character. He muses how his soul cannot flourish when its companion is only one person, but rather many people. His narration then turns to the fact that he has lost some friends along the way and how he realizes that Rome is as far as he is ever going to travel, and he says:

*“But as I think, truth has come nearer. For many years I crooned complacency, ‘My children... my wife... my house... my dog.’ As I let myself in with the latchkey I would go through that familiar ritual and wrap myself in those warm coverings. Now that lovely veil has fallen. I do not want possessions now. (Note: an Italian washerwoman stands on the same rung of physical refinement as the daughter of an English duke.)<sup>460</sup>”*

Throughout this small portion of Bernard’s inner monologue two elements of popular culture could be discerned. The first one is the image of the classic nuclear family, himself with his wife and children living in their house and having a dog, but it is not something he explicitly wanted, namely, to have a family, to own a house and a pet, but rather he was complacent in obtaining all of that because the rules of society say that it should be so. And he does not say “our house”, “our children”, “our dog”, in a manner which would include his wife, but rather everything is “his” because he is the man and he is the one holding all the power in the world considering his family, he is the one who is dominant, the patriarch of the family. The second element of popular culture in this portion of his narration is the note he gives himself how an Italian maid is as beautiful and refined as a daughter of an English duke, and that places aristocracy and the help on the same level when it comes to women. They are both beautiful and refined in his opinion and they are thus the same, no matter that one is a duchess and the other one a pauper. Whether the servant seemed the same to him as royalty or royalty seemed the same as the servant, the mere fact that those two ladies of completely different classes of society are on the same level implies that women are still viewed as lesser creatures because his thought process did not carry the notion of an aristocratic boy and a gardener being equally refined and handsome, but a daughter of a duke and a washerwoman.

Bernard’s mind takes him down memory lane and how he actually did not care about what was happening directly in front of him, like, for example, the headmaster of his board school carrying a crucifix, which drove Neville insane, but he would consider the background and so the direct things would disappear because he would make up his phrases. The point of all those phrases was that he would one day incorporate them into the one and only true story to which they all belong, but now he wonders if such a story does in fact exist and do stories in general really and truly exist, because he has not found the one and only true story up so far.

After presenting himself with the question about the tangibility of the one true story, Bernard has an identity crisis of sorts, seeing opportunities for telling stories and making up phrases about people in the street, but wonder what is the point. After some more thought he reverts back to making phrases, seeing a fin emerge from the water and noting “under F, therefore, ‘Fin in a waste of waters’<sup>461</sup>”, and after that, he speaks to himself, stating how he and himself have to start a new chapter, turn over a new leaf, but they will do it in the same manner, making up their phrases and

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<sup>458</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 132

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.* p. 133

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.* p. 134

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.* p. 135

telling stories<sup>462</sup>.

## Susan

Susan's narration commences with her taking a walk with her son. She, too, takes a walk down memory lane about that time Jinny kissed Louis and her whole world came crumbling down, about her school years and about the years on her farm before she got married. Then her thoughts turn towards a very productive year that she has had and how she owns everything that she sees<sup>463</sup>. This notion that she as a woman owns everything that she sees is the break from the norm, from the expected, because Susan is married, she has a husband, and as such it would fall under his authority to be the master of all that is actually theirs, as we it has been noted just a few paragraphs before in Bernard's narration, when he spoke of *his* children and *his* wife and *his* house and *his* dog<sup>464</sup>. Contrary to this image is Susan's simple "I possess all I see"<sup>465</sup>., which is in complete contradiction to her depiction from the previous chapter where she was a housewife taking care of her newborn baby and the house. This contradiction is a virtual breaking of her chains in some way and with it an element of popular culture. She describes all that she has done over the years and how the farm grew and how her children grew up and everything that she does for her neighbours on their farms. At some point she says that they "hang mistletoe over the clock at Christmas"<sup>466</sup>, which is an undeniable element of popular culture which has been explained in the first part of this thesis under the versatility of popular culture where Sheila Whiteley explained that Christmas became a part of popular culture because some of the Christmas symbols such as Santa Clause or Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer fused with elements of popular culture, for example Coca-Cola in order to appeal to the people throughout the most wonderful time of the year<sup>467</sup>. John Storey added how "traditional" English Christmas was actually "invented" in the nineteenth century and how its invention has far less to do with religion than it does with industrialization<sup>468</sup>. And even though it seems to have been invented for commerce and consumerism, the conclusion is that it is contradictory to itself because at the same time it celebrates capitalism and what it brought to the table to the classes, and it negates that very same capitalism because people come together during Christmas and have the so-called Christmas spirit, which makes them replace competition, conflict, denial and scarcity with goodwill, harmony, desire and abundance, respectively<sup>469</sup>. This makes Christmas one of the most easily recognizable elements of popular culture.

Returning to Susan, she shares her occasional displeasure with "natural happiness" and basically her ordinary life and her role of a mother keeping her eyes on her children. She once again takes a stroll down memory lane of the life she once had before her marriage and births of her children. She thinks of Bernard's Elvedon and what the two of them saw there. She then mentions thinking of late Percival from time to time and mentions his death in India, which has been established as an element of popular culture previously. She concludes her inner monologue with an offering of the image of herself:

*"Rather squat, grey before my time, but with clear eyes, pear-shaped eyes, I*

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<sup>462</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 136

<sup>463</sup> Ibid. p. 136

<sup>464</sup> Ibid. p. 134

<sup>465</sup> Ibid. p. 136

<sup>466</sup> Ibid. p. 137

<sup>467</sup> *Christmas, Ideology and Popular Culture*, Sheila Whiteley (ed.) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 2

<sup>468</sup> John Storey, "The Invention of the English Christmas" in *Christmas, Ideology and Popular Culture*, Sheila Whiteley (ed.) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 17

<sup>469</sup> Ibid. p. 30

*pace my fields*<sup>470</sup>. ”

It is demonstrated here that she still does not consider herself beautiful, but she paces *her* fields, and therefore her narration finishes with this element of popular culture, namely the breaking of the chains of a woman who should have nothing and consider even her dowry property of her husband.

## **Jinny**

Jinny’s narration opens with her describing the Piccadilly Circus metro station. In her words it is the very heart of London, her city, and she concludes therefore how she is in the center, the heart, of life. She discloses how even though she is in the center of life, she is not young anymore and is not “part of the procession”, as she used to be when she was young<sup>471</sup>. Her thoughts go towards millions of people who have died and of course, her friend Percival, and her question is who would come if she were to give a signal. Then she has the contradictory moment in her inner monologue where she describes herself as being both, a frightened, shaking, little animal and not that animal in mere seconds. This becomes the first element of popular culture in this part of the novel due to its contrasting nature, naturally. Jinny then continues thinking how that errant thought about her being a frail, frightened animal was a moment of weakness because she saw herself as she is - older, and did not prepare herself mentally for that image, as she always does. This is another element of the popular where women are practically programmed to always be beautiful and that their self-worth is directly proportional with their beauty; as soon as their physical appearance starts to dissipate, their value decreases as well. This places women in a role of property, like prized horses who are only as valuable as their last won race, thus placing them in that inevitable category of the disempowered and subordinated class of society.

Jinny makes herself shift her mood by thinking of omnibuses, cars and people soldiering on through life, of winners and how they are better than “savages in loincloths” and women with saggy breasts with children tugging on them and damp, presumably greasy, hair. She places herself in line with those winners because she is wearing her patent-leather shoes, a paper-thin handkerchief and has impeccable makeup<sup>472</sup>. In this section of her narration, there are a few elements of popular culture. There are cars and omnibuses, and then there are “savages” and their women who are presumably Native American people who had been enslaved or practically eradicated, which is a clear mark of their subordinated and disempowered position, and finally, there is her sense of self-worth which is encouraged by her perfect makeup and expensive accessories and shoes. This element of popular culture has been omnipresent in Jinny ever since the first time she was introduced in the novel, as is the case for all predominant personal traits of the six main characters. Louis’s chip on a shoulder of his Australian heritage makes him an element of popular culture, Bernard’s love of phrases makes him sometimes contradict himself, Rhoda’s daydreaming makes her a nonconformist, Susan’s love of nature and struggle with the love-hate relationship towards her role of a wife and mother onsets contradiction in her as well, and Neville’s homosexuality sometimes clashes with his desire for order and beauty.

Returning to Jinny’s train of thoughts while at the underground train station, she notices the sophistication of the clothes that people around her are wearing<sup>473</sup>. This is an immediate reminder of the importance of trousers that Bernard was contemplating at the beginning of the fourth section of the novel, and is another element of the popular, because it has been established that appearance is of the utmost importance when one formulates one’s opinion on another in the white, patriarchal societies of this world. And Jinny feels at home in such a world because she was born in such a

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<sup>470</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 138

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.* p. 138

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.* p. 139

<sup>473</sup> *Ibid.* p. 139

world, and therefore, she will put on her makeup, catch a cab, which is yet another already well-established element of popular culture in the text, and go home. She still finds herself desirable and sexually appealing to men, and she tips the scales of power with her appearance because she still feels “the silent bowing of men in the street<sup>474</sup>”. Her inner monologue concludes with her contemplating in what way she will prepare her house for potential guests, one of which could be a stranger she met on the stairway and invited over. Everything has its place and everything shall be in its place, because she soldiers on in her life, victorious in her mind due to the proper appearance of herself and her house.

## Neville

The antepenultimate narrator is Neville, and his inner monologue picks up where Jinny’s has left off, it would seem. He commences his train of thoughts with not needing the things that served as shields in his private life, like walls, his room and firelight. He is passing by Jinny’s house and sees a young man making himself presentable in front of it. Neville decides not to interrupt them and that he can always come to visit later. He, too, thinks about how he has gotten older and how earlier youth brought with it boastfulness and the lack of caring for the small things because they seemed unimportant, but now, he feels like he likes watching the sea of people coming and going on and off the train and the train station<sup>475</sup>.

He contemplates the responsibility of people, himself included, while reading Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*. He then takes a walk, enters some room and sees people talking, arguing, laughing, and so on and so forth. It appears to him that Rhoda or maybe Louis passed through the room, but he is not sure, and he concludes that whoever it was the mundane sequence that played out in that room was not enough for them to stick around. He thinks of all the horrors that he has experienced and he wonders why would he search for a reason why something happens, like his friend, Louis, does, or why would he take refuge in the imaginary land of daydream like his friend Rhoda does. He foreshadows that Rhoda and Louis are not still together by saying that she is constantly daydreaming, while Louis stays grounded in his little attic room<sup>476</sup>.

He proceeds to read a poem and experience it uninterrupted. Soon the people that were in the room with him leave and he is alone in silence. He contemplates the entertaining features of watching fire burn in the fireplace. It takes various shapes and produces sounds that remind him on insects, and his narration ends on an equivocal note, with the reader not being sure if there is really somebody at the door, or is it just Neville’s fancy, or maybe the ghost of Percival<sup>477</sup>.

## Louis

Louis starts off by announcing that he has come home from work, that he takes his coat off and hangs in like so, and places his cane in the designated spot, and then he thinks how he likes to imagine that Cardinal Richelieu used a cane like that<sup>478</sup>. And although the mention of the Cardinal might not be viewed as an element of popular culture due to the Cardinal historically being a French statesman and chief minister in the court of King Louis XIII of France in the seventeenth century<sup>479</sup>, it is one, because Cardinal Richelieu is one of the most famous villains in literary history. This is thanks to the 1844 novel *The Three Musketeers* by Alexandre Dumas, and the later film adaptations

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<sup>474</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 140

<sup>475</sup> Ibid. p. 140

<sup>476</sup> Ibid. pp. 141-142

<sup>477</sup> Ibid. pp. 142-143

<sup>478</sup> Ibid. p. 143

<sup>479</sup> Daniel Patrick O’Connell, *Armand-Jean du Plessis, cardinal et duc de Richelieu, French cardinal and statesman*, Encyclopædia Britannica, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Armand-Jean-du-Plessis-cardinal-et-duc-de-Richelieu>>, (Online since 20<sup>th</sup> July, 1998, last updated on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2019, accessed on 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2020)

carrying the same title, released in the years 1939, 1948, 1973, 1993 and 2011, respectively<sup>480</sup>, where the said Cardinal is plotting against the queen of France because she refused his romantic advances. Because he is one of the characters in the novel and all these film adaptations, with it his name becomes an imminent element of popular culture.

Bringing the focus back on Louis's inner monologue, he reveals how he has climbed to the position of the right hand man of the director of his company, and how he is immensely successful, but he still comes back to his little attic and reads poems. At this point in the novel the contradictory nature of Louis's character is apparent. It has been hinted at in the previous chapter, and has continued to be a part of him at present. This contradiction of him striving to amass a great deal of personal artefacts and possessions, and still not buy all the prestigious things that he is talking about is a clear element of popular culture in the novel which stems from Louis's inner struggle with him being an Australian<sup>481</sup>.

The first poem that he reads is an "anonymous sixteenth-century ballad<sup>482</sup>" beginning with the words 'O western wind'. As he reads the ballad, he commentates on each and every verse with parts of his life, amongst which are numerous elements of popular culture that have been following him and have been connected to him throughout the novel. There are the poor people's windows signifying the disempowered and subordinated, there is his Australian heritage, specifically his Australian accent and the struggles that have come with him trying to make it not noticeable, then there is mentioning of the Nile, which brings back the image of women carrying red pitchers while men are adorned with turbans. After this, he discloses how he has chosen his latest lover solely for her cockney accent.

*"But she only tumbled the floor with dirty underlinen, and the chairwoman  
and the shop boys called after me a dozen times a day, mocking my prim  
and supercilious gait<sup>483</sup>."*

Therefore, aside from him choosing her solely on the account of her speaking with a cockney accent, he proceeds to insult her by stating she had dirty underwear and that other members of the lower class society, like the chairwoman and the shop boys, mocked him for his prim and proper way of walking.

After this he mentions the Nile again, but this time with the addition of those aforementioned women with red pitchers. He then discloses that Rhoda has left him, which has been foreshadowed in Neville's narration earlier, and he mentions his gold-headed cane, which is an element of the popular because it is now connected to Cardinal Richelieu from the beginning of Louis's narration. His inner monologue then ends with him explaining when he thinks of Rhoda<sup>484</sup>.

## **Rhoda**

The final narrator of this, seventh, section of the novel is Rhoda. She commences her inner monologue with a contradiction. When she was on a train in London, she wished to be someplace else, someplace where there is nature and she would daydream about it, and now when she is on a hill in Spain from which she will be able to see Africa, she thinks, she has flashes of picture of "brown-paper parcels" and faces of people who were on the train with her<sup>485</sup>. This contradictory,

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<sup>480</sup> Results for "The Three Musketeers", IMDb,

<[https://www.imdb.com/find?q=The+Three+Musketeers&ref =nv\\_sr\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/find?q=The+Three+Musketeers&ref =nv_sr_sm)>, (Accessed on 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2020)

<sup>481</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 143

<sup>482</sup> Ibid. p. 217

<sup>483</sup> Ibid. p. 144

<sup>484</sup> Ibid. pp. 145-146

<sup>485</sup> Ibid. p. 146

opposing character of the scene is what makes it an element of popular culture, and therefore this entire section falls in line with other elements of the popular on an ever-growing list. Another element of the popular is her mentioning of the gray and brown clothes that all of those people were wearing. Clothing is a firm element of popular culture, which has been extensively explained on previous occasions in the novel.

She also mentions that she “yielded” to the influence, and this, too, is an element of the popular, because in order to have a sense of community, she had to submit to the rules of society. Then she, too, addresses her leaving Louis. She discloses how she had intimacy fears, even though she tried almost anything to stay there. Among other things, she says:

*“ I flung words in fans like those the sower throws over the ploughed fields  
when the earth is bare<sup>486</sup>. ”*

In this sentence there lies another element of the popular, namely, the worker in the field throwing seeds in such a manner that they would soar and fall in the shape of a fan. The worker is a member of the disempowered and the subordinated, and thus an element of popular culture.

She continues her climb on a back of a mule, and she expects to see Africa from the top. As always, it is not clear whether Rhoda is daydreaming everything that is around her, or if there is some merit to it. She has escaped from London and Louis and she is free, on her own, exploring, feeling nature, and her narration and, at the same time, the seventh section of *The Waves* conclude with her entering a Spanish inn<sup>487</sup>.

## **Part Eight – The Second Dinner**

### **Prologue Eight**

The penultimate chapter commences with its own prologue, as all of the parts did and the last one certainly shall. It starts with a sentence “The sun is sinking<sup>488</sup>.”, which in turn casts a prediction that in the eighth chapter of the novel the main characters will have entered their old age. The red and gold rays of sunshine are more intense, more saturated, occupying the more of the sky and sea as they spread across with the setting sun. The waves coming to the shore do not have the privilege of carrying light with them anymore, they just fall unceremoniously. A light breeze stirs the leaves. A hawk that was on the highest branch of said tree takes flight attacking a wild plover, which manages to escape the dominant hawk and in its subordinated position cries out because it is lonely. The smoke chimneys and trains are the second pair of elements of popular culture that are mentioned, signifying the working class, the disempowered class.

Everything have slowly died down, the workers have cut the corn, the hills have been abandoned, no life stirred on and among them. There are no sounds but the wind howling. No houses, let alone windows on them, can be seen. The rain starts, the shadows of the clouds engulfing and swallowing everything. The shadows elongate everything, the cutlery and a glass in the little white house look swollen. The darkness becomes greater, the shadows grow on the shore and everything becomes taken in by the blackness<sup>489</sup>.

### **Dining Together Again**

The first narrator of the main part of the eighth section of the novel is, yet again, Bernard. He opens his inner monologue with an element of popular culture that has been established and explained while analyzing the fifth section of the novel, which follows the aftermath of the death of

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<sup>486</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 147

<sup>487</sup> Ibid. pp. 147-148

<sup>488</sup> Ibid. p. 149

<sup>489</sup> Ibid. pp. 149-150

Percival, when Bernard feels guilty for not going to Hampton Court that one day with Percival<sup>490</sup>. Hampton Court is nowadays a tourist attraction turning a profit off of the tourism, contributing to the capitalism of the society, and therefore an element of popular culture. His thoughts betray the information that he is middle-aged, and he thinks it is utterly apparent due to the tone of voice in which he says and thinks the words “Hampton Court”. He muses how he used to say the words with excitement or a certain expectancy, but now they just sort of roll out of his mouth in a monotone, resolved way. He is the last to arrive to the rendezvous spot, an inn, and all of his friends are already there, and then he says:

*“Already at fifty yards distance I feel the order of my being changed. The tug of the magnet of their society tells upon me<sup>491</sup>.”*

This sentence reveals an element of the popular which has already been mentioned a couple of times. It is the element of popular culture which makes us feel the sense of community, when Joke Hermes argued that it “makes us welcome and offers belonging”, and in such a way one can obtain cultural citizenship<sup>492</sup>. Therefore, Bernard feeling like his inner self is changing as he approaches the group of his friends invokes this element of the popular and bring it to surface. At the same time as he feels this change in him as he approaches his friends, he quite contradictory to this feeling has a sense of unsteadiness, like he cannot find his ground, and that awkwardness follows him as he joins them. This contrasting feeling is another element of the popular in this part of the text<sup>493</sup>. They settle down and the awkwardness dissipates.

The next narration belongs to Neville, and his train of thoughts continues where Bernard’s has left off. He states how they all feel sadness because Percival will not come on the account of him being dead, of course. He continues describing how they all engage in the usual small talk, asking each other what is new in their respective lives. While describing this, his thought veer towards his credential papers in his pocket that prove that he has achieved his goal, passed something, although it is not disclosed what, but those papers are proof of his “superiority”, but he cannot bring himself to show off because of Susan’s eyes “full of turnips and cornfields” which disturbs him, and so he cannot take out his papers because of Susan’s look<sup>494</sup>. This is another element of the popular in the text, and it is twofold. Firstly, there is the notion of Susan, being a woman, and then a farmer woman, and then having eyes full of turnips and cornfields. All of these go to show that she belongs to the subordinated and disempowered class of society, nonetheless, under her gaze he cannot show off his dominance, and therein lies the contradiction. All of this, together, makes up for a sort of a cocktail of elements of popular culture in this small section of Neville’s inner monologue.

Continuing on, he wonders what else is there to do in order to show his superiority since he cannot show off his papers, and then concludes:

*“There is always somebody, when we come together, and the edges of meeting are still sharp, who refuses to be submerged; whose identity therefore one wishes to make crouch beneath one’s own. For me, now, it is Susan. I talk to impress Susan. Listen to me, Susan<sup>495</sup>.”*

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<sup>490</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 112

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.* p. 151

<sup>492</sup> Joke Hermes, *Re-reading Popular Culture* (Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 1-3

<sup>493</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 151

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.* p. 152

<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 152-153

These few sentences of Neville's are showcasing what popular culture is all about, more accurately, what popular culture is against. It is against the dominant dominating the subordinated, much like Neville who wishes to dominate over everybody present by showing his papers, but then there is Susan who "refuses" to submit, therefore rebelling against it and making herself a stellar example of the element of the popular. Then, there is the issue of her identity, one might say her individualism, and this is reminiscent of Adorno's critical view of popular culture, where individualism is in peril. He finds popular culture "something that is ultimately toxic in its effects on the social process<sup>496</sup>.", and here as well, we can see Neville trying to squash Susan's individualism by making her submit to his supposed superiority.

Neville continues on comparing their lives, making it painfully clear just how much Susan is disempowered by pointing out how when her husband is grumpy and grumbling, she says and sees nothing because she cannot say or see anything due to her being his wife, a woman, because, as Neville puts it, "Custom blinds your eyes<sup>497</sup>." Neville makes sure to underline how her relationship with her husband is gray, morose, it would seem, while his relationship with his lover, whoever he might be at present, is vibrant, lively. Such is the male prerogative. Even in relationships between two men, they are equals, while a woman is seen as a man's possession, and that is one of the most obvious elements of popular culture in Woolf's writings.

Neville's narration takes on a philosophical tone after this and after a rhapsody of metaphors and images about the privilege of his kind of a relationship he says:

*"You meanwhile – for I want to diminish your hostility; your green eyes fixed on mine, and your shabby dress, your rough hands and all the other emblems of your maternal splendor – have stuck like a limpet to the same rock. Yet it is true, I do not want to hurt you; only to fresh and furbish up my own belief in myself that failed at your entry<sup>498</sup>."*

This whole paragraph is filled with elements of popular culture. First and foremost, there is the image of Susan, her appearance, all the little things that show she is a mother and a wife, a farmer and a hard worker. All of these belittling features – the shabbiness of her dress, the roughness of her hands, and everything else that might show to somebody that she is a mother – make her an element of popular culture again and again. Secondly, there is the opposing feel of Neville's words because he tries so hard to indirectly insult her, and yet he characterizes her appearance as "maternal splendor", which has a distinctly positive connotation, that leads me to believe that this word coming from his mouth could be said in an ironic manner. And then there is the contradiction to him saying that he does not wish to harm her in any way, but only wants to boost his ego, which diminished once she entered the scene<sup>499</sup>. The paradox of popular culture is that Susan did not do anything, she just existed, and Neville was the one who saw her presence as a threat even though he is the dominant one by default because he is a man and a gentleman by birth. All of these features form an amalgamation of multitude of elements of popular culture in the novel, the most prominent one being that women are put in boxes as the disempowered ones, the subordinated ones by men, because that is who pulls the strings in a white, capitalist, patriarchal society.

Returning to the narration, Neville's inner monologue continues on with its philosophical direction and he ponders how, to Susan, and presumably everybody else around him, he is simply him, but to himself, he is "immeasurable". He feels everything and perceives everything, his

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<sup>496</sup> Robert W. Witkin, *Adorno on Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003 first edition, this edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004) p. 1

<sup>497</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 153

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.* p. 153

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.* p. 153

thoughts and imaginations run deep. His soul has been tangled with threads of love and then pulled apart, shredded by that very same emotion. His thoughts end on Percival, and how the last time they were dining all together they were all in sync waiting for Percival to arrive.

The inner monologue which follows is Susan's, naturally, since Neville has been so focused on her. She starts her thought process with a memory of Bernard's Elvedon. Then she turns to Neville and describes the difference between them. Those are the same difference that he talked about in his narration, but from her point of view. She does not see her dark skin and rough hands as something degrading, but as a medal of honour, a proof that she worked hard, as a person should, and she sees his pale skin as something that makes him weak and kind of transparent, as in see-through. This part is another elements of popular culture, because here Susan breaks the chains, breaks the status quo and blurs the lines between herself as a woman, a worker, the disempowered, and Neville, a man, a gentleman, the empowered. Her inner monologue ends on a positive note, though, because she feels that it was necessary to measure achievements in their respective lives, because that is what friends do. Then there is a very short interjection in the form of Rhoda's narration, where she describes the setting of the sun and mentions cars – a small but nonetheless equal element of popular culture as any other that has been stumbled upon throughout the text<sup>500</sup>.

Bernard takes the stage once more talking about the years passing rapidly and how to older they are the faster the years seem to go by. He once again mentions Hampton Court, an already well-known and thoroughly explained element of popular culture, and then says how they now have to jump "like fish" in order to "catch the train from Waterloo", but how they still do not reach the train and then fall back "into the stream"<sup>501</sup>. The mentioning of Waterloo is not a particular element of popular culture from that time period, but to the modern reader the word brings to mind, aside from the obvious historic information of that being the place where Napoleon was defeated once and for all, it brings to mind one of the most famous elements of popular culture, a song by ABBA, which are another well-known element of popular culture themselves<sup>502</sup>. He continues thinking about old-age and what that entails, and then uses the same metaphor as Susan did at the end of the previous section of the novel – a man which throws seeds in a shape of a fan, which is another already explained element of the popular.

Bernard's narration shifts towards his phrases and he reminisces about his school days when the boys from school would listen to his stories. He then amuses the thought of him being a vagabond of sorts travelling from door to door because he cannot be alone, his character craves audience. And he is contradictory in his description because he says how he is indiscriminate, not minding silk nor fleas in a haystack for a lodging, but at the same time holding a bit of "contempt" and "severity", he can turn anything into a story and that is his weapon. The sad thing for him is that he still does not know what is the true story, the one and only, he still has not found that out, while his friend Louis has his firm opinions on things<sup>503</sup>.

Following the form of narrations, that whoever the previous narrator mentions last becomes the narrator of the next part throughout this section of the novel, it becomes Louis's turn to share his thoughts with the reader, and so does just that. He opens his inner monologue with things that interrupt the threads of the life he tried to make for himself, one of which was, of course, that inevitable element of the popular, his Australian accent. But throughout all the things that he is convinced others see in him, he begs them to pay attention to his "cane" and his "waistcoat", because those are the things that show off his wealth, his climb to the top in his company, because he managed to realize his goal, he has "inherited a desk of solid mahogany" in his office, he works at a reputable company, wears that white waistcoat of his and has an engagement journal<sup>504</sup>. His

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<sup>500</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 154-155

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.* p. 155

<sup>502</sup> Sara Pendergast, Tom Pendergast, *St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture* (St. James Press, 2000), p. 4

<sup>503</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 156-157

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.* p. 157

strive to show off his wealth and success is in direct connection with the feeling of him being worth less because of his Australian heritage, and in turn, this is why him mentioning these things is an element of popular culture itself. Then he brings into the silent conversation the reader has with him at the moment a multitude, a plethora of contradictions, making the entire section that follows an amalgamation of elements of popular culture.

*“For I am always the youngest; the most naively surprised; [...] I suffer for all humiliations. Yet I am also ruthless, marmoreal. [...] I condemn you. Yet my heart yearns towards you. I would go with you through the fires of death. Yet am happiest alone. I luxuriate in gold and purple vestments. Yet I prefer a view over chimney pots; cats scraping their mangy sides upon blistered chimney stacks; broken windows, and the hoarse clangour of bells from the steeple of some brick chapel<sup>505</sup>.”*

Among these numerous contradictions there is one minor element of popular culture as well nestled between these words, and those are the broken windows which Louis can see from his attic. With this, his narration ends, and Jinny’s commences.

Jinny’s narration is one of self-love and self-adoration despite aging. She proclaims that she is never alone due to her many lovers. The first element of popular culture in her inner monologue is all the clothes that people wear and by which she deduces what they do for a living<sup>506</sup>. Then she emphasizes that men come to her willingly just by her signaling for them to do so with her hand<sup>507</sup>. This is the power of beauty. Everything with Jinny is about her beauty and her sexuality. She uses the fact that she is a beautiful woman to break away from the shackles of the rules of society stating that she cannot have power and cannot be dominant simply because she is a woman. And yet again, to achieve that beauty, she sits on front of the mirror and analyzes each and every flaw on her face and figure so that she would conform to the rules of society stating that a lady of certain stature has to look and behave a certain way in order to be taken seriously. These are the elements of the popular in her narration, which concludes on her reiterating the sentiment from the previous part of the novel, the seventh section, that she is not afraid despite her getting older<sup>508</sup>.

The succeeding narrator is Rhoda, and she continues with her daydreaming way of thinking. She repeats that she has no face, just like when she was younger. All of her friends have done something, they have children, or they have succeeded in business, but she does not have anything, she thinks. She describes how Bernard called for a waiter and Susan added that they wanted bread, but both of them just shouted one word orders, and this is the first element of popular culture in her narration. The waiter is the disempowered one, the subordinated one who must wait on them, them who assert their dominance by shouting orders. The second, albeit small and already exhausted, element of popular culture is her mentioning the place where they are, namely, Hampton Court<sup>509</sup>. Then she escapes into her world of daydreaming again when her friends start boasting with the things they succeeded in life up so far, and with this, her narration concludes, for now<sup>510</sup>.

### **The Silence**

The reader “hears” from Bernard again, and this is the last long narration before all of their voices start intermingling and the reader gets a feeling that the conversations have take on a livelier

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<sup>505</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 158

<sup>506</sup> Ibid. p. 158

<sup>507</sup> Ibid. p. 159

<sup>508</sup> Ibid. p. 159

<sup>509</sup> Ibid. p. 160

<sup>510</sup> Ibid. p. 161

tone, and that their collective minds are thinking as one, intermingling, which the six main characters often do throughout the entire novel. Silence fell over their little group and this is extremely bothersome for Bernard who does not wish to be alone. He resolves to take a look at his friends, and takes satisfaction from noticing that all of them are content and calm, and soon they break off into a silent chatter with their inner monologues intertwining. Amongst the abundance of their thoughts, some elements of popular culture reemerge, like Louis's image of the Nile which carries with itself the memory of women carrying red pitchers, or how they saw the nursemaid named Florrie and a servant named Ernest kissing<sup>511</sup>, and then Louis and Rhoda share a small conversation amongst themselves, just as they did the last time they all dined together with Percival, which foreshadowed their impending relationship in section four of the novel. Rhoda notes that when Jinny asked who was coming along, Neville thought for a split second that it might be Percival, but then remembered that he had died and so he sighed. Then she looks at Jinny looking herself in the small pocket mirror, fixing up her makeup just right, Susan is fidgeting with the top button of her coat in response to Jinny fixing up her make up<sup>512</sup>. These things that Rhoda takes notice of are an element of popular culture already explained several times over throughout this research. It is Jinny making herself presentable, doing what society imposes as the norm in order to be considered attractive and presentable because that is the only way in which a woman can have power, for as long as she is observed as beautiful. Susan's response is another element of the popular because even though she is a woman, Jinny makes her feel inferior, and so she is once again on a lower level in the hierarchy of those empowered and those disempowered, just like when they were children and Jinny kissed Louis, causing Susan her first heartbreak.

Louis responds by actually disclosing to the reader that they have left the inn and gone towards the gardens, but he suggests to Rhoda to fall back a little from the group so that they could share a private conversation, and Rhoda agrees comparing them to "conspirators who have something to whisper<sup>513</sup>."

As the six main characters share this walk, Bernard thinks of time passing by and Neville thinks about history, Louis, walking with Bernard, Neville and Susan, thinks of their childhood, Jinny about how she hurdled over the inevitable passing of the time with makeup and delicate handkerchiefs, while Susan offers an element of popular culture in a contradiction that it does not matter to her if she holds the hand of one of her friends, any of her friends for that matter with either love or hate. Rhoda is in one of her daydream moods, Bernard, in a manner that is now oh so familiar to the reader, makes up a phrase and places their lives into a red carnation with six petals that was on the table when they all dined with Percival<sup>514</sup>.

Louis and Rhoda have fallen back and now share their own moment. In their conversation Louis offers the following elements of popular culture: Jinny's gloves and nails that are manicured with a nail polish the colour of cherries, which signify her refinement and the ever-present sense of needing to look her best in order to have even a modicum of power in the white, patriarchal, capitalist society, and Susan talking about her "wasted life" because is constantly struggling with her role of a wife and mother<sup>515</sup>. Rhoda's contribution is another element of the popular where she takes notice of an elderly woman returning from somewhere and a man who is a fisherman, coming down the terrace, and she knows that he is a fisherman because he carries his fishing rod<sup>516</sup>. Once again the female character is nondescript aside from being old, which is apparent, and the male character receives a vocation, a fisherman, which places the aforementioned woman in the class of

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<sup>511</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 16

<sup>512</sup> Ibid. pp. 161-162

<sup>513</sup> Ibid. p. 163

<sup>514</sup> Ibid. pp. 163-164

<sup>515</sup> Ibid. p. 165

<sup>516</sup> Ibid. p. 165

the disempowered and subordinated.

As they take in the scenery and the world around them, it becomes apparent that they will not be getting back together and that they are just good friends now, as they have been when they were children, both of them with their own chips on their shoulders, and Louis notices some figures coming towards them, but cannot discern if the said figures are male or female, and Rhoda reveals that they are a mixed company, men and women, and later on that those men and women are their friends<sup>517</sup>. This is another element of the popular which takes the reader back to Orlando, and how he became she and did not change on the inside, just on the outside, showing that we are the same.

Rhoda's and Louis's moment finishes with their friends returning, and Bernard notices that their return has done something, whereas Neville is focused on how tired they all are because their years have caught up to them, which Jinny and Susan confirm silently<sup>518</sup>.

The last long narration belongs to Bernard, which is only fitting, seeing how he was the one whose narration set this section of the novel off, and whose inner monologue will be the only one the reader is offered in the last section of the novel. He beckons his friends to stay even though it is way past the usual bedtime hour. The first element of popular culture comes in the shape of the shopkeepers' bedroom lights, signifying the working class, therefore the disempowered and the subordinated<sup>519</sup>. He asks the question and answers it on his own.

*“What do you think their takings have been today? Only just enough to pay for rent, for light and food and the children's clothing. But just enough. What a sense of the tolerableness of life the lights in the bedrooms of small shopkeepers give us! Saturday comes, and there is just enough to pay perhaps for seats at the pictures. [...] ‘I have posted my letter,’ the greengrocer thinks, ‘to the Sunday newspaper. Suppose I win five hundred pounds in the football competition? [...]”<sup>520</sup>*

This section holds the struggles of the working class, the Sunday newspapers and football as elements of popular culture.

Bernard continues with his inner monologue, describing the boasting boys and their drunken singing and partying, which is reminiscent of a very popular spring break, when everything is allowed and drinking and twenty-four/seven partying is almost mandatory, it would seem. They soon decide it is high time they went their respective homes. And the last element of popular culture is the image of Bernard holding his train ticket to Waterloo<sup>521</sup>.

## **Part Nine – Old Age**

### **Prologue Nine**

The ultimate prologue, and with it the last chapter, starts off with an almost identical imagery as the first one did, darkness where the sky and sea cannot be distinguished one from another. The sun has set completely; the day is done. Darkness, shadows, decay, gloom and moroseness rule the little seascape now. The house with white walls and the objects inside do not have any of the previously held vibrant colours and their distinguishable shapes, all of that vanished with the sun that has set. The hills, roads and woods suffer the same fate, there is almost no sound, just a lonesome bird trying to find an even more lonesome tree and maybe a gust of wind and a

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<sup>517</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 166

<sup>518</sup> Ibid. p. 167

<sup>519</sup> Ibid. p. 167

<sup>520</sup> Ibid. pp. 167-168

<sup>521</sup> Ibid. pp. 168-169

whisper of water. Darkness spreads, unrelenting, it takes in everything. It covers the mountains and valleys, the trees and couples, the empty shells of the snails and even “girls, sitting on verandahs [...] shading their faces with their fans<sup>522</sup>”. These girls are the last element of popular culture in the intermittent allegory consisting of these nine prologues. They are faceless and it seems like they are all the same, fanning themselves, sitting on their verandahs. With this image of darkness engulfing everything, the ultimate prologue ends and the final chapter begins.

### **Bernard’s Final Story – Childhood; Louis; Neville**

The last part of the book is unique and it differs from the rest of the novel in more ways than one. The most obvious difference between the ninth part of the novel and all those that came before it is that it is told solely from Bernard’s point of view. It is his narration through and through and he retells the story of him and his friends. The second most notable difference is that it is the longest single chapter in the whole text with it counting close to fifty pages, forty-two without its prologue. He opens with an offer of “explaining the meaning” of his life to a person who is a virtual stranger, even though they might have met once before. It is the fact that the person he is talking to is stranger that gives him the confidence and freedom to retell the story of his life. He sits at a table with this stranger and he is an old man by now with gray hair and heavier than he would like to be. Surprisingly, he is tired of his phrases and the stories that he has been telling his entire life. He longs for some broken words, some inarticulate phrases. He enjoys a more sinister and macabre settings in his stories than he did before, and then while the two of them eat, he starts from the beginning<sup>523</sup>.

He starts from the very moment he was born and how Mrs Constable, an element of popular culture herself with her black thick stockings<sup>524</sup>, washed his little body then. He tells the tale about his first breath and how the water from Mrs Constable’s sponge shot “arrows of sensation<sup>525</sup>” all over his body and so “if we knock against a chair, a table or a woman, we are pierced with arrows of sensation<sup>526</sup> [...]”. The mere notion that he could place bumping into a woman on the same level as bumping into a table or a chair is a strong indicator of the place women have in a white, capitalist, patriarchal society. It might be argued that they are the same as furniture, something to be used when needed and then discarded. Obviously an element of popular culture with them being so blatantly disempowered and subordinated. Then he starts talking about that time when they were children, him and Susan, Jinny, Rhoda, Neville and Louis. He talks about various things that “happen in one second and last for ever<sup>527</sup>”. Bernard has been known for his contradictory utterances throughout the novel, so this one when things are both happening in a second and yet everlasting is just another one which gives Bernard’s narration over to the list of the elements of the popular in the text. He recounts the whole first part of the novel and offers the familiar elements of the popular, those belonging to the subordinated and disempowered, “the stable boy clattering about the yard in great boots”, “the gardeners” sweeping “the lawns with great brooms” and the lady sitting and writing, “transfixed”, and he could not do anything to stop them, the muses<sup>528</sup>.

He then started describing how all of them, namely the six main characters and at the same time narrators, experienced the same things but at the same time were and are very different. He states how all of the things happening to them affected them in their own individual ways. He

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<sup>522</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 170-171

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 172-173

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.* p. 173

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.* p. 173

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid.* p. 173

<sup>528</sup> *Ibid.* p. 174

slowly shifts into their school years when the girls and the boys got sent to separate schools. He shares his memories about their headmaster – the Doctor, and how he shouted through a megaphone “since people in authority always become melodramatic<sup>529</sup>” and how he neither hated the man like Neville did, nor worshipped him like Louis did. This remark that people who possess the authority always become melodramatic is another element of popular culture. With it he shows his rebellious side, the side that defies authority, which is all popular culture is about. Although Bernard is a gentleman, and then was the son of a gentleman, naturally, he was still in school and therefore the headmaster having the power and domination over the students, Bernard belonged to the subordinated and the disempowered, and popular culture is, among many other things, the constant struggle of the subordinated and the disempowered to bridge the gap between them and those empowered and dominant.

Coming back to the text, Bernard reveals how he took notes during the Doctor’s preaching to behave like adults about what was happening at the time with his friends and so he offers a scene from that time. He describes Percival and how everybody at school looked up to him. But soon his story takes a quite different turn remembering Percival’s trip to India for a position with a colonial government and he all but sees in his mind’s eye “many obscure Indians, and people dying of famine and disease, and women who have been cheated, and whipped dogs and crying children<sup>530</sup>”. These are all undeniable elements of popular culture in the novel, all of these walks of life, even the poor whipped dogs, if not especially them belong to the subordinated and disempowered class of society. He finishes his story of Percival with a notion of him dying too soon and that he would have been a great protector of those who desperately needed protecting.

His next story is of Louis. He starts his tale of Louis from their school days. How while they were in a chapel where he would listen to their headmaster with great concentration, but then his eyes would flash with laughter. How he was not popular like Percival had been, and how he would sometimes talk about “how the surf swept over the beaches of his home”, which he did rarely<sup>531</sup>. It comes as no surprise that Louis, who had constantly struggled with him being from Australia and having an Australian accent and not a British accent, would speak of his home on a rare occasion, but what does come as a surprise of sorts is that he would talk about it at all considering the amount of shame that he felt in connection to his heritage. Therefore, it could be argued that he did actually feel some sort of pride towards the beauty of the surf at his home. And so, his opposing nature, the contrasting feelings and the struggle because of that, continually resurface throughout the whole novel, and seal Louis’s fate as being one of the strongest elements of popular culture in *The Waves*. Bernard continues with his story of his Australian friend and notes how he was always detached from the rest of them and how he was a great scholar but that he had been envious of Bernard’s ease with which he conversed with the help. Bernard, being the son of a gentleman, should have treated the servants with reservation and keeping his distance, but he did not and it bothered Louis because he could not do so, because he so desperately wished to belong to the high society, and therefore acted in such a way that he thought those who belong to the high class of society should act.

Bernard continues talking about Louis and how despite his disapproval towards Bernard’s phrases and stories, he was not proud to the point of blindness, but rather self-conscious in many ways. Because of this, he managed to climb to the top at his company and achieve the success he dreamed of, but his life “was not happy”, Bernard concludes and then moves on to talking about another of his friends<sup>532</sup>.

The next character Bernard offers to his companion, this unnamed listener, his acquaintance, belongs to Neville. He describes Neville as being detached from the rest of them to some extent and

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<sup>529</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 175

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.* p. 176

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.* p. 176

<sup>532</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 176-177

as seeing the world as black or white because he did not appreciate the “half-likes and half-hates” of his friends. He comments briefly on Neville’s hatred towards their boarding school headmaster and how Neville “sought out one person, always one person to sit beside.” This could have been Percival, but seeing how Neville loved Percival from afar, it is more plausible that it is not one particular person that Neville sought out, but just that there is no more than one person in his company.

Following this, Bernard’s narration shows to the reader the image of all of them, the students, like soldiers almost saluting when the wives of their teachers would pass by<sup>533</sup>. This is an element of popular culture where the students are the subordinated ones even to the women, but solely because those women are married to their teachers, therefore, they are the ones who are in actuality the disempowered and subordinated ones, because their power is not their own, but it stems from their husbands.

Bernard then talks about them growing up as the years in boarding school go by, and how there was little that could stop them from doing anything together.

*“With one scoop a whole brakeful of boys is swept up and goes cricketing, footballing. An army marches across Europe. We assemble in parks and halls and sedulously oppose any renegade (Neville, Louis, Rhoda) who sets up a separate existence<sup>534</sup>.”*

In this small segment of Bernard’s narration, there lies another element of popular culture. Namely, the collectiveness of the mass – the group of boys – which decide what is the norm and disapprove of any and all who dare break the status quo – people preferring to be alone such as Rhoda, Louis or Neville. The boys represent the society and those who are alone are the disempowered ones trying to blur the lines between themselves and the norm.

Bernard continues on describing how he likes being in a group and what the multitude of voices brings into his life. Throughout his speech he brings up a few of the easily recognizable element of the popular such as the omnipresent omnibuses, the cars driving by the restaurant in which he and his companion currently are, the train, a steam boat, the men in public houses and clubs, and how he likes talking to those men and how he often sought company of others when his two male childhood friends were indisposed for some reason<sup>535</sup>.

His train of thoughts takes on now already familiar tone of philosophy, and by the end of the strain of numerous philosophical phrases, he announces that he would now talk of his three female friends. It must be noted here how Bernard, as a man, and a gentleman at that is the only one whose thoughts are displayed in this last section of the novel. Him being who and what he is makes him a member of the *crème de la crème* of society, and it cannot go unnoticed that he firstly speaks of his two male friends, and secondly of his female friends, placing them on a scale of lower importance than his male friends, possibly inadvertently. Thus, this is an underlying element of popular culture in this, ninth, part of the novel. The case in point might be that he just talked of Neville and Louis first because they all went to school together, but the fact remains that Jinny, Susan and Rhoda came in second, and after all, the reason why something has been done is unimportant when it comes to science, therefore, it remains an element of the popular.

### **Bernard’s Final Story – Jinny; Susan; Rhoda**

Coming back to the text, Bernard starts talking about all three of his female friends at the same time, intertwining their stories as he goes. He opens up by saying that Jinny behaved meekly and sweetly, but had a cunning and mischievous nature, that Rhoda was openly wild and different,

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<sup>533</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 177

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.* p. 177

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.* p. 178

while Susan was the first one to become “purely feminine<sup>536</sup>”.

*“It was she who dropped on my face those scalding tears which are terrible, beautiful; both, neither. She was born to be the adored of poets, since poets require safety; someone who sits sewing, who says ‘I hate, I love’, who is neither comfortable nor prosperous, but has some quality in accordance with the high but unemphatic beauty of pure style which those who create poetry so particularly admire<sup>537</sup>.”*

Throughout this portion of Bernard’s narration about Susan there are some elements of the popular. Firstly, there are the contradictory sections – Susan’s tears that are both terrible and beautiful and at the same time neither terrible or beautiful, then there is the notion that Susan is considered safe because she sits and sews, as a woman should. Then there are her contrasting feelings of hate and love at the same time when Jinny kissed Louis in the garden at the beginning of the novel. All of these are elements of popular culture which explain just in what way Bernard saw his friend when they were children and now, reflecting upon those days.

He resumes his inner monologue and once again reflects on the contradiction that were Susan’s feelings of love and hate, but adds that he heard at that moment a servant laughing while working in the attic<sup>538</sup>. This servant is yet another element of popular culture, the servant, who by default lies in the category of the subordinated and the disempowered on the spectrum of classes.

Bernard’s mind takes the reader on a journey through his youth by him describing a willow tree that is situated on the river bank. She notes how the tree has not changed, even though all of them have. He retells his college years when he was a different poet or a character from some novel interchangeably and intermittently. Then comes his memory of Percival, which cannot be a happy one because of Percival’s untimely death, of course. As he goes off on one of his philosophical phrasings, he mentions newspapers, which are an element of popular culture and therefore must be noted down here, but they hold no particular value to his story. His philosophical contemplations end and he steers his mind back to the story he was telling<sup>539</sup>.

He remembers all the things that happened in the vicinity of the aforementioned willow tree on the river bank. How he watched Neville observe a young man eating bananas out of a paper bag, how Rhoda took every opportunity to hide herself from the people and escape into her daydreaming. How there were omnibuses and trams – both of which are the well-established elements of popular culture – were what distracted her and what made her want to escape. How Jinny marched in with her sobriety, ready for the world and ready to deal with the rules of society, how they wore their suits, he a gray one and she a green one, and since clothes have been labelled as an element of popular culture due to the prejudice people have of other people solely by their appearance, it shall not be further extrapolated on. He then mentions how Louis did everything in his power to seem like he belonged there and like his father was not really an Australian banker. He mentions the tram again, and the factory with fumes pouring out, the drunken, naked women of Louis’s neighbourhood and Christmas, all of which are elements of popular culture.<sup>540</sup>

He spends an unusual amount of words on describing how only the faces of his five childhood friends remained always clear to him, while other people were just a blur. He describes the party where Jinny was, “quite at her ease, rayed out on a gilt chair<sup>541</sup>”, and this depiction of her

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<sup>536</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 179

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.* p. 179

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.* p. 179

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 180-181

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.* p. 182

<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.* p. 183

sitting on a chair just so, so that she would be noticed by other people – men in particular, is an element of popular culture falling back on that omnipresent and perpetually resurfacing fact that women in white, patriarchal, capitalist societies are to be observed, to be had, to be used, to be a possession, like objects, consequently belonging to the group of those subordinated and disempowered.

Along with the image of Jinny being on display, the reader is privy to the developments of the party from Bernard's point of view. He explains how "some lady" beckons somebody to come to her and "admits one to the honour of her intimacy", where the social niceties soon become more intimate by the leap of the usage of surnames, to the given names, and finally – nicknames<sup>542</sup>. The "old gentlemen" are depicted as "standing decorated under chandeliers", talking about India, Ireland and Morocco, respectively, and what should be done about those countries. So, once again, the reader is faced with the less than satisfying description of a female character – she is simply "some lady", while the male characters are described by their age – being old, by their stature – being gentlemen, their appearance – that they are decorated, by the position in the room – that they stand under chandeliers, and finally, which actually came first in the text, that they have answers to questions about the foreign affairs<sup>543</sup>. All of this is that same element of popular culture which constantly proves that women are thought of as being less, as being not important enough to be worthy of the description with so many parameters, it is enough for them to be described with just one or two, but very few, details.

Bernard's train of thoughts continues, he mentions two elements of popular culture from the very first section of the novel and his first story, the story of Elvedon. Those two elements are the gardeners sweeping and a woman writing, but in the general sense of things he makes that one lady that was writing into some women writing, a few sentences later another element emerges – the Strand, which was featured and explained in the sixth segment of the novel, and the last element of this particular train of Bernard's thoughts are the shop windows signifying the working class, of course, who are members of the disempowered and subordinated<sup>544</sup>.

### **Bernard's Final Story – Marriage; Birth of a Child; Percival's Death**

Bernard once again emphasizes how he only remembers the faces of his five childhood friends and what they did and what they said, he remembers other people, but not their names. He touches on the topic of the time passing by quickly, and then starts telling a story about a woman who he decides to call "the third Miss Jones<sup>545</sup>", which might mean that she was the third woman by the name of Miss Jones that he had ever met, but it might also mean that he forgot her name and decided to give her a generic name like Jones. It turns out that that woman became his fiancée and subsequently his wife, but when they were engaged, both Louis and Rhoda "contradicted what was then so positive" to him, and with this they became, once again, members of the elements of popular culture group. His narration describes his domestic, married life, in which *The Times* and the telephone appear as the elements of the popular<sup>546</sup>. After mentioning his brief conversation, he says:

*“ 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*

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<sup>542</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 184

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.* p. 184

<sup>544</sup> *Ibid.* p. 184

<sup>545</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 185-186

<sup>546</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 187-188

*dodges to achieve the same end – to earn our living*<sup>547</sup>. ”

Throughout the entirety of this segment of Bernard’s inner speech it is sufficiently evident that the society of Bernard’s world is the patriarchal capitalist society, that men are the breadwinners, they are those holding all the power, they are those dominating the world, while women are to be the homemakers, those subordinated to men, those with no power.

He continues his narration with explaining how wonderful life is, and he supports his utterance with the description of “the ordinary man in good health” who likes satiating his hunger and thirst and enjoys breathing fresh air and taking a fast stroll “down the Strand”<sup>548</sup>. Again, the elements of the popular are presented. The Strand, of course, and that undeniable male dominance, because he does not drive his point home by describing a woman’s day and her likes and dislikes, buy a man’s. the next element of popular culture comes in the form of “little shopkeepers” and other various workers Bernard sees when travelling to and from work. And then just as his first child was born – Percival died<sup>549</sup>.

He relives and retells the entire story of him being full of contradictory feeling of joy about his son being born and sadness for the death of his friend, how he wandered the streets of London and then went to a museum, he mentions his guilt over not going with him to Hampton Court – which is now already a well-explained element of popular culture<sup>550</sup>. He reiterates how he decided to seek the company of his friend, Jinny because “she had a room; a room with little tables, with little ornaments scattered on little tables<sup>551</sup>”. Jinny’s little room is another element of popular culture in the novel because it shows just how much she cared about her appearance and the appearance of her home, because that is what a proper lady does. Bernard follows this depiction of Jinny’s room with how he cried tears of guilt and sorrow while telling her about not going to Hampton Court with their deceased friend<sup>552</sup>. The mention of him crying takes the reader back to the beginning of the second part of the novel when he was saying goodbye to his family before going to boarding school and how he did not cry for as long as his parents could see him, but did cry once the taxi turned a corner, because it is not manly to cry, it is not manly to display weakness, to display emotions, but here he does all of it and in company, which makes him an element of popular culture in this instance, just as it did when he cried as a boy for leaving home.

Another element of the popular strolls in in a shape of a made delivering a letter for Jinny, the made being the obvious element because she is a woman and on top of that a servant. Bernard’s visit comes to an end and he describes her touching up her makeup and making sure to keep her hair in place despite the wind while seeing Bernard off<sup>553</sup>. This is another element of the popular connected to Jinny and her desire to act and look like a lady of her stature should, as imposed by the rules of society.

The saga about Percival dying concludes with Bernard observing women shopping, an already explained and strong element of popular culture where women blur the lines and take a bit of the power from the world for themselves by shopping, and the last element in the story of the day Bernard received news of his friend dying is the parlourmaid of his home who told him to be extremely quiet when going upstairs because the baby is sleeping<sup>554</sup>.

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<sup>547</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 188

<sup>548</sup> *Ibid.* p. 188

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.* p. 189

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.* p. 190 p. 190

<sup>551</sup> *Ibid.* p. 190

<sup>552</sup> *Ibid.* p. 191

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.* p. 191

<sup>554</sup> *Ibid.* p. 191

Bernard's story continues with him thinking about the time passing and healing all wounds to some extent, and visiting his friends one by one after Percival's death, first he visited Susan and was almost insulted for Percival when he saw the way she was living, a farmer's wife, pregnant, surrounded by nature and farm work. This is the moment when the reader discovers that Percival proposed to Susan and she refused him, and that is why Bernard felt that all of the things filling Susan's life were "hateful"<sup>555</sup>.

While sitting on a bench waiting for the train to arrive, he looked at the nature around him and thought of Elvedon again. The familiar elements of popular culture – the lady writing and the gardeners sweeping – came to him once more. He daydreams about Elvedon, which transforms into a philosophical thinking about what was once cause for adventure, now has lost its appeal<sup>556</sup>. Returning to London he says:

*"How satisfactory, the atmosphere of common sense and tobacco; old women clambering into the third-class carriage with their baskets<sup>557</sup>; [...]"*

His disdain for Susan's choice of life carries through all the way back to London, and the elements of popular culture in this minute section of his speech are the tobacco and old ladies riding in a low-class carriage.

### **Bernard's Final Story – Seeking Out Old Friends**

Bernard opens the next chapter of his oral autobiography with a notion of enjoying theatre – another element of popular culture, of course. On one such occasion when he was in the theatre he met Jinny and three of her friends. He muses how he loved their company, but sometimes liked being alone, too, but in that moment he wished to find Neville. And he finds him, and he thought how nobody ever changes really because it seemed to him that Neville has always sat in that chair, in that room, doing what he was doing then – reading<sup>558</sup>.

This is true for each and every of the main six characters in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*. All of the narrators have one distinguishing feature which follows them from early childhood all the way until the end of their story. And all of those features make them elements of popular culture, each of them in their own way. Let us start from the female characters, first and foremost, they are female, therefore they automatically belong to the disempowered and subordinated. Aside from that, Jinny uses her sexuality in order to blur the lines between the male and female classes of the patriarchal society and take a small portion of the male power for herself, but in doing so she just falls into the slot addressed to her by that very same society. Susan is constantly contradictory to herself, loving and hating at the same time and enjoying her motherhood and thinking her life is wasted at the same time. Rhoda is a daydreamer who constantly feels like an outsider and does not even wish to be a part of society, and by being like that and doing so, she is breaking the mould, breaking the status quo.

Now let us take a look at the male characters. Bernard is a son of a gentleman and a gentleman himself, but he does not always act like one, he is often contradictory to himself and he cried in public on at least two occasions. Neville is homosexual and completely angry at the rules of society telling him he cannot be so. Louis is the youngest of the group and the only Australian of the group. He is contradictory to himself in his striving to climb to the top at his company, but still living in the awful neighbourhood, in his little attic.

Returning to Bernard's and Neville's encounter, they had a nice evening, and as the time approached for Neville's lover to arrive he became more concentrated on the approaching and

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<sup>555</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 192-193

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 193-194

<sup>557</sup> *Ibid.* p. 194

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 195-196

passing footsteps than Bernard's company, so Bernard left, and as soon as he went outside, he remembered that he wished Percival was there so that he could share a laugh about Neville with him. Due to the pang of pain over his lost friend, he went in search for the company of Louis and Rhoda. While going towards their place he wondered about their relationship. Once he came to their door and knocked on the door, nobody answered, so he left. Thinking about friendships he concludes that he cannot possibly dislodge his life from their lives<sup>559</sup>.

### **Bernard's Final Story – Remembering the Dinner at Hampton Court and What Came After**

He commences the story of their last dinner together with the beginning of it feeling awkward for all of them, which had been presented to the reader in the previous section of the novel. He talks about how the awkwardness dissipated and how they came together during the course of their meal. He talks about their walk after the dinner, and how Neville, Susan, Jinny and himself left Louis and Rhoda behind "to stand on the terrace by the urn". After the four of them came back, they all were on the terrace and after some time, went their separate ways<sup>560</sup>.

He shifts his thoughts towards a visit to his hairdresser, another member of the group of the elements of popular culture because the hairdresser serves to others by cutting their hair, and even though they receive monetary compensation for their work, they do not have the power to choose what type of a haircut would one get, but they have to submit to the will of their customers. Upon exiting the hairdresser's, he sees Rhoda in his mind, and he reveals to the reader that she had committed suicide. While thinking of her and imagining what could have been, he says:

*"'Wait,' I said, putting my arm in imagination (thus we consort with our friends) through her arm. 'Wait until these omnibuses have gone by. Do not cross so dangerously. These men are your brothers.' In persuading her I was also persuading my own soul. For this is not one life; nor do I always know if I am man or woman, Bernard or Neville, Louis, Susan, Jinny or Rhoda – so strange is the contact of one with another<sup>561</sup>."*

Here one can find a few of the elements of popular culture, omnibuses, the claim that men are Rhoda's brothers in a sense brothers in arms, her fellow men, her comrades, and last but certainly not least, the notion that Bernard does not know whether he is a man or a woman, which is utterly reminiscent of Orlando and his, that is, her struggle with his/her gender, and furthermore not knowing whether the Russian princess skating was a man or a woman, because, as one will remember, the mind of the young male aristocrat could not comprehend that a woman could skate in such a way, because "no woman could skate with such speed and vigour<sup>562</sup>".

Going back to *The Waves* and Bernard's final story, he thinks of Louis and his Australian accent, which is an element of popular culture and a distinguishing feature of Louis's. and time marches on, day after day, his life goes on<sup>563</sup>. He later mentions India and "a naked man spearing fish in blue water", and the women that carry those red pitchers to the river Nile<sup>564</sup>. All of those already established as elements of popular culture.

Finally, he says how there was a time when no phrases came to him and he thought it to be the greater death than the death of any of his friends or the death of his youth, and then he sees their collective lives flash before his eyes and he finally depicts himself as an old man with gray hair,

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<sup>559</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 196-199

<sup>560</sup> Ibid. pp. 199-201

<sup>561</sup> Ibid. p. 202

<sup>562</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Wordsworth Classics, 1995), p. 17

<sup>563</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), pp. 202-203

<sup>564</sup> Ibid. p. 204

tired. The time passes by<sup>565</sup>. His story caught up with his present self. He does not seem to know if his companion and himself are in London or Paris He once again makes a claim that he does not know if he is Bernard or one of his friends because as he was telling the final story, he felt everything as if it were him<sup>566</sup>. As the last section, and with it the entire novel come to a close, Bernard's story has more and more images of the scenes from the prefaces. They have been shown here and there throughout this ultimate part of the novel, but they become more prominent an the ending nears<sup>567</sup>.

### **Bernard's Final Story – Solitude**

Bernard's companion has gone and he becomes contradictory to himself, he who has desired company all throughout the novel, and who said that his soul cannot be alone before, says:

*“Heaven be praised for solitude! I am alone now. That almost unknown person has gone, to catch some train, to take some cab, to go to some place or person whom I do not know. the face looking at me has gone. The pressure is removed. [...] heaven be praised for solitude that has removed the pressure of the eye, the solicitation of the body and all need of lies and phrases<sup>568</sup>.”*

This speech is so contradictory to Bernard's character throughout the whole novel, that it cannot be seen as anything but a confirmation that he is, as all of the main characters in the text are, one of the strongest elements of popular culture throughout the book.

He speaks of the book that he has filled with phrases has fallen to the floor. He leaves it there. He is resigned, he is done with thinking up phrases. He is tired. He notes time passing by, again. He feels death approaching and goes forward<sup>569</sup>.

The last section of the novel is the only section that, aside from the preface, has a very short epilogue as well, and it reads:

*“The waves broke on the shore<sup>570</sup>.”*

These six words signify Bernard's death, and seeing how he was all of his friends as well, their death as well, and so the cycle is completed, the story has been told, and all of them can rest.

### ***A Room of One's Own – 1929***

This critical essay by Virginia Woolf encompasses the soul of the two lectures that she gave at the first two colleges for women at Cambridge, namely, at Newnham College and Girton College, in 1928. The lectures were revised and published a year later as an essay. In the essay the author touches on the issues of women in general and particularly women artists<sup>571</sup>. The essay is long and divided into six chapters, and due to this, one could feel like one is reading a novel at first, but the

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<sup>565</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 204-206

<sup>566</sup> Ibid. pp. 207-208

<sup>567</sup> Ibid. p. 210

<sup>568</sup> Ibid. pp. 211-212

<sup>569</sup> Ibid. pp. 212-213

<sup>570</sup> Ibid. p. 213

<sup>571</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, *A Room of One's Own, Essay by Woolf*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/A-Room-of-Ones-Own>>,, (Online since 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2011, last edited on 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2016, accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2020)

style is completely different from any of Woolf's novels, that is to say, it is not written in the narrative style of stream of consciousness, but is in fact an essay where the author speaks directly to the reader or listener. "The papers were too long to be read in full, and have since been altered and expanded<sup>572</sup>."

The focus of this essay is on women and their expressiveness, and how they are "excluded" from politics, creativity and social scene of society, which in turn affects the aforementioned society in its entirety in a deleterious fashion. In addition to that, the spotlight shines on the various courses of action in which women have tried to fight against them being excluded and discriminated against<sup>573</sup>.

What is of great significance for this academic analysis when it comes to *A Room of One's Own*, is that Woolf was working on this critical essay at the same time as when she was writing the other two novels featuring in this research – *Orlando: A Biography* and *The Moths*<sup>574</sup>, which was the initial title of *The Waves*<sup>575</sup>. Due to this, there is the additional connection among these three works presented throughout the research, not just the obvious connection of all three being written by the same author.

## One

### **The Question of Women and Fiction - Introduction**

Mrs Woolf commences her first part of the essay with a question, foreseeing that people might wish to know why she speaks of a room of one's own, when she was asked to talk about "women and fiction", and she provides an explanation. That explanation is simple, when she had been asked to give a lecture about the topic of women and fiction she sat on a river bank and pondered the meaning of those words. At first she thought she would simply talk about prominent women writers like Fanny Burney, Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters, et cetera. On closer inspection, she thought that the title "women and fiction" might have meant that she needed to describe those women, or women authors and their writings, or in what way women are portrayed in fiction, or possibly to mix all of those together. Her conclusion was that she could not possibly achieve the lecturer's goal, to sum up everything for her audience in such a way that they could take down in their notebooks and that be the complete, unabridged truth, so instead she offers her opinion that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction", but that, ultimately, that does not explain "the true nature" of said woman and fiction<sup>576</sup>.

So, let us stop here and consider her words. The first part of her opinion is that a woman must have money, her own money, therefore, she has to be self-sufficient in order to have the power to do what she might like, in this case to write fiction. I would go so far as to say that it can be any type of writing or another type of art, especially because what might start as a hobby, or a pass-time, might one day become a profession, a calling. The second part, that the woman must have a room of her own, is equally important, because one needs one's own place and peace and quiet in order to create, but more than that, one must have a home to their name. Why is this important? It is

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<sup>572</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 5

<sup>573</sup> Anna Snaith, "Introduction" in Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, Anna Snaith (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. xi, xii

<sup>574</sup> Christiane Bimberg, "The Poetics of Conversation in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*", *Connotations, A Journal for Critical Debate*, Volume 11.1 (Connotations Society for Critical Debate/Waxmann Verlag, 2001/2002), p. 1

<sup>575</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 238

<sup>576</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), pp 7-8

important because women, as has been thoroughly explored in the two previous works of Virginia Woolf depicted in this research, are an undeniable element of popular culture due to the fact that they are supposed to be mothers and ladies of the house, but not more than that. They are not supposed to have academic aspirations, and that is why it is extremely important for women to break free from the shackles of the white, patriarchal, capitalist society, specifically from the patriarchal part of it, to be precise, and have their own income and their own home, whether it be just one room or a palace, and only then can they be completely free and write, or paint, or do whatever they wish to do.

Returning to the text, the author continues with her thought that the question of the true nature of women and fiction remains unanswered, but adds that when it comes to such a controversial subject such as the question of sex (but I might wish to use the word gender here), we cannot possibly tell the entire truth, but just voice our opinion on the subject and try to explain how that opinion came to be<sup>577</sup>. And this is true for most topics, not just the topic of gender. Unless the topic discussed is the absolute truth, for example the Sun rising in the East and setting in the West, the water boiling at 100 degrees Celsius, or another scientifically proven fact, there is no absolute truth, just your opinion and perception of the truth. Let me explain this further, let us take three animals, a mouse, a cat and a dog. To each of them the perception of enemy, friend and food is different, but it does not make it any less true for them. If we take a mouse, its enemy is the cat, but the cat's enemy is the dog, which in a roundabout manner makes the dog the mouse's friend. To the cat, the mouse is food, but the dog is the enemy, and all of those are the truths. Each of those relations are truthful to each animal, and no one can say that one truth is the absolute truth. The author stresses this point with a sentence:

*“Fiction here is likely to contain more truth than fact<sup>578</sup>.”*

This means that in fiction truth can be anything the author deems it to be, but it is seldom a fact.

### **Telling Lies in Order to Find the Truth**

Woolf then informs her then audience and now readers that she will tell a story and that all of the things she says will be “lies”, as she puts it, and that the truth might possibly be found amongst those lies. There is an imagined place called Oxbridge and Fernham. She also emphasizes that when she uses the pronoun “I”, it is just “a convenient term” for a nonexistent person, but a figment of her imagination. She gives her audience a chance to pick among three names for her character, Mary Beton, Mary Seton and Mary Carmichael, and then says that the audience can call that character by any other name if they pleased. She describes her character facing the same predicament she had – to talk about women and fiction. She describes the scenery and how the character came to a conclusion, and that thought was “the sort of fish that a good fisherman puts back into the water so that it may grow fatter and be one day worth cooking and eating”, and she then, quite mischievously denies the audience the disclosure of what that thought was<sup>579</sup>. Now, here, we have the image of a fisherman, who is an element of popular culture seeing how he belongs to a working class of society and therefore to the disempowered and subordinated. It is worth mentioning that there is more than meets the eye when it comes to the usage of the three Maries, here. The significance in using three various characters sharing the same name goes deeper than one could think, for of course one could simply conclude that Mary is a generic female name and so it is used for the purpose of the character not being anyone in particular, as Woolf suggests in her essay,

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<sup>577</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 8

<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.* p. 8

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 8-9

but the importance of all these female characters named Mary is that it is actually “an allusion to a 16th-century ballad about a woman hanged for rejecting marriage and motherhood<sup>580</sup>”, which is another element of popular culture, albeit not so obvious one.

Returning to the text, Woolf’s character lets the aforementioned small thought ripen and give birth to a swarm of other ideas, and so the character, not being able to sit still started walking brusquely across the lawn<sup>581</sup>.

*“Instantly a man's figure rose to intercept me. Nor did I at first understand that the gesticulations of a curious-looking object, in a cut-away coat and evening shirt, were aimed at me. His face expressed horror and indignation. Instinct rather than reason came to my help; he was a Beadle; I was a woman. This was the turf; there was the path. Only the Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me<sup>582</sup>.”*

This small paragraph is brimming with notions highlighting the element of popular culture where women are the ones who have to submit to the will of men, those holding no power. As soon as the female character started her walk so that she could act upon her ideas, a man’s figure stood in her path. The man is horrified and downright angry at the woman having ideas, it would seem, but it turns out the problem was that she had been walking on the grass. She describes the man as being a Beadle, which is “an officer who in former times helped a priest in keeping order in church, in giving money to the poor etc<sup>583</sup>”, or “(in some British universities) a uniformed officer who may lead university processions, help to keep order etc<sup>584</sup>”. If one takes a closer look at what the Beadle made her do, get off the grass and walk on the gravel road because the grass is only for members of the university and students, the logical conclusion is that in this case it is the latter, namely a uniformed officer who works at a university. Of course, the words “I was a woman; [...] only Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is place for me.” resound deeply with the injustice towards women who were forbidden to get their education simply on the account of them being of a female gender.

Shifting the focus back to the text, one is informed by the author’s character that due to this interruption, her idea has now escaped her mind. The character, which we shall start calling Mary, it was high time we did so, spends some time at the college, contemplating essays written by Lamb and a novel written by Thackeray<sup>585</sup>. She goes to the library, but is stopped by:

*“a deprecating, silvery, kindly gentleman, who regretted in a low voice as he waved me back that ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of*

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<sup>580</sup> Robert McCrum, “The 100 best nonfiction books: No 45 – A Room of One’s Own by Virginia Woolf (1929)”, *The Guardian*, <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/dec/05/100-best-nonfiction-books-no-45-a-room-of-ones-own-by-virginia-woolf-shakespeares-sister-seton-beton>>., (Online since 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2016, accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2020)

<sup>581</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), pp. 9-10

<sup>582</sup> *Ibid.* p. 10

<sup>583</sup> *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*, Della Summers (ed.) (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, Third Edition, 2005), p. 101

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.* p. 101

<sup>585</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), pp. 10-11

The fact that the librarian had to stop Mary from entering the library, the she as a woman was denied access to the home of knowledge, speaks volumes, and is, of course, another branch of the same element of popular culture in the text confirming that women were seen as not worthy enough, or sometimes even not clever enough to receive knowledge, therefore placing them into the category of the disempowered and subordinated class of society.

Mary leaves the library and curses the place for not allowing women inside unaccompanied either by a member of the university or a letter, vowing never to come inside that library again. While thinking about what she could do until it is time for her to go to lunch, she hears music coming from somewhere. She detects that the music is coming from the church that is on university grounds and stays a while, observing the procession. The men seemed to her all the same, even the ones who were not in their old age, but rather middle-aged, looked like they were much older because of their clothes and the way they carried themselves, and as she leaned on the wall of the University, she thinks how these types of people could not survive “on the pavement on of the Strand”, because those types were losing their contemporary features<sup>587</sup>. Here we have an element of popular culture which was present both in *Orlando* and in *The Waves* – clothes. Were it not such ceremonious clothes, those men would not have looked all the same to her, perhaps. Furthermore, there is another element of the popular here – the Strand, which appeared several times during the analysis of *The Waves*.

Mary observes the procession and thinks of the way in which the chapel must have been built, with rich men pouring silver and gold into the palms of holy men because it was “the age of faith”, and that was what had been done, but even when the age of faith ended and “the age of reason” commenced the same thing happened, but instead of wealthy aristocrats, the silver and gold was given by the merchants<sup>588</sup>. And here is the element of popular culture known to anybody who has even glanced in the direction of this topic – capitalism, consumerism<sup>589</sup>, industry.

Soon enough it was time for Mary to go to her luncheon party. She ponders how funny it is that novelists never say anything about the food when they work the luncheon parties into their stories, so she decides to write this wrong and so she describes in great detail what was served at the luncheon<sup>590</sup>.

She continues with her observations and after some time notices a book by Tennyson, and so she reads the tenth stanza from one of his poems *Maud (Part I)*:

*“There has fallen a splendid tear  
From the passion-flower at the gate.  
She is coming, my dove, my dear;  
She is coming, my life, my fate;  
The red rose cries, ‘She is near, she is near’;  
And the white rose weeps, ‘She is late’;  
The larkspur listens, ‘I hear, I hear’;  
And the lily whispers, ‘I wait.’”<sup>591</sup>*

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<sup>586</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929). p. 12

<sup>587</sup> Ibid. pp. 12-13

<sup>588</sup> Ibid. pp. 13-14

<sup>589</sup> Sara Pendergast, Tom Pendergast, *St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture* (St. James Press, 2000), p. 589

<sup>590</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), pp. 14-15

<sup>591</sup> Ibid. p. 17

And compares it to the first stanza from a poem *A Birthday*, by Christina Rossetti. Even though she does not name the poetess, she hints that the poet is a woman by wondering what women whispered at such luncheon parties before the great war and then offers us the said stanza:

*“My heart is like a singing bird  
Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;  
My heart is like an apple tree  
Whose boughs are bent with thick-set fruit;  
My heart is like a rainbow shell  
That paddles in a halcyon sea;  
My heart is gladder than all these  
Because my love is come to me<sup>592</sup>.”*

Another element of the popular is actually the fact that Mary opens the book by Tennyson, reads a random stanza and starts thinking if that, perhaps was what the men would whisper at such luncheons before the great war, while she does not mention Christina Rossetti by name, and does not even say that the poem was written by a woman. It goes to show that the elements of popular culture considering the position of women in society stems not only from men, but sometimes women, too.

After the luncheon party Mary still thought of the two poems and compared them and came to a conclusion that both poets were magnificent<sup>593</sup>. And only then, when she has come to a conclusion that they were both wonderful poets, does she name Christina Rossetti beside Tennyson. And another slightly obscured element of popular culture worms its way in this scene as well as the previous one, namely, the fact that Tennyson's name and stanza come before Christina Rossetti's.

Mary was headed towards Fernham, the other imagined place of this story, and while thinking of how it was maybe the war's fault that people have been disillusioned and stopped speaking like Tennyson and Rossetti she missed the turn for Fernham. She finally arrives to the gardens of Fernham and after seeing a figure for which she thought it might be the famous scholar “J----- H ----- herself”, she sat for dinner. She makes a remark that the dinner is nothing to write home about, but that she did not have anything to complain about “seeing that the supply was sufficient and coal-miners doubtless were sitting down to less<sup>594</sup>.” This is another element of popular culture touching on the issue of working-class members – the coal-miners. The dinner ends and Mary muses how in order for anyone to live well they must eat well as well<sup>595</sup>.

### **The Divergence of Mary and the Author's Character**

Somewhere along the way, the I of the author's character diverged from the Mary Seton, and they became two separate entities, the author's character thought of the masons and merchants, kings and nobles pouring money so that the town could grow and develop, and the author's character starts a discussion with the Mary Seton character.

*“Briefly, then, I told Miss Seton about the masons who had been all those years on the roof of the chapel, and about the kings and queens and nobles bearing sacks of gold and silver on their shoulders, which they shovelled into the earth; and then how the great financial magnates of our own time*

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<sup>592</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 17

<sup>593</sup> *Ibid.* p 18

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 19-22

<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.* p. 23

*came and laid cheques and bonds, I suppose, where the others had laid ingots and rough lumps of gold<sup>596</sup>.”*

And Mary Seton started replying and then completely changed the subject. These masons working, and the capitalism and later industry and consumerism are all elements of popular culture that have already been explored earlier in the text.

There is talk about the poverty of the female gender and how numerous women working could not together accumulate two thousand pounds. And the author's character asks some hard questions.

*“What had our mothers been doing then that they had no wealth to leave us? Powdering their noses? Looking in at shop windows? Flaunting in the sun at Monte Carlo<sup>597</sup>?”*

These questions once again underline the strongest and most prominent element of popular culture in this essay, the position of women as the disempowered and the subordinated class of society in the white, patriarchal, capitalist society of the world, which unfortunately is still lingering in some parts of the world today. Women hear stories of other women being beaten by their husbands, being made to quit working so that they could take care of the children and the house, made feel worthless, discarded at birth because they were born girls, and being blamed for not giving birth to boys. For this last one, the greatest irony of all is that the women giving birth to baby girls get blamed for something they could not have any influence over. From my biology class in my fourth year of high school I remember that humans have two chromosomes, the XX are chromosomes for women and the XY pair is for men. I also remember a simple fact which is actually common sense if you only think about it for a bit, that the X chromosome comes from the moms because it cannot possibly be anything else since women have two X chromosomes. Humans cannot produce chromosomes willy-nilly, our bodies work with what they have got. Women, having only the XX pair can “give the one X chromosome to the fetus, so it comes down to the father's material to add the other chromosome, whether it will be the X or Y chromosome is completely random, but, ultimately it is their “fault”, and can never be the woman's fault, if the fetus becomes a baby girl. And yet, women have been blamed for not giving birth to sons and heirs for centuries, and even though we learn of some basic genetics in school nowadays, some women are still getting blamed for not giving birth to sons. These stories one hears on the news, from friends and members of the family bring into the light how much the society today is still very much the patriarchal society of the yesteryears. Of course that it is not as commonly heard of as it has been before, but the fact that it still happens is defeating.

Returning to the text, the author's character describes the picture of Mary Seton's mother, a woman who married a minister, had thirteen children and is depicted in this particular picture as an old lady trying to make her pet cocker spaniel to pose for the camera. The author's character then asks a question of what would have happened if that same woman “had gone into business”, made a lot of money and left it all to Fernham. If that had happened they could have talked about “archaeology, botany, anthropology, physics, the nature of the atom, mathematics, astronomy, relativity, geography<sup>598</sup>.” If Miss Seton's mother and her mother and all the women that came before Mary Seton had had the opportunity to earn a living, amass their fortune and make a university for their gender, the author's character feels that they would have led very different

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<sup>596</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 24

<sup>597</sup> Ibid. pp. 25-26

<sup>598</sup> Ibid. p. 26

lives<sup>599</sup>. They would have been living their lives as men do. this whole segment of the text is another notch on the belt for the element of popular culture depicting women as the disempowered and subordinated.

The author's character then asks a different set of questions, questions challenging that if Mrs Seton had been making money, she could not have thirteen children and could not spend a sufficient amount of time with her children, and then that character comes to a conclusion that it is pointless to ask questions about what would have happened to the childhood of Miss Mary Seton, because she might not have even existed, and at the same time asking the questions of what if nature considering Mrs Seton and the women before her making money is also completely useless, because "to earn money was impossible for them", and even if they managed to make money "the law denied them the right to possess what money they earned", and the musings of the author's character conclude on the piece of information that only for the last forty-eight years Mrs Seton could have her own money, because for hundreds of years before it would automatically belong to her husband, and perhaps that knowledge was the barriers between women's desire for earning a living<sup>600</sup>. All of these what ifs are just an addition to the overwhelmingly obvious element of popular culture that is the position of women in patriarchal society.

As the night fell, the author's character started for her inn and was reminiscing of the events of the day, and with that, the first part of Woolf's essay, *A Room of One's Own*, ends<sup>601</sup>.

## Two

### **The Question of Why There are Such Discrepancies Between the Two Genders**

The second part of this essay seems to continue where the first one takes off, but now the author seems to have disregarded her character and is once again speaking to her audience. She implores them and the reader of the book at the same time to imagine a completely ordinary room in London and a table with a piece of paper containig onlz three words "written in large letters" - WOMEN AND FICTION. The character of the author from the previous part which was once Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael and Mary Beton, all three and none of them at the same time, which is another underlying element of popular culture due to its contradictory quality of being and not being something at the same time, like the proverbial Schrödinger's cat which is alive and dead at the same time in its box, has now been discarded and the audience and the reader are left with the author herself. The author's voice is fusing in and out of past, which makes it hard to discern whether she is still telling her story when once she was the three Maries and then diverged from them, or she is speaking to her audience in the present. The truth might actually be the combination of the two, therefore it shall be unavoidable if this quality is transferred to the language of analysis as well.

Going back to the text, the author's mind is filled with questions considering the enourmous and painfully obvious gap between genders. The following questions are the fule for the element of popular culture placing women in the group of the subordinated and disepowered.

*"Why did men drink wine and women water? Why was one sex so prosperous and the other so poor? What effect has poverty on fiction? What conditions are necessary for the creation of works of art<sup>602</sup>?"*

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<sup>599</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929). p. 26

<sup>600</sup> Ibid. pp. 27-28

<sup>601</sup> Ibid. p. 29

<sup>602</sup> Ibid. p. 30

The conclusion that comes to Woolf is that she needs answers and not all these questions, and in order to find the answers she decides to visit the British Museum. On her way to the said museum she mentions that the weather was horrendous. She makes London an element of popular culture by comparing it to a machine, and the British Museum also saying it was “another department of the factory”, describing herself entering the museum and going through the motions, doing what one is expected to do in a museum, and then she gives a pause followed by some more questions<sup>603</sup>.

*“Have you any notion of how many books are written about women in the course of one year? Have you any notion how many are written by men? Are you aware that you are, perhaps, the most discussed animal in the universe<sup>604</sup>?”*

These questions answer more than they ask, for the usage of the words in the question hints at the answers. It is presumed that the majority of books featuring women are written by men and the usage of the word animal in correlation with women as subjects simply screams of the way men observe women, all of which are elements of popular culture which actually flow into that one element of the popular – subordination and disempowerment of women.

Woolf discloses how it seemed like every and any man though himself worthy, competent and, at the end of the day, qualified to write about women. Young MA graduates, essayists, novelists, men with school degrees and without said degrees, men whose only qualification was that they were not women. The author reveals how women do not write about men and how that gave her relief because it would take her two years to go through all of the materials. While waiting for the books that she chose at random, she wondered what might possibly be the reason for such great discrepancy between the topics of men and women writers<sup>605</sup>.

*“Why are women, judging from this catalogue, so much more interesting to men than men are to women<sup>606</sup>?”*

Woolf though this peculiar and her imagination conjured scenes of those men writing about women, and no matter their age, appearance or even marital status, she explains her feeling flattered due to the fact that she as a woman was “the object of such attention”, alas, soon that flattery dissipated entirely due to the arrival of her research material – the books about women written by men. She did not just dive into her research because she has no university degree, like many before her, she was denied proper schooling because she was born a girl, unlike a young male student sitting in the museum’s library next to her, taking notes with ease and seeming pleased about it<sup>607</sup>.

I would like to contribute to this particular segment of this particular element of popular culture with the story of somebody very near and dear to my heart who had a similar experience. For this to take place I would have to set the scene to the best of my knowledge because this is not my story, but my late nana’s story, and one of many at that.

She was the middle child of five girls in a very small village located on a hill between the city of Vranje and the town of Vladičin Han which are located in southern Serbia. Since my great-grandfather, my nana’s father, did not have any sons and did have numerous agricultural fields, a

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<sup>603</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), pp 30-31

<sup>604</sup> Ibid. p. 31

<sup>605</sup> Ibid. p. 32

<sup>606</sup> Ibid. p. 32

<sup>607</sup> Ibid. pp. 32-33

fair amount of land, in his possession and was considered very wealthy in the village, he decided to do what was best for him and his estate, and pick two out of five of his daughters to work in the field. To be fair, if he had had sons, however weak they might have been, he would have let his two girls finish elementary school.

He picked the two who were the strongest, naturally, one of which was my nana. As a result of this, she only had four years of elementary school under her belt when her father came to her school to pull her out of school. The school system ran differently in those days, which were the late 1930s to early 1940s, and so she only ever learned how to read, write and do basic math and was only seven or eight when her four years of education were up. She cried for her father not to pull her out of school for she liked to learn, but he needed a worker and so he told her that she needed to work in order to be able to eat, simply put – she needed to earn her keep, and she was put to work immediately after that. She was so young that she could barely lift the field spade or the pickaxe, so she had to trail it behind her, on the dirt road and then cross the motor road, cross the river Southern Morava (Južna Morava) on foot, and arrive to work in the field. This entire story was unimaginable to me when I first heard it because I was born in the city and my mother is a doctor and she holds an MA in medicine. But none of it would not have happened were it not for my late nana who strived and fought to put her two daughters through school, and I shall be eternally grateful to her for that.

In order not to make you think my great-grandfather a monster I should mention the fact that in that part of the country at that time, namely the first half of the twentieth century, it was a custom for wealthy landowners to have their children work on their land because their wealth was in that land and was measured by that land, while the families which did not have many possessions worked as workers on other's land and then were sending their children to school, still in favour of male children, so that those children would find work in the nearby cities if possible. There were discrepancies running both ways, but the fact remains that female children seldom got to finish more than elementary school.

Now, let me provide you with a comparison. My grandfather, my late nana's husband, is from the same village but from a family with much smaller wealth. I underline the financial situation so that it could provide a parameter for the comparison. Even though his family did not have as much as my late nana's did, he was put through all three schools, elementary school, high school and a kind of a college. He was their son, their heir, and simply by being a man he received the privilege of sufficient education.

I remember another story, depicting an even worse situation than that of my nana, the one she had told me once about her grandmother. Her grandmother, my great-great-grandmother whom I have never met, was not allowed to go to school for even one day, let alone four years that my nana managed to get out of the patriarchal community she was born and raised in, and so the great-great-grandmother would sit and do everything she needed around the house, like a woman was supposed to in those days. She never learned to either read or write, she was not even able to write her own name, and she had four brothers, initially eight, but four of her brothers died young. Those brothers had the opportunity to go to school and they would do their homework aloud in the same room their sister would spin silk, knit, cook, or do whatever else was needed at the time. That was how my great-great-grandmother learned mathematics, by listening to her four younger brothers doing their homework aloud while she would do some domestic work in the same room. On one such occasion her youngest brother started crying because mathematics was just too much for him, and she made him tell her about the problem aloud and she helped him with it from the knowledge she had taken in while listening to their three other brothers before him for years. I know it sounds made up, but it is the truth. Imagine the mental capacity of a woman learning mathematics enough to help her brother with a mathematical problem just by listening to the other brothers. Her mind craved education, but she had been denied it solely on the grounds of being a woman, just like my nana had to work in order to earn a living when she was only seven or eight years old. The three of her sisters got to finish elementary school because they were too weak to work in a field, but they would work around the house later on in life.

These stories, aside from being completely true and not altered one bit, are clear indicators that that element of popular culture – women as the subordinated and the disempowered class of society – was still in full swing even a decade or more after this essay of Virginia Woolf’s was published in 1929, and of course that it was highly prominent and expected in the case of my great-great-grandmother, some fifty years before.

Continuing on with the second part of the essay, the author started with only one question of why were some women poor, which multiplied to fifty and then even more. Among numerous excerpts from a great deal of material, she found words of Samuel Butler “‘Wise men never say what they think of women’<sup>608</sup>”, Alexander Pope’s “‘Most women have no character at all’<sup>609</sup>.” and Jean de La Bruyère who says: “‘Les femmes sont extremes, elles sont meilleures ou pires que les hommes—’<sup>610</sup>”, which means “‘Women are extreme, they are better or worse than men—’<sup>611</sup>”. Woolf finds these three statements contradictory considering that the men who wrote them were contemporaries<sup>612</sup>. The question then arises if these men thought women “‘capable of education or incapable’”, since Napoleon considered women incapable of receiving education and Dr Johnson capable of being educated. On the question of women’s possession of soul or the lack thereof, there are contradiction again with some stating that women have no soul and others claiming that women are divine, worshiping them. Then, there are some who claim that women are “‘shallower in the brain; others that they are deeper in the consciousness’”, Goethe thought highly of women while Mussolini found women deplorable, and so the conclusion that comes to the surface is that one cannot find truth here<sup>613</sup>. The final paragraph of this conclusion reveals this.

*“It seemed pure waste of time to consult all those gentlemen who specialize in woman and her effect on whatever it may be - politics, children, wages, morality - numerous and learned as they are. One might as well leave their books unopened<sup>614</sup>.”*

All of these contradictory statements are elements of popular culture, and in addition to this they all consider women as objects and talk about them with no regard for their feelings and thought on the subject, therefore are elements of the popular of a different variety, and so they serve doubly in this case.

### **All Men as Professor von X**

Under the influence of her research she had been unconsciously drawing a picture of a deplorably looking man whom she dubbed Professor von X who is writing his life’s work - *The Mental, Moral, and Physical Inferiority of the Female Sex*, and who seems completely, utterly and perpetually dissatisfied. Upon thinking of the possible causes for his dissatisfaction she comes up with his wife being the cause, possibly because she might have been in love with a young, handsome cavalry officer, or it was perhaps that the professor was laughed at by a pretty girl when

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<sup>608</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 34

<sup>609</sup> Ibid. p. 34

<sup>610</sup> Ibid. p. 34

<sup>611</sup> My own translation.

<sup>612</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 35

<sup>613</sup> Ibid. p. 35

<sup>614</sup> Ibid. p. 36

he was a baby. The answer does not come, but the author realizes her drawing the professor was due to her anger towards the notion of women being viewed as inferior to men<sup>615</sup>.

*“One does not like to be told that one is naturally the inferior of a little man - I looked at the student next me - who breathes hard, wears a ready-made tie, and has not shaved this fortnight<sup>616</sup>.”*

It has been made clear until now that the entire essay is filled with elements of popular culture depicting women as the subordinated and disempowered class of society, but this is the first instance where it has been said explicitly that the overall conclusion of men writing about women is that they are inferior to men. Woolf gives as a contrast the picturesque description of a young man sitting next to her, his untidy appearance and a tie he does not even have to tie himself would be considered utterly unsightly if he were a woman, but the rules of society give him the right to look like that and still be seen as superior to any woman.

The author, realizing her anger as the cause of the angry looking Professor von X, drew round shapes on top of the drawing of the professor until he lost all “human semblance or significance”, and after thinking about it she comes to a conclusion that the anger she felt was due to the underlying anger in the literary works she had been reading<sup>617</sup>.

Realizing that the books she had been studying were written emotionally and not scientifically she decided to take them all back, but the question of why were all those men angry with women remained. While waiting for her lunch she found newspapers and started reading the headlines:

*“A ribbon of very large letters ran across the page. Somebody had made a big score in South Africa. Lesser ribbons announced that Sir Austen Chamberlain was at Geneva. A meat axe with human hair on it had been found in a cellar. Mr Justice – commented in the Divorce Courts upon the Shamelessness of Women. Sprinkled about the paper were other pieces of news. A film actress had been lowered from a peak in California and hung suspended in mid-air. The weather was going to be foggy. The most transient visitor to this planet, I thought, who picked up this paper could not fail to be aware, - even from this scattered testimony, that England is under the rule of a patriarchy<sup>618</sup>.”*

Another testimony to the element of popular culture with women as those holding no power at all and being subordinated in the patriarchal society. All the exciting news had involved names of men, while the only mentioning of women was in regards to their shamelessness in connection to them divorcing.

The professor here becomes the synonym for all members of the male species, and he is influential, powerful, dominance, the one writing for the papers, the one editing, the one proof-reading and the one owning, the one reading them, the one who has it all. He is all the scientists and the lab technicians, he is the judge and jury and the executioner, and the only thing he could not control, Woolf concluded, was the weather<sup>619</sup>. All of these thoughts of the author are clear elements

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<sup>615</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929). pp. 36-37

<sup>616</sup> Ibid. p. 37

<sup>617</sup> Ibid. pp. 37-38

<sup>618</sup> Ibid. pp. 38-39

<sup>619</sup> Ibid. p. 39

of popular culture in the text showcasing male dominance and power in society of the white, capitalist, and above all, patriarchal society.

What came as a shock to the author is that after all of the power that the proverbial professor possessed he was still angry at the small insignificant, inferior woman. In an attempt to explain her confusion, she justifies her bewilderment with stating how the anger in professor's writings of women had been what was out of place, because somebody thinking of their argument for their thoughts and beliefs should speak in a rational, impartial manner. Her reasoning is that if one sees another's approach to their argument in a dispassionate way and then offer proof to support their opinion, one should find that agreeable, especially if the person presenting the argument gives off a feeling that they are approaching the subject scientifically.

The question of anger of the members of the male gender towards the members of the female gender at this point has not yet been answered, the only thing that the author takes away is that her anger was a reaction to the anger of the collective mind of men personified in the almighty and omnipotent professor. She then wonders if that anger is connected to the male power, and to further explain this correlation she gives as an example of rich people frequently having that exact same emotion towards poor people due to the fact that they are under the impression or suspicion that those poor people wish to take their wealth for themselves<sup>620</sup>.

Here the author switches the term by which she has called men, namely – the professors, with the more suitable term – patriarchs, and argues that the possible cause for their anger could be the same as with the rich in relation to the poor.

*“Possibly they were not 'angry' at all; often, indeed, they were admiring, devoted, exemplary in the relations of private life. Possibly when the professor insisted a little too emphatically upon the inferiority of women, he was concerned not with their inferiority, but with his own superiority. That was what he was protecting rather hot-headedly and with too much emphasis, because it was a jewel to him of the rarest price<sup>621</sup>.”*

In this short section of the second part of the essay there lies an obvious element of popular culture, the notion that men and women are the same, but that the patriarchy makes up the rules of society and therefore women are labelled as the disempowered and subordinated ones.

The author arrives at a judgment that in order to go through life one must be in possession of self-confidence. And the best and fastest way of boosting one's self-confidence is if one sees others are being inferior in comparison with one. If we consider ourselves as having “some innate superiority”, our self-confidence will be built up as well. Woolf reveals that that is the reason patriarchy has virtually enslaved the female half of humanity for that is the “source” of their power, their dominance. The author then tells a story from her daily life, and it is not entirely clear whether this is a true story or one of her fictional stories, but it does not matter, for if it did not happen to her, it must have happened somewhere with some other people who have other names. In brief, imagine a most agreeable of men by the name of Mr Z, he is modest, humane, gentle. He picks up a book by a female writer, Rebecca West and upon reading a part of it he shouts in a shocked and disapproving manner how she claims that all men are snobs and for that he considers her to be the utmost feminist. The author, who was in his presence at the time, is confounded by his reaction, for in her opinion the statement about all men being snobs is possibly true, albeit not flattering. Her conclusion is that his cry signified a protest against “some infringement of his power” of self-confidence and possibly self-image. As the reason for her conclusion she gives an explanation that

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<sup>620</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 39

<sup>621</sup> *Ibid.* p. 40

women's role in life was to blow up the image of men twofold, that without this usage of women wars maybe never would have happened and kings and czars and Kaisers would not have existed<sup>622</sup>.

*“That is why Napoleon and Mussolini both insist so emphatically upon the inferiority of women, for if they were not inferior, they would cease to enlarge. That serves to explain in part the necessity that women so often are to men. And it serves to explain how restless they are under her criticism; how impossible it is for her to say to them this book is bad, this picture is feeble, or whatever it may be, without giving far more pain and rousing far more anger than a man would do who gave the same criticism. For if she begins to tell the truth, the figure in the looking-glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished. How is he to go on giving judgement, civilizing natives, making laws, writing books, dressing up and speechifying at banquets, unless he can see himself at breakfast and at dinner at least twice the size he really is<sup>623</sup>?”*

This depiction of a woman serving as a contraption for the male ego-enlargement is a great addition to the ever-growing list of the attributes offering affirmation to the element of popular culture where women are deemed inferior, tools, objects, slaves, playthings, servants, disempowered, subordinated.

### **Money as Power**

The author finishes her lunch and while waiting for a waiter to bring her back her change she reveals that her aunt was Mary Beton, so the author once more steps into a character and everything that was written up so far falls into the category of a story, a fiction<sup>624</sup>. The waiter is an element of popular culture where he is the subordinated and the disempowered one despite her being a woman simply because she is a part of the capitalist society exercising her right to engage in consumerism. She requires a service and she is paying for the service, and in that one moment her disempowerment liquefies and turns to power, but that power is like the sand in a sand clock, it is temporary power, for as soon as she pays her meal, gets her bill and her change and leaves the restaurant she stops being the consumer and returns to being just another woman.

The importance of capitalism and wealth, especially considering women is then presented to us by the author, or rather that character that author uses for her storytelling, through a story about how her late aunt Mary Beton left her five hundred pounds a year for the rest of her life, and how that news came by mail at the same time when the news of women being allowed to vote came in post. She confesses that her having money was “infinitely the more important” because before that she had to do a vast number of various kinds of jobs in order to make a living. She describes it like being a cog in the machine of society, doing the jobs that one can, or rather is allowed to, not the jobs that one chose because one would like such a job. She explains being frightened in those days and how now she is relieved for she has a fixed income and does not have to fear for her existence anymore. What she emphasizes is that contrary to a man, she does not need to hate any member of the male gender because she feels safe with her fixed income and does not depend on any man and thus no man can hurt her. She also does not need to engage in flattery because she does not need anything from a man<sup>625</sup>. This is freedom. Money is power, money is security, especially for a woman, but not all women are free. Not all women have the power to stop serving as ego-inflating

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<sup>622</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929). pp. 40-41

<sup>623</sup> Ibid. p. 41

<sup>624</sup> Ibid. p. 42

<sup>625</sup> Ibid. pp. 43-44

mirrors for men, or their punching bags. And for as long as there is but one case of a woman being looked down on solely for being born a woman the element of popular culture where the position of women is in the subordinate and disempowered class of society will stay intact, and the society we live in is still going to be the one where patriarchy rules.

Woolf continues with her story and shares her realization that the five hundred pounds a year have liberated her to such an extent that she is now free to have her own opinions on things, any things, on the quality of the books, the aesthetics of the pictures, the architectural appeal of a building. While thinking of this, she arrives home, and her neighbourhood is breathing “domesticity”. And then she showers the reader with the array of people all being elements of popular culture. The people in question were: the house painter, the nursemaid, the coal-heaver, the greengocer’s shopkeeper who is a woman. The author’s character has now been immersed in the thinking of different kind and as a result of this she cannot enjoy the simple things these people do without seeing the scenes unveiling before her through the prism of male and female dynamics<sup>626</sup>.

*“I thought how much harder it is now than it must have been even a century ago to say which of these employments is the higher, the more necessary. Is it better to be a coal-beaver or a nursemaid; is the charwoman who has brought up eight children of less value to the world than the barrister who has made a hundred thousand pounds<sup>627</sup>?”*

What the author takes away from this is that there is no use in even asking such questions for she cannot possibly hear the answers straight from the horse’s mouth. She talks about people not being able to measure the value of a job and compare it to another especially because time changes the dynamics between members of the two genders<sup>628</sup>.

Woolf concludes the second part of the essay with the notion of an equal world for men and women a hundred years from that day. She sees the utopist, idealistic world where women have everything men have and are allowed to do everything men do. she calls on the patriarchs to make women soldiers, sailors and workers, cleverly calling them the protected sex, even though they were anything but, and she ends this section of the essay wondering what all of this which she has found out today and has taken away from her research has to do with the topic of her paper – Women and Fiction<sup>629</sup>.

Woolf’s cleverly navigated plea for the patriarchs to relieve the female gender of their protective title is another element of popular culture where the fact that women are labelled as being protected is a direct contradiction to the reality of their position in society. To surmise that women are the protected sex and mean it when one is a woman is almost ludicrous, but from the tone of Woolf’s words one can draw out that it was meant to sound ironic. At the same time, actions speak louder than words and that is why the gender which was being physically and psychologically abused, the gender whose members were under the thumb of the members of the other gender, the gender which was called inferior, unworthy, shameless and downright disgraceful, and sometimes still is even in this day and age, can under no circumstances be characterized as “protected”. That is why her words resonate with such force.

It is amazingly beautiful how Mrs Woolf’s picture of the equal world a hundred years from the time this essay was published has almost completely come true. I say almost because yes, there are women chauffeurs nowadays, women drive buses, lorries, trams, taxi cars, there are women in the army, but there are still women being told each and every day that they are weak, insignificant,

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<sup>626</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), pp. 44-45

<sup>627</sup> Ibid. p. 45

<sup>628</sup> Ibid. pp. 45-46

<sup>629</sup> Ibid. p. 46

worthless. There are women being beaten up by their partners, there are women made to leave work once they get pregnant, and the worst part of it that those women were not thought by their parents, and especially their mothers that they should never let anyone make them feel that way, that they have as much of a right to do anything they please as any man does.

I remember the story one of my students told me about women getting a diploma, going to work and then having to leave work as soon as they get married. She told me that was still a common practice in Japan where she lives and that she is expected to give her carrier up so that she could take care of the kids and the house. This was, again, something unimaginable to me, even more so because it is the twenty-first century. For such a patriarchal notion to still be in full swing today, and for it to be so readily accepted by both men and women, was bewildering to me. This just goes to show how that element of popular culture is still alive and well in some parts of the world. Whether that is good or bad, it cannot be said, because, as Mrs Woolf said, times constantly change.

### **Three**

#### **Women in the Time of Queen Elizabeth I**

The third part of the essay starts off with the author's disappointment with the lack of concrete reason why women had less wealth than men. she wished to had had an unequivocal answer to the question of why women were poorer than men, but she did not have one and hence her dissatisfaction. In a way reminiscent to people who have no patience, the author's train of thoughts marches into a swarm of thoughts about simply giving up on the idea of finding the truth and maybe just become content with learning of the circumstances under which women from the period of English history when queen Elizabeth I was the ruler lived<sup>630</sup>.

As the essay progresses, the author's character seems to take on more and more of Mrs Woolf's voice, and once again it is not clear whether the "I" of the story is "I – Virginia Woolf" or "I – the author's character". It might even be the amalgamation of the two, a union of Woolf's thoughts and her fiction because what are thought of the author's characters if not the contemplations of that very author? For the time being, we shall continue to refer to the person telling the story as the author due to it being the term that encompasses both, Virginia Woolf as the real author and her character – the author – in the essay.

Returning to the third part of the complete critical essay, the author argues that there is a perpetual and constant, unyielding question of why no woman had written a single poem during the rule of queen Elizabeth I, "when every other man, it seemed, was capable of song or sonnet", this is what prompted her question of the circumstanced of life for women of that time period. She wondered about this because in order to write fiction one need only have a pen, some paper and their own imagination, and at the same time fiction is perpetually connected to reality, to life. The truth of the matter is that that connection cannot always be "perceptible", nonetheless, it is there<sup>631</sup>. As an example of this the author uses plays of Shakespeare, which seem like they have materialized out of thin air, but if one scratches the surface, one shall realize that those plays are displaying quite realistic themes of money which is power, possessions like one's house for example, health in general<sup>632</sup>, and even those things none of us completely understand – human emotions.

These plays of William Shakespeare are elements of popular culture on the grounds of there being a multitude of film and series adaptations which stem from said plays like the four versions of

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<sup>630</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 47

<sup>631</sup> *Ibid.* p. 47

<sup>632</sup> *Ibid.* p. 47

*Romeo and Juliet* from the years 1936, 1968, 1996 and 2013<sup>633</sup>, then the mind-bending seven adaptations of *Much Ado About Nothing* from 1984, 1993, 2011 two adaptations in 2012, one in 2016 and the latest one in 2019<sup>634</sup>, and three film adaptations of his *Midsummer Night's Dream* from the years 1969, 1999 and 2004<sup>635</sup>, to name a few.

The author elaborates on her idea of finding out more about the conditions of women during the Elizabethan period by taking a book entitled *History of England* written by somebody she refers to as Professor Trevelyan<sup>636</sup>, which is a book written by an English historian George Macaulay Trevelyan who is considered to have been “the last of the Whig historians” , and is famous for publications such as *English Social History: a Survey of Six Centuries* published in 1942, *Garibaldi's Defense of the Roman Republic, 1848–49* published in 1907, and *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy: June–November 1860* from the year 1911<sup>637</sup>. Searching for prominent women in this book, the author discovers:

“Wife-beating', I read, 'was a recognized right of man, and was practised without shame by high as well as low . . . Similarly,' the historian goes on, 'the daughter who refused to marry the gentleman of her parents' choice was liable to be locked up, beaten and flung about the room, without any shock being inflicted on public opinion. Marriage was not an affair of personal affection, but of family avarice, particularly in the "chivalrous" upper classes . . . Betrothal often took place while one or both of the parties was in the cradle, and marriage when they were scarcely out of the nurses' charge. <sup>638</sup>”

Aside from this right of a man to physically abuse his wife or daughter, which she found out was in or around the year 1470, she finds out that in the time of the Stuarts women of middle class and upper class were still not allowed to choose their partners and when they would marry their husband would be “lord and master” by law, and the text ends with a remark from its author that “neither Shakespeare’s women nor those of authentic seventeenth-century memoirs” lacked character and personality<sup>639</sup>.

This part of the text in its entirety is a strong vote for the element of popular culture where women are subordinated class of society because what is more disempowering than being considered somebody’s property?

Mrs Woolf continues with her research and on the Professor’s remark that none of the ladies lacked in character or personality, she thinks of the Shakespearian ladies and concludes that female

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<sup>633</sup> Results for “Romeo and Juliet”, IMDb, <[https://www.imdb.com/find?q=Romeo+and+Juliet&ref =nv\\_sr\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/find?q=Romeo+and+Juliet&ref =nv_sr_sm)>,, (Accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2020)

<sup>634</sup> Results for “Much Ado About Nothing”, IMDb, <[https://www.imdb.com/find?q=Much+Ado+About+Nothing&ref =nv\\_sr\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/find?q=Much+Ado+About+Nothing&ref =nv_sr_sm)>,, (Accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2020)

<sup>635</sup> Results for “Midsummer Night's Dream”, IMDb, <[https://www.imdb.com/find?q=Midsummer+Night%27s+Dream&ref =nv\\_sr\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/find?q=Midsummer+Night%27s+Dream&ref =nv_sr_sm)>,, (Accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2020)

<sup>636</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 47

<sup>637</sup> Trevelyan, George Macaulay (1876–1962), Making History, The Institute of Historical Research © 2008, <[https://archives.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/historians/trevelyan\\_george.html#historians](https://archives.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/historians/trevelyan_george.html#historians)>,, (Accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2020)

<sup>638</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 48

<sup>639</sup> Ibid. p. 48

characters like Cleopatra, Lady Macbeth and Rosalind certainly do not lack in those respects, and she adds how women have been “beacons” in the works of “all poets from the beginning of time”. She then remarks how if somebody were to find about a creature called woman solely from these works of fiction, one would think that a woman is extremely important, maybe even more important than a man, alas, the history, as it was painfully obvious to the author, was a completely different story. In imagination a woman was utterly important and in reality just as utterly unimportant<sup>640</sup>. A contradiction serving as yet another double element of popular culture, first with its contradiction and then by showing how disempowered the women were.

Then Mrs Woolf tries to find any kind of information about an ordinary Elizabethan woman to no avail since the only women mentioned at that time period are the queens who ruled. The fact that one cannot find any piece of information about women before the eighteenth century is staggering for her. She comes to a realization that she cannot have the answer about why women did not write in the Elizabethan period because there is no information about whether they were allowed to learn how to read or write, or any other aspect of their life. She remembers that once some gentlemen said how no woman did, does or will ever have the genius of Shakespeare and spares a thought about his ignorance<sup>641</sup>.

### **Imagining Judith Shakespeare**

The author then imagines what would have happened if Shakespeare had a sister called Judith. In this imagined scenario William got to go to school while his sister had to stay at home. He got married, went to London, became an actor and enjoyed his wealth and fame, while his sister, to whom Woolf gifts the gift of imaginary brilliance, never went to school, maybe read a few pages here and there out of a book William left there, but would be interrupted by her parents ordering her to do some domestic work rather than read. When the time came for her to marry she refused and subsequently was physically put into her place by the hand of her father. When he stopped with the beating he perhaps begged her not to bring shame upon his name. She went to London before she turned seventeen and when she tried to work as an actress men laughed at her openly. Finally, after getting pregnant she killed herself and her story ended<sup>642</sup>. Woolf concludes that:

*“it is unthinkable that any woman in Shakespeare's day should have had Shakespeare's genius. For genius like Shakespeare's is not born among labouring, uneducated, servile people. It was not born in England among the Saxons and the Britons. It is not born to-day among the working classes. How, then, could it have been born among women whose work began, according to Professor Trevelyan, almost before they were out of the nursery, who were forced to it by their parents and held to it by all the power of law and custom<sup>643</sup>?”*

The further the reader reads through this critical essay, the more elements of popular culture denoting women as the ones with absolutely no power and having to have an absolute subordination arise.

The author then goes on an extensive elaboration about why women of the sixteenth century would have gone insane or lost their health or even killed themselves if they had been born with a gift for literature. She imagines how their only saving grace would be to either not sign their work or use a man's pseudonym like Currer Bell, George Eliot and George Sand did. The whole world

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<sup>640</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929). pp. 48-49

<sup>641</sup> Ibid. pp. 50-52

<sup>642</sup> Ibid. pp. 52-54

<sup>643</sup> Ibid. pp. 54-55

was against a woman, any woman in that time, especially the gifted woman<sup>644</sup>.

Another element of popular culture present geniuses like Carlyle, Keats and Flaubert who had numerous difficulties regarding their creative process due to financial reasons and life in general, and due to this they are representatives of those disempowered and swallowed by the machine that is society. Woolf then argues that despite these difficulties being grave, they were “infinitely more formidable” for women who were their contemporaries. It would prove to be exhaustingly difficult to get a room of one’s own should one be of such misfortune to had been born a woman, and that was nothing compared to the “immaterial difficulties” such as pure, unadulterated “hostility” of the world, being a laughing stock for the world<sup>645</sup>.

The author then reveals how in her time, namely at the beginning of the twentieth century, women novelists were not such a rare bird, but that things were still rather difficult for painters, musicians, composers that were women. Throughout history men would look at a woman trying to perform or share her art and would scoff and say hurtful words, and her judgement is that such things had to have been done because the male ego needs to consider itself superior to any woman<sup>646</sup>.

Woolf then speaks directly to her audience and the reader and says:

*“Moreover, it is all very well for you, who have got yourselves to college and enjoy sitting-rooms - or is it only bed-sitting-rooms? – of your own to say that genius should disregard such opinions; that genius should .be above caring what is said of it. Unfortunately, it is precisely the men or women of genius who mind most what is said of them<sup>647</sup>.”*

And she gives as an example Keats and Tennyson, how both cared immensely about the world’s opinion of them. She ends the third section of the essay talking about Shakespeare and how one cannot know what he thought of the world’s opinion of him because there is no information about his “state of mind<sup>648</sup>”.

## **Four**

### **The Notable Ladies of the Past**

In the same fashion that the two previous parts of the essay have begun with continuing exactly where their predecessor has left off, the fourth section of the essay commences. Woolf does not even break stride and simply continues with her story about her research in women and fiction, which is only natural seeing how this essay was at first two lectures where she talked to the young minds comprising the audience at the first two women-only colleges in Cambridge.

She talks about how it would be unfeasible to find a woman having a state of mind like Keats or Tennyson or quite possibly Shakespeare during the course of the sixteenth century due to their early deaths and the improbability of any woman of that time writing poetry. Another thought that came to her mind is that a noblewoman would have less trouble writing something down and perhaps even publishing it “than an unknown Miss Austen or a Miss Brontë at that time would have met with”, but that would not automatically mean that poetry of this lady of noble birth would exude happiness and joy, but rather “feet and hatred”, and that this would be notable in the writings

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<sup>644</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929). pp. 55-57

<sup>645</sup> Ibid. pp. 58-59

<sup>646</sup> Ibid. pp. 60-61

<sup>647</sup> Ibid. p. 62

<sup>648</sup> Ibid. p. 63

of that lady<sup>649</sup>. Then she mentions Lady Winchilsea, which was Anne, Countess of Winchilsea, who was considered a female version of Arnoldian Gray, and a “minor saint” of the Romantic era<sup>650</sup>. Woolf notes how the Countess was born in 1661, how her nobility status was both by birth and from her marriage, how she had no children, how she wrote poetry and how her umbrage considering the position of women was obvious in her poems<sup>651</sup>.

As an example, she offers the ending verses of Lady Anne’s poem *The Introduction*:

*“How we are fallen! fallen by mistaken rules,  
And Education's more than Nature's fools;  
Debarred from all improvements of the mind,  
And to be dull, expected and designed;  
And if someone would soar above the rest,  
With warmer fancy, and ambition pressed,  
So strong the opposing faction still appears,  
The hopes to thrive can ne'er outweigh the fears<sup>652</sup>.”*

Which she follows with the verses of the very same poem that are closer to the beginning of it:

*“Alas! a woman that attempts the pen,  
Such a presumptuous creature is esteemed,  
The fault can by no virtue be redeemed.  
They tell us we mistake our sex and way;  
Good breeding, fashion, dancing, dressing, play,  
Are the accomplishments we should desire;  
To write, or read, or think, or to enquire,  
Would cloud our beauty, and exhaust our time,  
And interrupt the conquests of our prime,  
Whilst the dull manage of a servile house  
Is held by some our utmost art and use<sup>653</sup>.”*

Only to add three more verses from the same poem as “the sad chant” with which Lady Ann might have meant to be for herself and possibly inadvertently for other women poets, telling them their work will not see the light of day in publishing:

*“To some few friends, and to thy sorrows sing,  
For groves of laurel thou wert never meant;  
Be dark enough thy shades, and be thou there content<sup>654</sup>.”*

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<sup>649</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929). p. 64

<sup>650</sup> Reuben A. Brower, "Lady Winchilsea and the Poetic Tradition of the Seventeenth Century", *Studies in Philology* 42, no. 1 (1945), pp. 61-80, JSTOR, <[https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/4172687.pdf?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/4172687.pdf?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)>, (Accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> August, 2020)

<sup>651</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 64

<sup>652</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 64-65

<sup>653</sup> *Ibid.* p. 65

<sup>654</sup> *Ibid.* p. 65

The significance of the Countess of Winchilsea's words is not only indicative of a woman poet's mind in the seventeenth century, but also resounding even today, for every woman trying to be what she wishes to be and being discouraged by men in the patriarchal society of the capitalist world we still live in is like any woman poet of the seventeenth century. In Lady Anne's *The Introduction*, one sees how her creativity is screaming to be seen, to be heard, to be recognized, but the "mistaken rules" of the patriarchal society and them being prohibited from being educated and expanding their knowledge, the constant terror of being prosecuted by the members of the opposite gender who berate them and put them into moulds so that they would be exactly what they wish for them to be – their property, are all elements of popular culture which Mrs Woolf points out throughout her commentary of this poem. The fact that the last section of this poem Woolf takes away from the rest serve as a kind of a "sad chant" where the poetess encourages herself by saying that her work will not be published is staggering.

Woolf sees hope in one of Lady Anne's other poems *The Spleen*, where she sees poetry for poetry's sake, unadulterated with anger and bitterness imposed by the scorn of the ruling gender. She sees the Countess's interest for nature's beauty and wonder and is saddened by the hurt of her words in *The Introduction*, especially because she knows that those emotions were unavoidable because of the obtruded subordination towards men. Woolf implores her audience and the reader to think about the plausibility of the Countess writing about nature and human emotions in any way other than having a hue of anger and resentment.

*"But how could she have helped herself? I asked, imagining the sneers and the laughter, the adulation of the toadies, the scepticism of the professional poet. She must have shut herself up in a room in the country to write, and been tom asunder by bitterness and scruples perhaps, though her husband was of the kindest, and their married life perfection. She 'must have', I say, because when one comes to seek out the facts about Lady Winchilsea, one finds, as usual, that almost nothing is known about her<sup>655</sup>."*

The contradiction that serves as another element of popular culture in Woolf's critical essay is that she sees hope and terrible sadness and melancholy in the two separate verse pairs of the same poem – *The Spleen*, and then once again verses of "fields and dreaming", as Mrs Woolf puts it<sup>656</sup>. This element of the popular is the element of contradictory nature and at the same time the underlying element of a woman's disempowered state.

Woolf follows this with some information which is perhaps just "dubious gossip", according to Mr Murry, whose book she is referencing for Lady Anne's life, and she underlines that she would love any kind of information about the poetess, even the gossip so that she could have her own musings about her life.

*"But she became diffuse, Mr Murry says. Her gift is all grown about with weeds and bound with briars. It had no chance of showing itself for the fine distinguished gift it was<sup>657</sup>."*

With this, Woolf concludes her exploration of the life and work of Anne, Countess of Winchilsea, and gives her focus to another lady, Duchess Margaret of Newcastle, who was older than Countess Anne, but at the same time was "her contemporary". There are numerous similarities between the two poetesses. They were both born into the noble family and married into the noble

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<sup>655</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 66

<sup>656</sup> Ibid. p. 66

<sup>657</sup> Ibid. p. 67

family, neither of them was blessed with children, both of them had kind and supporting husbands, they were passionate about poetry and both of the ladies “are disfigured and deformed by the same causes”, Woolf reveals<sup>658</sup>.

The author once again emphasizes how utterly wasted was the Duchess’s mind because nobody taught her, the professors who were supposed to guide her were too lenient and praising her to a fault while the members of the Court mocked her. In the end the Duchess lost her mind due to these drastically opposing scenes and the constriction of the patriarchal rules where a woman could not express herself properly because of the lack of educational guidance<sup>659</sup>.

At this point in her research, the author read a highly misspelt passage of one of the letters of a woman called Dorothy Osborne, who talked in her letter about the new book of the Duchess, and since she was a “woman of sense and modesty” she did not write anything. Here the author underlines that fact that the only thing acceptable for a woman to write were the letters, and the freedom of the female correspondence was such that they were allowed to write their letters anywhere in anyone’s presence, even in presence of men while they grumbled about her disturbing their conversation<sup>660</sup>.

These notions of a woman blurring the lines of the patriarchal society by being able to write a letter wherever she wished is at the same time an element of popular culture where the disempowered and the subordinated breaks the status quo, and the element of the popular accentuating the disempowerment and subordination of the woman. On one hand the men only grumble about a woman’s writing disturbing their conversation, but they refrain from forbidding her to write her letter and they do not mock her or laugh at her for doing so, even though they are more than within their rights to do so according to law if she dares write a poem, a novel, a story, etc.

Woolf makes a point of stressing how it is bewildering to her that the aforementioned girl named Dorothy had such a great talent to frame a sentence and set the scene, unexplored, of course due to her lack of proper education. She then offers to the audience and the reader an excerpt of the girl’s letter in which she describes a part of her day in the same misspelt way littered with grammatical mistakes<sup>661</sup>.

*“After dinner wee sitt and talk till Mr B com's in question and then I am gon. the heat of the day is spent in reading or working and about sixe or seven a Clock, I walke out into a Common that lyes hard by the house where a great many young wenches keep Sheep and Cow's and sitt in the shades singing of Ballads; I goe to them and compare their voyces and Beauty's to some Ancient Shepherdeses that I have read of and finde a vaste difference there, but trust mee I think these are as innocent as those could bee. I talke to them, and finde they want nothing to make them the happiest People in the world, but the knoledge that they are soe<sup>662</sup>.”*

The girl’s letter concludes with her speaking to whoever she is writing and saying that her day ends when she goes into her garden and wishes that that person is with her.

Throughout this portion of her letter one can see a few elements of the popular, firstly, when the conversation turns towards the topic of a certain Mr B, she leaves the room, and it is not clear why it happens, just that it has to be done, as if it were the law for her to make herself scarce when

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<sup>658</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929). p. 67

<sup>659</sup> Ibid. pp. 67-68

<sup>660</sup> Ibid. pp. 68-69

<sup>661</sup> Ibid. p. 69

<sup>662</sup> Ibid. p. 69

that particular gentlemen is in question. Then she discloses how she works or reads, which is a step up from not being able to read at all. Her description of women taking care of farm animals is another element of the popular where women do the work and no man is helping making them the subordinated ones, and the last part where they are happy just by knowing that they are happy has a distinct feeling of them settling and not seeking their happiness at all.

Woolf puts into the foreground how even though the writing of this girl is filled with mistakes of various kinds, to her there is a great potential for writing, but the sad fact is that such a woman who obviously has talent for phrases “has brought herself to believe that to write a book was to be ridiculous, even to show oneself distracted<sup>663</sup>”.

This is the power of patriarchy, the power that they hold over members of the matriarchy because they tell them who they should be, what they should or should not do and what they are or are not capable of doing. They beat, enslave, imprison and conceal from education and do so, as has already been said numerous times by the author, just so that their superiority would not come in jeopardy.

### **The Ordinary Woman Paving the Way for Future Generations**

The author looks at the history of Mrs Aphra Behn, who was known as the first woman of English birth who has earned her living with her writings<sup>664</sup>. Woolf marks this by stating how with Mrs Behn her and her audience enter almost a whole new era considering women and literature where all those women who wrote for themselves inside the walls of patriarchy, and step into the street with Mrs Behn, “a middle-class woman with all the plebeian virtues of humour, vitality and courage”, who had to think quickly on her feet and use her cleverness and acuity in order to survive, for she was a widow. She had to assert herself and work on the same level as men and by working hard she managed to earn money for herself. This nugget of actuality is what Woolf considers the most important part of Mrs Behn’s life, not the many publications of hers, but the fact that she worked for herself and made a living. The author notes how this was the cornerstone of all young women who could go to their fathers and exclaiming they need no money for they shall earn their own money by writing fiction. She also concludes that for a number of years the answer of the fathers of those girls would certainly run along the lines of that happening solely over the proverbial dead bodies of the said fathers<sup>665</sup>. The writing of fiction and loss of one’s virginity comes into the light here, and Woolf connects the two with:

*“That profoundly interesting subject, the value that men set upon women's chastity and its effect upon their education, here suggests itself for discussion, and might provide an interesting book<sup>666</sup> [...]”*

Where the book is another very small but nonetheless equally important element of popular culture in this text. She gives the example for the connection between a woman being chaste and the value of it with what *The Times*, another element of popular culture, had said about the death of Lady Dudley. They started with her husband, Lord Dudley, praising him, describing how he showered his wife with glorious clothes and bountiful jewels, always gave her whatever her heart desired, but insisted she always wear a full skirt so as not to be seen as anything but chaste and demure, and after he had a stroke she “nursed him and ruled his estates with supreme competence

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<sup>663</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 69

<sup>664</sup> Ernest Bernbaum, “Mrs. Behn's Biography a Fiction”, *PMLA*, vol. 28, no. 3, (1913), pp. 432–453, JSTOR, <[https://www.jstor.org/stable/457030?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/457030?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)>, (Accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> August, 2020), p. 432

<sup>665</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 70

<sup>666</sup> *Ibid.* p. 70

for ever after<sup>667</sup>”.

What should have been the obituary of Lady Dudley, was actually a praise of her husband and how she was a worthy successor of his estate, not to mention the highly inappropriate comment about her being possibly forced to wear a full skirt so that she would appear chaste even though she was married and it was obvious that her chastity was not intact. This is yet another element of popular culture where the woman is being considered a possession, a prized pony to wash and clean and show off her good breeding and her shiny hair and good, strong teeth.

The author comes back to Mrs Behn stating that

*Aphra Behn proved that money could be made by writing at the sacrifice, perhaps, of certain agreeable qualities; and so by degrees writing became not merely a sign of folly and a distracted mind, but was of practical importance. A husband might die, or some disaster overtake the family. [...] The extreme activity of mind which showed itself in the later eighteenth century among women - the talking, and the meeting, the writing of essays on Shakespeare, the translating of the classics - was founded on the solid fact that women could make money by writing<sup>668</sup>.*”

In summary, what Mrs Aphra Behn did was unintentionally liberating all women to some extent leading by example. This is the first strong element of popular culture in the essay where a woman almost completely obliterated the lines of the rules of the patriarchal society and earned a living on her own accord, but there is always the other side of the coin, namely, her public figure was slandered and her morals questioned and her character looked down upon because she dared earn her own money.

Woolf underlines the importance of literary predecessors. By there being women like Aphra Behn – a middle-class woman earning a living by writing her fiction, a path was paved for the likes of Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters and George Elliot, and the case is not gender-exclusive, for the same could be said for Shakespeare whose path was paved by Marlowe, who could not write without Chaucer, and he owed the liberation of his craft to the first poets whose names history does not know<sup>669</sup>.

Therefore, here we have generations of people who were all in peril of being disempowered and subordinated at some point in their respective careers, for if just one of the links went missing, the chain reaction could have sent the whole world of literature back into the Stone Age, making all of the people involved, both men and women, the disempowered ones and the subordinated ones.

### **Women Novelists of the Nineteenth Century**

Woolf declares that her and her audience and the reader of her essay of course have reached, together the nineteenth century where there is a notable change for there are “several shelves given up entirely to the works of women<sup>670</sup>.” Looking at the shelves, the author asks herself and imposes this question unto her audience, why those literary works of fiction written by women in the nineteenth century were predominantly novels. The answer comes to her by looking at the memoirs written by the relatives of those famous ladies. A woman in the nineteenth century scarcely had time for herself and had no room of her own, thus her concentration suffered and the novel was the easiest piece of literature to write in such a scattered way<sup>671</sup>.

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<sup>667</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929). p. 71

<sup>668</sup> Ibid. p. 71

<sup>669</sup> Ibid. pp. 71-72

<sup>670</sup> Ibid. p. 72

<sup>671</sup> Ibid. pp. 72-74

*“They wrote novels, however; one may even go further, I said, taking *Pride and Prejudice* from the shelf, and say that they wrote good novels. Without boasting or giving pain to the opposite sex, one may say that *Pride and Prejudice* is a good book. At any rate, one would not have been ashamed to have been caught in the act of writing *Pride and Prejudice*. Yet Jane Austen was glad that a hinge creaked, so that she might hide her manuscript before anyone came in. To Jane Austen there was something discreditable in writing *Pride and Prejudice*<sup>672</sup>.”*

Here Woolf accentuates the fact that Jane Austen was afraid and ashamed of somebody seeing her writing a novel, so she hid her manuscript, and the question remains why it was so. She reminds the audience and the reader that in those times a woman’s life was constricted in a sense that she could not go almost anywhere alone, she did not travel, she did not go for a ride in an omnibus, which is another well-known element of popular culture in the writings of Virginia Woolf, and the nineteenth century woman did not dine alone. Wondering if perhaps it was not due to the circumstances that Jane Austen hid her manuscript, but rather her character. Then she opens *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë and a phrase about Charlotte not caring if anybody blamed her or not catches her eye. Searching for the answer of why somebody would blame the novelist, she reads the book and finds that people blamed Jane Eyre for wishing to see beyond the natural limit and experience the world behind that which her eyes could reach<sup>673</sup>. With this revelation came a thought that

*“Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex<sup>674</sup>.”*

This whole section of *Jane Eyre* found in this critical essay is reminiscent of Woolf’s writing about women of a couple of centuries ago, of their submission and lack of power, of the domination of men over them, and she remarks how when she compared Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë, she found that Austen wrote about their characters, while Charlotte wrote of herself. And here is where the question of money comes into play, Woolf asks herself if the situation would have been different if Miss Brontë had three hundred pounds a year. She goes on thinking that all the things that she wrote in *Jane Eyre* about wishing to interact more with people and experience life more. Were the things all women were plagued by at that time. She turns to George Eliot and remarks that she was the only one who had a room of her own to an extent, but she was riddled with a longing to not be alone. After offering to her audience and consequently the reader an extensive philosophical recital about the makings of a novel, Woolf concludes that novel resembles life, and therefore the values that one can find in there are those of the real life<sup>675</sup>.

After this the thought of values serves as a sort of trampoline for the author to explain how

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<sup>672</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 74

<sup>673</sup> Ibid. pp. 74-75

<sup>674</sup> Ibid. pp. 75-76

<sup>675</sup> Ibid. pp. 76-80

what women see as important is different from what men consider important and in the patriarchal society of the early nineteenth century the things deemed important and valuable by men “prevail”, and therefore, aside from this element of popular culture which has been the focal point of the essay, we have some more, like football and sport, which are important according to the “masculine values”, and at the same time we have fashion and shopping, also elements of popular culture labelled as “trivial”, books dealing with masculine topics such as war were of the utmost importance, while a book delving into a mind of a woman doing what she normally does was considered insignificant<sup>676</sup>. All of these are connected by the omnipresent element of popular culture of women being the disempowered ones and the subordinated ones in a patriarchal society.

In looking over the novels before her, the author of this critical essay concludes that women were criticized.

*“She was admitting that she was 'only a woman', or protesting that she was 'as good as a man'. She met that criticism as her temperament dictated, with docility and diffidence, or with anger and emphasis<sup>677</sup>.”*

These phrases are attesting to the aforementioned omnipresence of the element of popular culture denoting women as the subordinated and the disempowered.

Mrs Woolf concurs that it must have been nearly impossible not to show one’s anger towards the male sex when one was so constricted and boxed in, and makes an emphasis on only Jane Austen and Emily Brontë doing so, and that they “wrote as women write, not as men write”, since the anger of Charlotte Brontë brought back the memories of the angry horde of men writing about women from the beginning of this essay. She takes notice of a certain Sir Egerton Brydges who criticized poetry by criticizing the fact that a woman has written that poem, and further stating that in his opinion “female novelists should only aspire to excellence by courageously acknowledging the limitations of their sex”, which is something the gentleman in question uttered only a few months before Virginia Woolf gave this lecture and subsequently wrote this essay – the early twentieth century<sup>678</sup>.

The fourth part of the essay concludes with the author reiterating that interruptions were the worst enemy of creation, and so she ends this part and commences with the penultimate section<sup>679</sup>.

## **Five**

### **Mary Carmichael**

The fifth section of the essay is opened by the author announcing how in her research she arrived to her present day, therefore the beginning of the twentieth century and how now she considers books by authors who are still alive and that she considers books from authors of both genders, “for there are almost as many books written by women now as by men”. Then she hedges with a statement that if it were not completely true, that women at least do not write only novels, but about Greek archeology, aesthetics, and Persia, to name a few. She discloses how in her nowadays women write poems, plays, books about criticism, history, biographies, books about travelling, scholarships and research, philosophical books, scientific books, books about economy. And so she takes it that because of the wide array of topics that women write about now, a woman writer “may be beginning to use writing as an art, not as a method of self-expression”, which presents a question to which Woolf is hopeful to find the answer in the books she has before her

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<sup>676</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), pp.80-81

<sup>677</sup> Ibid. p. 81

<sup>678</sup> Ibid. pp. 81-82

<sup>679</sup> Ibid. p. 85

now<sup>680</sup>.

Taking a book by Mary Carmichael, she considers it a successor of the works of Lady Winchilsea, Aphra Behn, Jane Austen and the Brontë sisters.

*“For books continue each other, in spite of our habit of judging them separately. And I must also consider her - this unknown woman - as the descendant of all those other women whose circumstances I have been glancing at and see what she inherits of their characteristics and restrictions<sup>681</sup>.”*

These few sentences take the reader, and presumably the audience, a little while back when almost the same was said about the four famous women novelists of the early nineteenth century and Shakespeare in correlation with Marlowe and Chaucer, therefore the exact same element of popular culture has been transferred to this small paragraph comprised of a few lines of text. That is why Woolf expects Mary Carmichael’s book *Life’s Adventure* to be the continuation of the poems, plays and novels of previously researched ladies from the past, and expects the book to have inherited at least some of the restraints and character traits of its predecessors. True, the author does not say that the book inherited those characteristics, but that Mary Carmichael has, but is not it also true that no matter how hard the author tries there is always something that transposes into their work?

It becomes painfully obvious that Mrs Woolf dislikes the style of writing of young Mary Carmichael, with the tone being interrupted and the author, having a role of the reader now, being flung out into the virtual typhoon. She compares Austen and Carmichael and says how Austen’s writing seems as easy as composing was for Mozart, while “this writing was like being out at sea in an open boat<sup>682</sup>”. If one remembers the fact that *Orlando: A Biography*, *The Waves* and *A Room of One’s Own* came about at the same time, it comes as no surprise that a metaphor like this about being at sea and immediately imagining the waves rocking the boat should find its way into the text.

Coming back to the essay, Woolf describes the way in which one feels like they are going up and then down, which is reminiscent of a rollercoaster ride, but she used the metaphor of an open boat at sea. As a reason for this convulsive, uncontrollable, jolting way of writing she imagines the young writer

*“[...] afraid of something; afraid of being called 'sentimental' perhaps; or she remembers that women's writing has been called flowery and so provides a superfluity of thorns<sup>683</sup>[...]”*

This is another in a swarm of elements of popular culture in the text denoting women as the disempowered and subordinated class of society. Woolf presumes that the history of a patriarchal society slandering, criticizing, laughing at and demeaning works of fiction which came from the pen of women writers is what possibly coloured this young writer’s style. She adds that she needs to do some more research in order to pass her judgment, but this is the first reason that comes to her mind.

Woolf admits with some reserve that as she continued reading she saw potential and was faced with a decision, either Mary Carmichael was quite cleverly creating a completely new style of narrative, or she was breaking off her sentences and her sequence so that she would be considered

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<sup>680</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929). p. 86

<sup>681</sup> Ibid. p. 87

<sup>682</sup> Ibid. p. 87

<sup>683</sup> Ibid. p. 88

different from her predecessors and in order to almost mechanically prove the patriarchal critics wrong in that women write in a flowery manner and write of emotions and their everyday lives. The author mentions Mary cramming an almost impossibly vast amount of facts into her sentences, but at the end she manages to place everything and everybody together<sup>684</sup>.

### **Female Relationships in Literature**

At this point Woolf completely exits for the first time since the beginning of the essay and speaks directly to her audience and only her audience, asking if there are no men present in the lecture hall. She makes them swear that all of them are women and then reveals that the very next thing she read was that one of the female characters in Mary Carmichael's *Life's Adventure* – Cloe, liked another female character from the book – Olivia<sup>685</sup>.

*“Do not start. Do not blush. Let us admit in the privacy of our own society that these things sometimes happen. Sometimes women do like women.*

*'Chloe liked Olivia,' I read. And then it struck me how immense a change was there. Chloe liked Olivia perhaps for the first time in literature. Cleopatra did not like Octavia. And how completely Antony and Cleopatra would have been altered had she done so<sup>686!</sup>”*

The fact that she preemptively warned her audience comprised solely of women not to let the shackles of society pull them in a direction where the homosexuality was shunned and frowned upon and, to put it quite simply – taboo, is an element of popular culture in and of itself. The status of homosexuality as a concept varies from country to country and from religion to religion nowadays, but then it was the same as women were a few centuries prior. It was something abnormal, something kept secret, which continued to be the norm, to be expected well into the twenty-first century, at least in Serbia, for I can only talk freely of Serbia due to my lack of information about the topic in other countries. At present, every person owning a television knows of one openly homosexual person of female gender and that is our female Prime Minister. She is in a gay marriage and she and her partner have a child. That would make anyone presume that our country is open to homosexual relationships. The other side of the same story is that the sad fact is that not all people have the same opportunities, for there are still people here not tolerating such relationships, being violent towards people who even might not be homosexual, but manifest some feminine personal traits or antics if they are a member of the male gender and vice versa. That is what makes homosexual people still belong to the group of disempowered and subordinated, and consequently an element of popular culture even today, let alone almost a century ago.

Coming back to the text, the fact that “Cloe liked Olivia” is an element of popular culture in the text, and Woolf thinks of all the female fictional characters that have graced her eyes during her life and how almost without fail their characters are put in perspective by those female characters and their relationships towards the male characters in those books. She notes how the relationship between women was not explored in a sense that women were friends, let alone more than that. Their relationships were those of a mother and daughter, of two sisters, confidants<sup>687</sup>.

*“But almost without exception they are shown in their relation to men. It was strange to think that all the great women of fiction were, until Jane*

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<sup>684</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929). p. 88

<sup>685</sup> Ibid. pp. 88-89

<sup>686</sup> Ibid. p. 89

<sup>687</sup> Ibid. p. 89

*Austen's day, not only seen by the other sex, but seen only in relation to the other sex*<sup>688</sup>.”

This serves as a reminder of the subordination of women and their disempowerment as in life so in literature, for fiction mimics life, Woolf said at the beginning of this critical essay.

Due to the fact that women were either seen through male eyes or in connection to men, and Woolf underlines that a man does not know about a woman and how he is just a small part of a woman's life, she concludes that it may well be the reason for:

*“the peculiar nature of women in fiction; the astonishing extremes of her beauty and horror; her alternations between heavenly goodness and hellish depravity - for so a lover would see her as his love rose or sank, was prosperous or unhappy*<sup>689</sup>.”

Once again this element of the popular comes to the surface and Mrs Woolf all but convinces the reader and her audience that it was most definitely so. She does emphasize how this stopped being a predominant occurrence in the nineteenth century, but that, in the end, neither man nor woman knows sufficiently about the other<sup>690</sup>.

### **Women's Interests**

The author soldiers on, coming to a realization that it became apparent in literature that women do not have interest only in domestic affairs, but other – just like men do, because the two female characters in Mary Carmichael's novel share a laboratory where they make medicine for a type of anemia, that one of the women had two children and a husband, but then Woolf surprises the reader and any listener with a statement that all of it “had to be left out”, and that is the reason that fictional women seem “simple and much too monotonous”. To drive her point home, she implores the reader, and her audience of course, to imagine a world where all those interesting facts about a character's life were omitted from the male character's make up. If the role of a male character were only to be a lover of a woman, Woolf claims, literature would be robbed of so many characters, just like it is “impoverished beyond our counting by the doors that have been shut upon women<sup>691</sup>”, who were made to enter into a matrimony with somebody they did not desire, somebody they might have hated, but their opinions did not matter, who were:

*“kept in one room, and to one occupation, how could a dramatist give a full or interesting or truthful account of them? Love was the only possible interpreter*<sup>692</sup>.”

This ubiquitous element of popular culture once again comes into full focus, just as it will continue to do so throughout the entirety of this critical essay.

Woolf continues exploring Carmichael's novel and reads on about the relationship between the two female characters, and while imagining a conversation between herself and Mary Carmichael about one of the two female characters of Mary's novel, she stops to chastise herself for praising her gender, which she did unintentionally. She immediately corrects herself and starts

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<sup>688</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929). p. 89

<sup>689</sup> Ibid. p. 90

<sup>690</sup> Ibid. p. 90

<sup>691</sup> Ibid. p. 90

<sup>692</sup> Ibid. p. 91

speaking of the impossibility of measuring the value of a single gender because<sup>693</sup>:

*“Few women even now have been graded at the universities; the great trials of the professions, army and navy, trade, politics and diplomacy have hardly tested them. They remain even at this moment almost unclassified. But if I want to know all that a human being can tell me about Sir Hawley Butts, for instance, I have only to open Burke or Debrett and I shall find that he took such and such a degree; owns a hall; has an heir; was Secretary to a Board; represented Great Britain in Canada; and has received a certain number of degrees, offices, medals and other distinctions by which his merits are stamped upon him indelibly. Only Providence can know more about Sir Hawley Butts than that<sup>694</sup>.”*

This part of Woolf’s writing flows into the seemingly infinite, never-ending and ever-growing stream of elements of popular culture labelling women as the disempowered and subordinated class of the white, patriarchal, capitalist society, which is the society one analyzes when researching popular culture in general. During the first half of the twentieth century, feminist research has not yet become prominent, which happened during 1980s<sup>695</sup>, therefore the women belonging to the subordinated and disempowered class of society was not an uncommon occurrence of that time period. The fact that there was an abundance of information about distinguished gentlemen and the same courtesy be denied to their contemporaries of the opposite gender only fortifies that.

Continuing with the essay, the author looks at her virtual bookcase, which she might have had at home but it shall not be revealed during the course of this essay because it is for now only a figment of the author’s imagination and serves to set the scene when she enters her narrative mode, and notices biographies of great men of literature like Goethe, Shelley, Voltaire and many more, and her thoughts lead her towards a question why would those men even enter into a relationship with any member of the opposite sex. She comes to a conclusion that the vast difference between a man’s daily life and a woman’s would provide a refreshment of his mind. Then Woolf offers contradictory images of various rooms that a woman enters into, which are of course elements of the popular due to their contradictory images<sup>696</sup>.

*“The rooms differ so completely; they are calm or thunderous; open on to the sea, or, on the contrary, give on to a prison yard; are hung with washing; or alive with opals and silks; are hard as horsehair or soft as feathers - one has only to go into any room in any street for the whole of that extremely complex force of femininity to fly in one’s face<sup>697</sup>.”*

Then she continues with another element of the popular showcasing the disempowerment of women by asking:

*“How should it be otherwise? For women have sat indoors all these*

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<sup>693</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929). pp. 91-92

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 92-93

<sup>695</sup> Amy G. Mazur and Gary Goertz, “Introduction”, in *Politics, Gender, and Concepts, Theory and Methodology*, edited by Gary Goertz and Amy G. Mazur (Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 5

<sup>696</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), pp. 93-94

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 94-95

*millions of years, so that by this time the very walls are permeated by their creative force, which has, indeed, so overcharged the capacity of bricks and mortar that it must needs harness itself to pens and brushes and business and politics. But this creative power differs greatly from the creative power of men*<sup>698</sup>. “

This powerful distinction is pivotal to Woolf. Thinking about Mary Carmichael, she comes to a conclusion that Mary will be a writer who reveals her female characters as they are and not put them in little boxes assigned to them by men<sup>699</sup>.

She then presents to the readers an image of an elderly lady taking a walk with her daughter

*“both so respectably booted and furred that their dressing in the afternoon must be a ritual, and the clothes themselves put away in cupboards with camphor, year after year, throughout the summer months*<sup>700</sup>. ”

Which is another element of the popular which has been noticed in both *Orlando: A Biography* and *The Waves* throughout this research. The importance of clothing comes from how we wish to be perceived, therefore the mere mentioning of the clothes being respectable is an element of the popular in this essay.

Woolf then recaps the old lady’s life, but because it is a life of an ordinary woman it shall not be recorded anywhere, and nobody will remember her once a certain number of years goes by<sup>701</sup>.

The author once again speaks of Mary Carmichael as if she were there, and imagines what she should, could or might write, but soon decides to actually finish her reading and let all speculation go. She starts reading again, in her story of her research for the answers to the topic of women and fiction, and determines how there is no use in comparing Austen and Carmichael<sup>702</sup>. Reading on she discloses how

*“she had certain advantages which women of far greater gift lacked even half a century ago. Men were no longer to her ‘the opposing faction’; she need not waste her time railing against them; she need not climb on to the roof and ruin her peace of mind longing for travel, experience and a knowledge of the world and character that were denied her. Fear and hatred were almost gone, or traces of them showed only in a slight exaggeration of the joy of freedom, a tendency to the caustic and satirical, rather than to the romantic, in her treatment of the other sex*<sup>703</sup>. ”

All of these have already been said and repeated, many times over, all of those scenes being united and intermingling, each of them representing women as the subordinated members of the society, women as the ones being dominated by men, women having no power of their own, but still trying to break the norm and take a little piece of it for themselves.

The author then adds that Mary Carmichael

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<sup>698</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 95

<sup>699</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 95-96

<sup>700</sup> *Ibid.* p. 96

<sup>701</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 96-97

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 97-99

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.* p. 100

“wrote as a woman, but as a woman who has forgotten that she is a woman, so that her pages were full of that curious sexual quality which comes only when sex is unconscious of itself<sup>704</sup>.”

which is an underlying element of popular culture due to a slight contradictory quality of a woman forgetting she is a woman and female quality present with a woman forgetting she belongs to that gender.

As she reads on, she imagines all of those patriarchs she had encountered throughout this essay up so far yelling their advices and warnings at her, to keep off the grass for only fellows and scholars are permitted to step on it, that she cannot possibly enter the university library without a letter of introduction, so Woolf once again speaks to Mary in her imagination and offers some advice of her own. She tells her to go on without hesitation, to jump over the numerous fences constricting her.

She concludes the fifth part of the essay by imploring the society to give Mary Carmichael a room of her own and five hundred pounds a year, to let her speak her mind, and she expresses her certainty that Mary would in those circumstances write a better book or become a poetess<sup>705</sup>.

Until now one has all but forgotten that Mary Carmichael was one of the three names that Woolf said her audience should call her throughout her narration, thus the conclusion that she has managed to be the three Marries and none of them at the same time rears its head and looks the reader straight in the eye. She spoke to her characters, seeing in each and every character herself and offering the fused personalities to her audience throughout her story.

## **Six**

### **Elements of Popular Culture on the Streets of London**

The last part of this critical essay begins with it being the next day in Woolf’s imaginary world. She explains all that she could hear, offering elements of popular culture like the traffic, the factory and the machines in said factory. The date is “the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 1928<sup>706</sup>”, and one cannot help but be reminded that the last entry at the end of *Orlando: A Biography* was that the date had been 11<sup>th</sup> October of the same year, which only consolidates the connection between that novel and this essay.

In continuation, Woolf asks a question and answers it, for it was a rhetorical question that she had asked, and the question considered Londoners and what they were doing on that fine October morning. She reveals how there were none reading Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*, how nobody cared about what was happening in literature. Then she feeds into the fancy of her audience and the reader some more elements of popular culture, like the errand-boy – an element of the popular for he is the one running errands for other people, as his title suggests in that obvious, self-explanatory way; then there was a woman with a dog on a lead – who is an element of popular culture first and foremost for being a woman and at that time still belonging to the disempowered and the subordinated; next came the “business-like” people carrying their “little bags” – elements of the popular for playing a part of cogs in a machine of the society; “drifters rattling sticks upon area railings” – who invoke the image of homeless people, and are defined by the *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* as “a person who travels or moves about aimlessly or who has no aim in life<sup>707</sup>”, which in turn, once again presents a picture of somebody having no power and being

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<sup>704</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 100

<sup>705</sup> Ibid. pp. 100-102

<sup>706</sup> Ibid. p. 103

<sup>707</sup> *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*, Della Summers (ed.) (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, Third Edition, 2005), p. 418

dominated by the white, patriarchs of the capitalist society; then there were the good-natured, easy to talk to people exercising their right of free speech a little too vehemently – whose lack of proper etiquette makes them elements of the popular<sup>708</sup>.

Then her audience and the reader of this essay are steered towards the funerals and how men lift their hats as a gesture of respect, but how that respect comes from them being reminded of their own mortality.

*“And then a very distinguished gentleman came slowly down a doorstep and paused to avoid collision with a bustling lady who had, by some means or other, acquired a splendid fur coat and a bunch of Parma violets<sup>709</sup>.”*

And each of these characters, who might be real, but are quite possibly simply figments of Woolf’s imagination, were preoccupied with what they were doing, not taking notice of one another<sup>710</sup>.

The scene with “a very distinguished gentleman” and “a bustling lady” shows such contrast in character that one cannot find oneself without a conclusion that in the sense of elements of popular culture, the man is presented in this scene as the subordinated one, because he stopped in his tracks to let her through, and she was wearing a fur coat, which is another element of the popular – the clothes denoting somebody’s status.

Then a calm descended upon the fair city of London, and in this “suspension of traffic”, the author sees a young woman, a young man, and a taxi-cab – which has so far been well-established as an element of popular culture throughout the novel *The Waves* – with all three of these having a connecting point right underneath the author’s window, where they all merged by the boy and the girl entering the taxi-cab and going towards an unknown, undisclosed location.<sup>711</sup>

By this happening, in Woolf’s narration, of course, for she is still telling a story to her audience and the reader of the essay so that among the “lies” one could find the truth, she imagines it to be a culmination of sorts where the two genders came together<sup>712</sup>, without blame, without pretense, without professors or great ladies of the past, without society rules and laws prohibiting one of the genders to get an education, without the patriarchs deciding what a woman should wear, how she should speak, or whom she is to marry.

### **The Marriage of the Minds**

Wondering about the “unity of the mind”, Woolf came to a conclusion that “it is natural for the sexes to co-operate”, and that such an alliance would be the most magnificent feeling of being satisfied and happy. She went off on a philosophical journey, not unlike her character Bernard from her novel *The Waves*, and thinking about the union of the minds and souls, she deduced that there was a possibility of there being a male mind in each mind of a woman and a female mind in every man’s mind as well, and that the complete union of those two minds sets off the greatest of harmonies<sup>713</sup>.

In order to detangle what was meant by that, she decided to spare a glance at a few books starting with Coleridge, who declared how “a great mind is androgynous”, but she also emphasized how it did not include “any special sympathy with women”. As an example of an androgynous mind she considered Shakespeare, but the lack of information hindered the firmness of judgement.

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<sup>708</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 103

<sup>709</sup> Ibid. pp. 103-104

<sup>710</sup> Ibid. p. 104

<sup>711</sup> Ibid. p. 104

<sup>712</sup> Ibid. p. 105

<sup>713</sup> Ibid. pp. 105-106

Therefore, the author once again came to her imaginary bookshelf filled with her contemporaries and discloses that<sup>714</sup>:

*“No age can ever have been as stridently sex-conscious as our own; those innumerable books by men about women in the British Museum are a proof of it. The Suffrage campaign was no doubt to blame. It must have roused in men an extraordinary desire for self-assertion; it must have made them lay an emphasis upon their own sex and its characteristics which they would not have troubled to think about had they not been challenged. And when one is challenged, even by a few women in black bonnets, one retaliates, if one has never been challenged before, rather excessively. That perhaps accounts for some of the characteristics that I remember to have found here, I thought, taking down a new novel by Mr A, who is in the prime of life and very well thought of, apparently, by the reviewer<sup>715</sup>.”*

The entirety of this piece of Woolf’s text is brimming with elements of popular culture displaying the position of women as the disempowered and the subordinated class of the white, patriarchal, capitalist society. It is an allegory denoting the female gender as the villains of this part of the story, for it is their fault for wishing to have basic human rights and be treated equally, because that was what cornered the male gender, so that they simply had to retaliate in a way of writing such characteristics in relation to women. Aside from this, there is an element of the popular in the form of the black bonnets women in the Suffrage campaign wore, and a novel, which is another element of the popular found throughout this essay.

Woolf describes the male writing style as “direct”, “straightforward”, as exuding the quality of a free mind, liberated personality, self-confidence, and how whoever read the words of this male writer would have a feeling that he is physically healthy, content, “well-educated”. Alas, this was not to remain so, because in the man’s writing she saw, after a while the unmistakable outline of a male ego casting a “shadow” over the whole novel. She could not escape it, however much she tried, and due to this, the important elements of the novel could not be discerned<sup>716</sup>.

*“Is that a tree? No, it is a woman. But . . . she has not a bone in her body, I thought, watching Phoebe, for that was her name, coming across the beach. Then Alan got up and the shadow of Alan at once obliterated Phoebe. For Alan had views and Phoebe was quenched in the flood of his views. And then Alan, I thought, has passions<sup>717</sup>;*

This this shapelessness of the female character and the overpowering dominance of the male character are yet again proof of that predominant element of popular culture in Virginia Woolf’s writings – the disempowered and subordinated class of society, namely, women.

She continued reading and she got bored with it. Asking herself of the reason why it had been so, she answers that it was in part due to the “dominance of the letter ‘I’” and its subsequent overshadowing of everything else, besides this she felt that Mr A’s writing lacked imagination. This took her back to the very beginning of this essay and her imaginative weekend in Oxbridge and Fernham, where her thought process led her to a judgement that people do not talk like Tennyson or Christina Rossetti, and because these two characters lacked this quality as well her deduction is that

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<sup>714</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), pp. 106-107

<sup>715</sup> Ibid. p. 107

<sup>716</sup> Ibid. pp. 107-108

<sup>717</sup> Ibid. p. 108

Mr A purposefully places an overbearing male character to dominate the female character<sup>718</sup>.

*“He does it in protest. He is protesting against the equality of the other sex by asserting his own superiority<sup>719</sup>.”*

These two sentences reiterate the collective mind of all professors, patriarchs, men, who were embodied in the angry Professor von X.

The author turned to Mr B, who was a critic and was as equally disappointed in his writing as she had been with Mr A’s, for he lacked any emotion in his conclusions<sup>720</sup>. Her disappointment ran even deeper when a realization came to her that

*“some of the finest works of our greatest living writers fall upon deaf ears. Do what she will a woman cannot find in them that fountain of perpetual life which the critics assure her is there. It is not only that they celebrate male virtues, enforce male values and describe the world of men ; it is that the emotion with which these books are permeated is to a woman incomprehensible<sup>721</sup>.”*

This enforcement of male values, virtues and emotions are another element of the popular marching to join its fellow elements which offer a woman as the one being dominated of and the one holding no power of her own, especially in the writings of Mr A and the critiques of Mr B.

Moving on from the aforementioned gentlemen, the author mentions the overwhelmingly masculine quality of Rome, which instantly becomes an element of popular culture for many reasons, one of which is that that city was the setting of one of the most popular books of the twenty-first century – *Angels and Demons*, written by Dan Brown, which stand in the fourth place on the list of one hundred top-selling books between the years 1998 and 2010 with 3.096.850 copies sold<sup>722</sup>, therefore it becomes an element of popular culture by association. It is also an element of the popular in this text because Woolf describes it as having “unmitigated masculinity<sup>723</sup>”, which is imposing and therefore dominates over femininity.

### **The Last Part of the Story of Three Marries and the Two Critiques**

Finally, it was time for the author to come to her writing station and commence writing her essay on Women and Fiction. She opened by stating how one needed to have the presence of both minds, male and female, in order to write, because if one writes with only one-gendered mind that creation would most certainly die without a shadow of a doubt. There had to be a union of the two minds for harmony and success. The author finishes with an offering of a multitude of elements of popular culture such as the boat with the undergraduate student from the first part of the essay, the taxi-car and the traffic of the city of London<sup>724</sup>:

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<sup>718</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), pp. 108-109

<sup>719</sup> Ibid. p. 109

<sup>720</sup> Ibid. pp. 109-110

<sup>721</sup> Ibid. p. 110

<sup>722</sup> *Top-selling 100 books of all time*, DATABLOG, Facts are sacred, <<https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2011/jan/01/top-100-books-of-all-time#data>>, (Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2020)

<sup>723</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 111

<sup>724</sup> Ibid. pp. 112-113

*“And I saw again the current which took the boat and the undergraduate and the dead leaves; and the taxi took the man and the woman, I thought, seeing them come together across the street; and the current swept them away, I thought, hearing far off the roar of London's traffic, into that tremendous stream<sup>725</sup>.”*

The essay does not end here, merely the story of Mrs Woolf who was the author, the “I”, and the three Maries or any other woman at the same time. Woolf now talks directly to her audience and the reader of the essay and states that she shall criticize her own story in two ways.

She critiques people taking sides of one gender over the other as a childish characteristic and states how people outgrow this, or at least they should. She then gifts to all a notion of one writing what one wishes, because that is what is important especially because nobody can predict if what one writes will be notable and noticeable only to them or to generations to come<sup>726</sup>.

*“But to sacrifice a hair of the head of your vision, a shade of its colour, in deference to some Headmaster' with a silver pot in his hand or to some professor with a measuring-rod up his sleeve , is the most abject treachery, and the sacrifice of wealth and chastity which used to be said to be the greatest of human disasters, a mere flea-bite in comparison<sup>727</sup>.”*

The Headmaster and the professor with his measuring rod are representatives of the patriarchy and by urging her audience comprised only of women to not conform to the status quo and to break the mould and blur the lines between their social class of the disempowered and the subordinated and the dominant, empowered male gender, she makes this another element of popular culture, for it is the culture of those disempowered and subordinated which gives a sense of cultural citizenship and belonging, as it has been stated on numerous occasions throughout this research.

The second objection which Mr Woolf foresees is the possibility of her audience, and the reader of course, coming to a judgement that everything is about the issue of money and materialistic tendencies. After quoting one of the lecturers of that college about the twelve most prominent poets of the last one hundred years, namely - Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Landor, Keats, Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Morris, Rossetti, Swinburne – nine were university men, Keats had died young, Browning “was well to do”, and Rossetti had “a small private income”, therefore the conclusion arises that one has to have money in order to write poetry. Those who wished to write poetry and had no source of income had no way of doing so<sup>728</sup>.

*“[...] a poor child in England has little more hope than had the son of an Athenian slave to be emancipated into that intellectual freedom of which great writings are born.' That is it. Intellectual freedom depends upon material things. Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor, not for two hundred years merely, but from the beginning of time. Women have had less intellectual freedom than the sons of Athenian slaves. Women, then, have not had a dog's chance of writing poetry<sup>729</sup>.”*

Woolf stresses that this is the reason why she put so much emphasis on having an income

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<sup>725</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), p. 113

<sup>726</sup> Ibid. pp. 113-115

<sup>727</sup> Ibid. p. 115

<sup>728</sup> Ibid. pp. 115-116

<sup>729</sup> Ibid. p. 116

and a place of one's own to write. In this section there are numerous elements of popular culture denoting those disempowered and subordinated, starting from that poor child in England, going over the son of the Athenian slave, and then coming to that very slave, and of course the notion that women had been poor always, and that they should have less freedom than the son of a slave just accentuates this and puts more weight on it.

Upon presuming that somebody would ask her why she puts such an accent on women writing, she reveals how she was not educated and like "most uneducated Englishwomen, I like reading", and she is bored of history, biography of great men, and poetry which seems sterile. That is why she implores the audience to write any kinds of books, for as long as they are books written by women, she would find them interesting. She asks them not to be confined to fiction only, but to write about travelling, to write history books and biographies, critiques, philosophical books and science books<sup>730</sup>.

To end her speech and this essay, she makes a small speech inside of it – a "peroration". She does not ask the reader and her audience to inspire masses and better the world but to simply be themselves. She then offers one of the findings of her imaginary research and that is that women dislike women and are stern with other women, but her feelings are quite contrary to this. She then, in order to fulfil the requirement of being hard on her fellow members of the female sex, reiterates all the times some patriarch expressed his displeasure with the women which are all elements of popular culture where women were the disempowered and subordinated class of society such as Napoleon's and Mussolini's opinions, a critic stating that women have their limitations when it comes to writing, all men embodied in Professor von X, and many more.<sup>731</sup> The last "warning" she projects is a notion from a book called *A Short History of Women*, by John Langdon Davies.

*"Mr John Langdon Davies warns women 'that when children cease to be altogether desirable, women cease to be altogether necessary'<sup>732</sup>."*

This sentence is the almost palpable element of popular culture which summarizes the mentality of the white, patriarchal, capitalist society where women were slaves, playthings, house pets, possessions, punching bags, in short – anything and everything men desired them to be, and in case of Mr Langdon Davies – just baby machines.

Woolf ends her critical essay by stating how the imaginary Judith Shakespeare, William Shakespeare's sister, lives in her and every other woman listening to her and reading this essay.

*"She lives in you and in me, and in many other women who are not here tonight, for they are washing up the dishes and putting the children to bed"<sup>733</sup>.*

And once again there is that element of popular culture where women are supposed to take care of the house and children, just like Susan did in *The Waves*, with the last words of Mrs Woolf in this essay reflecting how the imaginary poet, the female Shakespeare, will descend from Heavens if only all women poets work for her<sup>734</sup>.

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<sup>730</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Grafton An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1977; first published in 1929), pp. 117-118

<sup>731</sup> Ibid. pp. 119-120

<sup>732</sup> Ibid. p. 120

<sup>733</sup> Ibid. p. 122

<sup>734</sup> Ibid. p. 123

## Conclusion

This academic research commenced with a short overview of Virginia Woolf's life, works and her connection to popular culture. Because she was one of the first authors that revealed through her work the innermost thoughts of women in a society ruled by patriarchy, the hypothesis was formulated that the predominant elements of popular culture found in the analyzed texts would be those denoting women as the subordinated and disempowered class of society, where the society observed is a white, patriarchal, capitalist one.

Her life was not one of peace and harmony, a picturesque or “Disneyfied” version of a writer without a care in the world, being completely free to do everything she wanted. It was full of loss, pain, fear, messy emotions, but also full of creativity and overcoming one's obstructions and setbacks. All of this is what her characters were facing also, for it is obvious that when she created them, she put a part of herself in each of them to some extent.

The works included in this selection, and therefore analyzed, are two of her novels – *Orlando: A Biography* and *The Waves*, and a critical essay *A Room of One's Own*. Throughout the course of the research an interesting fact came to light, and that is that Woolf was writing all three of her works at approximately the same time<sup>735</sup>. This in turn makes the cohesiveness of all three literary works that more intricate.

Before this academic voyage could start and the texts be analyzed, some outlines had to be drawn. Firstly, there was the search for the elusive definition of popular culture where at the very beginning it was established by John Fiske that it was “the culture of the subordinated and disempowered<sup>736</sup>”, and this served as the main outline for the discovery and recognition of the elements of popular culture in the texts later on. Fisk also offered elements of the popular which could be found in various resources such as **the media** – where one can unearth elements of the popular like *television* (and everything it carries with itself, namely television series, films, even daytime programs), *newspapers*, *magazines* and *advertisement*; **music** – with its elements which include but are not limited to *records*, *CD's* and *tapes*; **clothes** and even **language** and **any form of entertainment**. Fiske then introduced defiance, breaking the mould, not sticking to the status quo, and added how popular culture was that which was “made by the people<sup>737</sup>” and not produced by the industry, and that it was “always a culture of conflict<sup>738</sup>”.

As a sharp contrast there were notions of Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, whose critical outlook on popular culture was more than apparent with him criticizing numerous elements of this culture such as radio, television, newspapers, CDs and CD players, film, etc., because in his opinion those were things utterly perilous for the individualism. He argued that as a result of the elements of popular culture the capitalist society lost its subjectivity, for it trampled over the individuality, initiative and spontaneity, and he even made the bourgeois an element of popular culture as well by stating how it represents a conflict between one's freedom and the constrictions of one's society<sup>739</sup>.

A great volume of definitions of the culture in question was offered by Barker, Bennett, Hall, Schudson and Storey, but there seemed to always be a problem with some aspect of each of

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<sup>735</sup> Christiane Bimberg, “The Poetics of Conversation in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*”, *Connotations, A Journal for Critical Debate*, Volume 11.1 (Connotations Society for Critical Debate/Waxmann Verlag, 2001/2002), p. 1

<sup>736</sup> John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2010) p. 4

<sup>737</sup> *Ibid.* p. 19

<sup>738</sup> John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 2

<sup>739</sup> Robert W. Witkin, *Adorno on Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003 first edition, this edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004), pp. 5-10

those definitions, so John Storey's solution was to actually offer six definitions. He argued that popular culture was almost always defined in contrast or alongside other cultures, such as mass culture, dominant culture, folk culture etc., meaning that one could not define it on their own without some kind of comparison<sup>740</sup>. All of this proved invaluable for the course of this research and one being able to recognize the elements of popular culture in order for them to be discovered throughout the analyzed texts.

Then the versatility of popular culture came into view, how it could be found not just in correlation with a multitude of its elements, but also the cinema, football or any other sports, the music hall, science fiction as a whole film or literary genre or even motorcycle gangs<sup>741</sup>. It could be found in connection to post-modernism, "soft power", New Media, law, and even Christmas. It was said that it offers cultural citizenship<sup>742</sup>, and has ties with lycanthropy. The vastness of popular culture was thus fairly explored, and the research focused on a specific connection of popular culture to gender.

Due to the fact that the social system observed in its interconnection to popular culture is the white, patriarchal, capitalist one, the most notable part of this, when it comes to gender, is that the society is ruled by patriarchy. This means that men create and run industries while women are the consumers, therefore men are the dominant, empowered ones, and women are disempowered and subordinated. Seeing how this proved to be one of the main elements of popular culture in the analyzed writings of Virginia Woolf, here are the findings of the research itself throughout the respective texts.

In the first novel – *Orlando: A Biography*, there are numerous times one sees just how prominent the element of popular culture denoting women as the subordinated class of society is. The patriarchal nature of Orlando's society imposes drastically different roles on each gender, where men can and should have multiple sexual partners, whilst women must keep their chastity. It makes them depend on men, whether their husband, father or a brother, to be able to survive, because they are not allowed to work, their role is the role of domesticity. This is emphasized with a single sentence where Orlando's fiancée, Euphrosyne, is described in short as "a perfect wife for such a nobleman as Orlando"<sup>743</sup>. With this sentence, the gates open and this particular element of popular culture enters slowly but surely to each and every crevice of the novel. Among the innumerable elements of the popular that one encounters in this novel, there are claims that women are the weaker gender, there is also the notion of the American dream with a husband being the breadwinner and the woman a homemaker, invoking a scene of a white picket fence and a dog as a pet. This particular element of the popular is also found in the other novel of this research – *The Waves*, when Bernard talks about *his* wife and *his* children and *his* house and *his* dog.

During the analysis of *Orlando: A Biography*, it has been discovered that love is considered to be for the popular while lust for nobility, and thus love joins the list of the elements of popular culture in this novel. The plot thickens when Orlando becomes a woman after a particularly long dream and even though her body changes, she is still the same person, thus the reader has a possibly once in a lifetime opportunity to discover that men and women do not necessarily differ on the inside, but the social rules of patriarchy make them think it is so. Clothes prove to be a very frequent element of popular culture throughout these three texts, but it pales in comparison to the one denoting women as the subordinated and disempowered class of society. For the former is mentioned just a couple of times, while the latter is overpowering in the first text, is fairly notable in the second and comprises almost the entirety of the third and final analyzed text.

Alcoholic beverage in the form of beer enters the stage in the fifth chapter of *Orlando: A*

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<sup>740</sup> John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture, An Introduction*, Fifth edition (Pearson Longman, 2009), pp. 5-13

<sup>741</sup> Bernard Waiters, Tony Bennett, Graham Martin, *Popular Culture, Past and Present: A Reader*. (Routledge; Croom Helm in association with the Open University Press, 1982), vi

<sup>742</sup> Joke Hermes, *Re-reading Popular Culture* (Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 2

<sup>743</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Wordsworth Classics, 1995), p. 15

*Biography*, while numerous books make their appearance in the final chapter of this novel. The last element of the popular in the novel is slightly obscured because it is a scene where Orlando has a baby boy and within the author's words one can easily see a scene from a film or a popular television series developing before their very eyes.

The second and last novel that is included in this selection is *The Waves*. It is a novel which was not even considered a novel by the author herself, and so it does not have nine chapters, but rather nine parts. Each of those parts have their own miniature prologue, with the exception being the final part which has a miniscule epilogue as well comprised of a single sentence.

It was discovered that even the prequels were filled with a multitude of elements of the popular, starting with the Statue of Liberty and her "Americaness" from the first prologue. As the novel progresses, there are black stockings of women who belong to the lower class of society, then numerous members of the staff doing their jobs such as scaling a fish, and that particular element of the popular only comes into focus after being compared with the sheer proximity of the opposing white tablecloth and china with silver cutlery next to each of the plates, representing the elements of the elite culture. This is a very good example of why there had to be an extensive research into what popular culture encompasses, because without that part, this would not have been possible.

Something that is very apparent in *The Waves* is the fact that all of the main characters are at some point contradictory to themselves, which in turn makes them all and each one, individual elements of popular culture, for it is "always a culture of conflict"<sup>744</sup>, as John Fiske argues. Out of the six main characters, each of them has a characteristic that has been introduced at the beginning of the novel, and continues to follow them throughout their adulthood, maturity and even old age. For Bernard, who opens the novel and closes it, it is his talent for making phrases and telling stories, which sometimes leads to contradiction and therefore makes Bernard an element of the popular, for Jinny it is her sexuality and flirtatious nature, which is notable because she does what a proper lady needs to do in order to be respected in the patriarchal community, but at the same time she is breaking the mould by using her beauty in order to gain even a modicum of power as a woman, and she enjoys in making men her puppets, even if it lasts for just the duration of the flirtation. Neville is a homosexual character in a time when homosexuality is as much an element of popular culture due to its members being those disempowered and subordinated as any other, but it certainly is not as prominent as the element showing women at the bottom of social hierarchy, for homosexual men are still men, and still have more rights, greater education and more freedom than women. Susan is a very strong element of the popular in this sense because she chooses the life of motherhood, marriage and domesticity, but she contradicts herself constantly because she is happy about her decision, and at the same time profoundly saddened about the loss of her life before she got married and had children. Rhoda proves to be a very ethereal character, always dreaming, a bit contradictory to herself in a sense that her distaste for civilization and city people, sometimes people in general is grave, but still somehow, for the longest time, fails to outweigh the conformity of society. The last character – Louis – is full of characteristics denoting him as the unavoidable element of popular culture. He is an Australian, with a father living and working in a bank in Brisbane, he has an Australian accent and he is the youngest of the group. All of these things sit as the individual chips on his shoulder, stacked up one on top of the other, seemingly weighing a ton each. All of those come into light as elements of the popular, for Australia is subordinate to England, his accent reveals his "poor" heritage, and his age makes him slide to the bottom of the hierarchy when the male characters are in question, but interestingly enough, not when it comes to the female characters, for they are women, and therefore subordinated to even him. This Australian heritage follows Louis throughout the novel and hinders him in feeling completely relaxed with his friends, but at the same time lights a fire in him to strive and climb to the top at his company. The contradiction comes in the form of him being unable to move out of his room in the attic even after his income grows considerably.

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<sup>744</sup> John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 2

Throughout the novel, one finds elements of popular culture in the form of the two opposing cultures, namely the popular culture of the subordinated and disempowered and the high culture of the dominant and empowered elite as one of the main elements of the popular and then, of course the one designating women as the ones having no power and being dominated by men. Then there is a wide array of contradictions like Susan that loved and hated at the same time<sup>745</sup>, or the aforementioned contradictory qualities of each of the main characters. Then there are a few elements of popular culture which emerge in Bernard's imaginary place called Elvedon in the shape of people belonging in some way, shape or form to the disempowered class, specifically "the stable boy clattering in the yard in rubber boots" as a member of the working class oppressed by the rich and powerful, and the ladies in the ladies' garden who "walk at noon, with scissors, clipping roses<sup>746</sup>" representing the female gender in a stereotypical light. And here once more there is that omnipresent element of the popular of women being the subordinated and disempowered class of society, because even though they could be doing anything, they are still portrayed in Bernard's mind as taking a stroll at noon cutting flowers as proper ladies should and are expected to. The power play of classes is present to the extreme in Neville's thinking, while thinking of Bernard telling a story with Neville's knife, that the big, strong, powerful blade is the emperor, and the broken one an oppressed, subordinated African slave. On top of that, he shows his tendency to keep things proper and in order, clean and just the way they are supposed to be, but the problem with that turns out to be his sexual orientation. He likes things to be the way they should, but that rule does not apply to him being with a woman, and so he contradicts himself over and over again throughout the novel.

Another extremely frequent element of popular culture is traffic and vehicles like the taxi-cab, omnibuses, trams, etc. They weave their way through the novel in such an effortless way that one might not even catch them as numerous elements of the popular. There are occasional newspapers, telegram or a telephone as elements of this culture as well, but they are also undemanding and almost hidden throughout the novel.

Some of the greater elements of the popular are actually underlying because they are not obvious like class distinction, gender inequality or one of many contradictions. Those elements are for example Cardinal Richelieu, whose mentioning calls into mind the book and many film adaptations of the same under the name *The Three Musketeers*. The popularity of the book and the subsequent film adaptations is what makes them the element of the popular by association. Another one of these is a modest lift, for there are at least three films featuring this piece of machinery.

Just as black stockings were a tell-tale sign of one's disempowered position, the white ones, especially thin, white ones, are the sign of wealth. Clothes in general play a very important part as an element of popular culture in this novel, so much so that Bernard devotes a whole part of his narration to the importance of trousers. He remarks just how much "depends upon trousers; the intelligent head is entirely handicapped by shabby trousers<sup>747</sup>". The importance of clothes is not just in how one looks but the consumption, the purchasing, shopping, as Judith Williamson argues, to obtain and consequently own a product gives the people a sense of control, and it is "the only form of control legitimized in our culture<sup>748</sup>." In *Orlando: A Biography*, there were numerous elements of the popular in various clothes, starting with the physical change of Orlando's clothes from a man's to a woman's only for her to revert back to a man's clothing so that she could go for a walk and not be in danger of the society's scorn. Then, there was a married couple where the bride was depicted standing next to a huge pile of material things entwining consumerism as an element of the popular with wedding clothes.

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<sup>745</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2018, first published in 1931), p. 10

<sup>746</sup> *Ibid.* p. 10

<sup>747</sup> *Ibid.* p. 79

<sup>748</sup> Judith Williamson, *Consuming Passions: The Dynamics of Popular Culture* (London: Marion Boyars, 1986), p. 231

One more especially evident element of the popular in *The Waves* is India, for it was one of the England's colonies, and as such the ultimate representation for those disempowered and subordinated. India comes into conversation when they talk about their friend Percival going there and soon after dying there, and each time someone mentions that country it is considered the same element of popular culture.

Class, gender, contradiction and homosexuality are the four main elements of popular culture discovered throughout the analysis of *The Waves*. But even in this case, one cannot notice that one of those elements is just slightly more prominent than the rest, and that is the one where women are subordinated and disempowered class of white, capitalist, patriarchal society. This is due to the fact that even where there is class distinction, somehow women are suffering additionally just because of their gender. There is another element of the popular that at a first glance seems to be all about the men, but at the end turns out to be closely connected with the subordination and disempowerment of women. That element is showing of one's emotions. Namely, if one is a man, one cannot possibly show any type of sadness, let alone cry, while the women are expected to do so because they are women and they are emotional and unpredictable and they do not have control over their minds as men do.

The very way in which women are presented throughout the novel is degrading. They are either faceless and have no qualities other than being a woman and possibly sharing their age or status, while men almost always have more than two denoting factors. This comes into view in particular when male characters talk or rather think, for both *The Waves* and *Orlando: A Biography* were written in Woolf's signature style of narrative – stream of consciousness, about their surroundings.

The conclusion about this novel is that even though there are four greatest elements of popular culture in the novel, the one labelling women as the disempowered and subordinated class of society still is more prominent, even if it is by a hair.

*A Room of One's Own* is a critical essay almost entirely comprised of the aforementioned element of the popular because it came about by first being a lecture that Woolf gave at the first two colleges for women at Cambridge – Newnham and Girton.

Throughout the analysis of this final text there was no doubt that women being the ones ruled over by patriarchs and having no power of their own is unquestionably the most frequent element of popular culture in it. Woolf offers a tsunami of elements of the popular all falling under the scope of the aforementioned one. She achieves this by doing what she does best, namely telling a story. At the beginning of her story she offers the names of three Maries – Mary Seton, Mary Beton and Mary Carmichael. She tells to her audience, and consequently the reader, that one of the Maries and all three could be her name, or any other woman's name could be her name and that she will be using the pronoun "I", but soon she disregards the Maries and the narrative becomes confusing due to the fact that there are many instances where it is not clear if Woolf is speaking directly to her audience in the lecture hall or the reader, or simply telling a story where she is Mary Seton, Mary Beton, Mary Carmichael, any other woman, or the elusive I that overlap and intertwine.

Aside from there being an occasional traffic, omnibus, taxi-cab or a novel, or even a newspaper, the overwhelming vastness of the element of popular culture where women are shown as being physically and emotionally abused, used, sold, laughed at and made to feel inferior by the patriarchal social system is more than apparent.

The conclusion that asserts itself is that one simply cannot read Woolf in connection to popular culture and not be introduced to just how much a woman had to go through in the world dominated and ruled by men.

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## **Биографија аутора**

Александра Кундаковић Радојичић рођена је 1991. године у Панчеву где је завршила основну школу и гимназију и где живи. Дипломирала је 2014. године на Филолошком факултету Универзитета у Београду на одсеку Језик, књижевност и култура, модул: Енглески језик, књижевност, култура. 2015. године на истом факултету завршава и мастер студије одсека Језик, књижевност и култура, модул: Енглески језик, књижевност, култура, где је наслов њеног мастер рада био „Упоредна анализа превода поезије Вилијама Блејка на српски језик“. Своју љубав према енглеској књижевности открива на својој првој години основних академских студија, која је временом прерасла у жељу за писањем на енглеском језику.

Александра је такође песникиња, писац и сликар. Своју прву онлајн збирку песама и кратких прича на енглеском језику под називом *Pieces of Mind (Делићи ума)*, у коју су, између осталог, укључена дела која је написала још пре десет година, је усавршавала од 2017. године. У ову интернет презентацију су укључене и галерије њених слика сликаних акрилним бојама, као и дигиталних слика, пошто сматра да је свака слика, као и свака њена песма или кратка прича, део ње, па самим тим припада овој колекцији. Комплетна збирка њених књижевних и сликарских креација се налази на <https://piecesofmind.in.rs/>.

## Изјава о ауторству

Име и презиме аутора Александра Кундаковић Радојичић

Број досијеа 15076/Д

### Изјављујем

да је докторска дисертација под насловом

“Elements of Popular Culture in Virginia Woolf’s Writings”

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резултат сопственог истраживачког рада;

да дисертација ни у целини ни у деловима није била предложена за стицање дипломе студијских програма других високошколских установа;

да су резултати коректно наведени и

да нисам кршио/ла ауторска права и користио/ла интелектуалну својину других лица.

### Потпис аутора

У Београду, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Прилог 2.

## Изјава о истоветности штампане и електронске верзије докторског рада

Име и презиме аутора Александра Кундаковић Радојичић

Број досијеа 15076/Д

Студијски програм Језик, књижевност, култура

Наслов рада “Elements of Popular Culture in Virginia Woolf’s Writings”

Ментор проф. др Зоран Пауновић, редовни професор

Изјављујем да је штампана верзија мог докторског рада истоветна електронској верзији коју сам предао/ла ради похрањивања у **Дигитални репозиторијум Универзитета у Београду**.

Дозвољавам да се објаве моји лични подаци за добијање академског назива доктора наука, као што су име и презиме, година и место рођења и датум одбране рада.

Ови лични подаци могу се објавити на мрежним страницама дигиталне библиотеке, у електронском каталогу и у публикацијама Универзитета у Београду.

**Потпис аутора**

У Београду, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Изјава о коришћењу

Овлашћујем Универзитетску библиотеку „Светозар Марковић“ да у Дигитални репозиторијум Универзитета у Београду унесе моју докторску дисертацију под насловом:

“Elements of Popular Culture in Virginia Woolf’s Writings”

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која је моје ауторско дело.

Дисертацију са свим прилозима предао/ла сам у електронском формату погодном за трајно архивирање.

Моју докторску дисертацију похрањену у Дигиталном репозиторијуму Универзитета у Београду, и доступну у отвореном приступу, могу да користе сви који поштују одредбе садржане у одабраном типу лиценце Креативне заједнице (Creative Commons) за коју сам се одлучио/ла:

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Кратак опис лиценци је саставни део ове изјаве).

**Потпис аутора**

У Београду, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_