Chapter Two

Towards a Diachronic Articulation of Subjectivity as Exposure and Responsibility

The engagement with the Woolfian view of time is necessarily the engagement with her conception of human subjectivity. This manner of establishing the vital significance of subjectivity within temporal coordinates is not unfamiliar, since temporal interruption or fragmentation has long been used as a metaphor in the formation of modernist subjectivity. It is thus viable to argue that the only way to confront these violent enactments of modernist time is through a rethinking of subjectivity. In general terms, modernist subjectivity has been held to be intelligible as the "inward turn," whose knowledge of the world is authorized by direct experience. And it is on this ground of thinking that modernism is faulted for its "failure" to address social issues. Too often Woolf's novel has been interpreted within this narrow conception of modernism's subjective turn—a charge frequently leveled against *The Waves* for its espousal of Woolf's aesthetics as "emptiness at the heart of life" (Hussey, 39-40). To such interpretive tendencies, I have already pointed out in the previous chapter how the chronic interruption indicates a possible form of articulation between subjective time and the time of the other. More specifically, Woolfian *time* in this novel has always meant a place where the struggle to imagine a relation between inner mind and outer reality, results in a diachronic interruption. One key distinction that Andrew Low derives from his reading of Charles Taylor between "inwardness" and "isolation" shows us how the confusion between the two terms forestalls any real analysis of the ways in which modernist writers themselves actively engaged questions about their *proper* relation with the world. To quote Low, "Though modernism…start with a pronounced inwardness, they cannot intelligibly be conceived if 'inwardness' is understood as 'isolation'" (121). The model of modernist

subjectivity that Taylor proposes is “an estheticizing inwardness capable of disclosing commitments” (Low, 120). The preliminary point to be made about Woolf’s particular commitments in *The Waves* is that, as is clear in the previous chapter, diachrony becomes our singular relationship to the other, bring together the subject and the other in an asymmetry of time. Woolf’s struggle, then, is to find another conception of time, otherwise than the synchronous continuity of the present, which avails to resist a stable depiction of social reality without conceding the concept of “reality” itself. Her particular commitments are disclosed in her reconfiguration of modernist time as diachrony.

The crucial question to be raised at this point is that how would it be possible to *attest to* a diachrony that has always and already interrupted the synchronous order of experienced time? Generally, temporal interruption or fragmentation has long been used as a metaphor in the formation of modernist subjectivity. As Klages indicates, “Modernism, for example, tends to present a fragmented view of human subjectivity and history, … but presents that fragmentation as something tragic, something to be lamented and mourned as a loss” (“Postmodernism”). This critical view in fact sees fragmentation as the definitive trait of modernist subjectivity. While this modernist paradigm has contributed to our understanding of the ways that modernist subjectivity is a locus into which temporal fragmentations are built, it has been less successful in identifying the *diachronic* articulation of subjectivity, or in moving beyond the negative, or “tragic,” conception of subjectivity. My own response to Woolf, then, relies on the Levinasian thought in order to highlight a possibility within this text that has until now been largely overlooked in Woolf criticism: the ethical character of subjectivity. In seeking a full realization of the “subjectivity” as emphasized in Woolf’s *The Waves*, we need to re-consider the category of diachrony not only for its interruptive appeal but for its demand for *responsibility*. What I earlier identified as an interruption of the modernist preoccupation of the present moment could be viewed more charitably as Woolf’s

very struggle over the issue of fragmented subjectivity that features the modernist reconciliation with the past. This chapter thus goes on to suggest that Woolf's project in rendering her articulation of subjectivity perceptible is to, first, call attention to the role of diachrony as discussed in chapter one, and, second, how her treatment of diachrony has illuminated an ethical character of modernist subjectivity as *exposure* and *responsibility*. I bring these issues to bear upon an analysis of *The Waves*, a novel that can be read as a complex rumination on modernist subjectivity, as Monson observes, "*The Waves*, in its rejection of realist style and adoption of stream-of-consciousness juxtaposition, attempts just a complicit interrogation of language and with it, meaning and subjectivity" (177). It will be all the more complex once Woolf's interrogation of subjectivity is situated within the diachronic time.

Reconsideration of the Category of Interruption

The more prominent and sustained of the discussion about Woolf's conception of subjectivity centers around the importance of interruption. Woolf does not regard the interruption simply as a moment in the life, but sees it as representing a permanent structure of subjectivity. Interesting enough, debates about Woolf's socio-political vision or "aesthetic failure" in *The Waves* also hinge on the concomitant reassessment of the category of interruption itself. In considering Woolf's idea of subjectivity, we need to trace the critically transformative effects made possible by the category of interruption.

As Lucio P. Ruotolo asserts, interruption is the controlling device of Woolf's thinking, "heralding change, and the growing expectation that society is on the verge of radical transformation" (16). Interruption, so archly on display as silence or punctuation in Woolf's novel, becomes, as Laurence expands on Ruotolo, not only "occasions for inventive impulses" but also part of "capturing the moment whole" (94). In large measure, Laurence's

statement provides a relevant framework for understanding the centrality of Woolfian moment of interruption to her relation to the social present. As Patricia Joplin remarks on Woolf's later novel, *Between the Acts* (1941), this novel, in order to unfold its multiple layered meanings, is dependent on the literary exploitation of interruption as significant textual effects. To quote Joplin, "For the first time in Woolf's career, she seizes hold of the gap, the distance, and the interrupted structure not as a terrible defeat of the will to continuity or aesthetic unity. Rather, she elevates *the interrupted structure* to formal and metaphysical principle" (89; emphasis mine). Yet, as I elaborated on the issue of diachrony previously, such a deep structure may be said to have been prefigured in *The Waves*. From this perspective, Woolf's insistence on "the interrupted structure" turns into a underlying logic of a "positive" aspiration to convincingly represent a world in which the possibility to reconsider the interruption or fragmentation is asserted. Astradur Eysteinsson makes a similar case of the centrality in modernism of an "aesthetics of interruption": "far form rejecting a 'real world,' modernism is seeking reality at a different level of human existences" (184). Following Eysteinsson's insight, this chapter challenges the assumption that "isolation" or the rejection of the real world prevails in this modernist novel of Woolf, and establishes the pertinence of interruption to any full consideration of Woolf's understanding of subjectivity.

In the following, the problem of subjectivity in *The Waves* is reconfigured as *exposure* and *responsibility* in a manner specific to diachronic interruption. Through a close reading of the character, Bernard, as Woolf's narrative voice within, as I will argue, Woolf turns his exposure to interruptions into an ethical modality of subjectivity.[12] It is precisely in the diachronic interruption that a Levinasian intersubjective ethics of response might be born. And this points to the distinctly *ethical character of subjectivity* that Woolf has in mind. Woolf's realization of "how it is not oneself but something in the universe that one is left

[12] As each character within the novel represents different enactments of subjectivity, my current research is only limited to the case study of Bernard as a more salient one.

with" (*Diary III*, 113) concisely sums up this common ground with Levinas. Their mutual insistence on the subject's irreducible engagement with the other thus brings them so centrally into dialogue concerning ethical subjectivity.

The Woolfian subject is therefore characterized by "vulnerability" or inexorable exposure to the other in one's delay in the present. As Jan de Greef explains, "for Levinas the movement [of subjectivity] does not go from me to the other but from the other to me…" (106). Woolf elaborates a similar sentiment in terms of Bernard's engagement with a world "ransacked to its uttermost ends" (126). What the ethical subject finds out is that the "immemorial" other is always already there. As the interruption of the other points back to its immemorial past, it also refers the subject to a prior situation that one finds oneself already bound up with the other, unable to do anything but to make responses. The delay of the subject as responsibility is in this sense not an act of will or choice; rather, it is an a prior condition of ethical possibility. "The delay of time," as Beardsworth argues, "re-marks itself in my unconditioned responsibility to the others" (129). My responsibility to and for the other is infinite and impossible in the way that the other is always before the subject, in an immemorial past. In delay upon the other, Woolf's conception of subjectivity is produced insofar as the "I" is what Levinas terms a "hostage," subject to any specific relation or founding debt. Indeed, it is in and around this prior delay of the subject that Woolf locates both the exposure of the subject and its opportunities for response. The subject is brought into being only through a belated response to the call of the other. Subjectivity in *The Waves* is thereby everywhere beholden to the other.

At the heart of Woolf's unique concept of subjectivity is the idea of diachronic connection to the external reality, despite the fact that *The Waves* is imbued with a high modernist language concerned with memory, privileged moments, and the individual psychic experience. Insofar as the external reality is to be seen as "ransacked to its uttermost ends" of

the immemorial other, then, the coordinates of subjectivity that have come to constitute one's understanding of a continuous present needs to be reoriented in an ethical light within modernist culture. Subjectivity as responsibility thus moves beyond a set of modernist oppositions of subject and object, public and private, the real and the imagined, to stress the diachronic coordinates of subjectivity as well as the claims of the social pressing upon the subject. As McGee observes in his essay on *The Waves*, "modernism, at least in some of its practice, is not a retreat from the social into the private but an insistence of *the sociality of the private*" (641; emphasis mine). Whereas McGee does not specify how the "practice" of "the sociality of the private" goes, Woolf, like Levinas, has asked us to think and respond to the other not in a denial of generative inwardness, but from within one's delay as responsibility for the other. As Levinas makes clear, human sociality "has to be conceived as a responsibility for the other; it might be called humanity, or subjectivity, or self" (OB 46). Through Woolf's reconsideration of subjectivity as responsibility, *The Waves* gives us a chance to see High modernism as an experience of diachronic connection rather than subjective isolation in "the wild, the weak and inconsequent cries that we utter" (99).

With the prior exposure to the other, Woolf revises the modernist emphases on inwardness and subjective knowledge. Her persistent gesture to reconfigure Bernard's delay and recommencement into the present is itself an indication of the outer reality that impinges. And it is the very outer reality where the subject interrupted is left behind with "an inescapable sense of obligation of self for others" (Jenkins 413). In writing about *The Waves*, Woolf wrote "I am convinced that I am right to seek for a station whence I can set my people against time and sea" (*Diary III*, 264). Figuring out how to "seek for a station" under such diachronic interruption becomes Woolf's search for a new mode of expression of subjectivity. And this, it seems to me, is the crucial intervention that she performs for a rethinking of the ethical subject: The only founding "station" in the anguished clash of diachronic interruptions,

as I am proposing, is the sense of one's delay itself as "responsibility" for the immemorial other.

I. Subjectivity as Exposure

Woolf's treatment of subjectivity as exposure manifests its clear line of development in Bernard's interrupted story. Seemingly aligned with conventional realist narration in his insistence upon the "sequence," Bernard's merging with the story illuminates the impasses generated by his exposure to the story of the other. The violence of such exposure is legible as well, however much Bernard may wish to discount or explain away this interruptive aspect inherent in his project. As his self-conception suggests, "I then first became aware of the presence of those enemies who change, nut are always there; the forces we fight against" (170), Bernard could be seen as the perfect case study for the diachronic interruptions that I analyzed in the chapter one as the theoretical basis for the thematics of subjectivity here. In moments of intersubjective tensions, Bernard the subject suddenly loses its easy capacity for integration of the other. And Bernard the subject can only appear at once threatened and ineffectual. Such exposure thus sets the stage for a reconsideration of ethical heroism, which he cannot always sufficiently distinguish from his exposure to interruption as failure. As Hussey suggests, "The question of whether there is an autonomous self apart from identity has led to the potential expressed in some of the characters of the novels and by Woolf herself in her diary" (35). After all, what Woolf's conception of Bernard's exposure exemplifies, I suggest, is the ethically heteronomous nature of subjectivity as a "hostage."
In *The Waves* the advent of the ethical subjectivity thus changes the modernist configuration of an autonomous subject.

The ethical subjectivity is, in terms of Levinas, a constant "exposure to the other" that is made inevitably, "without holding back" (OB, 15). Exposure as such is, for Woolf, premised

upon the moment of interruption. To recapitulate, Woolf has developed a complex engagement with the moment of interruption, the delay and recommencement in the present which undermine the subjective knowledge or certainty. In this sense, the full recognition of the principle of subjectivity, for Woolf, requires the breakup of the subject-centered present. Woolf proposes instead the birth of an ethical subject through a shift in modernist time. For its diachronic exposure to the other, Woolfian ethical subject is posited as a vulnerable, fragile being that never returns to itself. Herein she tries to reverse the modernist subjectivity as it is thought as a closure of the self in its synchronous present.

Insofar as the exposure is associated with experiences of interruption, this interrogation is paralleled particularly in Bernard's relation to the story. As we shall see, Bernard's subjectivity has blurred into and becomes indistinguishable from the interrupted story he has been recounting. He ponders, "As it is, finding sequences everywhere, I cannot bear the pressure of solitude. When I cannot see words curling like rings of smoke around me I am in darkness—I am nothing" (95). For his merging with the story, there is yet an important difference that separates Bernard from the modernist project of solipsism. In other words, the story that is impossible to be finished becomes a movement in which the category of the subject is opened up to the alterity it aims to exclude. As Bernard has also noted, "But why imposed my arbitrary design? Why stress this and shape that and twist up little figures like the toy men sell in trays in the street? Why select this, out of all that—one detail?" (134). Insofar as *his* story goes out to the other, Bernard is unable to weld phrases into a whole story, his identity into a stable oneness. This is how we should understand the significance of the ethical subjectivity in Woolf's novel. We could thereby take the route of Levinas and follow the call of the other: always to start with difference and not with identity or unity.

The heteronomous movement of the subject to the other, for Woolf, does not consist in reciprocal exchange of views. The movement is not that as Bernard takes it to be: neither "As

we exchange these few but amiable remarks about country houses, I furnish him up an make him complete" (49), or "But I only come into existence when the plumber, or the horse-dealer, or whoever it may be, says something which sets me alight…" (95). Either way, the activity of the subject claims the unity of an "I" who presides over the other as the object it perceives. By doing so relations are maintained through the acts of mutual service that make up the continuous present, the time of the same. With respect to the issue of subjectivity, I will show that quite the contrary is the case. As Bernard points out, the alterity of the other comes directly to him like "the shock of the falling wave which has sounded all my life" (207). That is, the subject is constantly threatened, constantly in danger because the foundations and borders it assumes have never been secure and will never be.

In a sense we have arrived at Levinas's notion of ethical subjectivity. For him, the rise of subjectivity can only come after this interruptive ethical moment that sees the subject put in a relation with what is other than oneself. The safety of identical identity is to be overturned. The ethical subjectivity, then, consists "in the uncovering of oneself, in sincerity, the breaking up of inwardness and the abandon of all shelter, exposure to traumas, vulnerability" (OB, 48). The relation to the other in this ethical event would involve the prospect of finding oneself exposed and called upon to respond. The relation is heteronomous; the subject is confronted with it. Some such exposure of the subject is, for instance, what takes place in "the crisis and stab of the moment" (64) when Bernard receives Neville's poem. Bernard reflects, "Like a long wave, like a roll of heavy waters, he went over me, his devastating presence—dragging me open, laying bare the pebbles on the shore of my soul. It was humiliating; I was turned to small stones. All semblances were rolled up. 'You are not Byron; you are yourself'" (64). As engaged in exposure with an incommensurably different other, the subject is conceived as incomplete, framing, opening outward to the other. The possibility of Bernard the ethical subject emerges in the breakup of "all semblances." This passage above enacts one of the

major concerns of *The Waves*, namely the Woolf's figuring of the subject in an asymmetrical exposure and the significance of this condition for thinking the ethical subjectivity.

In this confrontation, alterity comes by way of *Neville's* poem, a movement into difference. The boundaries that constitute Bernard's identity or ego are encroached as though by a long wave. Alterity is glimpsed among the roll-up of all "semblances," the interruption of Bernard's identification with Byron. His safety of identity no longer holds, even though he recommences to "feel returning from the dark corners in which they took refuge, those shabby inmates, those familiars, whom, with [Neville's] superior force, [Neville] drove into hiding" (64). Subjectivity is thus torn away from "those shabby inmates, those familiars" of Bernard by his responding to "the stab, the rent in my defences that Neville made with his astonishing fine rapier" (64). Torn away from these "essence" (OB 12) of the self, for Levinas, the "singularity" of the subject lies in an "uniqueness without identity" (OB 73). Put otherwise, to be confronted by the other is to lose rather than find oneself. Such a confrontation is never reassuring but always painful. *Dragged open*, "one is exposed to the other as a skin is exposed to that which wounds it, as a cheek as offered to that which smites it" (OB, 63). Like Levinas, Woolf's depiction of the fragility of identity here may be read as the crucial intervention that she performs for a rethinking of the ethical subject. In this regard, *The Waves* is of interest not only as an inquiry into the difficulty of reconciling sameness and difference, but also because it in turn reworks the ethical moment when the subject is "dragged open" and "laid bare." There is, as Woolf insists, *an asymmetrical exposure* in that we need to acknowledge ourselves as addressed by the other. In his resistance against the identity accorded by Neville, "'You are not Byron; you are yourself'" (64), Bernard suggests, "With this addition, I am Bernard, I am Byron; I am this; that and the other" (64). In this line his desire for meaning may merely mask an appeal for justification. As Tamlyn Monson points out, Bernard's bold assumption, however, "has the effect of revealing each self in its

own terms, its own truth, and subsequently problematizing the truth and exposing the violence of subjectivity" (179). His entrenched conception of self-identity, "My Byronic untidiness" (65) is further debilitated later when he concedes that "For it is difficult to finish a letter in somebody else's style" (177). The gap in his self-conception allows the reader to see the extent to which Bernard integrates that difference into the saying "I am this; that and the other" merely to avoid an exposure to otherness. His ethical subjectivity thereby comes into being through subjection to the appeal of the other, to "the woman who made me Byron," whose appeal dawns on him his failure to be Byron. Inexorably open to the other, as Bernard puts it, "To be contracted by another person into a single being—how strange" (64). It is strange in the sense that one's ethical subjectivity is subjection before the other.

As argued above, the ethical subjectivity in its singularity as exposure disrupts one's stable identity. For Woolf, this experience reaches its most charged moment when the subject is always contested, always in question. As Bernard is contested, his response is also relevant to the question of how to receive the ethical as a subject. The situation is this: "*I am incapable of the denials*, the *heroisms* of Louis and Rhoda. I shall never succeed, even in talk, in making a perfect phrase. But I shall have contributed more to the passing moment than any of you" (96; emphasis mine). The sense of frustration then descends upon Bernard as he becomes painfully aware that he is incapable of confronting the denials or "making a perfect phrase." If we are to realize the full import of his frustration, it is necessary to consider it in relation to Levinas's notion of ethical singularity as nonidentical singularity. Bernard is incapable of the denials; that is, he is incapable of "heroism" which isolates and enforces solitude and, while rejecting the interruptive appeal, renders a perfect phrase. As Bernard tells us, "Yet I think it is likely that the best [phrase] are made in solitude. They require some final refrigeration which I cannot give them" (50).

What Bernard is responding to, and *denied* by, is the alterity of the other. As he admits

that he is incapable of the denials, instead of denying the "denials," he is already capable of such *ethical* denials. This is "heroism" proper[13]. It is the ethical relation of being open to the other which preempts any "perfect phrase" that might come from, or thematize, that relation. With his thwarted search for "a perfect phrase," the "denials" have disrupted the closed circuit of identity that Bernard seeks to ensure. Bernard's example functions so as to stress the point that subjectivity, for Woolf, is not identification which would still have a chance to collect itself in knowledge. It is "impossible," as Bernard concludes, "to give the effect of the whole" (182). The "denials" of the subject is precisely an opening to the other.

It is not too much to say that, for Woolf, subjectivity consists before everything else in the response-ability to "denials" from the "devastating presence" of the other. The response-ability created in the subject forces it out of the mode of knowing into that of answering. Response-ability is defined as the mode of having to respond. The major consequence of this response-ability shows that the characters are all pretty much in the condition Bernard finds himself in when he is completely overwhelmed by the other. Even the alleged heroisms of the "authentics, like Louis, like Rhoda" (83) who "exist most completely in solitude" do not successfully counter the "denials." As Rhoda says: "But I am not composed enough …afraid of the door opening and the leap of the tiger, to make even one sentence. What I say is perpetually contradicted. Each time the door opens I am

[13] There is, in fact, a strain of scholarship treating the centrality of heroism in *The Waves*. See J.W. Graham, "Manuscript Revisio and the Heroic Theme of *The Waves*," *Twentieth Century Literature* 29: 3 (1982):312-332 . John F. Hulcoop, "Percival and the Porpoise: Woolf's Heroic Theme in *The Waves*," *Twentieth Century Literature* 34.4 (1988): 468-488. In some measure, these studies can be seen to deal with indirectly the issue of how to encounter the "denials" in life under discussion. J.W. Graham's article stresses how Woolf's vision of a fin in a waste of water plays into the heroic theme, which is linkd to "another realm of being"(327). Yet he argues that , instead of the heroic theme, it is the fin idea, which is evidenced in the form of the text as the "dramatization of consciousness" dominates the novel. On the other hand, John F. Hulcoop suggests that the heroic theme does dominate the novel as a "refusal to be vanquished by death, this defiance of dark and nothingness" and that is "indistinguishable form the theme of effort" (470). Hulcoop further argues that as Percival represents courage, Bernard represents 'unegotism,' and Woolf considered these two among the prime human virtues" (484) as features of these two heroes. In my reading, however, these studies often hightlight these characters' inner attunements with nothingness that has stolen their identities, and relationships. In their foucs on existential dimension of death and nothingness, they do not prosecute the claim of these characters as ethical and "heroic" subjects of responsibility to the others in the way that the Levinasian models do.

interrupted" (77). Using this scene, Woolf proposes, once again, the notion that the subject is exposed to the alterity of the other. So instead of "a world immune from change" (77), Rhoda speaks of engaging a world that lays bare her defense. Her exposure to the event of the other, "Each time the door opens…," is a risking or uncovering of the self. For her lack of composure, it is quite different form "a taking up of attitudes" (Critchley 7). Her only response is "not composed enough," that is, not composed enough to turn the construction of interruption or contradiction into thought. As such the world can only emerge as something suddenly otherwise than one thinks.

The relation to the alterity must then be thought of as a weight upon her characters that comes from the outside. This is crucial to the way Woolf offers the characters to the reader: as posited on the edge or between worlds like Rhoda: "There is only a thin sheet between me and the infinite depths" (146), or in transitions from one world to another like Bernard: "They do not understand that I have to effect different transitions; have to cover the entrances and exits of several different men who alternately act their parts as Bernard" (55). The world is one where the rhythm of the wave haunts Louis: "…but I hear always the sullen thud of the waves; and the chained beats stamps on the beach" (42) and Neville: "I feel already …that things we have only dimly perceived draw near" (43). The dead threatens to intrude as well: "It is strange how the dead leap out on us at street corners" (194) as what Percival does to Bernard: "No lullaby has ever occurred to me capable of singing him to rest" (172). The dream of a return to the synchronous present loses its power. By the entry of the other into the living present Woolf finds the possibility of ethics, the ground upon which an ethics of alterity shows itself.

Horror of Being Held Hostage: "Here I am"[14] Before the Immemorial Other

[14] Tam K. Parker offers a synopsis of this religiously fraught term in his website article, "Emmanuel Levinas:

Whereas exposure to the other arrests the subject before questioning, this is not inherently negative but may instead offer the possibility of its ethical response. Response-ability as such thus rejects any possibility of evasion in terms of the subject addressed. Levinas foregrounds the subject's inescapability and irreplaceability as an addressee: "Subjectivity is being a hostage" (OB, 127). Being hostage to the other, the subject is overtaken and made to answer as a responsible subject. "Responsibility for the other, for what has not begun in me, is responsibility in the innocence of being a hostage" (Ibid., 125). To be a hostage is, then, to be first and foremost not "I" but "*me, that is, here I am for the others*, to lose [one's] place radically" (Ibid., 185). Levinas here describes the subject as one in the accusative, passive in its exposure to the other. In this novel, not surprisingly, registers of guilt as well as accusation and self-righteous anger are likely to be found in Bernard's responses of the exposed, lacerated subject despite his "innocence."

From the very beginning we find Bernard attempting to dispel one such moment, the asymmetrical relation of exposure to the other. For the immediate demand of the other, however, he is forced to abandon his conclusive truth, the truth he has represented and produced in his story. To quote Bernard, "Out rush a bristle of horned suspicions, *horror, horror, horror*—but what is the use of painfully elaborating *these consecutive sentences* when what one needs is nothing consecutive but a bark, a groan? *And years later* to see a middle-aged woman in a restaurant taking off her cloak" (178; emphasis mine). Inscribed in Bernard's "horror" or anxiety is the intolerable knowledge that he is *already* hostage, to an ethical relation that he may disavow but that he cannot overcome or sever, for "when what

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Where Philosophy and Jewish Ethics Meet." "This is the response Abraham gives to God when called from the land of Ur and upon Mount Moriah; it is the response Moshe gives to God on Mount Sinai. According to Levinas, it is the full and responsible response to the call of another, " Here I am" to the insular workings of the consciousness, that define the human person. Thus for Levinas, the act of conscience makes possible the act of consciousness. Thought, in particular philosophy, derives from the act of responsibility and the ethical relation. For Levinas, denizen of both 'Greek' and 'Hebrew' worlds, institutions, society, the work of justice, and philosophy itself all have their genesis in the ethical response of one person to another."

one needs is nothing consecutive but a bark, a groan." His identity yields to a condition that is more crucial than itself: the condition of being "taken hostage" by the other. Prior to his choice or freedom, Bernard has been a "hostage" who is caught in a participation, a responsibility from which there is no escape. At the moment Bernard encounters the appeal of the other, Levinas notes, "the I is not simply conscious of this necessity to respond…rather the I is, by its very position, responsibility through and through" The groan of "horror" thus stresses the acuteness of this asymmetrical relation and the ethical depth of response-ability.

It is precisely with a full awareness of his exposure to "the horror" that Bernard hears the call for his response which occurs antecedent to his spontaneity or choice. His exposure to "the horror," his promptness to say "Here I am" has been foreshadowed at an earlier stage of the novel. In the midst of their union, "We have destroyed something by our presence," Bernard cautions, "a world perhaps" (165). Suddenly he finds him in a time determined by what is already done and gone. Bernard is shown to be engaging in the effort to connect what is incumbent upon him, and what is, humanly, he cannot refuse, up to his subjectivity. Our question is, if "a middle-aged woman" calls for Bernard's response which exceeds his own identification and response-ability (as "these sentences" no longer works), what gives the woman that right? Whereas this violent sense of exposure is that of "horror," how are we to understand this "And years later" in relation to the "horror?" If, as Woolf expresses it, there is a necessary moment of distance or interruption of the present time of Bernard, I would like to argue that Bernard's imperative to respond needs to be thought in diachronic terms. Thus said, Woolf's gesture of exposing Bernard the subject in the midst of the present moment does not imply the symmetrical *end* of response as "horror" but rather the asymmetrical, diachronic emergence of a responsible subject for the *immemorial* other.

The key for Woolf, and the hub of the "horror" Bernard encounters, is how to receive the ethical call from the *immemorial* other. In the passage above, Woolf furnishes a way to think

about response-ability: the subject does not choose to answer the other's demand; yet the subject is not indifferent in its exposure. Since the other comes from the time immemorial, that is, there is must be a radical asymmetry in the priority and direction of the demand for response. In Bernard's situation, moreover, the ambiguous utterance, "Out rush a bristle of horned suspicions, horror, horror, horror" is exactly the Levinasian declaration, "Here I am" (*me voici*) answering "for everything and everyone" (OB 142). The call for response appears at the moment when "horror" begins to demand a responsive dimension in the subject. To be human is to proclaim "Here I am," to be responsive to the other. Even before he utters it, Bernard's exposure seems to presuppose a prior capacity for response in the subject. As such Bernard finds himself immediately available and obliged to the other as a hostage. In this sense, the other Bernard encounters in the very moment is better thought as an alterity that summons his attention and obligation to respond in "a bark, a groan"—a demand that is felt, but not literally articulated by the other. As a hostage, Bernard is displaced, loses track of time, loses track even of where and how he is, his project of "these consecutive sentences" put on hold.

For Woolf, this ethical moment of exposure not only opens the subject to the other, but *deformalizes* the time of the subject into a delay which, in Levinas's formulation, "destructures itself in its very punctuality" (EP, 68). That is, the *immemorial* other has already gone *before* all conception of relation, *before* Bernard's consecutive sentences which synchronize the same and the other. From a Levinasian optics, the other, if accessible to Bernard, gains its identity only "years later." The other so conceived is not thought in terms of "these consecutive sentences," in terms of its immediate identity as "a middle-aged woman in a restaurant taking off her cloak." The temporal distance and difference of the other opens up the diachronic expression of time, as is clear in the previous chapter. For the ethical subject, the relation is an "'unrelating relation' (TI, 295) in which the distance between self

and other is maintained" (Monson 176). In a crucial way, Bernard, in his delay of "years later," does not coincide with the moment of exposure when a bark, a groan is uttered, but is then hurled out of his time. "This being torn up from oneself in the bosom of one's unity," as Levinas suggests, "this absolute noncoinciding, this dia-chrony of the instant, signifies in the guise of one-penetrated-by-the-other" (OB, 64). Since this "immemorial" *before*, the time of the other, is a diachrony that cannot be erased, that which "a bark, a groan" signifies is always a substitute for something that is not present. As Bernard laments, "So the sincerity of the moment passed; so it became symbolical; and that I could not stand" (188).

This is, then, Woolf's insistence that the moment of our ethical encounter with the other is, "yeas later," the repetition of an event whose first occurrence is "immemorial," and irrecoverable to consciousness into the present. Instead of synchronizing diachrony, Bernard's response-ability finally undoes the thematization of "consecutive sentences" by repeating in "a bark, a groan" the return of a before that is never now. More remarkably, ethics arises in the "sincerity" of the moment when Bernard is never simply himself but is always weighted by, I would hasten to add here, his *responsibility* of the "one-for-the-other" (OB 169). Raised to such an exacting level, Woolf's conception of subjectivity as exposure could be read as, and only as, "the violence of subjectivity" (179), as Monson claims. However, what reading *The Waves* consoles in its stead is the fact that Woolf also insists upon an "immemorial" depth of the subject's connection with another. Across the diachrony, the moment of exposure affects Bernard in his accusative "me" while reinstates Bernard as responsive though wounded or divided from his self-conscious identity. An ethical subjectivity is born the moment the self, as a subject, is a primary orientation towards the other, a move of responsibility to the other.

As such, it might make greater sense to think of time the way Levinas and Woolf do, as I outlined in the preceding chapter, as a time for the other, a diachronic temporality of exposure.

If, from the start, for Bernard, the alterity of the other appears in its interruption in one's time, it is precisely because it comes to him as a demand of which he is immediately and painfully aware. As Bernard observes, "Yes, but suddenly one hears a clock tick. We who had been immersed in this world became aware of another. It is painful. *It was Neville who changed our time.* He…began *to live by that other clock* which marks the approach of a particular person " (194; emphasis mine). Here Woolf works out the question of the lapse of time in terms of the opening onto the other. The "painful" recognition is that, at the approach of the other, the subject might be overturned "to live by that other clock." It is this exposure that Woolf sees played out in the temporal orientation of an ethical subject. In other words, the moment of exposure is not to be dispensed with. It always constitutes itself as a claim on the subject's self-possession of time, on the subject's taking up of response-ability. Through the discussion of exposed subjectivity, we reach another determination of the "subject" in terms of responsibility, of an affirmative openness to the other prior to questioning.

II. Subjectivity as Responsibility to the Immemorial Other

The moment of exposure in which the subject is first and foremost addressed translates into a call for responsibility. For Levinas, "the tie with the Other is knotted only as responsibility" (EI, 97). It is responsibility that establishes the link between the subject and the other, the basis of human ethics. To the responsibility, Levinas adds, "whether accepted or refused, whether knowing or not knowing how to assume it, whether able or unable to do something concrete for the Other. To say: here I am [me voici]. To do something for the Other" (Ibid., 97). In the syntax of unconditional "whether," most importantly, we read a Levinasian imperative: issuing from an immemorial time, responsibility claims the subject before any initiative or conscious decision. "Before any present," as Levinas explains, "responsibility for my neighbor dates from before my freedom in *an immemorial past*, an

unrepresentable past that was never present and is more ancient than consciousness"(Levinas, "EFP," 84; emphasis mine). In the fact that responsibility remains antecedent to even the beginning of my time, the belatedness of the subject is inevitable and the subject is therefore always already guilty (OB 136). For the absent other that was never present but will always remain immemorial, the call for responsibility is all the more urgent. As Beardsworth succinctly puts it, "temporal delay is ethical debt" (130). In its delay in time, the responsible subject does not persist through but is rather exposed in and by time. As such the subject comes to responsibility through a diachronic temporality. Responsibility, indeed, is the ethical articulation of the irreducible diachrony of the subject in relation to the immemorial other.

If, as I have argued, Woolf may be closely associated with a Levinasian ethics in which the Woolfian moment undermines the validity of the present, it is also possible here to read into this moment the responsibility for the immemorial other. In this reading, the subject's consciousness of time becomes a consciousness of one's delay in time, or, in terms of Beardsworth, a consciousness of temporal indebtedness which turns a subject exposed toward an infinite responsibility. As the call for responsibility is presented in *The Waves* as a kind of violent interruption, Woolf, in turn, works tenaciously at articulating the import of the subject's opening itself up to alterity, taking seriously its delay in time. Her reconsideration of time as *delay* in the living present thus takes on an ethical potential. In aligning an ethics of responsibility with diachrony, Woolfian ethics in *The Waves* is a responsibility to which the "I," unique and irreplaceable, come always too late. In this sense, my delay in time becomes, firstly, the figure of my anachronic failure before answering the call for responsibility, and, secondly, the figure of taking on of the infinite responsibility, which precedes and exceeds my limited and finite capabilities in "here and now."

"For this is only a beginning?" (15): A Memory of an Immemorial Past

Without beginning or end, the antecedence of the call for responsibility comes from an immemorial past. Immemorial is what Levinas calls "plurperfect past"—"unrepresentable, invisible, the past that *bypasses the present* […] a past that is a gratuitous lapse" (OB 11; emphasis mine). Such a "bypassing-the-present" overture of the immemorial is hardly rare in *The Waves.* The temporal structure of this "immemorial," in effect, gives the time within the present for a distinction between a recollectable past and a "gratuitous" past without recompense. For the abruptness of its overture, the immemorial as a "gratuitous" past determines the effects such as the inscrutability of the actions or vision of Bernard. If "each tense," as Neville contends, "means differently, there is an order in this world…For this is only a beginning" (15), an order is imposed by the sovereign expansion through a linear beginning or ending. What is the tense, the time or the tension, of Bernard's abysmal utterance like "While one straightens the fork so precisely on the table-cloth, a thousand faces mop and mow" (181), when he seems to have scarce capacity to relate events to personal past: "There is nothing one can fish up in a spoon; nothing one can call an event. Yet it is alive too and deep, this stream? " (181). Or why is his persistence of this immemorial memory?

I would like to argue that Woolf suggests an ethical potential for the modernist crisis of historical consciousness at just this point in which the immemorial unsettles its assimilation of the past with the alternative of responsibility. This inability to distinguish different temporalities has led to the condition that the past and the present are synchronized "in a timeless unity," which becomes, according to Joseph Frank, the definitive feature of modernist literature (qtd. in Eysteinsson 10). Hugh Grady even further associates this modernist rejection of linear time with its lack of historical consciousness (qtd. in Gaston 7). In its address to the modernist historical consciousness, however, Bernard's response to the immemorial as an irrecuperable temporal lapse somehow effects a fundamental change that makes everything at once indeterminate, fluid but, above all, connected. The immemorial

connection here is not easy to characterize because it "bypasses" the present so suddenly. The effect, for Woolf, is not to relay some observation about how the subject in *The Waves* can hardly take his hold on time. Rather, the effect is to reveal how "alive and deep" the ethical subject's connection with the immemorial past is. If this immemorial connection would never come into being as an "event," our memory of its *beginning* can only be inscribed in Bernard's word "miraculously."

Bernard's word "miraculously" takes us right to the heart of the *immemorial* moment responsibility enters the subject, the moment that occurs before the possibility of choice on its part, before even the beginning of the subject's time. To quote him, "…the whole of life…then appeared in long ranks of magnificent human beings behind me… I, the person *miraculously appointed to carry it on.*…So swing my stick, with my eyes filmed, not with pride, but with humility rather, I walked down the street" (180; emphasis mine). The moment of "miraculously appointed," indeed, is the point of ethical priority in this novel. Whereas Bernard "miraculously appointed" to carry responsibility on, the term "miraculously" itself points to an immemorial depth of his connection with the other accordingly. Without any possibility of evasion or severing, his immemorial connection with the other is most strongly revealed in this line: "I took the blow…the complex and disturbing and utterly unprepared for impacts of life all over" (180). Out of this inescapable exposure the singular Woolfian immemorial connection arises. In this sense, Neville's saying that "For this is only a beginning" is, at most, what the subject in the present could presume to say—a *beginning* as yet to be going on.

Thus the immemorial connection intervenes "miraculously" as Bernard is equally uncertain about the temporal parameters of the story he is telling. In a backward glance, we shall see that Woolf builds the immemorial even more effectively into the story *of* Bernard by having *his* story doomed to incompletion. The moment Bernard is forced to forfeit his

justification to protest—"But if there are no stories, what end can there be, or what beginning?" (189)—his complaint of the impossibility of recovering the "beginning" reaches its most incisive expression. The "beginning," if any, is made manifest here as a past that was never a present synchronous with Bernard's, and is beyond his ability to "make present" in recollection. This passage indicates as much: "I carrying a notebook, making phrases, had recorded mere changes; a shadow, I had been sedulous to take note of shadows" (202). As "shadows," the status of the events he records as synchronous configuration is disrupted "even when we arrive punctually" (181). Again, Woolf already inscribes a dimension that opens toward an unrepresentable immemorial past beyond Bernard's power of recalling.

Given that the call for responsibility is to be inscribed in the immemorial beginning of the subject's time, one's belated response, however, must be a realization infinitely unattainable in ay present. Subjectivity is therefore tidal, as the name of the novel *The Waves* indicates, ebbing and flowing, suggesting and contradicting, posing a possibility and entertaining equally its opposite. In light of such a perspective it is possible to arrive at a richer, more nuanced, and most importantly, understanding of the ethical subjectivity that composes Woolf's world in *The Waves*. "Nothing remained stable long," Woolf reflects, "one must get the feeling of everything approaching and then disappearing" (MB 88). Put otherwise, nothing guarantees that what we have done or offered to the other will remain finished. The exposure of the subject is never once and for all, since "The door goes on opening" (75). Certainly Woolf does a tremendous work to have the ethical subject so overwrought with the incessant call from time immemorial. In this regard, the effect of a "here and now" is constructed only thanks to the trace of the immemorial other which has already traversed and disrupted it. The belated "here and now" is confirmed as such because the trace of the other invades its "perfect synchrony."

It is the immemorial other that leaves within us the *trace* that we recall. Subjectivity is

not constituted in the present, as the identification never fully succeeds. This position leaves Bernard disconcerted, because there is something which cannot be integrated or made sense of: "…then it becomes clear that I am not one and simple, but complex and many. Bernard, in public, bubbles; in private, is secretive" (55). Instead, as Cornell suggests, "the subject recollects himself in the act of remembrance of the other in himself" (76). The decisive gesture comes with Bernard's announcement:

> Thus when I come to shape here at this table between my hands *the story of my life* and set it before you as a complete thing, *I have to recall things gone far,* gone deep, sunk into this life or that and become part of it; dreams, too, thing surrounding me, and the inmates, those old half-articulate ghosts who keep up their hauntings by day and might; who turn over in their sleep, who utter their confused cries, who put out their phantom fingers and clutch at me as I try to escape — *shadows of people one might have been; unborn selves*. (205; emphasis mine)

This passage inclines us to see how Woolf collapses subjectivity into impossible responsibility. As the imperative Bernard must respond, the "shadows of people one might have been; unborn selves," constitute his ethical subjectivity. Bernard, then, resigns the understanding of his story to these "fabulous presences" (202). And meanwhile, he recognizes that *his* story does have a meaning, even if he can only surmise this from the demand of "shadows of people one might have been." Thus said, what Woolf illustrates in this novel is not a negation of subjectivity, or, as Hussey suggests, "emptiness at the heart of life" (39-40), but instead an orientation of subjectivity toward the *immemorial* presences of "unborn selves." As much as that other is necessary to one's sense of subjectivity, one is ethically responsible to that other. Woolf provides just such an ethical context for the subject in *The Waves*: "Consider what immense forces society brings to play upon each of us, how that society changes from decade to decade, and also from class to class; well, if we cannot

analyze these invisible presences, we know very little of the subject of the memoir" (MB 90). In this passage Woolf asks whether there is any form of ethical recognition possible of "these invisible presences" in the context of social changes *across time*. An admirable example of how Woolf denudes the historical practices of its synchronous frames is when she strips the subject down to what Bernard concedes, "I think also that our bodies are in truth naked. We are only lightly covered with buttoned cloth" (81). This is quite an exposure of the subject with "remembrance of the other in himself " to diachronic points of view. Woolf seems to asking here what remains after the social changes once it has been dismantled, as Bernard tells us "and beneath these pavements are shells, bones and silence" (81).

Beyond his memory and in spite of the limit of memory, the remembrance of the other in oneself enables a vision with "difference" (203). Without returning to or relying on anything identical, or familiar, Bernard describes himself as "a man without a self" (202). Whereas his *story* is one of failure and loss, it also reveals responsibility as a possibility. Indeed, this failure is nothing if he could not see that its intensity is the condition of an ethical call from time immemorial. At this point, we need to read Woolf's gesture with care, for it anticipates and addresses the question: what remains of the ethical subject after a radical exposure to time immemorial as such? Having done so, however, Woolf simply intensifies the demand for responsibility. The subject is still put into question, but with a diachronic conception of the "present" from which to respond.

III. A Diachronic Thought of the Present

To be responsive and responsible to the interruption from the other, one needs to "stay with the extreme situation of a diachronic thought" (OB, 7). It is this movement away, on and on, from the "reflexivity of the present" (Cornell 136) in spite of its immediacy which must be read in *The Waves*. It is this given horizons of synchrony that Woolf has rigorously put into

question. The pertinence of Woolf's endeavor is all the more compelling, as Bernard remarks on the "perfect synchrony": "But it is a mistake, this extreme precision, this orderly and military progress; a convenience, a lie" (181). To come to terms with responsibility to the immemorial other, as I have argued, requires breaking with the horizons of the present, the time of the self. As the Levinasian "diachronic thought" displaces one in time, it also runs up against a different conception of "now" whenever the intrusion of otherness is always likely to enter into my time with other possibilities. These *other possibilities*, of course, are what Woolf's text seeks to articulate. When the possibilities happen, what "must" be— "a detestable word" (208) for Bernard—or shall be the case is turned otherwise. Under the "wild semblance of life" (114), Rhoda once protests," "None had the courage to be one thing rather than another" (145). Neville also notes, "He says, she says, somebody else says things have been said so often that one word is now enough to lift a whole weight" (140). The diachronic possibilities of their "here and now," of a time otherwise than the present are present here. If the question is posed to Woolf: what words do the immemorial other actually say in this relationship that defines itself by its asymmetry? Her response would have been: the ethical subject responds, indeed, in the diachronic identifications with the present with which it both is and is not. And there will always exist a gap between the subject's efforts as a responsible hostage of the other without ever coinciding with him, and the limitless guilty despite its "innocence."

Humility for "So Much Suffering": When Violence Has Been Done

Drawing on Levinas's concept of responsibility as the crux of subjectivity, this chapter has tried to answer the question, as the ethical subject must also be able to answer, what does it mean to be responsible as an ethical subject? As Jessica Berman has noted, current understanding of Woolf's texts assert an integral relation between ethical stance and her

aesthetic practices, because "so much of her writing takes up the question of ethical reality" ("Ethical Folds"159). Given Woolf's concern with "the question of ethical reality," it is where the issue of subjectivity emerges and vies for reconsideration. We may here be encountering a moment in which a modernist notion of subjectivity defined in terms of fragmentation of time matches the ethical exigencies of its present moment with "so much suffering." In striking for an adequate awareness of a responsible subject, Woolf envisions an ethics of self-denial where withdrawal from the consolations of imposition is enacted. Bernard has equally expressed his vigilance on possible violence he might have committed:

> It is strange that we, who are *capable of so much suffering, should inflict so much suffering*. Strange that the face of a person, whom I scarcely know… —a mere adumbration of eyes, cheeks, nostrils—should have power to *inflict this insult*…Yet this shadow which has sat by me for an hour or two, this mask from which peep two eyes, has power to drive me back, to pinion me down among all those other faces, to shut me in a hot room.; to send me dashing like a moth from candle to candle. (108; emphasis mine)

As I have argued, it is precisely with a full awareness of the interruptive nature of "this insult" that Bernard hears the call for responsibility which, in fact, occurs antecedent to his spontaneity or choice. At the moment Bernard encounters the appeal of "the face of a person," Levinas notes, "The I is not simply conscious of this necessity to respond . . . rather the I is, by its *very position*, responsibility through and through" (TH; 17). His exposure to "this insult," his promptness to say "Here I am," has been foreshadowed at an earlier stage of the novel. In the midst of their union, he says "We have destroyed something by our presence," Bernard cautions, "a world perhaps" (165).[15] Suddenly Bernard finds himself in a time determined by what is already done and gone. In the passage, he is shown to be

[15] In like manner Louis reflects: "This moment of reconciliation, when we meet together united… is to me black with the shadows of dungeons and the tortures and infamies practised by man upon man" (155).

engaging in the effort to connect what is incumbent upon him, and what, humanly, he cannot refuse, up to his subjectivity.

Culpable for "so much suffering" "practised by man upon man," Bernard evinces what Levinas demands: "A fear for all the violence and murder my existing might generate, in spite of its conscious and intentional innocence" (EFP, 82). This ingrained fear of all the *possible* violence brushes close with a certain insistence as if to haunt the subject in *The Waves*, to demand "a responsibility for what is not my deed, or what does not matter to me" (EI, 95)—a responsibility beyond what the subject does. It would be a violent gesture to deny the culpability or consequences of "what is not my deed" as it would be to ignore this call to responsibility. None of the subjects rests and defends only oneself, since each subject is "a member of the alliance of responsibility" (OB, 122). Bernard explains his assignation with "humility:" "…the whole of life…then appeared in long ranks of magnificent human beings behind me... I, the person miraculously appointed to carry it on…So swing my stick, with my eyes filmed, not with pride, but with *humility* rather, I walked down the street… " (180; emphasis mine). Responsible subjectivity, as shall be clear at this point, not only derives from a taking charge of the other, but from the ethical principle of being "appointed" to the whole ranks of human being that the subject, with "humility," risks failure to assume.

Defining ethical subjectivity thus, Woolf further directs us toward the meaning of one's own ethical responsibility. Its is within a diachronic temporality, which I have explicated in chapter one, that Woolf provocatively situates the subject in relation to the other human beings. For her, it is by no means naïve to put one's faith in this promise of immemorial connection with the other. This is a delicate project, and the power of the novel resides largely in its depictions of the difficulties involved in any attempt to achieve a sufficient mastery over the process. Woolf's reconfiguration of time thus raises several corollary questions about ethical subjectivity: what might it mean to be a subject in the present moment

of delay? How does the subject undergo the present fraught with “so much suffering”? How might the subject respond given that any response always threatens to violate the other? What is, after all, one’s responsibility to the past?

In her responses, Woolf suggests that Neville’s apology reveals for us how the subject is to live through the diachronic temporality, to bear the delay of time as its responsibility:

> Yet it is true, I do not want to hurt you; only to refresh and furbish up my own belief in myself that failed at your entry. Change is no longer possible. We are committed…We have chosen now, or sometimes it seems the choice was made for us—a pair of tongs pinched us between the shoulders. (151)

By and large, Neville’s response is the exemplary promise of subjectivity itself. For Woolf, ethical subjectivity rests on the realization of one’s delay as responsibility and its becoming aware of it. One’s delay in time is so extreme that it becomes the very premise of responsibility to the immemorial other. Neville’s delay in time has overwhelmed him. The moment he utters the apology, “I do not want to hurt you; only to refresh and furbish up my own belief in myself that failed at your entry,” all is gone, then it is too late. Locating her ethics in the diachronic opening between the immemorial past and present, Woolf would of necessity oppose the Bergsonian dictum, “nothing is forgotten.” This delay requires that the subject respect the difference between past and present as well. The recognition that he is committed to the delay in time, indeed, breaks out of the utter impossibility of repairing the vanished past—“Change is no longer possible.” Neville the subject is therefore already overtaken with ineluctable responsibility. In other words, if the return to repair the vanished past is pronounced an utter impossibility because of his delay in time, then, the responsibility demanded of Neville the subject can never be completed—as in the case of Bernard, a responsibility the subject, with “humility,” risks failure to assume. More exactly, this is how Beardsworth’s insight should be taken on its word: “temporal delay is ethical debt” (130), for

the other demands a response the subject cannot give punctually. What he "chose," or rather, the only choice left for him, is to "[take] the print of life not outwardly, but inwardly upon the raw, the white, the unprotected fibre" (151). This would thereby accord well with what Levinas proposes that ethics is a matter of "something" that "has chosen me before I have chosen it" (OB, 11). It is as if the subject had lost the execution of choice to be responsible, but not the feeling of its claim on it.

This is, after all, an imperative passage. As Woolf has deprived the ethical subject of any identification possibilities, it is this awareness of one's delay in time fraught with "so much suffering," one's incapability to undo the past in the present, which, in turn, makes possible responsible subjectivity. In this sense, Neville's failure to identify or to acknowledge the call "at your entry" in no way assuages the demand for responsibility nor justifies his action. Yet his failure neither disqualifies him as the subject: the demand insures that he remains in his time of the present. He says, "I detect, I perceive. Beneath my eyes opens… I have been knotted; I have been torn apart" (152). Indeed, Woolf never underestimates the difficulty of this capacity, as Neville is fully aware: "There are no repetitions for me. Each day is dangerous. Smooth on the surface, we are all bone beneath like snakes coiling" (151). For the subject, there is no rule or "repetitions" for responses in this situation. Only in the exposure to this difficulty, like snakes ever ready to uncoil when stimulated, in the exhaustion of available knowledge, might something "ethical" happen. The subjectivity created in her character thus emanates out of the diachronic openings in Woolf's *The Waves*, the place where the subject is forearmed with nothing, nothing other than this warning: "Each day is dangerous," nothing other than the infinite possibility of a immemorial connection with the other.

Recurringly, critiques of modernist subjectivity define themselves in the cultural experience of fragmentation and confusion. Taking Klages's words for it, "Modernism, for example, tends to present a fragmented view of human subjectivity and history, … but

presents that fragmentation as something tragic, something to be lamented and mourned as a loss." This line of reading of modernist subjectivity thus registers with some sensitivity the ways in which prevalent treatment of temporal discontinuity makes it almost impossible for the subject to imagine an ethical, diachronic conception of responsible exposure. Indeed, given the particular set of aspirations for the synchronous "here and now," one can see that the modernist present moment would become the privileged site of its construction of subjectivity. As Bernard feels, "Everybody seems to be doing things for this moment only; and never again. Never again. The urgency of it all is fearful" (21). Through Bernard the character, the critics tend to displace an anxiety of diachrony in his conception of subjectivity, simply awarding the modernist subject a discontinuous relation to language, history or conventions. But I want to hold to the significance of the diachronic view of subjectivity, in its exposure and responsibility, I have been elaborating, that is, "Even Woolf's sense of modernist fragmentation has a positive association" (Scott 376). If Woolf's *The Waves* has anything to contribute to the emergence of ethical perspectives, it is to the degree that her commitment to moving beyond the modernist primacy of the present engages for the subject the positive nature of the fragmented present moment. For this reason, Woolf would purport to displace a preoccupation with the construction of synchrony, wholeness in subjectivity. As we have seen, the subject stands between temporalities and turns equally to each of them. Woolf's reformulation of modernist attitudes toward fragmentation consequently allows her to rework the modernist subjectivity in a diachronic, non-tragic manner.

Bernard's responsible subjectivity has provided an ethical model in which a recognition of difference is paired with an acknowledgement of responsibility. Where Bernard's ability to combat fragmentation of life partly aligns him with the novel's positive valuations of the Levinasian ethics, in many ways the case of Rhoda might be read as reminding us never to lose sight of the destructive capabilities of subjectivity as exposure. In her rejection of

connection with the other people, Rhoda claims, “oh, human beings, how I have hated you! How you have nudged, how you have interrupted…I have been stained by you and corrupted…Yet those were my life” (145). As a character who repeats “I have no face,” Rhoda does not acknowledge her diachronic connection with the other, present or immemorial, and thereby enacts what Woolf saw as a dangerous alternative to exposed subjectivity: a life of isolation. Rhoda’s outright severing from the “tragic” reality thus accords with the critics who construe subjectivity simply in terms of “fragmentation” that forecloses the development of a responsible subject. The tenor of Woolf’s *The Waves* on ethical subjectivity is therefore not naively optimistic, when it was warning as well of the danger of the cultural experience of alienation. It is crucial to note, however, that for Woolf the suicide of Rhoda is as much and more than a textual necessity. In the next chapter, I will try to show that death for Rhoda shall be read as a symptom of her attempt to find a proper form of *being together with exposure* that she can call her own to the radical alterity in Percival’s death, as Woolf endeavors to guard against the dangers of a persistent refusal to mourn, to look death in the eye, to be exposed to and responsible for the ethical knowledge that “All deaths are one death.”