

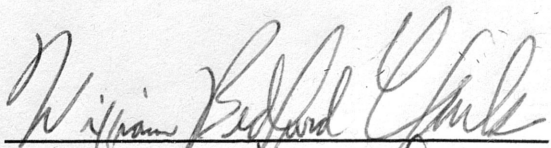
In Spite of Love
Family Encounters in Novels of Woolf, Welty and García Márquez

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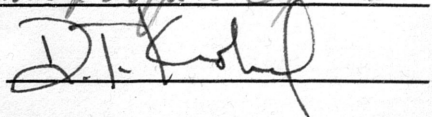
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*For my family
the McClellans, the Mahoods, the Lovvorns, the Tanners
the Hendersons and the Parkers*

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Introduction

Isolation, alienation, separation, psychic loneliness, fundamental aloneness, failure to communicate...the words sound a twentieth century litany. This study primarily examines the methods that writers from different cultural backgrounds use to portray alienation between family members and what their fiction implies about alienation and connection. Of secondary interest is the degree to which influences in the writers' own family experiences can be seen in their work. Three twentieth-century novels and their authors are particularly suited to such a study. *The Years* by British novelist Virginia Woolf was published in 1937; Eudora Welty of the American South published *Delta Wedding* in 1945; *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the tale of a Colombian family and its village, was published by Gabriel García Márquez in 1967. The novels depict many of the different ways family members try to communicate with each other on a fundamental level. At the same time, each novel uncovers secrets these characters keep from one another, and why their secrets are so precious to them.

The books differ markedly in style, reflecting the three cultural backgrounds of Woolf, Welty and García Márquez. Despite the differences, each is a modernist novel in the sense that the writers "distort" objective reality to create a psychologically true effect. The reader is compelled to join the writer from the vantage of a god as motives, thoughts, secrets and half-truths are revealed. But the reader is also sucked into the three families as literary techniques elicit a visceral response. All three writers blend reality with illusion, the commonplace with the fantastical, and the conscious with the unconscious. Reality transcends the corporeal in acknowledgment of the fact that the secrets we keep and the half-truths we

throw into the world are often translated falsely; yet false assumptions engender a reality as real as any other. The books disclose the reality of illusory roles and the fact that our secrets may constitute our salvation as well as our destruction. Each of these novels uniquely portrays that part of us that vacillates between the need to protect and hide an essential self and the need to connect with others.

The novels are similar in that they relate the lives and relationships of at least three generations of one particular family. In addition, the three families can be termed "model" families. Each commands a degree of respect and power in its particular society. The family members profess to love each other and seek out one another's company. The different ways the writers employ natural phenomena as a literary device is revealing and of interest. All three use weather, landscape, insects and birds in particular ways to depict family solidarity and individual isolation.

I have chosen three other aspects that are common to all three novels and seem to me essential to understanding the novelists' treatment of alienation. Woolf, Welty and García Márquez construct a paradoxical center or metaphor that applies to the family as a whole. This metaphor holds the family together and identifies it; yet it is the very cause of separation. It represents the "secret of all secrets," the manifestation of a fundamental fear each family faces. Families in the novels unconsciously look with terror at the fact we are indeed each separate from the other, that we can never know or be known. On the most fundamental level, family members grapple with fear. Collectively, each family has devised a metaphor to stand in for this fear.

A second essential connection has to do with the blending of the conscious with the

unconscious and reality with illusion to create cohesive order. The novelists use familiar objects and events to reveal and solidify family structure. Woolf accomplishes this through repeated themes: clocks, bells, furniture, personal articles; Welty through family pictures, houses on family land, a daily train, "yearly" pregnancies and a wedding. García Márquez builds structure by relentlessly repeating the cycle of decay and renewal of the Buendía house, through family names and through Melquíades's room and his texts. At the same time secrets, myths, half-truths and roles both assumed and assigned are the building blocks of an illusory order that engenders a deeper truth than that of reality. A "rage for knowing" permeates all three families. The members want to understand and know each other. Yet they blind themselves to the real person by creating masks--for themselves and for the one they would know. This is what Eudora Welty refers to as the "hiding and protesting, the secrecy of life."

The third aspect the novels have in common relates to conclusions concerning alienation and connection. None of the novels ends either tragically or comically. Although *Delta Wedding* centers around a wedding, usually a hallmark of comedy, there is no sense of "happily-ever-after" finality. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* closes with the destruction of the Buendía family; yet the story is not tragic in the sense of culminating in an unhappy catastrophe. Rather, each novel is a reminder that families are comprised of individuals, and individuals are essentially alone. All three writers underscore the pain alienation creates and the lengths to which individuals within families will go to assure alienation and yet search for connection.

Finally, the degree to which each writer has inserted his or her own family

experiences into the book's characters is of interest. Undeniably there is an important relationship between Virginia Stephen Woolf's family and the characters in *The Years*, between Gabriel García Márquez's family and the Buendía family in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and, to a lesser extent, between Eudora Welty's childhood as she relates it and *Delta Wedding*. The connection is of such paramount importance in *The Years* that we begin the first chapter of this study with a look at what Woolf was trying to say in her book and why she felt it so important.

It was an abominable system, he thought; family life; Abercorn Terrace. No wonder the house would not let. It had one bathroom, and a basement; and there all those different people had lived, boxed up together, telling lies.

Virginia Woolf's novel *The Years* was published in 1937. Through Woolf's journal entries, speeches and letters we have a remarkable vantage point on the history of the book from the moment of conception until it was published. Her entry on January 20, 1931 reads, "I have this moment, while having my bath, conceived an entire new book--a sequel to *A Room of One's Own*--about the sexual life of women: to be called *Professions for Women* perhaps--Lord how exciting! This sprang out of my paper to be read on Wednesday [January 21, 1931] to Pippi's [Pippa Strachey's] society."¹ The speech that engendered a novel six years later was delivered to the London/National Society for Women's Service; Woolf was invited to tell about her professional experiences as a writer. Her theme centered around the fact that women (she is talking about writers in particular and women in general) of her day and particularly in the years immediately preceding were handicapped because they were shut out of many of the experiences of life. Because of this, their values were different from a man's. And in their writing, they either had little experience to draw on, or their experience was such that they didn't dare write it; men would be shocked. She foresaw the day fifty years in the future when a woman *would* have the experiences men did and when a woman's imagination would not shock men. But, she added, "...even men I tell her, have to say Stop.

Thackeray for instance. And in our time, though things are better, still there are conventions, even for men; and if a man like Lawrence, I tell her, runs against convention he injures his imagination terribly.'"²

She expanded her thesis to include her observation that women *and men* were handicapped because of the positions society imposed. Thus, her initial purpose was, in her words, to "represent and express the view that both in the 19th century and in the 20th the social arrangement of the sexes was one which effectively smothered the aspirations of women, corrupted authentic human values, and eroded human relationships, whether close or distant."³

Woolf conceived the book as an experiment combining two literary genres--fiction and essay. She proposed to present a chapter of fiction, followed by an essay scrutinizing her characters' actions and their relations to other characters. The work was to consist of several volumes; the story would be that of a family from 1880 to 2032. Woolf completed only five chapters before she abandoned the experiment and turned to the conventional novel form. The five chapters are published as *The Pargiters: The Novel-Essay Portion of The Years*. They offer remarkable insight into Woolf's intentions and the techniques she used to achieve her aims. The question *Why did she abandon the experiment?* comes to mind. Mitchell Leaska, editor of *The Pargiters*, offers two answers. Woolf saw the combination as a "marriage of granite and rainbow," and perhaps the two simply would not come together. Also, she is caught in her own words. If it is true, as she maintains, certain taboos cannot be expressed, she is contradicting herself by expressing them. Yet if she does not describe these taboos in an honest, revealing way, she has no subject.

I see perhaps a third explanation. The thesis Woolf set out to illustrate through fiction and fact was one very close to home for her. For Woolf, fiction presented a vehicle for truth that non-fiction did not. She writes in the first essay of *The Pargiters*, "If you object that fiction is not history, I reply that though it would be far easier to write history--'in the year 1842 Lord John Russell...' and so on--that method of telling the truth seems to me so elementary, and so clumsy, that I prefer, where truth is important, to write fiction."⁴ She goes on to note that the book is one of fact--everything in it can be found in some memoir or biography. While Woolf indicates the *Pargiters* is a composite of "thousands" of such memoirs, the dynamics of her own family experience can be found throughout the story. Thus it is likely she abandoned the novel-essay format because she was writing from experiences that had marked her deeply, and fiction conveyed the truth of those experiences better than "history."

The beginning chapters of the book concentrate heavily on what societal repression of women has done to relationships between men and women, women and women, men and men. But as the novel progresses, this central theme seems to merge into another, that of the fear of being authentic. The original theme is melded into a larger issue--one that causes or at the very least contributes to a repressive societal arrangement. Late twentieth-century readers find it difficult, if not impossible, to envision late Victorian England. We have moved far from its rules and conventions. Woolf, with her sister and brothers, escaped a macabre Victorian nightmare when they moved to Bloomsbury in 1904. In fact, the Bloomsbury movement existed to break through bonds that masked (or obliterated) genuine existence. Through writing and speaking, through a certain degree of political involvement,

Woolf spent the rest of her life trying to break through the destructive pretense she saw Victorian convention to be. She tried to help society move from its cloying charade, and in doing so she tried to move away herself.

Woolf saw Victorian standards as a cause of alienation between human beings. Her own family experience represents a classic example, and this personal experience is linked directly to effects characterized in *The Years*. In order to understand such connections it is necessary to examine pertinent personal experiences in Woolf's early life.

Virginia Stephen Woolf was the daughter of Leslie Stephen, literary critic, historian and editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Her father had one child, a mentally disturbed daughter, and her mother, Julia Jackson Duckworth, had three children, two boys and a girl, when they married. Four children were born to the Stephens. Virginia was next to the youngest. Putting three families together is no easy task, but the picture was one of a happy family. All accounts indicate that Julia Stephen provided the glue that held the family together, and in a more acute sense, that held Leslie Stephen together. She was apparently a remarkable woman, strong and sensible, yet fun-loving, kind and extremely generous with her time and energy. A friend described her as a "mixture of the Madonna and a woman of the world."⁵ Her husband was plagued by insomnia, ill health and "fits of the horrors." The family finances haunted him beyond all reason. He took great pride in his children and spent lots of time with them. He fostered their particular interests, encouraged and guided them. Yet he could be very difficult and self-absorbed. A complicated man, he required sympathy, attention and constant reassurance, and Julia gave it to him. The children knew their parents to be deeply in love, and Woolf's biographer and nephew Quentin Bell writes, "This,

surely, was the genial fire from which they all drew comfort. But it was also the means whereby the whole edifice might be reduced to ashes."⁶ The edifice fell with Julia's death in 1895. Virginia was 13 years old. Soon after she had her first breakdown.

Long before the family ceased to be whole, Virginia was well aware of constraints placed on women and girls in the lower segment of upper class society the Stephen family occupied. Her half-sister Stella required a chaperon when she went out into the city, and Virginia, 13 years younger, often accompanied her. All the Stephen sons attended public school and Cambridge, but the girls were taught at home, mostly by their father. Vanessa Bell, the Bloomsbury artist and Virginia's sister, had been permitted to go to art school, but Virginia never attended school at all. She resented the missed opportunity all her life, refusing every honorary degree offered her.

With Julia's death, all the macabre, fatalistic aspects of Victorian life were brought to the surface. Her father's grief knew no bounds; for months he wept, cried aloud and lamented that Julia hadn't known how he loved her. He required unending sympathy and support: "It was, for the children, not only tragic but chaotic and unreal. They were called upon to feel, not simply their natural grief, but a false, a melodramatic, an impossibly histrionic emotion which they could not encompass."⁷ Stella Duckworth bore the brunt, and she provided the children all the support and normalcy they were to have. The semblance of normalcy was short lived, however; Stella died from complications of appendicitis and pregnancy in July 1897.

Now the children, particularly the girls, were at the mercy of George Duckworth, their oldest brother. He and Leslie Stephen were locked into a fading age, Victorian

gentlemen to the core. Three elements Woolf would replay again and again in *The Years* came to the fore: the force of society on women, family secrets and unnatural sex. With the deaths of Julia Stephen and Stella Hills, George turned from a loving brother into a kind of monster Virginia and Vanessa could scarcely bear. He undertook the role their mother would have in introducing them to society. For George, this was what life was all about. Writing years later, Virginia described him as totally conventional and absolutely without brains, a perfect archeological specimen of Victorian England.⁸ He lived for the gossip, the nightly parties, the teas, the whole busy life of it. He was not after pleasure but acceptance and a place in society. He wanted to move about with the intention of moving up, and he needed his sisters to help him do it. He bought them pretty jewelry, he took them places, he loudly proclaimed his love, he "took care" of them. To the dowagers of society, George was a model brother and the Stephen girls were lucky indeed. For his sisters, it was pure agony. His pretense covered a selfish, shallow core. The parties might have been enjoyable to a point, but George turned every social encounter into an examination, a test. Vanessa and Virginia rarely pleased him. He scrutinized not only their actions, but their attitudes. Their aversion to George's view of the ideal was seen as rebellion and subversion of all that was right, good and "proper." He coerced the girls with a mixture of duty and the force of excessive emotion, a lesson learned from Leslie Stephen. Arguments were blown away by kisses, hand holding, pronouncements of love, and reminders of their dead mother and sister. Woolf likens her brother to a huge whale; she was the minnow trapped inside the same tank.⁹ The feelings of inadequacy and powerlessness George evoked in her, she felt in turn from virtually all the men in her life. "When exposed to George's scowling, I felt as a tramp

or a gipsy must feel who stands at the flap of a tent and sees the circus going on inside.

Victorian society was in full swing; George was the acrobat who jumped through hoops, and Vanessa and I beheld the spectacle. We had good seats at the show, but we were not allowed to take part in it. We applauded, we obeyed--that was all. All our male relations were adepts at the game. They knew the rules and attached immense importance to them....It is as impossible to think of them as natural human beings as it is to think of a plough horse galloping wild and unshod in the street."¹⁰

The two brothers she loved so much, Thoby and Adrian, could not help but be influenced by the game her male relations played. Although they listened to Vanessa and Virginia, they sided with their father and George. They simply had no idea what the girls were talking about. Shyness and a degree of alienation replaced easy communication. Quentin Bell explains, "Thoby was on the side of authority--masculine authority; if George wanted the girls to go to parties then they should go; if Leslie demanded sympathy, then the girls should be sympathetic. This attitude was made possible by the fact that there was never an explanation between Thoby and his sisters. Sex was taboo, the dead were taboo, half their most important emotions were taboo; they were all too shy to come out into the open."¹¹

Alienation and misunderstanding flourished like a hothouse flower in such an environment.

Bound up within family secrets, an unreal atmosphere, and excessive displays of emotion, physical intimacy took the shape of a macabre, obscene, incestuous thing. After an evening spent watching George jump through hoops, Virginia would climb into bed and hear the door open quietly into her darkened room. George, 16 years her senior, would crawl into bed with her, murmuring words of love, admonishing her to keep still and keep the light off:

"Yes the old ladies of Kensington and Belgravia never knew that George Duckworth was not only father and mother, brother and sister to those poor Stephen girls; he was their lover also."¹² The intimacies George forced on Virginia joined forces in her mind with the clear memory she had of her half-brother Gerald setting her on a serving table when she was very young so he could explore her genitals. The same feeling of dumb, animal-like acquiescence covered her like a shroud.

Thus, when Woolf set out to write a book about the effects of the "social arrangement of the sexes" and consequent effects on relationships, she had plenty of personal experience from which to draw.

In each of the three novels contained within this study, the solitude of family members is felt by the reader in different ways. The solitude of the Pargiters and their friends can best be visualized in terms of a number of many walled cubicles surrounded by others, unconnected by any door. The occupants can speak to each other, they can see and be seen, but they cannot touch. They grope for ways to understand one another and to tell secrets that they carry around for years. It is as if a heavy transparent veil stifles all passion between them. Only two characters in the novel express strong emotion: Nicholas, a homosexual Pole, and Sarah, a slightly mad, unmarried cousin. Neither are members of the immediate Pargiter family. An absence of passion leads to sterility. Sterility is the metaphor Woolf employs as the signifier for a fundamental fear that grips the Pargiters, and, she believes, society at large. Subdued or eradicated passion results when emotion must be repressed. Because upper class Victorian men were obliged to fit very tightly into a prescribed mold, it was normal to hide feelings of inadequacy and fear. In turn, they needed "their" women to

fit into a mold. The mold was so circumscribed, one couldn't risk revealing honest emotions. One couldn't talk about fear, sexual feelings, death, or longings to escape a prescribed career; all the stuff of Pandora's box might come flying out. Thus, the melodramatic histrionics of Leslie Stephen and George Duckworth. Thus, the dumb animal-like submission of women of that time in that social stratum. In the Pargiter family, as in the Stephen family, honest emotion and real fear have to be suppressed. This results in a lack of passion, which resulted in sterility.

The Pargiter family line is sterile in a physical sense. Of seven children born to Colonel Abel and Rose Pargiter, only three marry. Of these three, only one has children that are a part of the story. One of the three children dies before adulthood. Neither of the two surviving third generation children are married by the end of the book, though they are well into adulthood.

Emotional sterility is noted first in Abel and Rose. The story begins as Rose lies near death. In a mixture of anger and vague guilt, the children, and perhaps her husband, are ready for her to die. Delia looks out the window at life (there is a young man going visiting next door) and thinks about her mother: "She longed for her to die. There she was--soft, decayed but everlasting, lying in the cleft of the pillows, an obstacle, a prevention, an impediment to all life. She tried to whip up some feeling of affection, of pity."¹³ In the family's mind, the mother has ceased to be productive; she is sterile. At the same time, Colonel Pargiter goes to his mistress, but there is no feeling of passion or even of comfort. The neighborhood is lower class and dirty. Woolf uses words like "furtive," "sordid," and "grudging" to depict a picture of dispassionate sterility.

Descriptions of landscape and weather are used very skillfully in the novel to reflect infertility. Woolf describes the March wind at the beginning of the chapter 1908: "There was no roundness, no fruit in it. Rather it was like the curve of a scythe which cuts, not corn, usefully; but destroys, revelling in sheer sterility....Uncreative, unproductive, yelling its joy in destruction, its power to peel off the bark, the bloom...."¹⁴ Woolf traces the breath of the wind through the city, the National Gallery, out to leaves piled beside a workhouse on the Isle of Dogs, back to the city and the "leather-smelling recesses of clubs," as it empties streets and blows old envelopes and bloody, yellowed trash against legs, lamp posts, and iron railings. Paradoxically, sterility, usually thought of as barren and flat-faced, roars with a powerful, destructive force.

Paralleling this depiction is that of the youngest daughter Rose's encounter with an exhibitionist. Woolf's theme with all its facets--society's treatment of women, unnatural sex, family secrets--flares in one brief scene.

The scene is that of a little girl full of confidence, knowing what she wants and setting out to get it. The lamplighter is just lighting street lamps as Rose sets out to buy the toy she has decided she must have. Although Eleanor has warned her she is not to go alone--her brother is to go with her--his refusal finds her on the street by herself. She colors the adventure with the image of herself as Pargiter of Pargiter's Horse--"riding to the rescue!" Her excitement turns to terror as a pock-marked and peeling, white-faced man steps from the shadows and reaches for her. Instantly her game is forgotten; her bravado gone, she is a little girl again, one who has disobeyed her sister. Returning from the store she comes upon the man again: "As she passed he sucked his lips in and out. He made a mewing noise. But

he did not stretch his hands out at her; they were unbuttoning his clothes."¹⁵ Healthy sex is inherently productive, yet this sexual encounter is sterile. Like the March wind its violence cuts like the "curve of a scythe."

As noted, this scene captures Woolf's theme in all its aspects. The original text in *The Pargiters* reads, "...gibbered some nonsense at her, sucking his lips in and out; and began to undo his clothes...."¹⁶ The ellipses following the word "clothes" are Woolf's; in them she sees something vital. The dots represent the fact that society that cannot come to grips with real problems and in failing to do so creates more. Woolf finds fault with a society that forces a novelist to use ellipses instead of explicit words. Subjects that can't be discussed, a society in which women are repressed, and unnatural sex are tied up in the same knotty bundle. First, there is the fact that the little girl is truly at risk out on the street by herself. Eleanor has good reason for insisting her brother must go with her. But the fact that the female is at far greater risk than her male counterpart (or even a much younger male) creates a feeling of being different in a girl's mind having to do with sex and vulnerability. As the unprotected female steps out into life, she is prey in a way a man never is. She feels it, her brother feels it, and it represents the beginning of a wall between them. Next in terms of building walls between the sexes, there is the whole idea of the fascination and repugnance of what Woolf terms "street love." This covers the wide spectrum of attraction between members of the opposite sex, from the disturbing nature of Rose's encounter to casual flirtation. When Eleanor sees her sisters looking out the window at a young man she cautions, "Don't be caught looking."¹⁷ Woolf writes, "...they wanted to look at the young man; they knew it was wrong to look...they disliked being caught; they were ashamed,

indignant, confused--all in one--and the feeling, since it was never exposed, save by a blush, or a giggle...sometimes woke them in the middle of the night with curious sensations, unpleasant dreams...."¹⁸ According to Woolf, because their mother was ill and their social life curtailed, because they were rivals for the few men their ages they came in contact with, and because sex and feelings of attraction were never discussed, the girls were at a disadvantage. Their attraction to a young man in the street, though natural, seemed perverted, something to be hidden. Woolf goes on to compare these experiences, so far apart in their intensity yet connected by a common thread, to the early street love experiences of Martin Pargiter. Because he goes to school everyday, mixes with older boys and can walk the streets by himself, he, at twelve, knows more about all forms of love than his much older sisters. His first encounter with street love bears none of the embarrassment, guilt, or element of danger his sisters encounter. He and an older boy are walking from school when a laughing girl shouts some words, and his friend introduces him to the word "prostitute" and its meaning. The encounter initiates him into a male fellowship with all its accompanying camaraderie. It differs completely from Rose's repulsive, terror-filled encounter or the furtive glances of Delia and Milly. Yet, Woolf points out, his freedom is oddly combined with secrecy: "He could no more have mentioned the word "prostitute" to Rose than she could have mentioned the man under the gas lamp to him--a mass of feelings, of reserves, of licenses, and of control...."¹⁹ So the brother and sister, who in childhood wore red threads on their wrists to symbolize their oath as blood brothers, each have a secret as they leave childhood, one they cannot possibly tell the other. For Woolf, this "undoubtedly affects the mind and distorts the relationship between the liar and the lied to, even if the lie is

justified."²⁰ Rose flies in the front door, convinced the horrid-faced man is pursuing her. She yearns to tell someone about her experience but can never bring herself to put the thing into words even to her nurse, her sisters or to her cousins, twenty years later: "Hers was the kind of powerlessness characteristic of an atmosphere where matters of real human importance are either hushed up or totally suppressed; where communication is either not possible, by the rules of decorum, or dead, from atrophy. And out of that decorous silence grows an appalling confusion between what *love means* and what *sex is*, a confusion enshrined in the double standard, or the notion of conduct becoming to a lady of virtue."²¹

In all three novels the reality and the illusion of cohesive order depict alienation of family members from one another. Woolf repeats descriptions that tie the reader to the world over and over again, crafting *The Years* as a piece of music. She uses motifs in the same way Beethoven or another Romantic composer might. Burning weeds, bells, pigeons cooing, an old Venetian mirror, a centuries-old tree--these are introduced, appear again, reappear and surface yet again in different settings and in the same settings at different times. At one point in the chapter *1880*, she describes a rainy evening: "And the walloping Oxford bells, turning over and over like slow porpoises in a sea of oil, contemplatively intoned their musical incantations."²² Fourteen pages later, following seemingly unrelated scenes in two different locations, we hear the music again: "...listening to a belated bell that went walloping like a slow porpoise through the thick drizzling air...." Another author might employ such motifs to develop security and warmth. But Woolf uses them to create a sense of time passing and a mood of solitude rather than comfort. Every chapter captures a portion of a different year and begins with a description of the season. In *1880*, "It was an uncertain spring"; in *1891*,

"The autumn wind blew over England"; and in 1910, "In the country it was an ordinary day enough; one of the long reel of days that turned as the years passed from green to orange; from grass to harvest...." Thus Woolf creates structure and cohesive order through phenomena we use to mark the passing of time.

At the same time she reveals ways the Pargiters deal with a fundamental fear at the root of alienation by creating an *illusion* of structure and cohesive order. A close look uncovers the roles and masks she sees getting in the way of authentic communication. Woolf came of age bound by a family made up of such illusion. She described her father's violent rages as "sinister, blind, animal, savage."²³ She noted that he subjected only her and Vanessa to such treatment, and she attributed this to his Victorian notion of women as slaves. Yet she felt his belief that he had failed as a writer and philosopher just as instrumental. She attributed George Duckworth's obsession with society to his repeated failure to enter the diplomatic service. She saw her father and brother caught in the game all her male relatives were adept at. She writes, "Every one of our male relations was shot into that [patriarchal] machine and came out at the other end, at the age of sixty or so, a Headmaster, an Admiral, a Cabinet Minister, a Judge."²⁴ Men and women both had a prescribed role, and society brooked no departure.

Throughout *The Years* family members grapple with an unremitting desire to know and be known. Yet their masks remain firmly in place, and they skirt the edges of meaningful exchange. North asks, "Why do we hide all the things that matter?"²⁵ Repeatedly Woolf sets two characters face to face and permits us to read the thoughts of both. Colonel Pargiter, preoccupied about his mistress, wants to talk to Eleanor about the

whole business. Eleanor is grown, the two of them are the only ones still living in the house and he is tired of the secrecy of it all. Yet as they sit together eating lunch, he decides against it. After all, she has her own concerns. At the same time, she tells him some of her morning's activities, but very carefully avoids an incident she feels he would see as foolish. Later the Colonel wants to talk to his sister-in-law about his mistress, but he doesn't. As he leaves her house, a profound feeling of disappointment and loneliness envelopes him. Twenty-two years later, as Martin lies about an appointment in order to remove himself from the company of the old housekeeper Crosby, he thinks about lies: "Everybody lies, he thought. His father had lied--after his death they had found letters from a woman called Mira tied up in his table-drawer. And he seen Mira--a stout respectable lady who wanted help with her roof. Why had his father lied? What was the harm in keeping a mistress? And he had lied himself...."²⁶ Lies protect an illusion of order; they keep a familiar structure intact.

Eleanor and Kitty are together at an afternoon meeting; Kitty wears evening clothes because she's going straight to the opera. Their conversation is stilted because Eleanor feels dowdy and as unsophisticated as a child. Kitty feels absurd in her fancy dress. Yet she badly wants to talk to her old friend. Eleanor is always rushing off, uncomfortable with Kitty since she has married a lord. Neither has any idea that the other is held back by concern for her appearance--concern that she looks "different." Masks and roles get in the way and isolate one from another.

One of the most telling scenes in the novel is Delia's family party. The point of view moves from Eleanor, now 81, to Martin, to Peggy, to North, just back from Africa.

Each strives to connect with others, but their efforts are futile. A conversation Peggy has with her uncle Patrick is symbolic. Peggy, searching for something to talk about, recalls that Patrick's gardener cut his foot with a hatchet the last time she visited her aunt and uncle, and she asks how he is getting along. Uncle Patrick, misunderstanding, embarks on a long tale about "dear old Peter Hacket." Peggy is amused: "A grown woman, she thought, crosses London to talk to a deaf old man about the Hackets, whom she's never heard of, when she meant to ask after the gardener who cut his toes off with a hatchet. But does it matter? Hackets or hatchets?"²⁷ After all, she thinks, it's the sharing that matters. But it occurs to her she's not listening to the tale; she and her uncle are not sharing anything.

In other conversations both at the party and in the car with Eleanor on the way to the party, Peggy asks searching, personal questions about her relatives' lives. It seems as if she's trying to break through the barrier that isolation produces between people. She asks Eleanor, "Was it that you were suppressed when you were young?"²⁸ She says to Martin, regarding her aunt and uncle, "I was wondering how they came to marry...Were they in love?"²⁹ But the reader begins to understand that Peggy is not trying to communicate. A physician, she is categorizing and probing, as she might a patient or a specimen. With the same motion she uses to remove the mask from people she encounters, she confers a mask of her own making. Martin feels it: "There was something in her that chilled him."³⁰ She fits each person into the category of "other." She tells Rose, "People hadn't made such fools of themselves in your day." Rose very neatly takes herself out of the category of people whose day is done when she answers in the present tense, "We live in a very interesting world."³¹

Peggy's pseudo attempt to communicate represents one of several paths to authentic communication that Woolf presents. It is not clear whether she is simply exploring possibilities that have been presented throughout history or if she is holding them up to the light to point to their futility. One of these is the belief that knowledge holds the key to authenticity. The year is 1917, and Eleanor and Nicholas are dinner guests of Maggie and Renny. They are talking after a bombing raid has sent them to the cellar. Eleanor asks Renny about the New World. "Do you think we're going to improve?" she asks. He answers:

"It is only a question," he said--he stopped. He drew himself close to her--"of learning. The soul..." Again he stopped.

"Yes--the soul?" she prompted him.

"The soul--the whole being," he explained. He hollowed his hands as if to enclose a circle. "It wishes to expand; to adventure; to form--new combinations?"³² (ellipses Woolf's)

Renny sees each individual as "his own little cubicle"³³; to Eleanor we are "cripples in a cave."³⁴ Later, in 1939, as Peggy and Eleanor are going to Delia's party, their talk is intermingled--that of aeroplanes and motor cars with freedom and justice. Eleanor (classified with those of "that" generation) amazes Peggy because she can still become passionate about political matters. She still thinks politics has something to do with freedom and justice. Peggy laughs: "She was about to say that aeroplanes hadn't made all that difference, for it was her line to disabuse her elders of their belief in science, partly because their credulity amused her, partly because she was daily impressed by the ignorance of doctors...."³⁵

Another possible avenue of authentic communication is found in getting away from civilization, back to nature. When Kitty leaves the city and her society party to go to the

country, she feels free. There Martin's critical humor, always poking at her, seems "light as smoke."³⁶ She is herself in a way she can never be in the artifice of her role as Lady Lasswade. She enjoys the company of Cole, her country driver: "He had none of the servile ways of the London flunkey; she was at her ease with him; she could be silent."³⁷ North also displays this affinity for the "natural" life. Just in from Africa, he feels lonely in the city, an outsider. The noise of the city bothers him, and he finds it difficult to communicate what Africa is like to people who have spent their lives in "civilization." All the conversations seem to be about politics and money: "Never have I felt so lonely, he thought. The old platitude about solitude in a crowd was true; for hills and trees accept one; human beings reject one."³⁸

Christianity is another avenue that is very briefly explored. Indeed, the words might be Woolf's though they are couched in Eleanor's thoughts:

She had always wanted to know about Christianity--how it began; what it meant, originally. God is love, The kingdom of Heaven is within us, sayings like that, she thought, turning over the pages, what did they mean? The actual words were very beautiful. But who said them--when?³⁹

The passage is only four sentences long; the tea kettle's whistle interrupts Eleanor's thoughts, and she (or any other character) never returns to them. Woolf implies that Christianity might have held a fundamental truth at one time, but it has changed too much to matter anymore.

Throughout the novel "trying to talk" is naturally one of the principal means characters use to authentically communicate. Rose is one who sees an avenue in communication through talking to others. She is visiting with her cousins Maggie and Sara

for the first time in years. She wants to talk but feels shy. She feels they are laughing at her, but she keeps trying to get past superficialities:

"All talk would be nonsense, I suppose, if it were written down," she [Rose] said, stirring her coffee.
Maggie stopped the machine for a moment and smiled.
"And even if it isn't," she said.
"But it's the only way we have of knowing each other,"
Rose protested.⁴⁰

None of these attempts to communicate succeeds in any more than a fleeting way. The futility of finding a way to communicate on a genuine level is characterized by the group of children who come in to sing just at the party's end, at dawn. Their words sound as if they might mean something but they can't be interpreted: "Not a word was recognizable. The distorted sounds rose and sank as if they followed a tune....The rhythm seemed to rock and the unintelligible words ran themselves together almost into a shriek. The grown-up people did not know whether to laugh or to cry...There was something horrible in the noise they made. It was so shrill, so discordant, and so meaningless....As they stood there they had looked so dignified; yet they had made this hideous noise."⁴¹ There is something horrible in the noise, but the experience is not horrible. The adults are puzzled and amused. The party has been a good one, though attempts at communication have gone awry. As the Pargiter family leave one another, the sun breaks on another day.

Woolf has carefully juxtaposed situations of miscommunication with a festive family party and a new dawn. The conclusion is that isolation and alienation cause miscommunication which leads to further alienation. Yet each family member *is* individual; no one can escape being a solitary creature. *Despite* isolation and also *because* of isolation, family members draw strength from one another. The Pargiter children understand their

brothers and sisters less than they might because of societal constraints and the fear of presenting an authentic self. At the same time, each has made a relatively happy life. They will keep most of their secrets and share a few. It is dawn.

II

All were dear, all were unfathomable, all were constantly speaking, as the stars would even twinkle, imploringly or not--so far, so far away.

In sharp contrast to Virginia Woolf's use of sterility and bleakness to convey isolation of family members from one another, Eudora Welty's tools are fertility, warmth and profusion. A wedding ceremony, a life-affirming ritual, provides the structure around which the novel's action takes place. As with the families in *The Years* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the Fairchild family has created a metaphor--one that seemingly holds the family together while it actually separates. As discussed in Chapter 1, the Pargiter metaphor is sterility. It might be assumed the corresponding opposite, fertility, would be the Fairchild metaphor. However, though fertility plays an integral part in forming the metaphor, it is not the sign itself. Rather, the metaphor is the family objectified as a unit--a Fairchild pantheon--peopled with the living as well as the dead. As Shelley, the oldest daughter writes in her diary, "...but all together we have a wall, we are self-sufficient against people that come up knocking, we are solid to the outside."⁴²

The structure that supports yet separates is constructed with a complex network of details. Family members lay stone upon stone of the "hero house," fortifying against anything that would dismantle their protection against that which they fear. It is the outsiders--Robbie, Ellen and even Laura--who direct our attention to the metaphor. From within, George sees the pantheon *Fairchild* for what it is and accepts his role in it, all the

while maintaining a separate integrity. Shelley and, to a certain extent, Dabney sense the world outside and feel a need to experience it.

The network of details that constitute the Fairchild metaphor includes forces both within and outside the family. From within the family, Welty develops the entity *Fairchild* through fertility and profusion, through expressions of love and caring, and through acknowledgement of identical characteristics and traits.

Fertility and overabundance create family solidarity. This can be seen in three particular aspects: the number of family members, the prominence of food and the many varieties of plant life.

The Years covers a period of almost 60 years; as the title suggests, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* reflects the course of the Buendía family over a 100-year period. *Delta Wedding*, on the other hand, looks at one week in the life of the Fairchild family. Packed into this short span of time are almost as many characters as García Márquez uses in his whole hundred years. Ellen and Battle have eight children and are soon to have another. Added to this number are five grown Fairchild children--the third generation of Fairchilds at Shellmound--with their wives and children. Two great-aunts, Shannon and Mac, are still living. As much a part of the family as the living are the dead--Denis, Annie Laurie, Great-Great Uncle Battle, Great-Grandfather George, Aunt Mashula, Aunt Rowena, Great-Uncle George, Laura Allen, Mary Shannon. Black servants and field hands add to the proliferation of names and characters--Roxie, Bitsy, Little Uncle, Vi'let, Partheny, Pinchy.

The predominance of food in the novel contributes to an idea of solidarity and plenty. One meal consists of "chicken and ham and dressing and gravy, and good, black snap beans,

greens, butter beans, okra, corn on the cob, all kinds of relish, and watermelon preserves." On the way from the train station to Shellmound, Laura's cousins shove sections of orange into her mouth, giving the impression of boisterous children, noise, love and streams of juicy orange dripping from a nine-year-old's chin. The simple naming of good food mingles with family occurrences. As Ellen separates 14 eggs for a fresh coconut cake, she worries about Dabney and thinks about George. The recipe is that of Mashula, wife of the first Fairchild in the Delta. "Poor Laura, little motherless girl" has been chosen to pound almonds in the mortar and pestle and select 24 perfect ones for the top. A child running through the kitchen grabs a beaten biscuit, is caught and a piece of crisp bacon popped into his mouth. The whole family knows that Primrose is better with preserves and pickles and candy while, of the two, Jim Allen is better with cakes. Banana ice cream, cold iced tea with mint, hot black coffee, blackberry wine, tart lemonade, a bite of cookie, spoon bread, pickled peaches, chicken salad, cream-filled cornucopias, Jim Allen's green and white mints, and the wedding cake, covered with spun-sugar icing, a thimble and a ring baked inside--food comforts, binds, nurtures, facilitates conversation, links the past to the present and the present to the future.

Vegetation abounds in the house, in the garden, in the Delta and along the bayou. Besides cotton, the fertile black dirt grows snapdragons, Michaelmas daisies, Seven-Sister roses, Maréchal Niel roses, thick rose hedges, "nasty-turtiums," moon-vines, verbena, lemon lilies, sweet olive trees with small white blossoms, huge old cypress trees dripping with moss, camellia bushes, dogwoods, abelia. Vines cover everything, and sweet dusty honeysuckle with blossoms like "icing decoration on a cake" scents the air.

An almost palpable sense of family love is felt within this profusion. As the train conductor lifted Laura McRaven off the Yellow Dog into the uplifted arms of her cousins, "she was kissed and laughed at and her hat would have been snatched away but for the new elastic that pulled it back, and then she was half-carried along like a drunken reveler at a festival...."⁴³ Ellen looks at her children, and their features "moved her freshly and deeply in each child."⁴⁴ India's chant is heard from an upper window:

Star light,
Star bright,
First star I've seen tonight,
I wish I may, I wish I might
Have the wish I wish tonight.

For a moment longer they all held still. India was wishing.⁴⁵

Contributing to a strong sense of family identity are the continual statements that an essence of sameness exists in being a Fairchild: "'All the Fairchilds forget things,' said India, beginning to gallop joyfully...."⁴⁶ Gentleness in the faces of the living mirrors gentleness in the faces of pictures of the dead. It is "part of the way they were made, the nervous, tender, pondering forehead, the offered cheek...."⁴⁷ "Part of the way they were made," as if the fate is inescapable. Attributing similar traits to every member is a common enough thing in families, and Welty uses it to intensify the idea that Fairchild members are set apart from the rest of the world. As Ellen looks at her children, she values each one, but she takes pride in their sameness. After eight children she would have been as surprised as anyone to see her own dark features in a new baby. The notion of the family as an entity is very strong in the two surviving great-aunts, Mac and Shannon. "Aunt Shannon never wept

over Laura, as if she could not do it over one motherless child, or give her any immediate notice. In her the Fairchild oblivion to the member of the family standing alone was most developed...."⁴⁸

Welty compounds the family identity by marking a separation from the rest of the world in various ways. Shellmound, the Grove and Marmion (the three houses on the Fairchild plantation) are isolated from the small Mississippi town of Fairchild, and Fairchild is isolated from the rest of the world.

In *The Years* Woolf uses historical events and national figures throughout as a device to connote the passage of time and to move from one character's mind into another. Welty, on the other hand, leaves out any but the most oblique reference to events outside the Fairchild circle. Denis is killed in "the war"; the family gun cabinet includes weapons taken to "fight the Spanish." But the Civil War is the only historical event named and the only one we are given any details about. Those are limited to ones that explain the effect of the war on the Fairchild family. By focusing entirely on events peculiar to the family, Welty intensifies family identity.

She does it in other ways too. The fourth-generation Fairchild children are well acquainted with their dead ancestors; they even know about long-dead Fairchild dogs. Yet one who is not a Fairchild is hardly known at all. Among the Fairchild family pictures is one of Ellen's mother. The children are uncertain about whether she "had married some Lord in England, or had died...."⁴⁹ The crusty old family doctor tells Laura he's not surprised her mother is dead. She never should have married a businessman and moved to

Jackson, a very unhealthy place. All these details working both inside and outside the family combine to create a metaphor, the Fairchild pantheon.

It is a metaphor that grows and perpetuates itself. It is at the same time the thing that is created and the thing that does the creating. A human being "does what he does" to increase feelings of well being and pleasure. Certain of these actions are positive, i.e. life-enhancing; others produce pleasure in the short term but are ultimately destructive. Each family in this study has developed ways of coping with fear and pain just as each individual does. What is it that the Fairchild family is trying to overcome through creating the entity *Fairchild*? Dorothy Griffin in her essay "Architecture and Myth in *Delta Wedding*" notes that what lies outside the protected world of Fairchild is death and change.⁵⁰ Although she maintains that the thing which the family least recognizes is mortality, the implication is that death is feared in the same way change is feared. But the Fairchild fear is not one of dying, but of *living*--without the protection of an identity that comes from outside one's self. More so than in many families, premature death has affected the Fairchilds repeatedly. Both Mac and Shannon are Civil War widows who must live without their husbands for 60 years. Three of their brothers also die in the same war. The widowed sisters become mother and father to Denis, Battle, Jim Allen, Tempe, Primrose, Annie Laurie and George when their father is shot in a duel, and their mother dies of a broken heart. Denis, blessed fair family hero, is gone, killed in "the war," presumably World War I. Laura's mother, Annie Laura, has been dead just a few months. Besides losing many members prematurely, the family has experienced the death of their way of life through the South's defeat in the Civil War. After 60 years the mourning continues. In as many ways as they can, the Fairchilds retain vestiges

of a life most of them have only heard about. Thus, in various ways, family members have been confronted again and again with the challenge of surviving without touchstones and without those they love. The entity *Fairchild* has become that which carries them along. It is the net that supports.

At the same time, it separates and denies. Family characteristics they hold in common are touted, but in reality the individuals are significantly different from the others. Individuality is sacrificed to the whole. The family consensus, never spoken outright, is that Dabney's marriage to Troy Flavin is a mistake. Not that Dabney will be unhappy with Troy, but that his role, plantation overseer born outside the Delta, somehow threatens the family's perception of itself. Dabney yearns for someone in the family to acknowledge feelings that are unique to her: "But they simply never looked deeper than the flat surface of any tremendous thing, that was all there was to it. They didn't try to understand *her* at all, her love, which they were free, welcome to challenge and question. In fact, here these two old aunts were actually *forgiving* it. All the Fairchilds were indulgent--indulgence was what she couldn't stand."⁵¹ The paradox, common to many families, is that love is what members need and what they strive to give, but within this positive force all too often is a denial of whoever the object of love is and what he or she cares about. In their attempt to avoid feelings of isolation, the Fairchilds *create* isolation. Dabney's thoughts quoted above come as she leaves her aunts Jim Allen and Primrose. They have made over her and India, fed her fresh cake and banana ice cream, told her a cutting of Seven-Sister rose is already growing for her new home. They have let her choose anything in the house as a wedding present and have insisted she take the most precious family heirloom, a little night light. In other words,

they love her and have shown it in every way they know how. Yet she leaves feeling incomplete and lonely. The fact that no one addresses Dabney about her love for Troy ignores who she is. Psychologists maintain that to ignore one another is the most harm we can inflict. Secure within their pantheon, the Fairchilds are forced to ignore individual thoughts, fears, feelings and accomplishments. Thus, they exist in loneliness, surrounded by love. Shelley's diary says, "I think one by one we're all more lonely than private and more lonely than self-sufficient."

She continues, "I think Uncle G. takes us one by one. That is love--I think."⁵² It is George, both hero and sacrificial beast, who symbolizes wholeness. He recognizes the family pantheon for the positive role it plays, yet he is able to transcend its life-smothering aspects. Dabney understands: "Uncle George they indulged too, but they could never hurt him as they could hurt her--she *was* a little like him, only far beneath, powerless, a girl. He had an incorruptible, and hence unchallenging, sweetness of heart, and all their tender blaming could beat safely upon it, that solid wall of too much love." There is no corresponding character in *The Years* or *One Hundred Years of Solitude*; even in introducing the character Welty builds on the pantheon metaphor. Yet George represents the possibility of crafting a genuine self (without which there is no prospect for authentic relationship) despite the debilitating defense mechanisms all people tend to choose in order to deal with fear and pain.

Both the reality and the illusion of cohesive order sustain the family metaphor. Order is felt in the rhythm of generations living in the same houses and in recipes and rose cuttings passed by the women of one generation to the next. The ceremony of marriage reinforces an idea of order and continuity. The regularity of the train, the constancy of the Yazoo River,

family tales told and retold, a prescribed cemetery plot--all work to form a pattern. At the same time, they work to form the metaphor, the family as an entity unto itself. The reality of cohesive order nourishes communication between family members. It is the known as opposed to the unknown. Same things happening in the same way provide links of common experience. Family members know and are known in just one more way, and thus they can relax, hear what the other has to say and not be afraid to risk an authentic self.

The *illusion* of cohesive order, on the other hand, builds the metaphor in a destructive way. Denying individuality, family members assign roles to one another and avoid communication, forever "perfecting caricatures, little soulless images of themselves and each other that could not be surprised or hurt or changed!"⁵³ In order to sustain a Fairchild pantheon one member must be assigned the "hero" role, and that person is Denis. Denis in death is "owned" by the family in a way that the living cannot be counted on to be. It has fallen to George to be both the hero and the sacrificial beast, and for his wife Robbie, the dual role threatens him with the tug of a whirlpool. She has grown up in the shadow of *Fairchild*, and the pantheon looms as some annihilating thing. She recognizes the Fairchild disregard for the whole rest of the world and the way they seem to dare the outside world to touch them. She understands the power the family wields over its own members, particularly that of the women over the men: "And of course those women knew what to ask of their men. Adoration, first--but least. Then, small sacrifice by small sacrifice, the little pieces of the whole body! Robbie, with the sun on her head, could scream to see the thousand little polite expectations in their very smiles of welcome."⁵⁴ Thus, she believes that George is completely caught up in the role they have laid on him. The central scene in the novel takes

place when George, remaining on the railroad trestle with his retarded niece, Maureen, confronts the Yellow Dog. Robbie sees his action in terms of choice. In her mind, he has chosen the entity *Fairchild* over their separate life as husband and wife. The Fairchilds, with Battle at the fore, laugh over her childish response to a "trivial" event. But to Robbie, the incident not only reveals George's choice of the pantheon over her, it is an example of the attitude of *Fairchild* to the rest of the world. The word she uses is "vaunt" in the sense of disdain for forces (and people) outside the family. The feeling is that they mock something; something that is not life or death, but *forces* that come to bear on the entity they have established.

Ellen acknowledges that her sister-in-law understands the Fairchilds correctly. Indeed, she compares the Fairchilds to Maureen, who will ever be a child. As much as she, they will never understand the miracle of the stopping of the Yellow Dog, a symbol of all that is outside the family. But she realizes where Robbie does not that George only *seems* to accept the mantle of hero and sacrificial beast: "...she felt that he was, in reality, not intimate with this houseful at all, and that they did not know it...."⁵⁵ The child Laura, the daughter of a Fairchild yet outside the immediate circle, feels the small deliberate hurts Delta Fairchilds inflict when Maureen pushes piled logs onto her. As she smells George's pipe, she knows that he of all the family "could see a fire or a light, when he saw a human being--regardless of who it was, kin or not...."⁵⁶

The concept of role-playing dawns on Shelley as she walks into Troy's office and finds him enmeshed in a disturbance between two black field hands.⁵⁷ In her mind he is *playing the role* of overseer. Her perception partly reflects the Fairchild arrogance to those

outside the family. But in the next moment she questions whether her father might also be playing a role. She sees role-playing as a sham. Her insight echoes Jean-Paul Sartre's contention that we accept and seek roles to avoid the pain of confronting an essential alienation. According to Sartre, "being-for-others" represents a pattern of self-deception. We exhaust ourselves playing roles (plantation overseer, a real Deltan, a Fairchild). In so doing we are trying to put some kind of definition on ourselves, i.e., to become a *thing* that has permanence. This quest for identity with status or emotional attributes is an evasion. In conforming to society's (or the family's) expectation of one's role as, for example, a good father or a family hero, one falls into self-deception.⁵⁸

Yet it is impossible to avoid role playing. When we attempt an action we have never done before, we go through the motions of that which is unfamiliar to us. We adopt the actions of another; there is no choice in this. Before we can make it our own, we must base it on what we have seen and experienced. The problem comes when we cease at the point of adopting the action and never make it our own. Instead of authentic selves, we become caricatures. More often, we become a composite of many others, never using the role to forge something new, something uniquely our own. This is the failure of the Fairchilds, and this is the failure Virginia Woolf saw in her experience in Victorian society and expressed through the Pargiters. It is a lack of courage; the *fear* is so strong, that the guise becomes the norm, and its own truth. Fundamental communication is blocked in two ways. It cannot be permitted because it represents something outside the norm, and it is this deviation that threatens. Whatever has become the metaphor that stands in for the family's (or individual's) basic fear has been erected precisely to stop that which would threaten the norm and its

collection of roles. The second way is in the notion that action *creates* the individual. Thus within families, certainly within society, it becomes impossible to communicate on a fundamental level because the authentic self has been entirely snuffed out by layer upon layer of roles and metaphors. The "hiding and protesting, the secrecy of life"⁵⁹ then becomes the very essence of life, the entirety of what is left. What was false becomes true. It is left to the few, represented in the character of George Fairchild, to provide the stuff that brings others to authenticity. Ironically, the George Fairchilds provide a "role model" for the seekers, represented in Shelley, Laura and Ellen. George embraces the Fairchild pantheon, including its need, yet he forges an authentic self.

It is precisely at this point the personal family experience of Welty is reflected in the novel. Before this connection is explored, however, it is necessary to digress somewhat in order to grasp the significance of the connection.

The thrust of the writer's personal family experience into *Delta Wedding* is not as immediately apparent as in the other two novels. It is noted at first in small anecdotal pairings. As Welty's father insisted she be broken of writing with her left hand, so too does Battle insist that each of his eight left-handed children be taught to use their right hands. In *One Writer's Beginnings* Welty tells of her mother rescuing a beloved set of Dickens from a burning house. The same peculiarly warm smell of books that have been through fire and water is present in the Fairchild library. The "short cut" that Welty took to reach the library from her house--right through the middle of the state capitol building--is the same one Laura pictures her father taking, walking home from work in the late afternoon. Returning to Jackson after one of many family trips to visit grandparents, Welty is happy to be home:

Back on Congress Street, when my father unlocked the door of our close-up, waiting house, I rushed ahead into the airless hall and stormed up the stairs, pounding the carpet of each step with both hands ahead of me, and putting my face right down into the cloud of dear dust of our long absence. I was welcoming ourselves back. Doing likewise, more methodically, my father was going from room to room re-starting all the clocks.⁶⁰

Laura's memory sounds an echo:

With the opening of the front door which swung back with an uncustomary shiver, a sudden excitement made Laura run in first, pushing ahead of her father who had turned the key. She ran pounding up the stairs, striking the carpet flowers with the flat of her hands. The house was so close, so airless, that it gave out its own breath as she stirred it to life, the scents of carpet and matting and the oily smell of the clock and the smell of the starch in the curtains....Her father was at the hall clock, standing with his driving cap and his goggles still on, reaching up to wind it.⁶¹

These vignettes from Welty's experience seen in the novel are interesting. But they do not address the question we are concerned with: are there incidents unique to the writer's family experience that influenced the decision to portray alienation between family members in the particular way he or she chose?

Unlike *The Years*, *Delta Wedding* was not written to make a conscious statement. Welty relates that it began as a short story her agent saw as the second chapter of a book, and she took up his challenge. She was writing it during the war and had a good friend overseas. He came from the Mississippi Delta, so she sent him the manuscript chapter by chapter as she wrote it. She says, "I just made it up as I went; part of it was to entertain him, and part of it was to try to do something Diarmuid thought I could do. [laughter] It was the most ill-planned or unplanned of books. I was just writing about what a family is like, trying to put

them down in a place where they could just spread themselves...."⁶² This "unplanned" account of family may allow insight that a more conscious effort would not.

Ruth Vande Kieft, a friend (and author of several works about Welty), notes that one of her major impressions since their first meeting in 1961 is Welty's "recoil from thinly disguised autobiographical fiction, particularly when it exposed family secrets, resulting in painful and permanent alienations....Above all, she has protected her loved ones, since imagination works on all 'real' persons to transform them into fictional characters."⁶³ The statement, and similar ones echoed by others, assures us that to look for specific character foibles in relation to Welty's family experience is probably off the mark. Yet the question we are asking does not necessarily address characters or family members in particular, but the dynamics of relationship. It is within the dynamics that I see Welty's family experience in *Delta Wedding*.

In keeping with her reticence about personal matters, *One Writer's Beginnings* is a very short (114 pages) sketch by Welty of those experiences in her early life that came together to give her the writer's "voice" she uses so well. Clips from reviews include adjectives as "tender, intimate, exhilarating, lovely, affectionate, magical, warm, glowing and resplendent." The same might be used to describe *Delta Wedding*; yet in the novel, tucked in with all the family love and warmth of the Fairchilds, the reader comes across barely noticeable dark little incongruities from time to time. Maureen catches a cricket and proceeds to tear its wings off. Roy moves to stop her, but Battle, "his voice rumbling in Ellen's ears," says, "Don't stop her, don't stop her. Let her have her way."⁶⁴ When Ellen tells George she met a strange young girl in the bayou woods, he casually tells her "...I took

her over to the old Argyle gin and slept with her, Ellen."⁶⁵ In much the same way, although *One Writer's Beginnings* glows with the warmth of a loving family, from time to time Welty reveals undercurrents beneath that love. She describes coming upon a box in her mother's bottom bureau drawer and her great delight at finding two nickels inside. She rushes to ask if she can spend the money, and for the first time, hears of a little brother's death. While Welty's mother explains the story to her in a very loving way, the account contains the startling statement that the baby died because he was "forgotten" in the concern for Mrs. Welty, who was close to death. Welty makes two points about her mother in recounting the incident. One is the fact that the nickels were kept. "She suffered from a morbid streak which in all the life of the family reached out on occasions--the worst occasions--and touched us, clung around us, making it worse for her; her unbearable moments could find nowhere to go."⁶⁶ The second point is found in the secret itself. Welty's mother was never able to talk to her about sex; in Welty's mind the wrong secret had been told--"not how babies could come but how they could die, how they could be forgotten about." Welty felt in some strange way her mother forever associated the baby's death with birth. She goes on, "...one secret is liable to be revealed in the place of another that is harder to tell, and the substitute secret when nakedly exposed is often the more appalling." In another place she writes, "All my life I continued to feel that bliss for me would have to imply my mother's deprivation or sacrifice."⁶⁷ Welty recounts her trips to New York City to try to sell her stories and photographs and the "iron cage around my chest of guilt"⁶⁸ that gripped her as she left, knowing her mother would not leave the house until she called, three days later. She

remembered trips her father had taken and realized the weight that must have accompanied him.

Thus, the dichotomy between love and need and expression and denial that is found in *Delta Wedding* is found in Welty's account of her own life. Her father died of leukemia in 1931 at age 52, five years before her first story was published in 1936. Welty lived with her mother until the latter's death in 1966. She still lives in the home her parents built in Jackson, Mississippi. She has stayed within the family circle in which her life began. Just as George Fairchild, she accepted certain boundaries because she felt them to be necessary. Perhaps the constraints of family love and need have held her from a life she might have chosen. Yet within this circle of love and need she has cultivated the voice that is uniquely hers. In writing about writing, she talks about what stimulates a writer to begin: "'This story promises me fear and joy and so I write it,' has been the writer's beginning."⁶⁹ Welty has had the courage to find joy despite the fear that an authentic life requires. One of the over-riding themes in her work is the tension between the demands of community and order and the need for a separate individual life.⁷⁰ It is a tension every person lives within and makes choices from. Welty appears to have made the choice George made--to move *within* a framework of family suppression, staying within it, yet having the courage to literally force the authentic self through iron bars. Shelley's thoughts about George might also apply to Welty and her relationship to her family: "He cherishes our weaknesses because they are just other ways that things are going to come to us."⁷¹

As in *The Years*, *Delta Wedding* ends with a family party, a picnic. A familiar jab is felt when George suggests he might move back to the Grove. It would mean displacing

Primrose and Tempe, and India announces dramatically "Uncle Denis would never do this."⁷² For Laura, wrapped in the love and warmth of family it is a night that all secrets are "canceled out, sung out."⁷³ Yet before the evening ends, she has resolved to keep two more secrets. Like Woolf, Welty acknowledges the futility of trying to cancel all secrets. Secrets, roles and family expectations can't be sung out.

III

...for it was foreseen that the city of mirrors (or mirages) would be wiped out by the wind and exiled from the memory of men at the precise moment when Aureliano Babilonia would finish deciphering the parchments, and that everything written on them was unrepeatably since time immemorial and forever more, because races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth.

All three novels in this study begin by focusing attention on a solitary figure. In London, Abel Pargiter's thoughts separate him from his club cronies and when he turns from the window, he is alone. Laura McRaven, "poor little motherless girl," watches the changing Mississippi landscape through the Yellow Dog's sooty windows as she travels to Shellmound. García Márquez creates as solitary a mood as any of the three with his beginning sentence: "Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice."⁷⁴ At once the reader feels a hint of the solitude of a man facing death, the companionship of father and son, the anticipation of discovery and puzzlement that the seemingly commonplace could be an object of wonder.

The same juxtaposition between solitude, community, anticipation and the commonplace made extraordinary is paralleled in the founding of the village Macondo. José Arcadio Buendía and Ursula Iguarán, with a few adventure-seeking friends, set out from the village of their great-great grandparents to escape a ghost, Prudencio Aguilar. Their only plan is to go in a direction that will avoid contact with anyone they know and leave no trace behind them. They spend two years moving from their childhood home to the place they will

spend the rest of their lives, crossing mountains no mortal has crossed, lost in swamps, living on monkey meat and snakes. Finally, camped beside a river months and miles from any other settlement, José Arcadio Buendía has a dream which he takes as prophecy. He dreams of a bustling, noisy city--a city with houses whose walls are made of mirrors.

The metaphor García Márquez has chosen contains the juxtaposition of elements noted in the novel's first sentence and in the founding of Macondo. The same juxtaposition--solitude, community, anticipation and a common occurrence turned into the fantastic--is repeated again and again. José Arcadio Buendía and Ursula Iguarán, because they are cousins, fear they will produce a child with the tail of a pig. This pig-tailed freak is a metaphor for the fear that produces family unity and also family alienation. It signifies community because sexual intercourse, and also the marriage of José and Ursula, joins. The child can be produced only through an act of deepest intimacy between two people. Indeed, incest represents a relationship so intimate it is one of the few universal taboos. The freak is also a source of anticipation. Throughout the novel the fear that such a child will be born produces a sense of "waiting at the edge." The reader, along with the family, examines every baby. Even as each new child is born without the tail, the thought of a monster within the family never leaves Ursula's mind. Aware of the despicable depths her son Colonel Aureliano Buendía has sunk to in war, she tells him if he carries out the execution of his friend and fellow officer, she will kill him with her own hands. She leaves him with the words, "It's the same as if you'd been born with the tail of a pig."⁷⁵ The freak also represents the commonplace turned upside down. Birth is a normal, everyday occurrence; the child born with the tail of a pig is ludicrous, fantastical and freakish. But more than anything

else, the freak represents solitude. In its egocentricity, incest excludes all of society. The Buendías' fear is not that a child will be born mentally deficient or with one of its normal human functions impaired. The fear centers around a "cartilaginous tail in the shape of a corkscrew and with a small tuft of hair on the tip."⁷⁶ The child will be, in part, *outside* the human family because of its animal characteristic. Its solitude will be the greater because it will belong to no "family."

García Márquez is a master at laying symbol upon symbol, reinforcing the mood he is trying to create. The incestuous relationship that produces a child with a pig's tail parallels the vision Jose Arcadio Buendía has of the city of Macondo. Incest is like looking into a mirror; both represent a preoccupation, to the exclusion of all else, with oneself. The last child born to the Buendía clan is finally the creature with the pig's tail. As his father Aureliano reads Melquíades's text, "as if he were looking into a speaking mirror," the "city of mirrors (or mirages)"⁷⁷ is swept away. Dennis West notes this passage is a reminder that "whosoever constructs a universe with his own self as center builds a labyrinth in which he is condemned to wander alone before being swept forever from the face of the earth and the memory of men."⁷⁸

Throughout the novel symbols of a deceptive communion that produces solitude are seen again and again. George McMurray calls attention to the irrational singlemindedness each character possesses.⁷⁹ This obsessive absorption in something outside oneself that simultaneously excludes all true communication mimics the Buendía fear of the birth of a freak. The technique itself mirrors the image of speaking mirrors. In a bizarre way, getting too close and caring too much produce solitude.

One example of many is found in the life of the patriarch Jose Arcadio Buendía. From the day he sets out for what will become Macondo, his life is a quest for yet-to-be-discovered wonders. In the early days of the new village, he is a model founding father. All his energy goes into creating a wonderful place to live. But the appearance of Melquíades and the gypsies with their new inventions from the outside world transforms Jose Arcadio Buendía into a man obsessed. First he uses magnets to look for gold, then he develops the "complicated art of solar war"⁸⁰ using a magnifying glass. Ursula, devastated over his spending gold coins her father spent his whole life saving, is beside herself. His solitude deepens: "José Arcadio Buendía made no attempt to console her, completely absorbed in his tactical experiments with the abnegation of a scientist and even at the risk of his own life."⁸¹ These situations are repeated over and over again. Only the object of his absorption and the instruments he uses change. He makes brief forays into a connected life, but always returns to "irrational singlemindedness." The obsession to achieve perpetual motion, combined with Melquíades's death, finally causes Jose Arcadio Buendía to go completely insane. One day he realizes the day is Monday, just like the day before. The next day is Monday too, and the next and the next. For José Aureliano Buendía, time has stopped. He turns into an uncontrollable monster, smashing instruments, tools and everything he has tried to bring to fruition. His obsession has been to bring the rationality of the outside world to the irrational world of Macondo. In his mind, science and technology should triumph over myth and superstition, the corporeal over the mystical. But instead of forming a connection between the solitary (either Macondo or himself) and community, his obsession has created a speaking mirror and a incestuous communion. He has assured his solitude. He

spends the rest of his life tied to a chestnut tree, speaking a language no one can understand, talking with ghosts.

His solitary madness represents family relationships between those who are lucid but oblivious to one another's loneliness. Ursula "felt so much alone that she sought the useless company of her husband, who had been forgotten under the chestnut tree."⁸² She talks to him as she feeds and washes him and after a while begins lying to him, telling him that good things are happening:

She got to be so sincere in the deception that she ended up by consoling herself with her own lies....It was like speaking to a dead man, for José Arcadio Buendía was already beyond the reach of any worry. But she insisted. He seemed so peaceful, so indifferent to everything that she decided to release him. He did not even move from his stool. He stayed there, exposed to the sun and the rain, as if the thongs were unnecessary, for a dominion superior to any visible bond kept him tied to the trunk of the chestnut tree.⁸³

The "communication" is hollow. Ursula begins her deception because she wants to give comfort to her husband, but she ends up comforting herself. Our lies separate and sometimes destroy, but they also serve a personal need. The passage reveals two other important facts about the way we communicate. Ursula is not speaking with her husband, but rather *to* his physical body. She is looking into a speaking mirror just as others in her family do. Yet in this instance it is not a selfish, incestuous communion, but a way of coping in a less than perfect world. And finally, the old man's habit of solitude has insured that his solitude will be permanent. He needs no rope to tie him to the tree; his isolation binds him securely. He has in a sense become a child with the tail of a pig.

In Jose Arcadio Buendía's last days, to console himself he dreams the dream of infinite rooms. In the dream he gets out of bed, opens the door and goes into another room which is the same as the one he left. He enjoys passing through room after room, "as in a gallery of parallel mirrors." The man he killed in his youth, Prudencio Aguilar, touches him on the shoulder, and he goes backward through the rooms, retracing his steps until he arrives at the room of reality where he began, and where Prudencio Aguilar is waiting for him. On the day of his death the ghost touches his shoulder in an intermediate room. "He stayed there forever, thinking that it was the real room."⁸⁴

A key phrase in the passage is "console." Jose Arcadio Buendía dreams of infinite rooms to console himself as a child holds a special blanket through the night, and as Ursula consoles herself with happy falsehood. At the end of a life of solitude, the symbol of his solitude, an infinity of rooms as parallel mirrors, becomes his comfort.

All three of the children born to José Arcadio Buendía and Ursula create solitary lives. Their irrational obsessions alienate them as if they had been born with a tail. At one point when José expresses concern about the excesses of his children, Ursula tells him, "You shouldn't complain....Children inherit their parents' madness.' ...she was lamenting her misfortune, convinced that the wild behavior of her children was something as fearful as a pig's tail...."⁸⁵

Like Woolf and Welty, García Márquez uses familiar objects and events to reveal and solidify family structure. The condition of the Buendía house mirrors the condition of the family as it endures the passing of time. In the beginning it is the model for every other house in the village, a clean, well-lighted space. Ursula realizes one day that Rebeca and

Amaranta are almost grown and ready to receive suitors. Rooms are added to the house, and furnishings from all over the world arrive to make it luxurious and pleasant. Ursula plants roses, begonias and ferns along a porch that extends from one end of the house to the other. An order to paint the house blue instead of white as they want indicates the first sign of political turmoil that will trouble the family for years. Many years later, Ursula restores the house again when it becomes clear Colonel Aureliano Buendía will recover from his attempted suicide. And one last time, after the five-year rain ends, she plunges into restoration again. Blind and very old, "she did not need to see to realize that the flower beds, cultivated with such care since the first rebuilding, had been destroyed by the rain and ruined by Aureliano Segundo's excavations, and that the walls and the cement of the floors were cracked, the furniture mushy and discolored, the doors off their hinges, and the family menaced by a spirit of resignation and despair that was inconceivable in her time."⁸⁶ She succeeds in restoring the house and wants to open it to visitors again as "that's the only way to drive off ruin."⁸⁷ But Fernanda is stronger than she is, and the house stays closed.

Other symbols of continuity include the chestnut tree in the courtyard that Jose Aureliano Buendía is eventually tied to, the repetition of names, the place accorded to fighting cocks in the story and regular introduction of new inventions from magnets to airplanes.

To a much greater degree than either *The Years* or *Delta Wedding*, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* clouds reality with illusion giving rise to the label *magical realism*. As Mario Vargas Llosa notes, "Fantasy has broken its chains and gallops wild and feverish, permitting itself all excesses, until it has outlined in space and time the life cycle of

Macondo, through its most conspicuous inhabitants: the family of the Buendías."⁸⁸ There seems to be no limit to the profusion of the fantastic: a rain of yellow blossoms such that animals smother in the streets; a five-year rain; the ascension of a beautiful woman trailing linen sheets; a gypsy who returns from death because he is so lonely; a plague of insomnia; a priest who levitates after drinking chocolate; the friendship between the patriarch and the ghost of the man he has murdered. However, García Márquez is averse to the notion that his prose is based on events that couldn't possibly be true. He likes to point out, "Reality is not restricted to the price of tomatoes."⁸⁹ For García Márquez the real world incorporates myths, popular beliefs, tales told and re-told and what people think about their stories as well as the price of tomatoes.

Often what seems fantastical in his stories is rather a near recount of actual events. García Márquez actually had an aunt who wove her own shroud and laid down and died when it was completed. His grandmother, blind in old age, made no distinction between the living and the dead and talked to both in the same way. When his grandfather, Colonel Nicholas Márquez, was a young man he shot a man who was pestering him and because of the murder moved to Aracataca. For the rest of his life he said, and Jose Arcadio Buendía echoed, "You can't believe how a dead man weighs you down." Luis Harss and Barbara Dohmann, in a conversation with García Márquez, say that if he invents anything, it is almost by mistake: "I only write about things I know. People I've seen. I don't analyze."⁹⁰

He writes about reality, then, but it is a reality that takes new shapes and turns itself inside out. All three works in this study reveal their authors' beliefs that a deeper truth lies beyond objective reality. Objective reality is often used to tap into that which is beyond it,

as in *The Years*, when young Rose encounters the exhibitionist, and in the way Welty uses the comings and goings of the train to symbolize that which is outside the family. García Márquez uses objective reality in a similar way. He also goes one step further by disassembling objective reality before the reader's very eyes in the form of the insomnia plague.⁹¹ With the plague comes an increasing loss of memory, and Aureliano Buendía comes up with the idea of posting signs to name objects and their functions:

This is the cow. She must be milked every morning so that she will produce milk, and the milk must be boiled in order to be mixed with coffee to make coffee and milk. Thus they went on living in a reality that was slipping away, momentarily captured by words, but which would escape irremediably when they forgot the values of the written letters.

García Márquez blends objective reality and metaphysical or spiritual reality to create a third dimension. One passage in particular is worth noting:

In reality, José Arcadio Segundo was not a member of the family, nor would he ever be of any other since that distant dawn when Colonel Gerineldo Márquez took him to the barracks not so that he could see an execution, but so that for the rest of his life he would never forget the sad and somewhat mocking smile of the man being shot.⁹²

The physical reality is that José Arcadio Segundo *is* a member of the family--the son of Arcadio and Santa Sofía de la Piedad, twin brother of Aureliano Segundo. Yet in a way more real than physical reality, his experience puts him outside the family. Magical realism defines reality as that which is *perceived* to be real. José Arcadio Segundo feels that his experience places him outside the human family. In effect he becomes a child with the tail of pig.

It is José Arcadio Segundo who finds himself on an "endless and silent train" loaded with "man corpses, woman corpses, child corpses who would be thrown into the sea like rejected bananas."⁹³ He has witnessed the massacre of 3,000 banana plantation workers at the Macondo train station. Yet when he asks about the massacre, no one will acknowledge it took place. Official word is that the workers left the station and went home peaceably. Relatives of the workers are told "You must have been dreaming....Nothing has happened in Macondo, nothing has ever happened, and nothing ever will happen. This is a happy town."⁹⁴ José Segundo spends the rest of his life in Melquíades's room, perusing manuscripts that tell the Buendía story. When the soldiers search the house looking for him, they look through him. To them, he is invisible.

Reality ignored gives rise to a new kind of reality. All three novels indicate that secrets, lies and half-truths create their own truth. What is "made up" becomes the basis for new realities. Families, because members have so many shared experiences yet feel the need of so many secrets, find themselves in a labyrinth of reality and illusion, with no way to tell which is which. This is the point Woolf is trying to get across in *The Years*. When important emotions and happenings cannot be discussed, a new kind of "truth" emerges. A family--and a society--can flounder on false assumptions and silence.

Reality is repeatedly redescribed as the Buendías misunderstand each other and fail to communicate. But of all the Buendías, Doña Fernanda del Carpio de Buendía has the most secrets and tells the most lies with the most disastrous consequences of anyone. Her "irrational singlemindedness" is not directed toward making, doing, discovering or even hating, but toward solitude itself. As Ursula grows old and loses her faculties, she is unable

to communicate her impulsiveness into the life of the family any longer, and "...the circle of rigidity begun by Fernanda from the moment she arrived finally closed completely and no one but she determined the destiny of the family."⁹⁵ From the beginning she is the object of family ridicule because of her habit of never calling anything by its proper name. Amaranta responds to her euphemisms: "'Thifisif,' she would say, 'ifisif onefos ofosif thofosif whosufu cantantant statantand thefesef smufumellu ofosif therisir owfisown shifisifit.'"⁹⁶ An excellent example of García Márquez's use of the humorous and absurd to point to fundamental truth is Fernanda's consultation with invisible doctors. Even in her correspondence with them she cannot express herself plainly. Her telepathic surgery lasts six hours because they are confused about her symptoms.

Her lies eventually lead to the birth of the child with a pig's tail. Her story, which no one believes (but they have no better story) is that Aureliano was found floating in a basket. The wise, prescient little boy grows up to fall in love with Amaranta Ursula, his aunt. Their union produces the last Buendía, Aureliano, who has the pig's tail.

Solitude and secrets formed a framework for García Márquez's personal family experience. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* represents his attempts to translate the reality of his childhood in Aracataca, Columbia into fiction. Mario Vargas Llosa writes, "All the sources of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* seem already assembled in the mind of García Márquez when he abandoned Aracataca in 1940 to study in a school run by Jesuits in Bogotá. However, many things would have to take place before he could definitely exorcise the devils of his childhood in one great verbal construction."⁹⁷

There are at least three occurrences in García Márquez's life that are likely to have encouraged him to explore family solitude in his fiction. The first has to do with the struggle between two political parties--Liberal and Conservative--that ravaged Colombia from 1840 until the early 1970s. Regina Janes in her essay "Liberals, Conservatives, and Bananas: Colombian Politics in the Fictions of Gabriel García Márquez" quotes Hernández Rodríguez: "Among the most remote childhood memories of a Colombian are...those of political parties similar to two races which live side by side but hate each other eternally."⁹⁸ García Márquez was raised by his maternal grandparents until he was eight years old, during which time he scarcely knew his parents. Tranquilina Iguarán and Colonel Nicholas Márquez did everything they could to prevent their daughter's marriage to Gabriel's father. They did not succeed, but Luisa went to her parents' home to have her first child, Gabriel, as a concession to them. She left him with them for eight years, until Colonel Márquez died. They opposed the marriage because García was illegitimate and new to Aracataca. But their greatest objection centered on the fact that he was a Conservative. Colonel Márquez had fought in the Thousand Days War (1899-1903) on the side of the Liberals. It was García Márquez's grandparents who affected his life most profoundly, especially his grandfather. He named Colonel Márquez as "the most important figure of my life."⁹⁹ To have the people most important to one--parents and grandparents--holding opposite views on a question that affected Colombians so pervasively would force a decision for one and against the other. Such a conflict would certainly result in a certain fundamental estrangement, despite the love that might exist.

The second aspect of García Márquez's life that influenced his portrayal of alienation between family members is related to the first. It is the fact that he was cared for by his grandparents, not his parents. Like the Buendías family home, the Márquez house was huge and awesome, filled with spirits. Aunts, uncles, cousins, and even Colonel Márquez's illegitimate children (reportedly he had a dozen) came and went. García Márquez says, "They had an enormous house, full of ghosts. They were very superstitious and impressionable people. In every corner there were skeletons and memories, and after six in the evening you didn't dare leave your room. It was a world of fantastic terrors. There were coded conversations." Whether in spite of the terrors or because of them he says, "I had a fantastic childhood."¹⁰⁰ He and his grandfather took long walks, and Gabriel especially remembers going with his grandfather to the circus. The old colonel would take him to the United Fruit Company stores where he would "open up the frozen fish boxes and let the boy ponder the miracle of ice."¹⁰¹ His grandmother tiptoed into his bedroom at night, sometimes even waking him up, to tell stories. His impressionable senses were awash with the experience of close family. Yet he hardly knew his parents. He imagined his mother as a "huge shadowy lap on which he had never sat."¹⁰² Actual events in the lives of his grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends fill the pages of his fiction, but there is no mention of father, mother, or brothers and sisters.

When he was eight, he left his huge, fascinating family, the enormous house, the dusty town of Aracataca and his "fabulous childhood." He says, "Nothing interesting has happened to me since."¹⁰³ He went to Sucre to live with his parents, whom he had just met, and a short time later he was sent to an elementary school in Barranquilla as a boarder.

Though his early life was filled with love and caring relatives, his parents were not part of that life. Secrets and separation were his from the beginning.

The third circumstance lending itself to solitude came in 1940 when he was awarded a scholarship to attend a school for the gifted in Zipaquirá. The small town is some 30 miles outside Bogotá. Today one can travel by jet from the coast to the capital city in an hour, but in 1940, the journey was an arduous, complicated trip of at least a week. Arriving in Bogotá, Gabriel, a child of the tropical lowlands, reportedly cried. He had never experienced ever-present drizzle and cold temperatures. The men in formal black, streets devoid of any women and church bells chiming for rosary at every sundown represented an emotional reserve that was totally alien to 13-year old Gabriel. Zipaquirá, even chillier and damper, loomed in the mountains like a medieval city. A massive early-eighteenth-century cathedral fronted the town plaza which was surrounded by multi-story buildings with balconies. The atmosphere was dark and cold. Gabriel, already dubbed "The Old Man" because of his solitary, taciturn manner, turned to the "bold, vigorous fantasy worlds of Alexander Dumas and Jules Verne."¹⁰⁴ More than 25 years later he would chose the somber, cold city to be Fernanda's birthplace.

The school, run by Jesuits, was not an altogether painful experience for Gabriel. The priests introduced the boy to Marxist thought and social and economic history as well as mathematics and science. Still, this move to a foreign, cold environment, constituted a loss and added another layer of solitude.

Aracataca assumed the "status of a boyhood paradise and lost Eden" in García Márquez's mind.¹⁰⁵ When he was 16, he went back to Aracataca with his mother. His

grandmother had died, and the house had to be sold. He found, not a paradise, but a hot, dusty town full of poor shacks, a virtual ghost town. The sense of silent sadness was heightened when his mother chanced upon a friend from years before, sitting in a shop. The two women embraced and clung to each other, weeping silently. The amazed Gabriel stood and watched. Soon thereafter, according to Gene Bell-Villada, Gabito knew he had to be a novelist.¹⁰⁶

One Hundred Years of Solitude portrays a family whose lives are built on solitude. Because of their solitude they are "wiped out by the wind and exiled from the memory of men...."¹⁰⁷ It seems clear that solitude is destructive. Yet certain events give pause. When José Arcadio Buendía dies, such a profusion of yellow flowers falls from the heavens that animals smother in the streets and shovels must be used to clear a path for the funeral procession. It is as if God himself pays homage to the patriarch who lived a life of solitude. Amaranta dies a virgin after a lifetime of refusing love in many forms. She is the only one who never forgets Rebeca because she hates her so much. She has lived a life of meanness inside her solitude. Yet she comes to understand the vicious circle of Colonel Aureliano Buendía's making little gold fishes, selling them for gold and melting the gold to make more little fishes: "It pained her not to have had that revelation many years before when it had still been possible to purify memories and reconstruct the universe under a new light and evoke without trembling Pietro Crespi's smell of lavender at dusk and rescue Rebeca from her slough of misery, not out of hatred or out of love but because of the measureless understanding of solitude."¹⁰⁸ It is apparent that for García Márquez solitude is not always destructive.

Conclusion

Two of the novels in this study--*The Years* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*--caused their writers pain to a remarkable degree.

Woolf began with high hopes, writing on September 2, 1934, "I don't think I have ever been more excited over a book....I wrote like a--forget the word--yesterday; my cheeks burn; my hands tremble."¹⁰⁹ Between then and the time it was published, the book's writing turned into a nightmare. Quentin Bell, Woolf's biographer and nephew, recounted her enthusiastic words with pain.

It is impossible to read these words without pain and pity; it is as though one saw Virginia run gaily and swiftly out upon a quicksand. For, whatever we may think of the final result [of *The Years*], it was for her a pitfall, very nearly a death trap. She entered with delight into most of her novels, but never with such lighthearted confidence as now; and never was she to be so thwarted, baffled, anxious and miserable in her writing.¹¹⁰

García Márquez failed so many times to write the book that was to become *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, he vowed never to write again. Following his "vision" he wrote feverishly for eighteen months while his wife sold their possessions; when he was finished they were ten thousand dollars in debt and reportedly did not even have money for postage to mail the manuscript.

These were significant books for their writers. Their conclusions about family relationships are worth noting.

In all three novels, secrets play an important role throughout, including the final scene. Secrets, lies and half-truths create their own reality and form the basis for a new

reality. Often this reality brings alienation and pain--and more secrets. Yet, as each writer reveals, secrets are necessary. For the Buendía family, annihilation comes as a result of a hundred years of solitude. Paradoxically, annihilation comes as all secrets are revealed. García Márquez's use of magical realism underscores the fact that reality requires myth. Reality creates a text; so do myth and illusion.

The characters in all three novels are caught up in trying to decipher their own texts and those of their fellows. Something essential is hidden. The authors show that human beings and families require secrets. Meaningful connection comes when we are helped to find that essential something--even helped to look for it--by another person. Welty reveals this when Laura takes George's pipe in order to give it back to him as a present. The little girl realizes that what he wants most is what belongs to him. It affirms his worth. Conversely, Dabney is empty inside and lonely when no one talks to her about the emotions she feels for Troy. That which is important to her is ignored. Woolf's Peggy searches for *herself* in her probing questions. García Márquez's Fernanda, with her invisible doctors and garbled communication, hides her secrets with secrets. She has, in effect, stolen her own pipe and is awash in solitude and alienation. She symbolizes our need to hide that which is most important to us.

Family members in all three novels love each other. Yet the authors reveal that love is not enough. The last Buendía born is the freak that has been anticipated for a hundred years, but the long-dreaded catastrophe is not what finishes the race:

Through her tears Amaranta Ursula could see that he was one of those great Buendías, strong and willful like the José Arcadios, with the open and clairvoyant eyes of the Aurelianos, and predisposed to begin the race again from

the beginning and cleanse it of its pernicious vices and solitary calling, for he was the only one in a century who had been engendered with love.¹¹¹

Although engendered in love, he is carried away by ants when his father, solitary and singleminded in grief, forgets his new son exists. That which is required is more than love.

In spite of love, Woolf, Welty and García Márquez reveal, we hurt those for whom we care.

Self-absorbed, we are always afraid. We mask authenticity because we cannot bear it.

Meaningful communication requires that we accept, even embrace, the secrets of ourselves and those we love. Sometimes that is possible; sometimes it is not.

Notes

- ¹ Virginia Woolf, *The Pargiters: The Novel-Essay Portion of The Years*, ed. Mitchell A. Leaska (New York: The New York Public Library and Readex Books, 1977) xv.
- ² Woolf, *Pargiters* xxxix.
- ³ Woolf, *Pargiters* vii.
- ⁴ Woolf, *Pargiters* 9.
- ⁵ Virginia Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," *Moments of Being*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976) 90.
- ⁶ Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf: A Biography* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972) 38.
- ⁷ Bell 40-41.
- ⁸ Woolf, *Moments* 131.
- ⁹ Woolf, *Moments* 147.
- ¹⁰ Woolf, *Moments* 132.
- ¹¹ Bell 72.
- ¹² Woolf, *Moments* 155.
- ¹³ Virginia Woolf, *The Years* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1937) 22.
- ¹⁴ Woolf, *Years* 146.
- ¹⁵ Woolf, *Years* 29.
- ¹⁶ Woolf, *Pargiters* 43.
- ¹⁷ Woolf, *Years* 19.

- ¹⁸ Woolf, *Pargiters* 38.
- ¹⁹ Woolf, *Pargiters* 56.
- ²⁰ Woolf, *Pargiters* 52.
- ²¹ Woolf, *Pargiters* ix.
- ²² Woolf, *Years* 48.
- ²³ Woolf, *Moments* 126.
- ²⁴ Woolf, *Moments* 132.
- ²⁵ Woolf, *Years* 412.
- ²⁶ Woolf, *Years* 222.
- ²⁷ Woolf, *Years* 352.
- ²⁸ Woolf, *Years* 335.
- ²⁹ Woolf, *Years* 356.
- ³⁰ Woolf, *Years* 357.
- ³¹ Woolf, *Years* 358.
- ³² Woolf, *Years* 295-296.
- ³³ Woolf, *Years* 296.
- ³⁴ Woolf, *Years* 297.
- ³⁵ Woolf, *Years* 329.
- ³⁶ Woolf, *Years* 275.
- ³⁷ Woolf, *Years* 273.
- ³⁸ Woolf, *Years* 403.
- ³⁹ Woolf, *Years* 154.
- ⁴⁰ Woolf, *Years* 171.

⁴¹ Woolf, *Years* 430.

⁴² Eudora Welty, *Delta Wedding* (1945; New York: Harvest/HBJ-Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979) 84.

⁴³ Welty, *Wedding* 5.

⁴⁴ Welty, *Wedding* 22.

⁴⁵ Welty, *Wedding* 27.

⁴⁶ Welty, *Wedding* 32.

⁴⁷ Welty, *Wedding* 55.

⁴⁸ Welty, *Wedding* 62.

⁴⁹ Welty, *Wedding* 55.

⁵⁰ Dorothy G. Griffin, "The House as Container: Architecture and Myth in *Delta Wedding*," *A Life in Literature*, ed. Albert J. Devlin (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1987) 101-102.

⁵¹ Welty, *Wedding* 47.

⁵² Welty, *Wedding* 84.

⁵³ Welty, *Wedding* 80.

⁵⁴ Welty, *Wedding* 146.

⁵⁵ Welty, *Wedding* 81.

⁵⁶ Welty, *Wedding* 74.

⁵⁷ Welty, *Wedding* 196.

⁵⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Self-Deception," from *L'être et le néant, Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (1956, New York: New American Library-Penguin Books USA Inc. 1975) 299-329.

⁵⁹ Welty, *Wedding* 193.

⁶⁰ Eudora Welty, *One Writer's Beginnings* (1983, New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1985)

75.

⁶¹ Welty, *Wedding* 231.

⁶² Albert J. Devlin and Peggy Whitman Prenshaw, "A Conversation with Eudora Welty," *Welty: A Life in Literature* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1987) 9.

⁶³ Ruth M. Vande Kieft, "Eudora Welty: Visited and Revisited," *Welty: A Life in Literature* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1987) 33-34.

⁶⁴ Welty, *Wedding* 23.

⁶⁵ Welty, *Wedding* 79.

⁶⁶ Welty, *Beginnings* 19.

⁶⁷ Welty, *Beginnings* 21.

⁶⁸ Welty, *Beginnings* 101.

⁶⁹ Eudora Welty, "Writing and Analyzing a Story," *The Eye of the Story* (New York: Random House, 1978) 110.

⁷⁰ Frank N. Magill, ed., *Critical Survey of Long Fiction* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Salem Press, Inc., 1983) 2820.

⁷¹ Welty, *Wedding* 86.

⁷² Welty, *Wedding* 245.

⁷³ Welty, *Wedding* 241.

⁷⁴ Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, trans. Gregory Rabassa (1967; Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, S.A.; New York: Avon Books, 1971) 11.

⁷⁵ García Márquez, *Solitude* 163.

- ⁷⁶ García Márquez, *Solitude* 28.
- ⁷⁷ García Márquez, *Solitude* 383.
- ⁷⁸ Dennis DeForest West, *Gabriel García Márquez: A Study of His Fiction*, diss., U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Ann Arbor: Xerox University Microfilms, 1974) 141.
- ⁷⁹ George R. McMurray, *Gabriel García Márquez* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1977) 67.
- ⁸⁰ García Márquez, *Solitude* 13.
- ⁸¹ García Márquez, *Solitude* 13.
- ⁸² García Márquez, *Solitude* 106.
- ⁸³ García Márquez, *Solitude* 107.
- ⁸⁴ García Márquez, *Solitude* 137.
- ⁸⁵ García Márquez, *Solitude* 46.
- ⁸⁶ García Márquez, *Solitude* 308.
- ⁸⁷ García Márquez, *Solitude* 311.
- ⁸⁸ Mario Vargas Llosa, "García Márquez: From Aracataca to Macondo," *Gabriel García Márquez, Modern Critical Views*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989) 17.
- ⁸⁹ Gene H. Bell-Villada, *García Márquez: The Man and His Work* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990) 12.
- ⁹⁰ Luis Harss and Barbara Dohmann, "Gabriel García Márquez, 'or The Lost Chord,'" *Into the Mainstream: Conversations with Latin-American Writers* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967) 320.

⁹¹ Morton P. Levitt, "The Meticulous Modernist Fictions of García Márquez," *Gabriel García Márquez: Modern Critical Views*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989) 233-234.

⁹² García Márquez, *Solitude* 245.

⁹³ García Márquez, *Solitude* 284.

⁹⁴ García Márquez, *Solitude* 287.

⁹⁵ García Márquez, *Solitude* 200.

⁹⁶ García Márquez, *Solitude* 199.

⁹⁷ Llosa 8.

⁹⁸ Regina Janes, "Liberals, Conservatives, and Bananas: Colombian Politics in the Fictions of Gabriel García Márquez," *Gabriel García Márquez: Modern Critical Views*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989) 129.

⁹⁹ Harss and Dohmann 319.

¹⁰⁰ Harss and Dohmann 319.

¹⁰¹ Bell-Villada 43.

¹⁰² Harss and Dohmann 319.

¹⁰³ Llosa 8.

¹⁰⁴ Bell-Villada 46.

¹⁰⁵ Bell-Villada 46.

¹⁰⁶ Bell-Villada 46.

¹⁰⁷ García Márquez, *Solitude* 383.

¹⁰⁸ García Márquez, *Solitude* 260

¹⁰⁹ Bell 179.

¹¹⁰ Bell 172.

¹¹¹ García Márquez, *Solitude* 378.