Doktori (Ph.D.) értekezés

The Butterfly's Wing Clamped together with the Bolts of Iron—Sentient Spaces and Bodies in the "Flesh" of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*

Moise Gabriella

Témavezető:
Dr. Bényei Tamás

Debreceni Egyetem
BTK
2011

The Butterfly's Wing Clamped together with the Bolts of Iron—Sentient Spaces and Bodies in the "Flesh" of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*

Értekezés a doktori (Ph.D.) fokozat megszerzése érdekében
az irodalomtudományok tudományágban
Írta: Moise Gabriella okleveles angol nyelv és irodalom szakos tanár.

Készült a Debreceni Egyetem Irodalomtudományi doktori iskolája
(Anglisztika: Angol nyelvű kultúrák és irodalmak programja) keretében

Témavezető: Dr. Bényei Tamás

…….
(olvasható aláírás)

A doktori szigorlati bizottság:

elnök: Dr. ……
tagok: Dr. ……
Dr. ……

A doktori szigorlat időpontja: 20… . …… … .

Az értekezés bírálói:

Dr. .....
Dr. ……
Dr. .....

A bírálóbizottság:

elnök: Dr. .....
tagok: Dr. ……..
Dr. ……..
Dr. ……..
Dr. ……..

Az értekezés védésének időpontja: 20… . …… …

Én Moise Gabriella felelősségem tudatában kijelentem, hogy a benyújtott értekezés a szerzői jog nemzetközi normáinak tiszteletben tartásával készült. Jelen értekezést korábban más intézményben nem nyújtottam be és azt nem utasították el.

Debrecen, 2011. november 14.

……..

Moise Gabriella

Table of Contents

1. Introduction **5**

2. “Hinges of Light, Hallways, Stairways, Thrones Spaces of Being”—

A Phenomenal Encounter of Spaces **24**

2.1. Unfolding the Textual Vistas **24**

2. 2. Lived Spaces—The Phenomenology of the Ramsays' **35**

Architectural Sites

2. 3. “The Hermit’s Hut”—Mrs. Ramsay’s Transfigurations **46**

3. Abysmal Reflections in *To the Lighthouse* **69**

3.1. Reflective Upbeat **69**

3.2. Structural reduplication—Thematic/Surface Replicas **71**

3. 3. Structural reduplications—

Internal Replicas/Mise en abyme **78**

3. 4. “my hands become aware of each other”—The Chiasmic Node **88**

4. The Pictorial Domain **108**

4. 1. “The needles drip blots of blue”—The Overview of Formalist

Aesthetics of *To the Lighthouse* **108**

4. 2. “Nature is on the inside”—An Overview of the Phenomenological

Criticism of *To the Lighthouse* **118**

4. 3. “Heaven be Praised for it, the Problem of Space Remained” **126**

5. Conclusion **153**

Works Cited **163**

Abstract in English **171**

Abstract in Hungarian **174**

Publications of the Author **177**

1. Introduction

Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* explores and attains the elimination of dualities in a subtle and complex philosophical and aesthetic frame, in accordance with what Woolf herself emblematically formulated as a fundamental transformation of the "human character": "All human relations have shifted—those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children" (Woolf, "Mr. Bennett" 71). Her declaration bears explicit socio-political overtones, claiming the disappearance of the inherent hierarchy that such power relations disseminated; a critical stance which is also present in her admittedly autobiographical work, *To the Lighthouse* (1927). I shall, nevertheless, put emphasis on the less tangibly and/or audibly articulated art theoretical and philosophical modulations of the novel, invoking concepts of space, corporeally grounded subjectivity, notions of the home and dwelling—as spatial and, subsequently, corporeal configurations—and painterly vision. The theoretical framework invited by the novel's implicit capacity for a phenomenological study rests on the triad of Sartre, Levinas, and Merleau-Ponty, the latter offering the primordial analytic resource of the dissertation.

My exploration focuses exclusively on *To the Lighthouse*—with occasional references to Woolf's other fictional or theoretical works. The novel has been read from innumerable theoretical and technical perspectives yet the phenomenological approach is still underrepresented. *To the Lighthouse*, among other generic categories, is a *Künstlerroman* that explores and practices the evolution of a new artistic form of expression (Post-Impressionist, formalist, visionary, Cézannesque) and a new mode of seeing (the painterly, visionary eye) rather than being concerned with the mere development of the artist character. Lily Briscoe, the figure of the painter, a Cézanne-surrogate in the story, is, at the same time, the embodiment of Modernist poetics and Post-Impressionist aesthetics, as well as the repository

of the visible realm and also vision, the latter bearing paramount importance for Modernist poetics as well as for Merleau-Pontian phenomenology.

Vision is a forcefully charged notion that appears both in Roger Fry's and Woolf's poetics, indicative of the energy the visionary mode of perception and creativity conveys. Fry's "psychological volume"[1] is a forerunner of the composition that Lily Briscoe grasps as "a framework of steel," or "the bolts of iron" (Woolf, *TTL* 54, 186), which structure lies beyond the surface that is "beautiful and bright […] feathery and evanescent, one colour melting into another like the colours on a butterfly's wing" (Woolf, *TTL* 168). His critical work entitled *Vision and Design* (1920) advances the significance of design, the means of his formalist aesthetics, which is turned palpable through the visionary fusion of the individual artistic constituents.

> Almost any turn of the kaleidoscope of nature may set up in the artist this detached and impassioned vision, and, as he contemplates the particular field of vision, the (aesthetically) chaotic and accidental conjunction of forms and colours begins to crystallise into a harmony […]. In such a creative vision the objects as such tend to disappear, to lose their separate unities, and to take places as so many bits in the whole mosaic of vision. (Fry, *Vision* 36)

Fry is straightforward in his articulation of an artistic detachment, a creative state less governed by passion and mystification than by an almost scientific aspiration that conditions the visualization of the hidden order of life and nature.

---

[1] "Psychological volume" is a term originally employed by Charles Mauron—a French art critic who considerably influenced the aesthetic principles of the Bloomsbury group—in his *The Nature of Beauty in Art and Literature* (translated by Fry and published by the Hogarth Press in 1927). Later Fry himself uses Mauron's phrase in his collection of essays *Transformations: Critical and Speculative Essays on Art* (1926) "to suggest the equivalent of verbal and visual imagery" (Reed, *Roger Fry* 284), serving as an alternative term for what Clive Bell defined as "significant form" (8). David Dowling reflects on the conceptual discrepancy of Fry and Bell as follows: "[Fry] wanted to connect shape with emotion in a more precise, scientific way than Bell had in his rather mystical assertion of 'significant form'" (16). Fry himself acknowledges the analogous relationship of art and science. "None the less, perhaps, the highest pleasure in art is identical with the highest pleasure in scientific theory. The emotion which accompanies the clear recognition of unity in a complex seems to be similar in art and in science that it is difficult not to suppose that they are psychologically the same" (Fry, *Vision* 57-8).

Woolf exemplifies the importance of vision through the character of Mrs. Brown in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," her seminal essay on Modernist fiction, more particularly, on character drawing. The "old lady in the corner opposite […] can be treated in an infinite variety of ways […]. […] And I regret to say that I threw that ugly, that clumsy, that incongruous tool [description] out of the window, for I knew that if I began describing the cancer and the calico, my Mrs. Brown, that vision […] would have been dulled and tarnished and vanished for ever" (Woolf, "Mr. Bennett" 74, 75, 82). Woolf invites artists to express rather than to describe reality underlying the visible surface of the world. The power of imagination that aims at the invisible, the non-material, does not automatically defy realism, on the contrary, it presents reality proper, only shown from a different angle, from the inside.[2]

Merleau-Ponty claims about the painterly mode of perception and expression of reality something remarkably similar to Woolf's visionary credo quoted above. "This voracious vision, reaching beyond the 'visual givens,' opens upon a texture of Being of which the discrete sensorial messages are only the punctuations or the caesurae" (Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy* 166). Hence the relationship between the individual and the world necessitates not only the adjustment of representation but, first and foremost, the re-evaluation of the very relationship: the way the individual defines his or her locus within the fabric of the world and, consequently, the way s/he gets to know the self, the other, and the nexus of these embedded participants. Vision additionally serves as a means of translating the paradoxical relationship of bodies and objects being simultaneously distanced from and embedded within a space with which they all maintain a common origin.

Yet, before Woolf's narrative yields to what Merleau-Ponty calls "*syncresis*: an overlapping or enjoining or coming together of distinct selves" (Hass 31), it performs a whole

[2] A much more detailed introduction of the aesthetic significance of vision and design will be provided in the chapter "'The needles drip blots of blue'—The Overview of Formalist Aesthetics of *To the Lighthouse*," in which I briefly introduce the individual studies devoted singularly to the artistic/visual/painterly commitment of the novel.

series of separation, distancing, and parergonality. These appear in a multifarious diversity on numerous levels of the narrative: from the most conspicuous ones like the tripartite structure, the social and familial dissociations of the characters to the subtle metaphorical images signifying concurrent emotional and psychic pulls and divergences and artistic arrangements in Lily's canvas. The introductory chapter of liminal relationships, through its central metaphor, the window, indicated in its title, generates an essentially spatial and architectonic context in which the events, and more particularly, the characters form a collective subjectivity. This subjectivity gains its definition in a Sartrean manner of "over-against" the world, primarily involved in a confrontational relationship (Grene 218). My design, delineated in the introductory chapters of the dissertation is to explore the spatio-existential conditions of the subject within the walls of the transgressively decomposing and also transitory space of the Ramsays' summer cottage. Their house embodies a liminal space proper, which provides the potential of subject formation at the cost of the suppression and nihilation of categories such as the external, the other, the body. At this stage of my exploration, I employ Sartre's and Levinas's concepts concerning subject formation, partly because of their shared logic in terms of a spatio-corporeal context for the upsurge of the subject-to-be. They also disapprove of the idea of the embedded, indwelling subject: whereas Sartre emphasises existential distance, casting "the body [as] […] a necessary characteristic of the for-itself" and "perpetually the surpassed" (309, 326) Levinas advocates the notion of the separated/isolated self, claiming that "[c]onsciousness does not fall into a body—is not incarnated; it is a disincarnation […]" (165).

Discussing Sartre and Levinas on a common platform may provoke distrust. My objective, however, is not to reconcile the two "thinkers who can seem sometimes to stand in a relationship of irreducible antagonism" (Brogan 2), nor to attenuate the existential versus ethical edges of their concepts. Instead, I attempt to trace the innate generative logic of *To the*

Lighthouse, which simultaneously produces patterns of a Sartrean surpassability of bodies and spatio-corporeal out-thereness, as well as it presents the Levinasian disruptive Other, who "puts me and my ideas in question" (Hass 33) in order for me to experience, in contrast to Sartre, "not a process of objectification, but one of subjectification" (Hass 34).

Whereas the Sartrean model is discernible holistically in the spatial arrangements of the narrative (most particularly in "The Window" section) and in the psychic and emotional interrelatedness of characters, Levinas's Other, "in which the self is rooted, from which it becomes differentiated" (Vermes 110)[3] characterises one single, nonetheless, collective relationship, that of the family members and guests of the Ramsays and Mrs. Ramsay herself. This association, however, does not necessarily deny the model of Sartrean distancing from the referential locus, i.e. from Mrs. Ramsay as a spatial design and as a crucial factor in the others' economic existence. It rather complements and subsequently transcends Sartre's concept of the body "as a sensible centre of reference […] *beyond which* I am" (326) owing to a secondary break with our engagement with the sensible, with our corporeal anchorage. Mrs. Ramsay confronts the others' phenomenal being as "an irreducible transcendence," "a non-presentable alterity," and "a non-appearing presence," to adopt Katalin Vermes's introductory terms applied to crucial Levinasian notions in her comparative exploration of Merleau-Ponty's and Levinas's phenomenology entitled *The Ethos of the Body* [*A test éthosza* (2006)] (105).[4] The epiphany of the Other (Levinas's recurrent term for the manifestation of the Other), more particularly the Other's face "[opens up] a new dimension" (Levinas 197), that of infinity, of the other's transcendence which "resists possession, resists my power" (Levinas 197). The encounter of the characters with Mrs. Ramsay as the Levinasian Other prepares a secondary separation of the self in which Levinas's totality gives way to the metaphysical desire for the sake of achieving infinity. I hasten to emphasise that my claim is valid only

[3] Quotations from Katalin Vermes's text are given in my translation. („Az én a másikban gyökeredzik, a másból különül el […].")

[4] "a Másik redukálhatatlan transzcendenciája," "prezentálhatatlan alteritás," "meg nem jelenő jelenlét."

from the others' point of view, the way all the figures swarming around Mrs. Ramsay experience her as the Levinasian Other, "who conditions receptivity, the self, hospitality, the non-universalizable singularity of the self" (Vermes 110), whose face "is the source of all sense" (Vermes 110),[5] who enables the encounter with the ethical. For them—the sole exception is perhaps Mr. Carmichael, whose essential protean qualities and roles I discuss within the frame of the third chapter—Mrs. Ramsay is "the other [who] is never 'given,' never here, but always transcendent, beyond any image or presentation" (Hass 32), the one who forces the self to leave behind the security of its own interiority and opens up one's eye, through the alterity of the other, to infinity. "It turns out that my immersion in my ownness, being looked on from another perspective, is different from how I have experienced it so far. It becomes a mere phenomenality, an appearance. […] The Other looks at me and I realize my world as something that *appears* to me, from the outside" (Vermes 119).[6]

The disruptive look of the other initiates a paradigm shift for the ego, the encountering of the other's face, which resists representation, urges meaning-making, the ego's producing its own image as a sight to be looked at, to be understood, to gain signification. Paradoxically, the Other does so without its being a graspable image herself. This radical resistance to representation is reproduced by Mrs. Ramsay's irreducibility to any cognitive, poetic or aesthetic image. From the "annoying Charles Tansley" (Woolf, *TTL* 125)[7] to Lily and Mr. Ramsay[8] and, occasionally, even the love-stricken Paul Rayley or the considerably reserved

---

[5] "Habár a 'Másik' felől érkezik az értelem, egyben feltételezi a fogadást, az ént, a 'vendégszeretetet', az én általánosíthatatlan egyszeriségét." "Mégis ez minden jelentés […] eredete."

[6] "Saját világomba való belemerülésemről pedig kiderül, hogy máshonan nézve nem az, aminek én átélem. Így lesz belőle puszta fenomenalitás, látszat. […] A másik rám pillant, s ettől saját világom nekem 'így tűnő' világgá változik."

[7] Even the "odious little man" (Woolf, *TTL* 19) can be overwhelmed by the beauty of Mrs. Ramsay, for instance, on their visit to the miner's home: "[…] for the first time in his life Charles Tansley felt an extraordinary pride; a man digging in a drain stopped digging and looked at her, let his arm fall down and looked at her; for the first time in his life Charles Tansley felt an extraordinary pride; felt the wind and the cyclamen and the violets for he was walking with a beautiful woman. He had hold of her bag" (Woolf, *TTL* 18-9).

[8] Mr. Ramsay cannot disregard the compelling nature of his wife's beauty either: "[…] when her husband passed, though he was chuckling at the thought that Hume, the philosopher, grown enormously fat, had stuck in a bog, he could not help noting, as he passed, the sternness at the heart of her beauty" (Woolf, *TTL* 71). See also 72.

Mr. Bankes, all make desperate attempts to grasp Mrs. Ramsay's essence, each in his or her own manner. These characters frequently find themselves challenged by the indescribable qualities of Mrs. Ramsay. The moment they face her, an irresistible impulse is activated in them to come up with tropes for the articulation of the otherwise inexpressible. A good example for this is the observation of the aloof Mr. Bankes with his trademark critical tone. "The Graces assembling seemed to have joined hands in meadows of asphodel to compose that face. 'But she's no more aware of her beauty than a child,' said Mr. Bankes" (Woolf, *TTL* 34). He offers his acknowledgment of her unearthly quality that he describes through hinting at the image of oblivion while he undermines Mrs. Ramsay's potential awareness of her own beauty. The tension felt over the proximity of the enigmatic figure of Mrs. Ramsay is expressed through the contrast of her innocent state of mind, that of a child's, and the implicit presence of death by the image of the asphodel meadows.

Naturally, Lily is the most implacably forced character to present an abstract (visual) equivalent for Mrs. Ramsay. "How did she differ? What was the spirit in her, the essential thing, by which, had you found a crumpled glove in the corner of a sofa, you would have known it, from its twisted finger, hers indisputably? She was like a bird for speed, an arrow for directness" (Woolf, *TTL* 55). The image of the glove with the twisted finger represents Mrs. Ramsay's multivalent nature. This particular item of clothing defines her social status along with her refinery, yet its twisted finger—being an eyesore that creates a homely awareness of Mrs. Ramsay's closeness—suggests simultaneously the sense of familiarity and disturbance. Lily's two other motifs with which she tries to take hold of her model are terse, declarative and schematic conceptual analogies as if she wanted to compensate for the assumed ambiguity of the previous image. The two highlighted attributes of speed and directness recur in connection with Cam who, in a similar fashion to his mother, is compared to a bird, a bullet, and an arrow (Woolf, *TTL* 60-1). This, strangely, sheds light on the mother-

daughter bond that is otherwise conspicuously shadowed by the James-Mrs. Ramsay attachment almost in the entirety of the novel. Cam, however, asserts her structural significance when she joins his father and brother on the journey to the Lighthouse in the final phase by reinvigorating the balance that rules the triad of Mr. Ramsay, Mrs. Ramsay and James, in "The Window." Yet Lily's initiative and fairly general attempts shortly give way to a whole series of more abstract and/or aesthetically grounded motifs: the architectural spaces of "the tombs of kings," "secret chambers," the figure of a "cathedral," and a "dome" (Woolf, *TTL* 57, 58); the natural image of the beehive (Woolf, *TTL* 58); or artistic metaphors like Mrs. Ramsay as the Madonna of Renaissance paintings and, at the same time, the triangular purple shadow, the visual counterpart of the Madonna and the child. "Mother and child then – objects of universal veneration, and in this case the mother was famous for her beauty – might be reduced, he [Mr. Bankes] pondered, to a purple shadow without irreverence" (Woolf, *TTL* 59).

Lily is also preoccupied with the difficulty of the knowability of Mrs. Ramsay and the process of establishing intimacy with her painterly subject. "What art was there, known to love or cunning, by which one pressed through into those secret chambers? What device for becoming, like waters poured into one jar, inextricably the same, one with the object one adored? Could the body achieve, or the mind, subtly mingling in the intricate passages of the brain? or the heart? Could loving, as people called it, make her and Mrs Ramsay one?" (Woolf, *TTL* 57). The passage foreshadows Lily's primarily phenomenological relationship with her subject matter: the body gains equal importance in the exploration of Mrs. Ramsay's spatio-corporeal depth and, eventually, in her visual transposition. Thus, the character of Mrs. Ramsay triggers the interaction of body, architectonic figures and formalist tropes, a constellation that characterises not only Lily's artistic concern but the novel's entire aesthetic framework.

Hence another aspect of Levinas's phenomenological system of thought, his

metaphorisation of the spatio-existential ontology as dwelling and inhabitation gain significance in my analysis of Mrs. Ramsay's corporeal, spatial, and aesthetic stance, which confluence I shall introduce in the chapter entitled "'The hermit's hut'—Mrs. Ramsay's transfiguration," more particularly in the discussion of the Ramsays' summer cottage and Mrs. Ramsay's body as isomorphic spaces. The former is radically exposed in a constant condition of what Sharon Todd, in her ethical considerations on knowledge and education, terms as "a 'pre-originary' susceptibility and openness to Otherness" (67) or what is called by Vermes an orientation towards the exterior (110), where "the exterior is, strictly speaking, absolute alterity, the Other" (110).[9] Thus Mrs. Ramsay as the Levinasian Other, as the condition of encountering metaphysical infinity is restated through her corporeality.

On the other hand, motifs like James cutting out images from a catalogue, Mrs. Ramsay's insistence on closed doors and open windows, Mr. Ramsay's unexpected interruption, as well as his repetitive recitals of poetry, with which he continually cuts into the narrative flow, or Lily's peculiar blocks of colourful patches "representing" elements of reality all evoke Sartrean notions of separation and distancing. These forms of liminal associations all call for "the relation that is established between consciousness and the world" (Daigle 24), the way the ego experiences the world and its own objecthood in it resulting in the generation of consciousness. "We create a world on the basis of what we encounter 'out there,' i.e. outside of ourselves. We give meaning to what we meet, and we thus make the world our own. The ego is also born of this encounter: I make myself, and I make the world as I go about it and act in view of my project" (Daigle 24). The necessity of self-expulsion enables the ego to generate a consciousness of itself as an embodiment among all other bodies/objects and also a more comprehensive awareness of the world of which it is an organic part itself.

[9] "A külső a szó szoros értelmében, 'abszolút módon Más—a Másik.'"

These engendering projections and outward movements characterise the protagonists' relationship with specific entities or objects. The most illustrative of these are naturally James's longing to the Lighthouse, the primary object of his interest, the basis of all his emotional and psycho-social relationships. The rest of the Ramsay children are described by their interest in the flora and the fauna of the Hebrides. "[The] wild, villain, Cam, dashing past. […] She was off like a bird, bullet, or arrow" (Woolf, *TTL* 60-1) regularly rushing out of the house to pick flowers, yet she also habitually appears in a structural juxtaposition with Mr. Bankes, at least in the latter's recollection of the memory of Cam's refusal to give him a flower (Woolf, *TTL* 26, 27, 52). Jasper most particularly is depicted as "[having] a shot at a bird" (Woolf, *TTL* 27, 30, 32, 65, 73, 89), while "Andrew would be off after his crabs" (Woolf, *TTL* 32, 62, 68) and Rose is occupied by her "objects – shells, reeds, stones" (Woolf, *TTL* 32). In their attachment to particular objects, the parents are not exclusion either. Mr. Ramsay frequently rests his eyes on "the stone urn which held the geraniums" (Woolf, *TTL* 39, 40, 41) which, as he himself reflects on the image, "had so often decorated processes of thought" (Woolf, *TTL* 48) or ponders by the "hedge which had over and over again rounded some pause, signified some conclusion" (Woolf, *TTL* 48, 49, 71). On the other hand, Mrs. Ramsay appears in a singular spatial attachment to the drawing-room, most particularly looking out of its window (Woolf, *TTL* 13, 43, 58, 95, 101). These vectors of excursions into and intercourse with the "meaningless other out-there" (Grene 217) support each of them in establishing the ego's relation to its object (Grene 215), in the upsurge of consciousness. As Grene goes on in her article "The Aesthetic Dialogue of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty," the ego, without this relationship, without its external object "[in] itself, […] is empty. […] If I turn inward to myself, if I look for the content of my own subjectivity as such, what I find is just exactly *nothing*" (215-6). Centrifugal directionality subsequently leads the ego to realize its emptiness which thus also constitutes the sense of spatiality, an interiority, a vacuum that

urges its own replenishing.

To the Lighthouse exhibits numerous images and forms of spatiality, from the most literal ones (the summer cottage, the Lighthouse and their architectonic constituents: stairs, corridors, doors, and windows) to metaphorical spaces of nature and culture (bee hive, cathedral, pyramids). Authors like Woolf, Mansfield or Forster adopt "private domestic space as frame and metonym of inner, psychological space" (Briganti 149), also exploiting the communicative potential of such spaces for inter- and intrapersonal exchange of ideas. *To the Lighthouse*, however, produces two further fields for the spatial encounter: on the one hand, Mrs. Ramsay's phenomenal body, an intersubjective tissue that serves as the ontological condition for the others, and, on the other hand, Lily's canvas, which is partly a recreation of Mrs. Ramsay's corporeal presence, as well as the par excellence domain of visuality and an aesthetic space. The latter theme I shall introduce in the closing chapter of my dissertation, "Heaven be Praised for it, the Problem of Space Remained"—The Pictorial Domain.

Sartrean distancing and Levinasian separation and severance, however, proves to be inadequate or insufficiently helpful in the second phase of Lily's artistic procedure. As a counterpoint to the remarkable parergonality of "The Window" section, in the closing phase, which presents the fulfilment of the painter's aesthetic ideals, one of the most demanding issues is "[t]he question […] of some relation between those masses" or to "achieve that razor edge of balance between two opposite forces" (Woolf, *TTL* 161, 209). The accomplishment of such an equilibrium of the painterly constituents, as well as, indirectly, of the professional, social, emotional, and psychic courses governing the relationships of characters, anticipates the long awaited arrival at the Lighthouse, not accidentally in the chapter entitled "The Lighthouse." Naturally, the novel is not constructed along such essentialist axes as exclusive liminality or confluence and unity. The opening section establishes the figure of Mrs. Ramsay as one embedded in a web of sociality, her essence appearing as a "summoning together"

(Woolf, *TTL* 69), being identical with her knitting, the very emblem of domestic integrity; whereas in the closing chapter, the most discernible motif, prevalent in the perception of both Lily and the Ramsays, is distance.

The shift of emphasis is performed by "Time Passes," the central section of the novel which functions as a *camera obscura*, projecting the final verbal and visual composition of the novel. "Time Passes" suspends the formerly dominant spatiality and light, replacing them with ultimate darkness and temporality. The dark room of the novel, with its engulfing quality and its utter negation of light, produces a whole series of thematic and structural reduplications and mises-en-abyme, the exploration of which will be pursued in the chapter "Abysmal Reflections in *To the Lighthouse*." The analysis aims at unfurling the motif of multiple embeddedness and its innate complexity, the former being a governing principle of the narrative composition.

"Time Passes" models the paradoxical attribute of the chiasmic relationship characteristic of Merleau-Ponty's concept of the intertwining of the seer/seen, touching/touched, visible/invisible. Even though the middle section is principally temporal, the conventional linearity of time is also disrupted and, by way of a subversive temporality, the section slits a gaping abyss in the fabric of the narrative coherence. Although "Time Passes," similarly to the devastation of the WWI (one of the thematic concerns and direct indications of the socio-historical context of the novel), devours the apparent bliss of the first part with its excessive apocalyptic darkness, it also functions as the in-built mirror of the narrative: thus it elucidates and turns visible what otherwise would remain imperceptible.

The reflective logic, partly due to the rigorous compositional constraints of the novel, produces structures of reduplications in the form of direct and internal doubles that from time to time encompass the entirety of the novel. Their analysis I undertake in two consecutive subchapters: "Structural Reduplications—Thematic/Surface Replicas" and "Structural

Reduplications—Internal Replicas/Mise an abyme." The first of these chapters attempts to demonstrate how the novel generates its own embedded textual alter-egos, generically diverse texts like Tansley's and Mr. Ramsay's academically engaged writings or Lily's painterly "text," just to mention two entirely different transfigurations of the narrative; their common denominator being the sense of failure and the strife for Beauty. The two most markedly elusive artefacts, however, are Carmichael's poetry that is literally missing from the narrative and Lily's painting that lacks a detailed ekphrastic presentation, so the reader can eventually put together only a vague impression of her representation of reality. The subversive presence of their artistic means, the way they "[redefine] thought as embodied, and art-making as 'physical sensation'" (Doyle 65) advances the phenomenological potential of the novel, its alternative perceptive and communicative power.

The other subchapter focuses on the notion of mise en abyme, adopting the theory of Lucien Dällenbach. *To the Lighthouse* offers a rich ground for the individual, and what appears to be even more exciting, the interrelated exploration of the visual and verbal mises en abyme of a text charged with intense visuality that embeds a textually generated visual artefact. Internal mirroring assists the understanding of the network of characters within and outside the narrative realm: I have in mind most particularly the Woolf-Lily and/or Lily-Mrs. Ramsay axes that incorporate Vanessa Bell and Julia Stephen as well. Occasionally, Lily condenses the above figures by way of her either emotional or artistic association with them, ending up with a whole series of "doubles," which results in Lily's becoming one of the structural mises en abyme. This assists the empowerment of narrative formalism—indirectly also the formalist aesthetics of Lily—and the energy of non-mimetic expression.

The third subchapter ("my hands become aware of each other" —The Chiasmic Node) of my exploring the abysmal qualities of the novel—with special emphasis on "Time Passes"—introduces the central section as the very chiasm of significant artistic (verbal and

visual) and philosophical categories inherent in *To the Lighthouse*. First and foremost, the temporal interlude, similarly to the central motif of the first chapter, namely, the window, occupies the ambiguous locus of the limen that simultaneously links and severs, blindfolds and illuminates. By suspending the narrative flow, "Time Passes" intertwines time and space and it occasions a spatial formulation: a fissure, a depth. The very setting of "Time Passes" enables the chapter to function as what Dällenbach calls a retroprospective mise en abyme. The term, which in his theory denotes a narrative means solely, reflects on what precedes and, at the same time, what follows the internal mirror's entry in the storyline. Yet, "Time Passes" exceeds what is a direct effect of its structural centrality in the narrative. Whereas the chapter itself is drawn along oppositional lines of force (let them be dimensions of past and future or historical pre-war bliss and post-trauma acquiescence), it is also caught in its own snare of innumerable reflective surfaces facing each other. "Time Passes" thus incarnates what is a natural outcome of two mirrors being turned towards each other: the infinity of mirror images enfolding an empty centre, an abyss that, by definition, remains invisible for the onlooker. Owing to its abysmal quality and the paradoxical intertwinings it presents, "Time Passes" exhibits the very chiasmic relationship of the two framing chapters: consequently, order gives in to chaos that is still able to command the fragments of reality into a coherent design; presence is replaced by absence that eventually enhances a perceptive realization of one's contiguity with the things and bodies of the world; and Lily's compulsive urge to find the trope that could convey the essence of Mrs. Ramsay ceases only to give way to the recognition of the importance of spatial relations of forms. This relationship is analogous to the confluence of animate and inanimate bodies, which Merleau-Ponty calls the flesh of the world imagining it "as an element, as the concrete emblem of a general manner of being" (*Visible* 147). Merleau-Ponty formulates his concept of the flesh in one of his last writings "The Intertwining—The Chiasm" published posthumously in *The Visible and the Invisible*, in

which he offers a new ontological perspective on the interrelatedness of the subject-object-world triad. As Elisabeth Grosz explains Merleau-Ponty's concept, "[f]or him, the notion of the flesh is no longer associated with a privileged (animate) category, but is being's most elementary level. […] Flesh brings to the world the capacity to turn the world back on itself, to induce its reflexivity, to fold over itself, to introduce that fold in being in which subjectivity is positioned as a perceiving, perspectival frame" ("The Question of Ontology" 22, 23). This model enables the philosopher to eliminate crucial dichotomies such as the external and the internal, the visible and the invisible or the subject and the object and it also introduces a reflexivity grounded in the very chiasmic relationship of such categories.

The Chinese-box arrangement of mises en abyme and the series of multiple engulfments anticipate both Merleau-Pontian and Cézannesque concepts of visuality, the interrelatedness of the internal and the external, the painterly eye/I and nature, the visible and the invisible. "Time Passes," however, describes a trajectory of a nature other than the artistic concern of Lily or the socio-historical force that pulls apart the family. It also serves as a channel between two stages of subject formation, an essential thematic preoccupation of *To the Lighthouse*: the first of these stages being dominated by the Sartrean "to-be-thereness," the second enjoying, in accordance with the Merleau-Pontian concept, a generative oneness with the world as an "indivisible whole" (Merleau-Ponty, *Sense* 15), incorporated as well as incorporating. The central section embodies the chiasmic node itself and the very condition of the Merleau-Pontian flesh of the world with its coils, fissions, invaginations. "It is that the thickness of flesh between the seer and the thing is constitutive for the thing of its visibility as for the seer of his corporeity; it is not an obstacle between them, it is their means of communication" (Merleau-Ponty, *Visible* 135). What Mrs. Ramsay meant for the characters in the first chapter—being space proper as a prerequisite for the others' subjectivity—"Time Passes" does for the sake of the entirety of the narrative structure—being the dark room that

develops the invisible, "the impression of an emerging order" (Merleau-Ponty, *Sense* 14) underlying the visible, that makes possible a presence through absence.

The concluding phase of the narrative represents Lily's theoretically driven, troubled meditation on the nature of art and artistic representation. Apparently, the vacuum left behind by Mrs. Ramsay is insurmountable, yet, bearing in mind the chiasmic mechanism of "Time Passes," Lily's capacity to accomplish her vision is renewed and reinforced exactly due to her model's absence. Her canvas, empowered by a thematic centrality in the closing chapter, becomes a sort of interface for the painter's extensive propensity for abstraction and for her commanding preoccupation with metaphysical questions that she is inclined to tackle besides what she directly or indirectly perceives. In this sense, her former subject matter, i. e. Mrs. Ramsay, ceases to be the singular focus of her attention or rather her figure itself becomes a medium for a full array of historical, social, cultural, and artistic issues that distinguish post-WWI Britain, and, on a more intimate scale, Woolf's own and the Ramsays' life and private history. Consequently, Mrs. Ramsay's physical absence reinforces the necessity of her presence through her phenomenal body that is embedded in the intersubjective tissue, the flesh of the (Ramsays') world. Lily's task is to conjure up the "vibration of appearances" (Merleau-Ponty, *Sense* 18), to weld together the myriad of sensations, impressions, thoughts, memories "into a pool of thought, a deep basin of reality" (Woolf, *TTL* 194). "Suddenly, the empty drawing-room steps, the frill of the chair inside, the puppy tumbling on the terrace, the whole wave and whisper of the garden became like curves and arabesques flourishing round a centre of complete emptiness" (Woolf, *TTL* 194). The painterly eye transforms the partially given sights of the visible into constitutive elements, "curves and arabesques," and significant forms in Bell's, or, indirectly, Cézanne's sense, as well as the relationship, the constellation of these particles, "the framework of steel" (Woolf, *TTL* 54) beyond "the feathery and evanescent" (Woolf, *TTL* 186) surface of reality. This mode of perceiving and formulating the

world realizes formalist ideals of Bell, Fry, and Cézanne—on a philosophical level also Merleau-Ponty's theory of the painterly vision—that addresses the expression of the invisible underlying the visibly given.

Lily adjusts herself to the altered creative conditions in another sense, too. Her transformed relationship to the Isle of Skye, the Ramsays' cottage and, most prominently, to Mr. Ramsay forces her to experience space differently. The ever-elusive Mr. Carmichael, who has so far constantly lingered on the borderline of imperceptibility, accompanies Lily into her final creative phase, naturally preserving his invisibility and silence. Still, Lily and Carmichael become associated through their art, the mutuality of painting and poetry assists Lily in bridging past and present, life and death, presence and absence, space and time. Her sense of being divided in-between these emotional and psychic stances is represented through her constant movement from her easel to "the edge of the lawn" (Woolf, *TTL* 161) and back again (the latter point of reference being her site of watching Mr. Ramsay and the children in the boat approaching the Lighthouse). She experiences this betwixt and between position as what Laura Doyle would term an intercorporeal space.[10] "Lily paces the space between the bay and her easel, creating a measure of distance that will enable her to fill in, on her own terms, the space in her painting […]" (Doyle 66).[11]

Yet Lily is only able to succeed on condition that she acknowledges the common origin of all her environment (including her own bodily rootedness in it) and of her canvas. Her painterly space is an integral part of the reality she aims to depict and also part of the space she corporeally perceives by movement and by receiving visual, auditory, and tactile sense data. She is no longer the Cartesian viewer/painter who controls his given spatial dimension at the cost of being disembodied and located outside the realm to be represented;

[10] See also Rowley (58). For a contextualized reading of Rowley's ideas and reflections on Doyle see chapter "'Nature is on the inside' —An Overview of the Phenomenological Criticism of *To the Lighthouse*."

[11] According to Doyle, the painter's spatial measure of distance capacitates her to heal the temporal break too. (67)

on the contrary, the perceiving "body belongs to the order of the things as the world is universal flesh" (Merleau-Ponty, *Visible* 137). The painter regains his/her integral locatedness in the world that initiates a new mode of reflective/critical seeing that considers its subject the very act of seeing, subsequently, enabling the viewer to reconfigure his/her own subjectivity in the light of being one among the things seen. Gottfried Boehm describes Cézanne's painterly space in a very similar fashion as a dense space inhabited by things that share a common origin with their embedding fabric. (68) By generating a portion of that space, Lily automatically gains access to and fuses the simultaneously present temporal and spatial dimensions and their constituents. Sartrean distance and nihilation that dominated the first part of the novel give way to the Merleau-Pontian synergic mode of existence, most distinguishably due to Lily's painting, her artistic engagement. Lily, like a genuine successor to Cézanne's aesthetic inheritance, eradicates the dichotomy of such mutually exclusive categories. "[Cézanne] did not want to separate the stable things which we see and the shifting way in which they appear; he wanted to depict matter as it takes on form, the birth of order through spontaneous organization" (Merleau-Ponty, *Sense* 13). This aspiration leads Lily as well to empty herself of her social ties. "Always […] before she exchanged the fluidity of life for the concentration of painting she had a few moments of nakedness when she seemed like an unborn soul, a soul reft of body, hesitating on some windy pinnacle and exposed without protection to all the blasts of doubt" (Woolf, *TTL* 173). This momentary suspension of her social and bodily existence exposes her inevitable vulnerability that accompanies her first decisive stroke, her entry into the pictorial space. She also takes upon herself the unease of facing a defamiliarised world to encounter the "primordial experience" (Merleau-Ponty, *Sense* 16) in unison with Cézanne's commands, and, finally, to bear, and even to exploit Carmichael's proximity.[12] The solidification of "the birth of order," that is, the realization of

[12] "The lawn was the world; they were up here together, on this exalted station, she thought, looking at old Mr. Carmichael, who seemed (though they had not said a word all this time) to share her thoughts. […] Then,

the work of art in such circumstances demands an absolute concurrence of things (including the painter's own phenomenal presence) which, nonetheless, is a constantly shifting togetherness of substances. To take command of this arrangement Lily performs a tactile-motor activity, she fills in or rather infiltrates the space at her proximity with which she maintains a Merleau-Pontian kinship. What she eventually attains is the absolute synergy of all temporal, spatial, psycho-social, aesthetic forms she struggled with all through her lengthy artistic process. "The meaning is not on the phrase like the butter on the bread, like a second layer of 'psychic reality' spread over the sound: it is the totality of what is said, the integral of all the differentiations of the verbal chain; it is given with the words for those who have ears to hear" (Merleau-Ponty, *Visible* 155).

surging up, puffing slightly, old Mr. Carmichael stood beside her, looking like an old pagan god […]. They had not needed to speak. They had been thinking the same things and he had answered her without her asking him anything. He stood there spreading his hands over all the weakness and suffering of mankind; she thought he was surveying, tolerantly, compassionately, their final destiny" (Woolf, *TTL* 210, 225). Lily's revelation of this exceptionally spiritual moment gains its significance in the light of her "final destiny," that is, her completion of the painting right after her communion with Mr. Carmichael. A detailed exploration of their unique relationship will take place in the final chapter.

2. "Hinges of Light, Hallways, Stairways, Thrones Spaces of Being"[13]—A Phenomenal Encounter of Spaces

2.1. Unfolding the Textual Vistas

The spatial orientation indicated in the title of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* delineates an explicitly spatial allocation for both the characters and the readers prior to any actual (interpretative) interaction with the story. Strictly speaking, the position of the characters/readers happens to be outside the immediate surroundings of the Lighthouse, indirectly, the narrative space. Thus, the aforementioned directionality marks out the limits of here and there as two opposing fields, which also establishes the frame for divergent forces of distancing and separation.[14] "Like every autobiographical novelist, Woolf makes a number of careful displacements in the time and setting of the actions, so that it does not directly implicate her as a participant. Thus for the Cornwall in the west of England we have the Isle of Skye at the west of Scotland […]" (Fleishman 609). A certain kind of emotional and/or psychic distancing is inherent in the very genre of the (semi)-autobiographical novel. Woolf's text works towards a conscious maintenance of spatial, temporal, emotional and also, what Fleishman terms "esthetic distance" (607) in his reflection on Woolf's letters documenting her visitation to Cornwall, "the place of her most powerful childhood memories" (607). In the network of immediate and subtle displacements, readers and characters alike encounter the text as outsiders, they are kept at a distance, and, at the same time, are called on for an active involvement with the spatially prescribed narrative and analytic path. The Ramsays' summer cottage, which is a direct autobiographical allusion to Talland House, the Stephens summer

[13] The citation comes from Rainer Maria Rilke's "The Second Elegy" in *Duino Elegies and the Sonnets of Orpheus* (13).

[14] In his essay "The Housemaid and the Kitchen Table: Incorporating the Frame in *To the Lighthouse*" William R. Handley analyses the motif of the frame from several aspects, including its political, social, artistic, and even structural implications. He views the implicit directionality of the title as an "attempt to overcome the distance of time or space" (Handley 20) which I apparently contradict in my introductory claim, however, later on Handley himself argues that Woolf's attempts "prove as futile" (20) and the emphasis falls on partitioning, distancing, separation, and framing.

house in Cornwall, is nevertheless as much secluded and distanced from the socially dense London as from the Lighthouse. In this manner, the house with its out-of-the-ordinary spatial and temporal attribute functions as a subversive space that produces unconventional intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic manifestations.

Most of the characters, naturally, experience a further estrangement as a direct effect of their geographical, physical separation. Their social identity becomes suspended by the absence of their regular social and cultural context. Perhaps the most conspicuously decontextualized/displaced character is Charles Tansley (being doubly confused by the lack of his academic routine and by the unfamiliarity of the upper-middle class manners). Mr. Ramsay, however, also suffers a deep intellectual crisis that is more emphatic in this artificial social vacuum. The family members and their guests apparently gather annually for the sake of a communion, yet they appear as isolated cells continually drawn to divergent paths. Mrs. Ramsay, while making some preparations for the dinner, views the company as "the discrepancy" (Woolf, *TTL* 91) that she, except for short, elusive moments, incessantly tries to mend, to no avail. "Nothing seemed to have merged. They all set separate. And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her" (Woolf, *TTL* 91). The failure of fusing them into a single, coherent unity is, however, resolved finally in the last section within the artistic framework of Lily Briscoe's painterly activity.

In his essay "Only Relations: Vision and Achievement in To the Lighthouse" (1984), Thomas G. Matro explores the analogy of Lily Briscoe's Modernist/Post-Impressionist visionary aesthetics that attempts to reach unity, order, "form" within artistic relations and Mrs. Ramsay's identical objectives in "human relations" (212). Nevertheless, Matro anticipates that this vision of unity and order differs from the conventionally meant notion of fusion as homogeneity and claims that it "arises from relations rather than from 'oneness'" (214). A homogeneous merger would undermine Cézanne's and Fry's formalist concept

concerning the uniqueness of the individual components.[15] The final order is complete through the assemblage of markedly divergent units and the interaction of their contrastive local values. Matro finally ascribes the success of Lily's artistic struggle not so much to the actual achievement of unity but her tenacious efforts to complete her vision: "the importance of the painting, of her effort, is not what it captures but what it attempts" (Matro 219).

Other critics concerned with the issue of unity also lay emphasis on the social and cultural aspect of order, whose most obvious and visible manifestation is Lily's artistic attempt. Alice van Buren Kelley examines "The Lighthouse" as the section in which "love and art are both creative forces that unite the most disparate elements of life" (123). She approaches this motif from several perspectives, considering "the Lighthouse itself [as] the image of unity" (Kelley 115) fusing Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay's mode of perception in James's eye as "two images of a stereopticon" (Kelley 115). As Matro already suggested the relational aspect of order that rules the micro-society of the Ramsays and their guests, Kelley also highlights the social and subsequent cultural layers of such convergence. She claims that "opposing elements of the novel are brought finally into balance—Woolf's past and present […], the Victorian view of women and the modern, the masculine and feminine in a vision of androgyny, love and art" (Kelley 124). Life and art, society and aesthetics apparently are inseparable similarly to Mrs. Ramsay's communal and Lily's artistic pursuit.

The narrative, on the other hand, is governed by the multivalent notion of distance and separation, which prefigures the characters' existential condition, the manner each of them yearns to formulate or reinforce their respective subjectivity. The narrative sets forth the philosophical outline for subject formation and the contravening lines of force, an essential characteristic of the whole novel on various levels, indicated right at the opening through

[15] For further exploration of Cézanne's and Fry's ideals on the necessity of order emerging from the chaos of disparate constituents see the chapter entitled "'The Hermit's Hut'—Mrs. Ramsay's Transfiguration."

James's experience. "To her son these words[16] conveyed an extraordinary joy, as if it were settled the expedition were bound to take place, and the wonder to which he had looked forward, for years and years it seemed, was, after a night's darkness and a day's sail, within touch" (Woolf, *TTL* 7). James's complex emotional response to her mother's casually affirmative remark establishes the very pattern of the narrative's rhythm, an indecisive restlessness that cannot gain fulfilment. Through the motifs of extraordinary joy and that of the expedition, a natural eruption, an outward movement is described, which, however the moment it arises becomes bound, somewhat fixed and frozen. This momentary stability is yet again dissolved by the subsequent temporal release of energies. The flow of anticipation projected into a seemingly incomprehensible infinity suddenly turns into a graspable reality, it happens to be "within touch." The dynamism of this sensation designates the duplicity of the inside and the outside, the rapid shift of unbound emanation and sudden halts, the doubtful promise of the external completion and the confinement of internal lack.

Contrary to my positioning James on the verge of the inside/outside binarism William R. Handley describes the youngest Ramsay child as a character who exclusively designates framing and separation by his "gendered tendency to cut out and separate and even further to react with violence to the severity of his father's judgments" (21). Handley, at an earlier point of his article, argues that judgement, itself a characteristics of the father, Tansley or Bankes, "suggests partitioning, a separation of a part from the whole" (20). In this sense, he doubly endows male characters with a dominantly separating, framing, dissecting role as opposed to "Mrs. Ramsay's knitting a stocking and her mediating role in blunting the edge of James's pain and his father's authority" (Handley 21-2). Yet James apparently appears in an inseparable unity with his mother. The two of them open the narrative, and even more significantly, the emblematic painterly trope, the triangular shape of the Madonna-and-the-

[16] "These words" is a reference to Mrs. Ramsay's reassuring promise regarding fine weather, hence the possibility of the excursion to the Lighthouse.

Child, through which Lily primarily attempts to visualise Mrs. Ramsay, is complete only with the presence of James. Moreover, their chromatic fusion produces the iconic purple that Jack Stewart calls "the direct sign of integration" ("Color" 449), which strengthens their initial unity and mutuality. James's liminal status that is evocative of Mrs. Ramsay's prospectively delineated locus within the house forces him to oscillate between emptiness and fulfilment. The grasp with which James suddenly takes a bodily and spatial hold on the external vacuum of invisible possibilities, on the one hand, advances Mrs. Ramsay's habit of solidifying her position by taking hold of objects around her, on the other hand, he assumes the spatio-existential modulations of both Sartre's and Levinas's concepts.

Both philosophers view the self's coming into existence through spatial, and subsequently, bodily metaphors. The notion of distance, separation, "confrontation" and the dichotomy of here-and-there, in-and-out or past and present recur multifariously on the thematic, structural, poetic level of the novel, most particularly, however, in the first part, which quality is further emphasised by the thematic aperture ("The Window") cut out of the narrative texture. James's affirmative grasp, however, also secures a temporal blend besides his spatio-corporeal seizure: his long-cherished wish that "for years and years" (Woolf, *TTL* 7) ruled his life suddenly finds its anchor in the near future. This bridging of the temporal hiatus anticipates Sartre's view on the instrumentality of the body that occupies the temporal limen of past and present within the frame of subject formation. "Thus the body, since it is surpassed, is the Past. […] In each project of the For-itself, in each perception the body is there; it is the immediate Past in so far as it still touches on the Present which flees it. This means that it is at once a point of *view* and a point of *departure*—a point of view, a point of departure which I *am* and which at the same time I surpass toward what I have to be" (Sartre 326). James's opening revelation prefigures the narrative's intrinsic pulsation of presence and absence, the taking-hold-of, possessing gesture of hands and the act of grasping emptiness and

vacuum only to achieve the illusion of temporary fulfilment and gratification before realizing one's utter loss. By the last bit of his suggestive remark of "after a night's darkness and a day's sail" (Woolf, *TTL* 7), James also portends the novel's structural design concerning the succeeding chapters through their most emblematic attributes: utter darkness of "Time Passes" and Mr. Ramsay's missionary sail in the final section, "The Lighthouse." James, who "belonged, even at the age of six, to that great clan which cannot keep this feeling separate from that, but must let future prospects, with their joys and sorrows, cloud what is actually at hand" (Woolf, *TTL* 7), occupies a pre-reflective stance. Yet, he is about to mark out the decisive locus of becoming, the Sartrean "point of view and point of departure" to be surpassed.

Whereas James represents the novel's most apparent theme, prefigured even in the title, that is, the (in)approachability of the Lighthouse, his spatial counterpart, Mrs. Ramsay can be identified—among other equally significant acts and motifs—with the climactic dinner-scene, with its carefully composed table and its most plastically described element, the centrepiece. The event is meant to serve Mrs. Ramsay's unifying objectives to "[make] order out of apparent disorder" (Naremore 123).[17]

> Now all the candles were lit up, and the faces on both sides of the table were brought nearer by the candle light, and composed, as they had not been in the twilight, into a party round a table, for the night was now shut off by panes of glass, which, far from giving any accurate view of the outside world, rippled it so strangely that here, inside the room, seemed to be order and dry land; there, outside, a reflection in which things waved and vanished, waterily.

[17] A very similar cohesive element appears in *Mrs. Dalloway*, in the form of an apparently routine act of "the perfect hostess," as Peter Walsh ironically calls Mrs. Dalloway (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 9). On the surface, the singularly dominant thematic motif of the novel is Mrs. Dalloway's party, determining the present of the Dalloways and their guests. A considerable difference, however, is that the organization of the party seems to be the sole preoccupation of Mrs. Dalloway, the character's public self, whereas Clarissa represents the oneiric, private self prefiguring Mrs. Ramsay's wedge-shaped core of darkness. Mrs. Ramsay's figure is not so visibly split in *To the Lighthouse*, yet she bears the same duplicity of the social and the personal spheres.

> Some change at once went through them all, as if this had really happened, and they were all conscious of making a party together in a hollow, on an island; had their common cause against that fluidity out there. (Woolf, *TTL* 106)

Apparently, the desired unity is accomplished the way the company is crystallized into a composition, which Mrs. Ramsay achieves owing to what Matro terms her "determination, for she insists on going through with the dinner despite the obvious differences and antagonisms among the guests" (217-8). Nevertheless, Matro himself acknowledges that the equilibrium of the arrangement is only temporary (218), and, conspicuously enough, is completed at the cost of a further separation, the company of guests being "shut off by panes of glass" (Woolf, *TTL* 106), producing a here-and-inside order and a there-and-outside chaos. Due to this design, the guests of the Ramsay house create a collective subjectivity, under the aegis of Mrs. Ramsay's compulsive unification. Matro recognizes "Mrs. Ramsay's achievement […] [as] a reduction" (218) and also draws attention to a frequent critical fallacy considering this order of fusion and, eventually, simplification as a representation of form (in Bell's and Fry's sense). Contrary to this Matro observes this order as "the very shape of the confusion they [Mrs. Ramsay and Lily] and others experience, not the shape of some idealistic oneness" (219). The tension prevalent in the company—indicating the innate drive of the subject-to-be's, including Mrs. Ramsay's, to follow divergent paths—is also revealed by the immediacy of the dissolution the moment Mrs. Ramsay, the cohesive force departs the company: "a sort of disintegration set in; they wavered about, went different ways" (Woolf, *TTL* 122).

These recurrent divergent lines of force evoke Sartre's formulation of subject formation according to which "[t]o come into existence, for me, is to unfold my distances from things and thereby to cause things 'to be there.' […] For human reality, to be is to-be-there; […]" (Sartre 308). The process of self-realization assumes the gesture of pointing outwardly, creating a chasm at the moment of the I's upsurge. The company's collective

subjectivity at the Ramsays' house emerges much more emphatically in the wake of distancing itself from the external sphere in a Sartrean "over against the world" manner rather than as a result of Mrs. Ramsay's strained efforts towards unity. The subject circumscribes "a hollow, on an island" (Woolf, *TTL* 106) for itself to survive the fluidity of chaos, yet the ostensible repose it reaches is grounded on emptiness, a vacuum, on the one hand, and a, by definition, isolated and separated geographical space, an island, on the other. The I for Sartre happens to be/to exist along with securing its detachment from the rest of the things by hollowing out or folding out a certain portion of the circumambient reality. The cleavage created by the self's unfolding comprises the sense of repudiation, the surpassing of others as the cost of one's coming to life. The self's "to be thereness" guarantees its own spatially generated being, that is its corporeality, which, also being one with the world, being cast into and out of its own texture, the I, consequently, has to surpass.

> To have a body is to be the foundation of one's own nothingness and not to be the foundation of one's being; I *am* my body to the extent that I *am*; I *am* not my body to the extent that I am not what I am. It is by my nihilation that I escape it. But I do not thereby make an object of it, for what I am is what I perpetually escape. The body is necessary again as the obstacle to be surpassed in order to be in the world; that is the obstacle which I am to myself. (Sartre 326)

This perpetual surpassing ensures the potentiality of the for-itself repeating the pattern of the spatio-corporeal distancing, the "nihilation" of the body at the moment of the self's upsurge. The spatial modality and relational stance with and within the world and all the other things there calls forth one's oscillation between the exterior and interior realms. Nevertheless, the relationship of the in-itself to the world and, parallel to that, the for-itself to the in-itself knows no mutually exclusive spheres of the external and internal. In the network of spatial

relativities the in-itself is yet another enfolding on the surface of the world that is in a constant transformation. In this sense Sartre precludes the reinforcement of dualities such as body and mind or exterior and interior.

Levinas's formula for the same ontological situation is the dwelling, which indicates an *a priori* interiority through the image of the house, and subsequently, of the body, as opposed to the world of objects from which the subject withdraws. Whereas for Sartre the momentum of distancing means the potential for the I to upsurge, Levinas lays emphasis on separation which "is constituted as dwelling and inhabitation. To exist henceforth means to dwell. […] To be separated is to dwell somewhere; separation is produced positively in localization" (Levinas 156, 168). Apparently, Levinas's model preserves the dichotomy of the inside/outside duality doubly: the subject withdraws into the intimacy of a home and, within that, the interiority of the body. Yet, this edifice, i.e. the body serves, similarly to the Sartrean model, as a thing to be possessed, the very means of my crucial estrangement and surpassability, my being an obstacle for myself in order to exist.

> The body is my possession according as my being maintains itself in a home at the limit of interiority and exteriority. The extraterritoriality of a home conditions the very possession of my body. […] *To be a body* is on the one hand *to stand* [*se tenir*], to be master of oneself, and, on the other hand, to stand on the earth, to be in the *other*, and thus to be encumbered by one's body. […] To be at home with oneself in something other than oneself, to be oneself while living from something other than oneself, to live from..., is concretized in corporeal existence. (Levinas 162, 164)

Yet, the body cannot be attributed with the qualities of objects and things that surround entities, it is rather the domain that awakens the self to its existential condition in its liminality. Possession, even if it might suggest a further binary opposition of a master and

slave relationship, appears to be indispensable in the formulation of subjectivity with a different connotation. Possession signifies the discovery, the comprehension of the world through the apprehensive grasp of the body, more particularly that of the hand on things, realizing their substantiality, their solidity (Levinas 161). This contiguity of body/hand and thing as substance prepares the ground for the phenomenological understanding of the relationship between the I and the non-I. Levinas redefines the inside/outside duality by describing them as simultaneous attributes of the body, as if the body occupied the threshold of these opposing realms, while maintaining its contiguity with other things. This innate alienation, distance, or separation, the perpetual spatial fluctuation in and out of the body is what characterizes human beings' corporeal dwelling.

These two spatio-existential models govern my exploration of *To the Lighthouse* that abounds in characters yearning for (self-)recognition/self-realization, probing the precarious borderlines of the self and the other (self as the other), for various reasons. Woolf, however, presents the range of struggling subjects emphatically through phenomenologically conditioned spatial relationships. Spatiality, as an ontological necessity, gains force, on the one hand, through a series of both literal and metaphorical spaces: first and foremost, the summer cottage, the shelter of/for the Ramsays and their guests; the iconic Lighthouse, the spiritual referential point; Mrs. Ramsay’s body, which is frequently introduced through spatial metaphors; and finally Lily’s painting, the artistic space opened to regain the lost substantiality, controversially, through absence. On the other hand, the narrative texture bears attributes of pictorial compositions, presenting an intricate network of correlations concerning the figures/characters’ physical positioning as well as their emotional and social associations. This rigorous structural logic permeates both the primary narrative line, the way certain characters recur in relation to particular characters or objects, and, additionally, Lily's painterly endeavours in her constant mobilization of compositional units within the artistic

space. This comprehensive relationality entails that the existential distances one ascertains as elemental and inevitable, necessarily transform fellow beings to things, casting them into a spatial exteriority with respect to the emerging subject.

The present chapter apparently reproduces the tripartite structure[18] of the novel, starting with: (1) the analysis of the house itself and its constitutive elements, first and foremost the window that carries a multiplicity of functions (mirror, frame, meta-painting); continuing with (2) the introduction of the focal character, Mrs. Ramsay and her corporeal presence which leads to her spatial (and visual) analogies with the cottage and the Lighthouse (being a membrane, medium, screen, and painting); and finally (3) examining Lily's painting, which fuses the previously discussed horizons, providing the third pillar, that of visuality, besides the textual and the spatial ones.

---

[18] Numerous articles are devoted to the examination of the triadic division of the novel. Woolf herself offers the often quoted primal structure of "two blocks joined by a corridor" (Woolf qtd. in Lee xiv) being reminiscent of an H-shape she draws in her "Notes for Writing." Norman Friedman, in his essay "Double Vision in *To the Lighthouse*" (1955) that focuses on the "dialectic order" (150) of the novel, distinguishes three levels corresponding with the three chapters as follows: "the relations of self to other," "of man to nature," and "of art to life" (151, 153). Marianna Torgovnick calls the novel a "triptych" (140) that imitates the structure of Lily's painting which "must balance a mass on the left with another on the right with a third mass in the center" (140). (For the triptych simile see also Dowling 150). This analogy, besides the arresting overtone of the hovering painterly quality and of its allusion to the sacral attribute of the genre, emphasizes the permeability of the verbal and the visual media. Virginia R. Hyman views the arrangement of the chapters as "suggesting the pattern of light-dark-light; peace-war-peace; civilization-barbarism-civilization" (123), which clearly reveals the repetitive pattern of the novel as its inherent compositional force and also the accomplishment of the thematic constraint of the order-chaos-order restored design. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak describes the overall pattern of the novel as "a grammatical allegory […]: Subject (Mrs. Ramsay)—copula—Predicate (painting). […] [T]he simplest and most powerful sentence. Within this allegory, the second part of the book is the place of the copula" (30-1). Christopher Reed emphasises the "neat trilateral symmetry of *To the Lighthouse*" (31) in comparison with *Between the Acts* whose "formal structure […] is left radically incomplete, an abruptly truncated triptych […]" (31). Reed establishes the novels' attitude to formalist expectations in the light of their structural clarity and equilibrium. Whereas "*To the Lighthouse* concludes with the affirmation of the formalist creative process" (Reed 31) *Between the Acts* terminates in "[t]he formal and authorial disunity" (Reed 31). Discussing "partitioning," "separation," and "framing" devices and images, Handley regards the "tripartite structure" as the very means of "fram[ing] the problem of the part's relation to the whole" (20). Although the triadic form is explored in a diverse manner, as the previous reflective enumeration of analyses demonstrates it, there is one common quality that all these approaches share: namely, they all work within the "neat trilateral symmetry" (to recycle Reed's term here) of the novel, strengthening the original chapter division and its thematic and structural partitioning. Even if my threefold interpretation discusses architectural, corporeal, and artistic spaces in separate units it also attempts to maintain their interrelatedness in order to highlight the impossibility of any artificial separation, which would also undermine Woolf's narrative logic. The repository of such simultaneity is the character of Mrs. Ramsay herself, whose phenomenal presence conditions all spatial and aesthetic modulations and the coexistence of categories such as inside/outside, presence/absence or place/space disregarding her death announced at the beginning of "Time Passes."

2. 2. Lived Spaces—The Phenomenology of the Ramsays' Architectural Sites

The narrative marks out the locus of the reader within a tight spatial and temporal composition in accordance with Woolf's H-shaped structural vision that prefigures the vertical frames around the horizontal bridge. The middle section also presents a caesura, geographically, through the image of the sea, and thematically, through the notion of oblivion manifested in a series of death cases that occur within the Ramsay family (the death of Mrs. Ramsay, Prue and Andrew Ramsay). Ambiguously enough, this overwhelming interruption also serves as a link with its fluid, amorphous substantiality between the temporal and spatio-existential realms, past and present, presence and absence. "Time Passes" performs the same liminal role for the entirety of the novel as the window motif within the frame of the first chapter.

Interruption is a recurrent device of the narrative, a permanent necessity to delineate contours, to establish boundaries, which fosters the process of subject formation. Disruption appears with protean richness from the most trivial details to all-comprehensive and abstract forms. "Nothing would make Mr. Ramsay move on. There he stood, demanding sympathy" (Woolf, *TTL* 42), with which he annoyingly interrupts Mrs. Ramsay and James's intimacy, while he himself often "[s]topped dead and stood looking in silence at the sea" (Woolf, *TTL* 51). Lily's muddled blocks of colours can also be interpreted as aesthetic interruptions, her stylized forms are incomprehensible for a conventional spectator of academic taste (e.g. Mr. Bankes's puzzlement at the purple triangle [Woolf, *TTL* 58]), or for those following the Impressionist atmospheric style that substantiates air only to fill in the gaps among objects and figures. The third mode of interruption appears on the structural level in the form of the repetitive exclamation "Someone had blundered!"[19] (Woolf, *TTL* 23, 30, 35, 38). This motif

[19] In her phenomenological analysis of *To the Lighthouse*, Doyle observes that words for Woolf acquire a certain physical presence and objecthood by which they "extend and multiply the intersections of corporeality"

haunts the first part, surfacing from time to time as an enigmatic textual trickster (altogether seven times), sweeping through the consciousness of different characters or appearing as a citation typographically disrupting the narrative flow.

The notion of bonding and connection, on the other hand, recurs with the prevalent narrative icon, the window,[20] which functions both as the mediator between inner and outer spaces and also as an indicator of a house, a "lived space" (Bollnow 32). Nevertheless, as Andrew Kaplan suggests in his meditation upon windows from a broad historical, generic, and philosophical perspective, the window as the means of mediation, fusion, or unification can easily be dismantled. He claims that "[the] window […] not only opens on a vista, [but] it reflects the image of the viewer. […] [It] both exposes and captures light: it is the frame as well as the lens. […] [It] gives us the opportunity to see as well as to look through" (Kaplan 162). This apparent ambiguity of transparency, offering a view for the subject and, at other times, blinding the subject with his/her own reflection, halting or ceasing the free flow of the detecting rays of the eye, is an essential characteristic of Woolf's narrative logic, too.

The constant interplay of outgoing movements of the searching I/eye and the introspection and contraction into the opposite direction controls the very mechanism of the narrative, which provides an incessant rhythm of oscillation between the extremes of both social/cultural

---

(58). She also mentions as an example Tennyson's often cited line from "The Charge of the Light Brigade" as a vehicle fairly similar to the image of the window both in its architectural context and as a trope. "'Some one had blundered,' at different moments interrupts the thoughts of Mrs. Ramsay, Lily, and Bankes; […]. Furthermore, it binds together separate moments in the text so that on this narrative level words again serve as concrete instruments of coherence" (Doyle 59). Although Doyle herself takes into consideration the line's severing and disruptive power, she also highlights its binding, connective function due to its formerly established material presence.

[20] Martha C. Nussbaum adopts the image of the window as a metaphor for knowing the other's mind (732, 743) which "stands in tension with Lily's image of the sealed hive, suggesting that Lily is blind to a possibility" (732). Glenn Pedersen reads the structure of *To the Lighthouse* from the perspective of Mrs. Ramsay's relationship with her husband and son, and also the way how this psychologically loaded triangular bond is represented or rather transforms Lily's artistic vision in the course of the novel. Pedersen draws an analogy between Mrs. Ramsay's figure and the window as one among the "leitmotivs [sic]" (585) of the novel, which correlation he often extends to the entirety of the house ("the house, the symbolic extension of the window, is Mrs. Ramsay" [586]); the island ("It and the island on which it rests is she" [586]); or the Lighthouse ("Mrs. Ramsay, by maintaining her usurpation of the lighthouse while she lives, herself keeps James from going to the lighthouse in the bay [Mr. Ramsay], because by her own desire he is fixed [in an Oedipal relation] to Mrs. Ramsay, the lighthouse in the window" [591-2]).

and human/bodily exteriority and interiority. The recurrent image of the window, however, is only one means of hollowing out a segment of reality, for the sake of a shelter, a dwelling place, on the one hand, and dismantling any confining/restrictive limitation, on the other. The physically related spaces or architectural structures like the summer cottage or the Lighthouse behave in a similarly ambiguous manner. In a more abstracted mode Lily's canvas acts out the same role, due primarily to its status of being the replica of the narrated space but also in its own right as the artistic spatial horizon of the novel.

The summer cottage performs the aforementioned fluctuating dynamism of in-and-out partly as a result of its temporary function, being abandoned for almost the whole year. In unison with the rhythm of nature, the house is in a constant transformation and it looks "fearfully shabby" (Woolf, *TTL* 31):

> [The rooms'] entrails […] were all over the floor […] [in] winter […] positively dripped with wet […]. Crabs […] seaweed, […] Rose's objects—shells, reads, stones […]. And the result of it was, she sighed, taking in the whole room from floor to ceiling […] that things got shabbier and got shabbier summer after summer. The mat was fading; the wall-paper was flapping […] still, if every door in a house is left perpetually open. […] But it was the doors that annoyed her; every door was left open. […] [W]indows should be open, and doors shut. (Woolf, *TTL* 31, 32, 33)

The passage above reveals not only the actual state of the house, but it initiates a further dichotomy that seems to be shattered by the house itself: the contrast of natural space and cultural/civilized space. The seashore with its flora and fauna gradually claims the interior of the house for itself. Since the walls are wet and continuously mouldering, the artificially erected borderlines of inside and outside, nature and culture also become disintegrated. This process, however, might jeopardize subject formation that is based on a definite separation

from the world, on the delineation of bodily/spatial contours. Perhaps that is the reason for Mrs. Ramsay's insistence on closed doors, to resist the overwhelming intrusion of nature as a result of which her intimacy as a spatial and bodily form would be eliminated. On the other hand, this fusion foreshadows the transfiguration of architectural spaces to bodily ones, the coexistence of the bodily subject and its encompassing set of things. O. F. Bollnow emphasizes the essential interiority and privacy of the house and defines it as the edifice that "carves out of universal space, a special and to some extent private space and thus separates an inner space from an outer space" (Bollnow 33). His observation also implies the sense of being situated in that "universal space" out of which one can define himself/herself. The Ramsays' house apparently transcends the public/private, exterior/interior oppositions, since the house is progressively turned inside out, or just the other way round, the natural sphere is turned outside in. The oscillation between the external and internal spheres at this particular stage refers exclusively to the lived space, i.e. the house; nevertheless, this transgressive tendency gains a further empowering twist through the emergence of the analogy between Mrs. Ramsay/her body, and the surrounding edifices.

Windows and doors, as the spatial constituents of the house, are the nodes of opening/closure, seeing/blinding, light/darkness, occupying the dubious position of the threshold between these realms. Mrs. Ramsay's reiterated demands for closed doors and open windows, with which she maintains their presence in the consciousness of the readers, automatically introduces the question of the functional difference between these means of fenestration. In the context of Lily's painting, one inescapably evokes Alberti's window as an arch-metaphor for paintings (Jay [6-7], Masheck [35]). His is only one in a whole series of metaphors regarding the relationship of visual artefacts and the aperture as an architectural form. In *The Virtual Window: from Alberti to Microsoft*, Anne Friedberg maps the transformation of the window, more specifically its "virtual" i.e. metaphorical appearance

from a cultural-historical viewpoint. “The window serves as a symptomatic trope […], because it has functioned both as a practical device (a material opening in the wall) and an epistemological metaphor (a figure for the framed view of the viewing subject)” (Friedberg 26). Its practical function is formulated by Alberti as an opening “for light and ventilation” (Friedberg 32), which attribute, nevertheless, can also bear figurative potentials, actually fairly similar ones to its epistemological power, due to its being the entrance for light.

The window also serves as a framing device for knowledge and/or the very process of knowing the world, in a twofold manner. Firstly, by excising a certain segment of the visible world from the inside of one's spatial setting, and secondly, by framing the viewing subject for the rest of the world, from the outside. “Its [the window's] transparency enforced a two-way model of visuality: by framing a private view outward—the ‘picture’ window—and by framing a public view inward—the ‘display’ window” (Friedberg 113). This distinction, however, is not descriptive of the Albertian window, “since fifteenth century windows did not necessarily use glass nor were they necessarily transparent” (Friedberg 32), unless one reads this employment of the window already as a trope, in unison with Alberti’s formula, as an “open window” that stands for paintings. ”Let me tell you what I do when I am painting. First of all, on the surface on which I am going to paint, I draw a rectangle of whatever size I want, which I regard as an open window through which the subject to be painted is seen […]” (Alberti 54). Alberti draws a clear analogy between the painterly surface and the architectural aperture. The window most tangibly assists the painter in positioning the subject, both as a human figure and as a theme, within the artistic space, in this sense circumscribing a segment of reality. “The Window” section frequently exposes the image of fenestration delineating various relational vectors among characters who are engaged in the act of either looking at or out of windows. “Mrs. Ramsay sitting in the window with James” (Woolf, *TTL* 22, 53) “[wearing] to Lily’s eyes, an august shape; the shape of a dome” (58) appears as the subject

matter for Lily, where the window establishes this primary painter-model relationship, indireclty positioning even Mr. Ramsay who "sat opposite her [Mrs. Ramsay] with his back to the window precisely in the middle of the view" (93). Mrs. Ramsay, however, becomes the subject of viewing for her husband alike, with which a social-marital bond is highlighted between Mr. Ramsay and his subject of admiration. "He […] looked once at his wife and son in the window" (Woolf, *TTL* 38, 42, 134). The window, nevertheless, serves Mrs. Ramsay differently. It is not the view highlighted/framed by the window that matters for her, since almost entirely she does not see beyond the pane of glass. Her view is blocked by the reflective quality of the window and triggers introspection instead. "She glanced at the window with its ripple of reflected lights" (Woolf, *TTL* 114); She looked at the window in which the candle flames burnt brighter now that the panes were black" (119).[21]

There is a similar theoretical divergence between the architectural and the painterly modes of employment of the window, which is often overlooked by theoreticians as Friedberg points out along with Joseph Masheck, who explores Alberti's window as a misread metaphor for Renaissance paintings as mimetic renditions of reality. "The 'window' idea, then, is a trope, and a signal of the essentially fictive poetics of painting" (Masheck 35). Whereas the former, that is the architectural employment of the window, functions as an aperture, in the strictest sense of the word, as a hole or an opening on the wall, the latter is rather the means of pointing out, highlighting particular sections of the visible. From a less historiographic approach, Friedberg not only explores the fallacy of the painting-reality relationship, but also underlines the implications of the socio-cultural power of the window as a trope. "The painting was not intended to copy a literal view out the window but to recreate a spatial reconstruction of such a view. Hence, Alberti's window emphasized the rectangular frame of viewing, a frame for the spatial realism of perspective. The frame was what mattered, not the

[21] For further instances of Mrs. Ramsay's similar experience see 120, 126, 134.

view from a window" (Friedberg 30). In this sense the painting—as opposed to the commonly accepted view of Renaissance visuality that declared the visual artefact as opening a window on reality, a direct access to the world—appears as a mediator that "recreate[s] a spatial reconstruction," as it were, doubly alienating reality from the work of art. Consequently, the emphasis falls on its functioning as a demarcation line, separating the continuity, yet not the contiguity, of the viewer's and the painterly space. The painting, i.e. the window, is "the intersection of the visual pyramid" (Grayson qtd. in Friedberg 32), or, as Friedberg synthesizes Masheck's analysis, it is "the metaphoric index of the frame" (Friedberg 33). The window motif thus loses its function as a means of realism; it rather sheds light on the constructedness, the painterliness of the artistic space. Handley devotes a fairly extensive analysis to the notion of frames to "examine the politics of seeing, of separating and making a whole, that occurs in the process of framing that is neither external nor internal to the object of the artist's eye but rather constitutive of the artist's work, that allows the work to 'take place'" (18-9). Although he focuses predominantly on the socio-political and gender-related aspects of framing rather than the aesthetic ones he claims, along with Eric Auerbach (whom he indirectly quotes), that Woolf manages to create an "alternative realism" at the cost of shattering "the internal/external border" (Handley 18) by which she perpetuates the constructive/creative potentials of the frame, instead of employing it to merely "[record] 'external' reality" (18). Similarly to the duplicity of the architectural and the painterly approaches to the window as a trope, Mrs. Ramsay's relationship with the apertures of the house marks a somewhat ambiguous attitude towards reality, both through the others' views and her own. Tension surfaces as a result of her two modes of being related to the window (as "a painting" or as signifying the threshold of in-and-out): primarily, as the representation of beauty, conventionally prescribing the role of a spectacle (Woolf, *TTL* 20, 22, 39, 42, 53) with the emphasis falling on what is behind the pane of glass/frontal panel of the painting;

secondarily, as her constant inclination to transcend both literally and figuratively her imposed frame, indicating an outward directionality (Woolf, *TTL* 70, 88, 119, 120, 133).

The trope of the frame as a corollary to the motif of the painting-as-window bears several implications. First and foremost, it prescribes the locus of the viewer as fixed within the space symmetrically juxtaposed to the one depicted beyond the picture plane. The frame also appears as the means of regulation, through which the *perspectiva artificialis* functions as:

> a systematic abstraction from the structure of this psychophysiological space. For it is not only the effect of perspectival construction, but indeed its intended purpose, to realize in the representation of space precisely that homogeneity and boundlessness foreign to the direct experience of that space. In a sense, perspective transforms psychophysiological space into mathematical space. (Panofsky 30-1)

The strict structuring of reality within the framework of the construed (painterly) space preserves the centrality of the human subject, who is extensively confined, yet, at the same time, is the very basis of its constructedness. On the one hand, man is the measure of this perspectival system, on the other hand, s/he secures its legitimacy through perception, occupying the inherent counterpoint of the recreated space through being its inscribed spectator. Hence, man and the spatial reconstruction of the artwork mutually define each other's existence. Additionally, the frame, due to its regulatory, prescriptive function, generates order and an ordered view of the world on both sides of the picture plane. Order, as a measured proportion, a strict compositionality beyond the apparent arbitrariness of loosely heaped up figures and forms—"the framework of steel" on which the colours are burning (Woolf, *TTL* 54) as it appears in Lily's painterly vision—conspicuously characterizes the aesthetics of Modernism as well as that of the Renaissance.

Another liminal means of the narrative's spatial construction is the door. In his phenomenological study of varied spatial structures, *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard sees the door as "an entire cosmos of the Half-open, the temptation to open up the ultimate depths of being, and the desire to conquer all reticent beings. The door schematizes two strong possibilities which sharply classify two types of daydream. At times, it is closed, bolted, padlocked. At others, it is open, that is to say, wide open" (Bachelard 222). Bachelard views "man [as a] half-open being" (222) who occupies the betwixt and between state of the self and the Other, the I and the world. The condition of this openness rests in man's capacity to receive the world in his or her interiority as his or her own and, at the same time, to emanate into the world, to incorporate other entities of the world. Daydreams besides being the nexus of influx and emanation also serve as the means of condensation, "a summoning together" (Mrs. Ramsay's own words to describe her experience of being one with the world [Woolf, *TTL* 69]) of past, present, and future, here and there, actual experience and aspirations. Daydreams fuse not only temporal imprints but spatial ones too, since man's dreams and memories are housed in actual spaces. "[T]he house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind. The binding principle in this integration is the daydream" (Bachelard 6). Mrs. Ramsay materializes the oneiric house proper, that is, "the house of dream-memory" (Bachelard 15), the wedge-shaped core of darkness, into which she continually withdraws and which gains its ultimate formulation in the purple triangular shape in Lily's painting well after the absence of Mrs. Ramsay.[22]

Bollnow's distinction between doors and windows, on the other hand, evokes the analogy of these structural elements and human sensory experience. He claims that man "needs a door by which he can leave and a window through which he can at least see the world outside" (Bollnow 35). Consequently, doors serve direct communication with the

[22] I shall provide the analysis of the binding capacity of Mrs. Ramsay and also the artistic/aesthetic space in subsequent chapters.

external sphere, where communication may also imply verbal mediation. Windows, on the other hand, provide less immediate, yet much more complex and controversial visual capacities. Mrs. Ramsay's insistence on closed doors indicates a self-imposed enclosure, withdrawal, in apparent contradiction with the predominantly outward direction of her gaze and her longing for transparency. Her insistence on doors being closed as opposed to open windows can be indicative of her awareness of the necessity for distancing and/or separation. She is consistent in maintaining the spatial, and indirectly, bodily borderlines for the sake of constituting the body that, in return for subjectivity, must be surpassed in the Sartrean manner. Being devoid of the body one has no potential for defining existential distance.

The doors of the Ramsays' house, however, are wide open all the time, conveying a definite call for entry and/or penetration, both physically and visually. In an exhaustive analysis of the door motif in painting, encompassing a period of about three hundred years from the 15th century on (primarily focusing on Dutch painters with occasional glances on Spanish and Italian artists) Claude Gandelman claims that "doors are veritable signals directed at us observers and ordering us to enter with our eyes. […] [T]hese doors are veritable perlocutionary devices urging us to 'Come in!'" (47-8). Considering *To the Lighthouse* as an emphatically visually composed text, Gandelman's observation regarding paintings is valid for the literary work too, since, in his book *Reading Pictures, Viewing Texts*, he pursues a cross-generic interpretative attitude from an interartistic point of view. This perlocutionary urge implies the verbal capacity of visual representations and also the communicative power of doors to generate an interpretative interaction with the painterly domain. In this sense, doors in *To the Lighthouse* do not only serve as physical borderlines of the public and private spheres, nor do they merely appear as means of spatial communication, but innately point to their own metaphysical potentials, too. This gradual interiorization is all the more manifest due to the arrangement of one space opening on the other towards the innermost rooms of the

cottage. “The drawing-room door was open; the hall door was open; it sounded as if the bedroom doors were open; and certainly the window on the landing was open, for that she had opened herself” (Woolf, *TTL* 32). In his exploration of Modernist indoor and outdoor spaces in the works of T. S. Eliot, Woolf and Wyndham Lewis, Michael Levenson straightforwardly states at the very beginning of his article that “Modernism begins in a room” (2). By this, he suggests the indispensability of the intimate spatial enclosure in the process of (artistic) self-realization. He continues his argument by confronting Victorian domesticity with that of Modernism, the latter “exaggerat[ing] inwardness to the point of trespass: an inwardness that completes and exceeds the confined world of domesticity, a recession beyond the cluttered drawing room, into the curtained alcove, the shuttered cabinet, the interior’s own interior” (Levenson 4). The Ramsays’ house appears as one integral cavernous body, similarly to a human organism. The constancy of the very image of the door, on the other hand, evokes its other function, that is its being a threshold, a limen, which is simultaneously a line of separation and linking. This motif also reinforces the essential rhythm of the narrative, the pulsation of flowing energies and renewed interruptions. Mrs. Ramsay's positioning in the window frames, on the frontal steps of the house or on the stairway ascending to the upstairs bedrooms establishes her locus as intermediary and liminal.

2. 3. "The Hermit's Hut"—Mrs. Ramsay's Transfigurations

Mrs. Ramsay's excessive desire for viewing/seeing reveals her inclination for an altered mode of existence/perception, even if apparently she never transcends the physical limits of her immediate environment, the house or, in a wider sense, the island. Most of the time she appears either in the window, framed (imprisoned?) as a picture, or in one of the rooms, as in a cell. Hence the dual (re)presentation of Mrs. Ramsay as a work of art and the home, "the determining centre," to adopt Bollnow's term. The characters, the events, the landscape revolve around her; consequently she manifests the focal point against which all the others define themselves in the Sartrean sense by erecting an existential distance from the referential locus of self-definition. She is the object proper of the others' for-itself, "the necessity of [one's] contingency" (Grene 217), the body to be surpassed.

Thematically, she is the one who invites the guests to the cottage, the one whose beauty[23] attracts almost all of the (male) characters[24], and the secret that everyone wants to unravel. Mrs. Ramsay is the silent observer and the observed at the same time, she is frequently physically absent, yet constantly occupies the consciousness of the characters, and she is the Sphinx, the embodiment of the enigma that everyone attempts to internalize, yet fears to approach. Mrs. Ramsay, primarily through her being a "mother and creative anima" performing her seemingly mundane acts, embodies life, fertility, "a creative spirit": for others,

---

[23] Suzanne Raitt reflects upon Mrs. Ramsay's beauty and its effect on Lily and her attempt to produce a visual narrative of Mrs. Ramsay as something that "paralyses, [and] is itself paralysed" (107). Her beauty appears "as an image of arrest" (Raitt 107) that blocks Lily with its "mask like" quality and stillness.

Emily Dalgarno discusses the notion of Mrs. Ramsay's beauty "as a term that represents the ideology of gender. […] Throughout 'The Window' Mrs. Ramsay remains socially identified as the beautiful woman, the object of the gaze" (89). She identifies Lily's inability to accomplish her artistic vision with the controlling presence of the male gaze and the aesthetic expectations to represent beauty in accordance with the laws of mimesis. The abstraction of Mrs. Ramsay's beauty into the "triangular purple shape" (Woolf, *TTL* 58) evades male dismissal only after "the death of Mrs. Ramsay [that] frees [Lily] to redefine beauty" (Dalgarno 90).

[24] Jane Lilienfeld explores the mother-daughter bond in the relationship of Lily and her surrogate mother, Mrs. Ramsay. She claims that "all the men in *To the Lighthouse* except Mr. Carmichael are to some degree in love with Mrs. Ramsay" with which the gulf between Lily's charm and that of Mrs. Ramsay's, similarly to Woolf's own compared to her mother's, Julia Stephen's feminine power over men is getting even more visible.

she seems to be the arch-womb, the home proper (Stewart, "Light" 379). "[…] [T]he fatal sterility of the male plunged itself […]. It was sympathy he wanted […] his barrenness made fertile, and all the rooms of the house made full of life […]. Flashing her needles, confident, upright, she created drawing-room and kitchen" (Woolf, *TTL* 43). Mrs. Ramsay, whom Barbara Bellow Watson subversively views as "the begetter of many things" (115), defies male barrenness by her creativity that is wrapped in flashing movements, with which she conjures up the intermittent strokes of the Lighthouse, bearing both its guiding and impregnating powers. The essential nature of the two spaces generated by Mrs. Ramsay incorporates her utmost female potentials, both being feminine spaces of domestic interaction. She manifests spaces of femininity with which she herself maintains contiguity, since they belong to her primary role as housewife and mother, hostess and nurturer. Mrs. Ramsay, however, also secures her reservedness, her distance from these spaces and the social interaction they represent for her through the status of being their creator.

> For now she need not think about anybody. She could be herself, by herself. And that was what now she often felt the need of—to think; well not even to think. To be silent; to be alone. All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with the sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others. Although she continued to knit, and sat upright, it was thus that she felt herself; and this self having shed its attachments was free for the strangest adventures. […] This core of darkness could go anywhere, for no one saw it. They could not stop it, she thought, exulting. There was freedom, there was peace, there was, most welcome of all, a summoning together, a resting on a platform of stability. (Woolf, *TTL* 69)

Mrs. Ramsay maintains her apparent approachability for others, yet she is withdrawn into the

invisible realm of uttermost intimacy, a state beyond physical, corporeal, spatial presence or givenness. Her sensation here seemingly reveals a self-reflexive inclination, yet she confesses without hesitation that she yearns for the condition of being entirely beyond thinking, by which she transcends the Cartesian self of cognition. Her silence assumes her pre-verbal, prediscursive condition and move to the void of intimacy, the nothingness of being in Sartre's sense. By her evaporated being, her shrinking into the wedge-shaped core of nothingness, a vacuum that, in the conclusion of *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre calls "the hole of being at the heart of Being" (617) Mrs. Ramsay expresses the urge to manifest her own for-itself besides being a necessary vehicle for the characters' economic existence, the others' in-itself to-be-surpassed. Her for-itself ignores "all the being and the doing" (Woolf, *TTL* 69), all her current and former states and actions. She turns into something invisible, indeterminably located anywhere and nowhere at the same time, exulting and limitless, an incorporeal nothing since, as Richard E. Aquila formulates the essence of Sartrean being in a somewhat simplifying manner, "to be or to exist […] is […] not to be at all" (167). "For Sartre, the ego is not only isolated from others, but is itself simply a negation of the objects to which it is, in essence, a relation: it is the amputation by itself of itself from being" (Grene 229). This is a negation of one's corporeal givenness in the world. Yet, Mrs. Ramsay rejoices in this state of freedom, "summoning together" (Woolf, *TTL* 69) a condition that, in his exploration of Sartre's self, Elwood reads as "the very 'being of consciousness' […] in [which] the human being is both his or her past and future, but only in the form of 'nihilation'" (310).

Her idiosyncratic upright position, another inherent characteristic of Mrs. Ramsay, consolidates the notion of verticality that Bachelard regards as a basic principle of man's spatial existence. "A house is imagined as a vertical being. It rises upward. It differentiates itself in terms of its verticality" (Bachelard 17). This quality, in addition, intensifies the image of the Lighthouse imprinted in Mrs. Ramsay's embodied subjectivity. Its primary function,

that is, its being a guiding principle, gets reinforcement through verticality too, being condemned to seclusion and confinement similarly to Mrs. Ramsay. The Lighthouse rests "upon a rock the size of a tennis lawn" (Woolf, *TTL* 9) while it radiates utmost simplicity. The image of the lighthouse, due to its minimalism, concentration, and erectness, shares common attributes with "the hermit's hut," a dwelling place that Bachelard considers "to be the tap-root of the function of inhabiting. It is the simplest of human plants, the one that needs no ramifications in order to exist" (31). He visualizes the hut as a "centralized solitude" (Bachelard 32) with a vigilant light in its window. Bachelard bestows anthropomorphic qualities upon the hut, and subsequently on any other dwelling place, with a "lamp in the window [as] the house's eye […]. Through its light alone, the house becomes human. It sees like a man. It is an eye open to night" (34, 35). The image of the light radiating from the window, besides its welcoming gesture, signifies the interiority of the house, the lived space as its natural extension.[25] A similar vision possesses Paul Rayley on returning to the summer cottage right after he proposed to Minta, which success he actually attributes to Mrs. Ramsay and her ceaseless encouragement.

> He would go straight to Mrs. Ramsay, because he felt somehow that she was the person who had made him do it. […] And so turning into the lane that led to the house he could see light moving about in the upper windows. […] The house was all lit up, and the lights after the darkness made his eyes feel full, and he said to himself, childishly, as he walked up the drive, Lights, lights, lights, and repeated in a dazed way, Lights, lights, lights, and they came into the house, staring about him with his face quite stiff. But good heavens, he said to himself, putting his hand to his tie, I must not make a fool of myself. (Woolf, *TTL* 86)

[25] This potential, nevertheless, is normally denied of the lighthouse as an architectural structure owing to its lack of or cryptically appearing windows and the very nature of its light. The lighthouse encloses darkness and emptiness rather than a source of its own inner light.

The house turns into one single radiant beam of light, so powerful that it overcomes him and he actually becomes part of that glowing exuberance, blinded and engulfed. The locus of the light occupies the upper windows of the house, which realm is both the place of the bedrooms and, more importantly, the space of Mrs. Ramsay's intimate withdrawal after the dinner party, a space of ascension.[26] By defining the source of the lights as the upper part of the house which is primarily associated with Mrs. Ramsay, the house assumes anthropomorphic, more particularly, feminine qualities, especially those of Mrs. Ramsay. Bachelard emphasizes femininity from the viewpoint of the maternal feature of the house through the image of "a large cradle," and "an enveloping warmth [that] welcomes being" (Bachelard 7). Both metaphors evoke the primeval maternal dwelling place, that is, the womb.

The Ramsays' house exudes primarily a feminine atmosphere,[27] even on the narrative level, most tangibly through the caressing ubiquity of Mrs. Ramsay,[28] despite its seriously decayed and decomposing condition.[29] In their article on the incorporation of the domestic

---

[26] "She put the pad on the hall table. She began to go slowly upstairs, with her hand on the banisters, as if she had left a party, where now this friend now that had flashed back her face, her voice; had shut the door and gone out and stood alone, a single figure against the appalling night, or rather, to be accurate, against the stare of this matter-of-fact June morning; soft with the glow of rose petals for some, she knew, and felt it, as she paused by the open staircase window which let in blinds flapping, dogs barking, let in, she thought, feeling herself suddenly shrivelled, aged, breathless, the grinding, blowing, flowering of the day, out of doors, out of the window, out of her body and brain which now failed, since Lady Bruton, whose lunch parties were said to be extraordinarily amusing, had not asked her" (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 35). In this passage we witness Mrs. Dalloway's conspicuously similar experience of ascending the staircase to her most intimate space that is her attic room. I consider this incident evocative of the divergent rhythm and/or pulsation of Woolf's narrative that is characteristic of *To the Lighthouse*, too. The description of Mrs. Dalloway's fleeting yet extremely complex reflective moment pulls apart the narrated subject—bodily and architectural alike—governed by simultaneous outward and inward pulls.

[27] Suzanne Raitt in the introductory chapter ("Ghosts") of her book on *To the Lighthouse* evaluates the autobiographical analogies of the novel, reading it along with Woolf's confessional writings. "Both Julia Stephen and Mrs. Ramsay have the ability to make sense of space, to order the chaos of life and human impressions into a harmonious repose" (38). Later Raitt reflects upon the complexity of the character of Mrs. Ramsay as being a blend of ambivalent emotions felt for Vanessa, Vita Sackville-West, and to her own (corporeal) self. Mrs. Ramsay and her body in this context appear as a threat: "[…] associated as she is with the domestic stability of the house and the island, [she] is the obstacle that the ships must avoid" (Raitt 42).

[28] "[…] sunk as he [Mr. Carmichael] in a grey-green somnolence which embraced them all, without need of words, in a vast and benevolent lethargy of well-wishing; all the house; all the world; all the people in it, […]" (Woolf, *TTL* 14). The all-embracing sensation is introduced here through the unique perspective of Mr. Carmichael, hence the ambiguous welcoming of somnolence and lethargy, yet he experiences the unification of the house and its inhabitants, on a larger scale the entirety of the universe, at the moment of sharing proximity and conversing with Mrs. Ramsay "without need of words."

[29] The metaphor of the warming and soothing house is offered as a solution to male barrenness. The separate spaces of the house are filled with life along with the restoration of Mr. Ramsay's bodily orientation

sphere, the house, in inter-war fiction, Briganti and Mezei exceed the "well-established identification of mother and home," in which the former is described in terms of the latter socially and sexually, too. They refine the metaphor of domesticity and propose that "the house itself may be embodied as mother, as the figure of Mrs. Ramsay […] poignantly suggest" (155). The woman does no longer simply take upon herself attributes of the house as enclosure and interiority (Briganti 155). As a reversal of their analogous relationship, the house is endowed with qualities of the woman, architectural spaces function as corporeal ones. The summer cottage becomes enriched with the protective, caring, even nurturing role: I have in mind those high expectations of, for instance, Charles Tansley, who hopes his scholarly advancement from the vacation within the walls of this house or James longing to visit the Lighthouse, to mention only two of the numerous candidates who virtually feed on dreams and gather to sap the creative energies of this communal habitation. For the guests invade the house as refugees yearly. Mrs. Ramsay's functional plasticity of offering security, maintaining social bonds among family members and acquaintances, and, at the same time, her aloofness, her tendency to withdraw into the "wedge of darkness" (Woolf, *TTL* 43) run parallel with the house's aforementioned duplicity of protection despite its continual decomposition. Mrs. Ramsay, on the one hand, attends the house and social bonds in order to offer her guests a dwelling place and, additionally, she herself appears in metaphorically and metonymically designated spatial structures.

> Was it wisdom? Was it knowledge? […] or did she lock up within her some secret which certainly Lily Briscoe believed people must have for the world to go on at all? […] she imagined how in *the chambers of the mind and heart* of the woman [Mrs. Ramsay] who was, physically, touching her, were stood, like

---

within the network of domestic and implicitly feminine spaces. "It was sympathy he [Mr. Ramsay] wanted, to be assured of his genius, first of all, and then to be taken within the circle of life, *warmed and soothed*, to have his senses restored to him, his barrenness made fertile, and all the rooms of the house made full of life—the drawing-room; behind the drawing-room the kitchen; above the kitchen the bedrooms; and beyond them the nurseries; they must be furnished, they must be filled with life" (Woolf, *TTL* 43, emphasis added).

> *the treasure in the tombs of kings*, tablets bearing sacred inscriptions, which if one could spell them out would teach one everything, but they would never be offered openly, never made public. […] Could the body achieve it, or the mind, subtly mingling in *the intricate passages* of the brain? Or the heart? Could loving, as people called it, make her and Mrs. Ramsay one? For it was not knowledge but unity that she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge […]. (Woolf, *TTL* 57, emphasis added)

All these architectural forms along with her being additionally identified with "the august shape of the dome," or "some sealed vessel" (Woolf, *TTL* 58, 72) reveal some further interiority or sacredness attributed to Mrs. Ramsay, and indirectly to the house, endowing her/it with an infinite capacity to renew the inside/outside dichotomy and the incorporation of others. Levenson considers the Modernist space of inhabitation as "the physical space of authorship" (4) bestowing the very source of creativity, the sole space of creation upon the house, to be more precise, on its inwardness, the room. Levenson focuses on the necessity of "constitution"—a term he borrows from Eliot's "Preludes"—,"the fragile and difficult constitution, of a self, a soul, a pronoun within the receptacle of the room" (5). Levenson attempts to locate the very birth of the self, the "pronoun"—the subject's possessive grasp on its own spatio-corporeality—in "the receptacle of the room, […] a container, giving both the solace of envelopment—a refuge from the world—and the anxiety of enclosure—the buried self" (5). The duplicity of the inviting shelter and the utter withdrawal as vectors of opposing gestures inscribed in Levenson's central trope echoes my own evaluation of the analogies between the Ramsays' house and Mrs. Ramsay's body.

Mrs. Ramsay's materialization through a series of interiorities, confined, secretive social and corporeal spaces, is also inseparably interwoven with the notion of knowledge and

wisdom about the self. The "secret" or "the tablets bearing sacred inscription" can also signify self-knowledge, the course of self-constitution that opens exclusively on or within its own unfurling spatiality. This knowledge, however, cannot be deciphered through Cartesian cognition, cannot be encoded in language, that is innately exteriorised to the self-to-be, hence the enigmatic intimacy and apparent inaccessibility of the contents of those chambers. Lily herself alludes to the possibility of a corporeally based cognition of Mrs. Ramsay, and indirectly her own self, even if as a second alternative she also mentions the mind. Nevertheless, she endows the cogito with exceptional phenomenological capacities, as it appears in a juxtaposition with the body and the heart in a markedly interiorized, spatial manner, visualized in the form of "intricate passages," which Levenson calls "a single, self-contained [room], […] a box for a brain" (5). With this ultimate interiorization of the individual's immediate environment, Levenson reveals the essence of the room motif through drawing a Chinese-box-like structure of the room as "the body's body; the next vessel beyond the surface of the skin, […] the proper sphere of own-ness" (5). The very fact that Lily's mode of offering a solution to the enigma is formulated in the interrogative does not undermine its force, since in the end she herself reinforces and expresses the key to such knowledge as: "intimacy itself, which is knowledge" (Woolf, *TTL* 57).

The relationship of receptive spatiality and knowledge, on the other hand, conspicuously evokes Levinas's notion of dwelling. As I have already indicated, his central idea of economic[30] existence, recollection, as "a coming to oneself," (Levinas 156) a realization of one's being in the world through separation, a recognition of the things' familiarity towards the I, is conditioned on the "Woman." "The Other who welcomes in intimacy is not the *you* [*vous*] of the face that reveals itself in a dimension of height, but precisely the *thou* [*tu*] of familiarity: a language without teaching, a silent language, an

[30] "'[E]conomy' is derived from the Greek term, *oikos*, meaning home or house, residence, or dwelling" (Grosz 118)

understanding without words, an expression in secret. […] [T]he discretion of this presence includes all the possibilities of the transcendent relationship with the Other" (Levinas 155). Levinas's "silent language" offers a converging point of what Mrs. Ramsay describes as "freedom […] a resting on a platform of stability" (Woolf, *TTL* 69) and also Lily's mode of comprehending Mrs. Ramsay as a result of establishing a corporeally grounded intimacy. All potential attempts to formulate the experience of the coming-to-the-self through understanding reveal an expression unknown to language, the utterance of a realization conditioned on the body, intimacy, familiarity, proximity through an apprehensive grasp. This language speaks through the unity of entities, it exists in a concentration that does not know the hierarchy and artificiality of signification. An additional condition of gaining familiarity with things surrounding the I is the "comprehensive" grasp of the hands,[31] the physical connection one establishes with the Other, "the concrete manifestation of absolute difference" (Todd 69). Sharon Todd continues her elucidation of Levinas's notion of alterity "as the *sine qua non* of being […]. Without difference, subjectivity is itself unthinkable" (69). Todd reads Levinasian transcendence, a relationship between the self and the other, as "a radical openness" (70), which however, does not threaten the subject's integrity. It is rather an intersubjective condition not governed by the compulsion of knowing the other—where knowing is instantly meant as cognition—but "an 'exposure' to the other that lies prior to consciousness" (70). This radical openness irrevocably characterizes the Ramsays' house,—as I have already suggested in my analysis of the motif of open doors—a condition Mrs. Ramsay is constantly struggling with. Concerning the relationship of Mrs. Ramsay's body and the summer cottage as identical entities, the architectural structure unconsciously performs

[31] For Levinas touch and proximity are closely related concepts. Elaborating the notion of vision and touch with respect to Irigaray's, Merleau-Ponty's and Levinas's theory, Cathryn Vasseleu argues that "Levinas considers touch as the exposition of an affective involvement with others. […] Prior to any consciousness of sensation and irreducible to it, proximity is a sensibility which is distinguished from the conjunction which occurs in experience and knowledge" (98). Earlier Vasseleu explains that experience for Levinas is representational (80), thus exposure, proximity, transcendence, Levinasian categories of the relationship between self and other all assume pre-verbal, unrepresented attachment, "an understanding without words, an expression in secret" (Levinas 155).

openness that serves the understanding of the I and the other, also evoking Bachelard's view of the man as "half-open being" (222). Mrs. Ramsay's repetitive cries for closed doors and opened windows signify the Cartesian constraints that enclose her in the domain of verbality, her words being uttered without having the faintest effect on others or the house, her phenomenologically conditioned self. Lily often attempts to realize her potential to get to know Mrs. Ramsay, and indirectly the world, through maintaining actual physical contact with her, encircling her legs, or laying her head on Mrs. Ramsay's knees.

This attachment strengthens the corporeal bondage between human subjects as an existential necessity, along with the forceful urge for fusion, unity—the latter being closely related to order that appears to be a persistent narrative and aesthetic drive of *To the Lighthouse*. The Rayleys' marriage serves as an illustration for the emergence of the collective order that, nonetheless, preserves the heterogeneity, the multivalence of its constituents.

> All that would be revived again in the lives of Paul and Minta; "the Rayleys"—she tried the new name over; and she felt, with her hand on the nursery door, that community of feeling with other people which emotion gives as if the walls of partition had become so thin that practically […] it was all one stream, and chairs, tables, maps, were hers, were theirs, it did not matter whose, and Paul and Minta would carry it on when she was dead. (Woolf, *TTL* 123)

The passage hails the unification of the young lovers through the image of the marital bond—most literally expressed by the common family name—which is performed on two levels: firstly, concentrating on the sentiment that is shared universally as a communion and whose natural consequence is the fall of emotional, cultural, and social partitions among human beings. The other level joins the emotional dyad and the fusion of actually all entities of the world in a phenomenological sense. The objects of the mundane sphere, chairs, tables, and

maps[32] do not simply refer to the potentially earthly possessions of the young couple, which most probably would be inherited by them. They evidently convey the aforementioned sense of universal merging, the togetherness of the things of the world, still maintaining characteristics of their respective objecthood.

On the artistic level, the same notion is expressed through Lily's claim for unity, intimacy, and knowledge. This reveals her unalienable desire for becoming an autonomous subject, defined in the Sartrean "over against" the world manner (Marjorie Grene's formulation), within which relationship, however, she maintains her intersubjective embeddedness. This apparently paradoxical constraint, nevertheless, reproduces Modernist poetics, more precisely, the novel's—and within that, as the representative of artistic principles, Lily's—aesthetics. Unity and order are conditioned by the harmonious conflation of the "disparate elements making up the composition" (Dowling 8).[33] The same contrast is drawn as Roger Fry elucidates the essence of Cézanne's vibrant plasticity of his compositions: "The more one looks the more do these dispersed indications begin to play together, to compose rhythmic phrases which articulate the apparent confusion, till at last all seems to come together to the eye into an austere and impressive architectural construction, which is all the more moving[34] in that it emerges from this apparent chaos" (Fry, *Cézanne* 79). The individual components or volumes (as earlier Fry refers to the painterly constituents) reach

---

[32] I note here that the three pieces of furnishings conspicuously evoke Dutch painterly props in general, more particularly, those of Johannes Vermeer, which implicitly emphasize the presence of interior spaces, rooms, partly as means of establishing the pictorial narrative, and also as a reflection on the essential human mode of existence. The seemingly accidental mentioning of maps, however, already assists the viewer to look out of the confined domestic spaces, signifying the Dutch painters' preoccupation with the geo-political situation of their country but also depicting maps as meta-spaces being the indicators of the knowledgeable site of the human being.

[33] In his *Bloomsbury Aesthetics: The Novels of Forster and Woolf*, David Dowling draws a parallel at this point in his argument between the visionary style of Cézanne and Proust, both artists being frequently compared to Woolf. I considered this significant to mention here to emphasise the correspondence of the aesthetic forces governing both fiction and the visual arts of the period concerned.

[34] Fry employs the playfulness of language here with which he reproduces the very vivacity of the Cézannesque canvases. The "architectural construction," despite its solidity, moves and, at the same time, it is moving. The former being the affect, the "aesthetic emotion—as Clive Bell termed the emanation of affective energies as a result of the proper "combinations and arrangements" of forms (Bell 11)—, the latter, on the other hand, directly indicating the ultimate effect of the contrastive colour scheme adopted both by Cézanne and Woolf.

their local value through their very deferral, yet the "rhythmic phrases" (an exciting choice of words on Fry's part, implicitly alluding to verbal art, too) constitute a form of austerity, evoking the image of the lighthouse or Bachelard's notion of the hut, directly owing to this multivalent heterogeneity. Hence, order and unity do not necessarily compel their constructive elements to abandon their respective uniqueness and individuality; subsequently, a new order is being born: that of the order of chaos. While Lily wants to find her own locus in and comprehension through the proximity with Mrs. Ramsay she turns into one of the patches, shapes, forms of the narrative texture that can be read as an enlarged alternative of her own canvas. Consequently, the mechanism of order built out of chaos becomes the means of communication between Lily's visual and Woolf's verbal forms of art.

Mrs. Ramsay's metaphorical architectural forms also share a mediatory quality, occupying a transitory phase of the becoming subject. They serve as a bridge housing the sacred, yet dead bodies of kings (awaiting resurgence) or transmitting between the earthly and the heavenly spheres. The "august shape; the shape of a dome" (Woolf, *TTL* 58), however, undergoes an alternative transformation, too. Lily recognizes the shape of the dome primarily as a natural, organic spatial form of the beehive, which transforms itself at a second stage to Mrs. Ramsay's body, to end the cycle with the elevation of a sanctified space. The image of the "sealed vessel in [Mrs. Ramsay's] brain" (Woolf, *TTL* 72) illustrates the human body's constitution as a series of enfolded spatial arrangements reduplicating the body's own being-in the world as a self-identical fold of the world's texture/flesh. In this manner, human corporeality in itself is the mise en abyme of the world-body relationship.

The narrative's triadic pattern of one space enclosed by the other (the exteriority of natural space/the island, the summer cottage, and Mrs. Ramsay's own body and architectural transfigurations) is unravelled through the character of Mrs. Ramsay, who emanates light, energy, creative forces, and further spatial embodiments from her corporeal and domestic

interiority into the external/natural realm. The perpetual merging of the interior and exterior dimensions is manifested within two sites: the house and Mrs. Ramsay's body, which, following the logic of my interpretative framework, are isomorphic spatial structures. Levinas reflects on this duplicity as a natural and indispensable condition of dwelling. "Simultaneously without and within, [man] goes forth outside from an inwardness [intimité]. Yet this inwardness opens up in a home which is situated in that outside—for the home, as a building, belongs to a world of objects" (Levinas 152). The multiple fort-da game of the in-and-out movement reaffirms the corporeal basis of dwelling, evoking the biological process of invagination, through which the external surface enfolds upon itself and becomes an organic part of the interior build. Levinas, however, preserves the duplicity of body and architecture, which is eliminated by Sartre, due to the absence of the intermediary and distinguished category of the house. For Sartre the emphasis rests on the coherence of the world and the subject, as well as their spatial coexistence and existential mutuality. "Thus my being-in-the-world, by the sole fact that it realizes a world, causes itself to be indicated to itself as a being-in-the-midst-of-the-world by the world which it realizes. The case could not be otherwise, for my being has no other way of entering into contact with the world except to be in the world. […] In this sense my body is everywhere in the world […]" (Sartre 419). The reciprocity of the-body-as-world and the-world-as-body is traceable most prevalently through Mrs. Ramsay's simultaneous submergence in and perception of this world as an outsider to it. She actually embodies space proper for the entirety of the novel. Body here is also meant as a thing—a coexistence of inanimate and living entities whose natural interchangeability serves as a basic condition for the subject to upsurge in the world. "And it was still going on, Mrs. Ramsay mused, gliding like a ghost among the chairs and tables of that drawing-room on the banks of the Thames where she had been so very, very cold twenty years ago; but now she went among them like a ghost" (Woolf, *TTL* 95). Mrs. Ramsay surmounts the temporal, and

the complementary spatial, chasm between past and present and treats these units not as successive but as simultaneously existing ones. Besides this, she fills up the emptiness among things—while she obviously links everything she touches—and metaphorically, among subjects, since the second instance of the third person plural pronoun can refer to the people around her as well as the surrounding pieces of furniture. The image of the ghost reinforces both her liminality and her omnipresence, her being "everywhere in the world," just like her most prevalent mode of representation, being "stretched out" in the window frames similarly to a canvas or a membrane between the realms of in and out, security and danger, sacred and profane, cultural and natural. She incarnates this simultaneous existence also through her corporeal verticality, representing the upright aspect of the hive, the pyramids or the dome, let alone the Lighthouse. Thus, Mrs. Ramsay reproduces the compulsive compositional force of the novel due to her vertical dimensionality, while by the recurrent concept of linking (her other emblematic feature), bridging of two distant realms she embodies horizontality as well.

Mrs. Ramsay's intermediary, liminal, and fluid plurality with which she instantiates a plethora of ambiguities characteristic of the places, spaces, and architectural structures she becomes analogized with, makes her evocative of Plato's notion of *chōra* in *Timaeus*. In her thoroughgoing exploration of Plato's "third form" (127), Emanuela Bianchi makes an attempt to relocate *chōra* into contemporary critical discourse without the apparently unavoidable stigmatization of its prevalent feminine and maternal qualities. Bianchi outlines three different terms for the same notion that Plato adopts in the dialogue. The first of these is *hupodochē*, "the nurse of all becoming" (Plato 67), the conventional image of the receptacle that is "invisible and formless, all-embracing, possessed in a most puzzling way of intelligibility, yet very hard to grasp" (Plato 70). Besides its explicit allusions to pregnancy and maternity, it also designates the welcoming gesture into one's house (Bianchi 130), which function Mrs. Ramsay evidently fulfils. The human (female) body and the house function according to the

same mechanisms: they generate inwardness, *intimité*, arouse the sense of familiarity, nurture and protect those within their walls, and provide a mould for other bodies to become.

Ekmageion, a very similar notion to *hupodochē*, shares the pluripotence (Bianchi's term) of the latter, serving as "a molding stuff or plastic material" (Bianchi 127). Mrs. Ramsay envisions "[h]er horizon [that] seemed to her limitless" as an emblem of her unstoppable fluidity and exultation, while she simultaneously experiences "a summoning together, a resting on a platform of stability" (Woolf, *TTL* 69). She convenes, among numerous other ambivalent urges, these contradictory forces akin to *hupodochē* and/or *ekmageion* that Bianchi, introducing Irigaray's interpretation of the Platonic concepts, describes as "an indeterminate state, neither solid nor liquid, or both solid and liquid, […] in(de)finitely labile and malleable" (128). Plato's receptacle occupies a primarily liminal position, a site of intermediacy, whose generative faculty rests in its very neutrality, epitomising "an originary chiasmus of appropriation and dispersal" (Bianchi 135). The Ramsays' house and its fold i.e. Mrs. Ramsay's body perform this chiasmic relationship of in and out, receptivity and emanation.

The opening of the house, the invasion of the external is counterbalanced by the flow of Mrs. Ramsay's intimacy and mingling with the exteriority of the building. Mrs. Ramsay's corporeality allows her to be internalized in the exteriority of the house and the world outside and, at the same time, the external sphere enfolds into the intimacy of the house-body.

> So she righted herself after the shock of the event, and quite unconsciously and incongruously, used the branches of the elm trees outside to help her to stabilize her position. Her world was changing: they were still. The event had given her a sense of movement. All must be in order. She must get that right and that right, she thought, insensibly approving of the dignity of the trees' stillness, and now again of the superb upward rise […] of the elm branches as

> the wind raised them. For it was windy (she stood a moment to look out). (Woolf, *TTL* 122).

The passage simultaneously reflects upon the house's and Mrs. Ramsay's liminal position where interiority and exteriority become a matter of constant oscillation. The branches of the elm trees transfigure into the railing of the stairs, while Mrs. Ramsay, along with the branches, performs an upward progress. Movement aids her to reflect upon herself and the associations of the surrounding figures, to crystallize her universe into an existential order. The shock of the event,[35] Mrs. Ramsay's withdrawal from "this hubbub" (Woolf, *TTL* 121) foreshadows the subsequent section, "Time Passes" in which space, vivacity, order give in to time, void, and chaos.

Even if the formerly introduced notions of the *hupodochē* and/or *ekmageion* signify a predominant interiority and receptivity, hence feminine and maternal qualities, the multivalent playfulness of their potentials for transfiguration connote figuration and generative power.[36] Nevertheless, Plato's other term, i.e. *chōra*, exceeds the generative capacity of the formerly discussed notions. It does not only preserve their formal and figurative diversity but adds a further contradictory quality by way of literally opening up its own scope. "*Chōra* denotes rather an exteriority, an opening out, giving room, dimension, depth, and magnitude—

---

[35] The event to which Mrs. Ramsay alludes here is the dinner party that is attended even by Bankes, who normally returns to his lodgings for the evenings. The gathering serves as a unique incident for Mrs. Ramsay to fulfil her unifying role. The array of people around the table is carefully prepared and carried out by Mrs. Ramsay for the sake of uniting them under the aegis of the marital bond. Minta Doyle and Paul Rayley, in fact, are becoming the Rayleys some moments prior to the event of prime importance. The description of the centrepiece, "a yellow and purple dish of fruit" (Woolf, *TTL* 105) is one of the most pictorial scenes of the novel, a meticulously elaborated still life, a visual orgy of colours and forms. This arrangement conveys an overwhelming composition that rules the whole scenario of the dinner party evoking "a trophy fetched from the bottom of the sea, of Neptun's banquet" (Woolf, *TTL* 105). "Indeed [Mrs. Ramsay] had been keeping guard over the dish of fruit (without realizing it) jealously, hoping that nobody would touch it" (Woolf, *TTL* 118). Finally, the event is the last occurrence before the apocalyptic future of the family in which Mrs. Ramsay, Prue, and Andrew meet their end.

[36] Bianchi explores the etymological roots of the terms concerned and reads them along with Irigaray, Kristeva, Grosz, and Derrida. She, consequently, comes up with the generative function of *ekmageion* and/or its capacity for figuration: as "a site of linguistic productivity" (125); something that "holds together […] mutually contradictory meanings of mark receiving, mark giving, and mark removing" (128); as "the figures of molding and writing" (129); and "not merely a site, a zone of inscription, but also the very power that generates, drives, and articulates becoming in its movement of dispersal" (130).

spacing—but also, as indicated by the related verb *chōrizō*, separating, dividing, differentiating, and severing" (Bianchi 131). Mrs. Ramsay's spatial incarnations—her fusion with the summer cottage and its minor, inward spaces (drawing room or the nursery) and with imagined, metaphorical spaces (natural formations and cultural edifices alike), structures which perpetuate the image of inwardness and enclosure—acquire further depth through her association with the most prominent architectural form of the novel, that is, the Lighthouse. Although this identification is anticipated in "The Window," it materializes discernibly in the third chapter within which Mrs. Ramsay's physical absence is doubly substituted: primarily by the Lighthouse itself; indirectly, through Lily's painting.[37] Her analogous relationship with the Lighthouse[38] reinforces Mrs. Ramsay's spatial stance in the Platonic sense of *chōra* that Bianchi terms a "vertiginous space" (131), delineating its potency compared to the idea of the receptacle. The fusion of Mrs. Ramsay and the Lighthouse initiates the notion of perspective: the Lighthouse, being a referential point, also becomes the means of creating depth, through which an existentially defined space is unfolded. It is "a point of view and a point of departure which I *am* and which at the same time I surpass toward what I have to be" (Sartre 326). In accordance with this, Mrs. Ramsay serves as an ontological condition of others, she functions as space proper for the multitude of characters in a manner that evokes Plato, who "[designated] *chōra* as space itself, the condition for the very existence of material objects" (Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion* 116). Mrs. Ramsay is the intersubjective tissue that, as

[37] Hyman evaluates Lily's artistic procedure as an androgynous fusion of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay's creative potentials. She claims that unlike in the first chapter Lily occupies the central position of "The Lighthouse" section by displacing Mrs. Ramsay and reconciling with Mr. Ramsay (Hyman 141-2). "By substituting the creative process of her painting for Mrs. Ramsay's creative process, Lily Briscoe takes Mrs. Ramsay's place" (Hyman 143). Hyman's emphasis fall on Lily's reinforced creative capacity as opposed to the painting's aesthetic energy communicated through its significant forms.

[38] Matro acknowledges the link between Mrs. Ramsay and the Lighthouse based on Mrs. Ramsay's searching eye with which she unveils her guests in the same manner as the stroke of light that emanates from the Lighthouse. (218) "Like the lighthouse, Mrs. Ramsay, with the guests arranged around her is in a focal position, [is] a kind of 'central line'" (Matro 218). He attempts to "redefine Woolf's achievement" (Matro 212), examining the novel not as a mere illustration of Fry's formalist and Post-Impressionist vision but as the manifestation of the comprehensive aesthetic design that infiltrates both Lily's painting and the entirety of the novel. (Matro 222)

Elizabeth Grosz describes *chōra*, is "less a positivity than an abyss, a crease, perhaps a pure difference, between being and becoming, the space which produces their [the things'] separation and thus enables their co-existence and interchange" (*Space, Time, and Perversion* 116). *Chōra* as Grosz views it incorporates the very liminality with which Mrs. Ramsay is characterized. The series of ambiguous sites, stances, roles she assumes as her own instantiates her as "pure difference," the limen of the textual/visual/spatial structure of the novel.

This position gains its ultimate significance in the framework of the artistic process pursued by Lily, which indisputably links not only the two of them (as potential mother-daughter substitutes for each other), or Mrs. Ramsay to art in general (firstly, by being the model of Lily's painting, secondly, in her being a work of art for several characters) but most predominantly the existential and pictorial spatiality with the body, with corporeality. The intertwining of the existential space with the artistic one, that is the space unfolded by the canvas, primarily through the means of vision, evokes Merleau-Ponty's concept of the body as "a third genus of being," (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology* 408) a term conspicuously reminiscent of Plato's *chōra*. Mark C. Taylor explores Merleau-Ponty's notion of carnality and discusses the body in his phenomenological framework as "the *mean* between extremes—the 'milieu' (*milieu*) in which opposites like interiority and exteriority, as well as subjectivity and objectivity, intersect. Never reducible to the differences, it simultaneously joins and separates, the body is forever *entre-deux*. […] The body, in other words, is never the body 'proper.' To the contrary, carnality is unavoidably *improper*" (Taylor 69-70). Besides Mrs. Ramsay's being analogous with the cathedral-like space, the dome-shaped hive, pyramids, the Lighthouse, all extensively "proper" spatial, carnal, substantial structures, she occupies the locus of the ghost or "a smoke, […] a fume" (Woolf, *TTL* 114) right before she transfigures to an even less materialized occurrence, that is to presence as gaping emptiness. Taylor attempts to enumerate

the various images Merleau-Ponty adopts to articulate the intermediality of the body (among others he mentions "wound," "dehiscence," "hinge," "joint," "pivot" [70]). He concludes his exemplification of the body's liminality by the identification of the body with art rather than any object-based materialization. Taylor formulates the analogy in Merleau-Ponty's own words: "The body is to be compared, not to a physical object, but rather to a work of art" (*Phenomenology* 174). Merleau-Ponty views body and art as "a nexus of living meanings" (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology* 175) a fluctuating confluence of bodily/sensory experiences that defy solidity, fixity or the hierarchy of body and mind, perception and cognition. His analogy of body and art reverberates in the shift of emphasis taking place in the course of the novel, starting out from Mrs. Ramsay's more discernible bodily/spatial structures of the first chapter to gain completion in her more abstract presentation through Lily's artistic/painterly space. In between the two phases "Time Passes," the central section is conspicuously similar to both Plato's *chōra* and Merleau-Ponty's notion of the body. Taylor describes the body with the image of a "'dark hole' that makes light possible" (70) which is applicable to "Time Passes" as being the limen, the Merleau-Pontian dehiscence or fold for the entirety of the narrative texture. In this manner, what Mrs. Ramsay denotes for the characters within the thematic and conceptual/artistic framework, the central section performs on the textual/structural level.

The second chapter emphatically opens with the image of darkness, the lack of light, unfurling the theme of oblivion and absence, with a series of exaggerated occurrences of extinguished lights. Both artificial and natural lights are withdrawn from the scene as the opening lines indicate: "So with the lamps all put out, the moon sunk, and a thin rain drumming on the roof a downpouring of immense darkness began" (Woolf, *TTL* 137). Not only does the title ("Time Passes") suggest the altered condition of narration, that is, the presence of the temporal instead of the spatial, but also the dissolution of the centre, i.e. Mrs.

Ramsay, and the dominance of night time directs our attention towards a different sphere. In this section, there is no potential for defining existential distances from the referential point, hence the fluid, or rather amorphous quality of the chapter and the temporal horizontality that seems to be infinite and ungraspable. The house is introduced as totally deteriorated, especially in the contrast of the appearance of two surrogate figures, Mrs. McNab and Mrs. Bast. As their task is to restore the state and the order of the house, they try to appear in the role of Mrs. Ramsay with her impregnating, creative, and invigorating power, but to no avail. The place turns into a magical crystal palace with mirroring surfaces in which the Lighthouse with its light, and indirectly Mrs. Ramsay, recurs from time to time, yet her presence remains mediated, illusory, merely representational. The chapter abounds in images of the looking glass, the telescope, or sideway glances into (broken) mirrors or reflective surfaces whereas previously, the straightforwardly oriented gazes were openly presented without the artificiality of the reflective medium, i.e. the mirror. Structurally, the second chapter through its blinding darkness and trapped light occupies the position of the threshold—thematically and art historically rather than conceptually and/or structurally as I formerly suggested in its parallel with Mrs. Ramsay's liminal status—between Mrs. Ramsay's presence and absence, or Lily's aesthetic strife against the academic conventions as well as the Impressionistic tenets of Mr. Paunceforte advocating a "pale, elegant, semi-transparent" (Woolf, *TTL* 23) technique, and her finally achieved vision of Cézannesque abstraction. With its apocalyptic forces and implosive tendencies, the temporal interlude prepares the ground for the final fusion of the tangled threads. The emphatic presence of falsity generated by mirroring and reflection also sets forth the contrast of the Impressionistic mode of artistic expression, modelled by Paunceforte's style of "thinned and faded" colours and "etherealized" shapes (Woolf, *TTL* 54) and the new mode of Lily's formalist creative method.

Lily has to face the conventionally trained viewer's incomprehension towards her

radical abstraction, and to retort the critical remark of Bankes, the representative of the mimetic tradition and its expectations.

> Taking out a penknife, Mr. Bankes tapped the canvas with the bone handle. What did she wish to indicate by the triangular purple shape, "just there?" he asked. It was Mrs. Ramsay reading to James, she said. She knew his objection—that no one could tell it for a human shape. But she had made no attempt at likeness, she said. For what reason had she introduced them then? he asked. Why indeed?—except that if there, in that corner, it was bright, here in this, she felt the need of darkness" (Woolf, *TTL* 58-9).

Bankes approaches Lily's canvas with a quasi-iconoclastic gesture, an act of a metaphorical penetration performed on the surface of the canvas by his penknife. Lily's determination to discard mimesis, a mere copying of what she actually perceives leads her to accomplish her aesthetic vision, the depiction of the compositional equilibrium embedded in the world. When Fry recognized and advocated the alterity inherent in Post-Impressionism, he claimed that "the graphic arts are the expression of the imaginative life rather than a copy of actual life" (Fry, *Vision* 15). By "imaginative life" he meant the artistically reproduced reality "which is separated from actual life by the absence of responsive action" (Fry, *Vision* 15). The spectator views a scene of everyday life without being immersed in its constitutive incidents; s/he succeeds in taking up an interpretative detachment which enables him/her to abandon the naturally selective perceptive mode that blocks the comprehensive vision of reality. In return, one gains a "greater clearness of perception" and "the greater purity and freedom of its emotion" (Fry, *Vision* 17). Purity of emotion, basically, bears the same disinterested detachment of the individual as perceptive clarity did beforehand. This affective response is what Clive Bell, who coined the phrase "significant form," calls aesthetic emotion. "The important thing about a picture, however, is not how it is painted, but whether it provokes

aesthetic emotion" (Bell 45).

The purple triangle[39] as the means of abstraction initiates the transfiguration of shape (the objects of actual life) to form (the constituents of the clarified vision). "When the artist passes from pure sensation to emotions aroused by means of sensation, he uses natural forms which, in themselves, are calculated to move our emotions, and he presents these in such a manner that the forms themselves generate in us emotional states […]" (Fry, *Vision* 26). Lily's purple triangle, the puzzling shape "just there" is the modulation of Mrs. Ramsay and James' position in the drawing-room window, the stylized shape of numerous Madonna-and-the-Child representations of Renaissance paintings. Its colour[40] is the amalgamation of Mrs. Ramsay's emphatic blue haze[41] and James's redness,[42] a colour whose intensity and plenum provoke a generative contrast, since "if there, in that corner, it was bright, here, in this, [Lily] felt the need of darkness" (Woolf, *TTL* 59).[43] The technique of equating the rivalling parts of a painting preoccupies Cézanne, too, while he is struggling to grasp the sight proffered by

---

[39] Lily's iconic form, nevertheless, condenses and subsequently perpetuates all architectural/spatial constructions with which Mrs. Ramsay formerly became identified.

[40] In his profound exploration of colours in *To the Lighthouse*, Jack F. Stewart differentiates the chromatic functions of colours, citing several artists and theoreticians. He considers blue as "the visionary colour for Woolf" (Stewart 444), "the atmospheric colour *par excellence* of sky and distance" (Gaunt qtd. in Stewart 444). Maurice Denis endows blue with a unique potential of "diffusion and condensation" (Stewart 445), which Stewart views as completely analogous with Mrs. Ramsay, her constant emanation and her being the bearer of light, on the one hand, and her recurrent withdrawal into the wedge-shaped core of darkness, on the other. Additionally, blue causes other colours to vibrate, it serves as a background colour "with which it is possible to blend most other colours in harmonious and rich conjunctions" (Fry qtd. in Stewart 446). Mrs. Ramsay fills up all spaces (literal and figurative alike) with her (imaginary) presence in the entirety of the novel, turning all other colourful forms and figures radiant and alive. One of the most prominent associations of colours is blue and red. Red is almost exclusively attached to men (the only exception is Minta Doyle with her "golden haze" [Woolf, *TTL* 107]) in the shape of, for instance, the red-hot pokers or the red geraniums along which Mr. Ramsay strolls and stops from time to time or James's red garment in his mother's vision. Hence it becomes the signifier of "closeness, rationality, farsightedness" (Stewart 449), characteristics radically opposing Mrs. Ramsay's aloofness and imaginative, visionary quality, let alone her short-sightedness. The emblematic triangular shape gains its final saturation through the merging of Mrs. Ramsay's blue radiation and James' red haze. "[Lily's] purple plays a key role as the chromatic signifier of integration" (Stewart 453). The painter's design is to create unity, fusion, and order, to effectuate the equilibrium of the experienced reality within the artistic space, as well. "It was a question, she remembered, how to connect this mass on the right hand with that on the left. She might do it by bringing the line of the branch across so; or break the vacancy in the foreground by an object (James perhaps) so. But the danger was that by doing that the unity of the whole might be broken" (Woolf, *TTL* 60).

[41] "He [James] began following her [Mrs. Ramsay] from room to room and at last they came to a room where in a blue light, as if the reflection came from many china dishes, she talked to somebody; he listened to her talking" (Woolf, *TTL* 203).

[42] Mrs. Ramsay "imagined [James] all red and ermine on the Bench" (Woolf, *TTL* 7).

[43] Jane Goldman views it, among others, as one of the socio-politically charged "suffrage colours" (*Feminist Aesthetics* 172).

nature. In his collection of essays on the fundaments of Cézanne's theory of painting, most particularly his concern with nature and the transubstantiation of the visual data onto the painterly surface, Gottfried Boehm highlights the significance of such formal arrangements. "Cézanne, at the same time, relates every single component with the others, establishing a contrastive relationship among them. Their borderlines, more precisely, their difference gradually constitute meaningful units, figures and forms of signification. 'We can claim thus that painting exists, after all, to create contrast'" (Cézanne qtd. in Boehm 67).[44] Cézanne's powerful declaration on the inevitability of contrastive colour arrangements reveals the very essence of what Boehm termed Cézanne's Copernican turn in the history of painting (19). Cézanne's perennial urge is to establish a new pictorial language that is adequate to articulate the altered relationships between man and nature, art and reality, perception and artistic expression or to reformulate the interrelatedness of the triad of "eye, image, and reality" (Boehm 19).

[44] Hereafter, quotations from Gottfried Boehm's *Paul Cézanne Montagne Sainte-Victoire* appear in my translation.

3. Abysmal Reflections in *To the Lighthouse*

3.1. Reflective Upbeat

The reflectivity of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* opens the ground for the evaluation of the verbal/visual intersection[45] from another perspective, that is, visual perception. In Woolf's novel, the fixed linear flow of the narrative texture is slit up by the strokes of light emanating from the abyss of visual art inserted into the verbal domain. The text produces a diversity of mises en abyme, thematic and structural alike, through which the biologically determined chiasmic mechanism of visual perception also unveils itself. In his article "The Problem of Ekphrasis: Image and Words, Space and Time—and the Literary Work," Murray Krieger emphasizes "the incapacity of words to come together […] at a single stroke of sensuous immediacy" (5), resulting from the fact that words "are mediations: [they] cannot have capacity, cannot be capacious, because, they have, literally, no space" (5). And yet, words achieve their spatial extension in the phenomenal dimension of perception the way they signify the visible and its constituent objects including the human sensible in Merleau-Ponty's sense. In her study of Woolf's intercorporeal narrative technique, Doyle declares that "[w]ords are themselves things, as palpable and as open to material struggle as things themselves. In *To the Lighthouse*, as in Merleau-Ponty's writing and as North feels it in *The Years*, 'The words going out into the room seemed like actual presences' (339)" (Doyle 58). She pursues her argument in a phenomenological fashion, viewing words and language as analogous to Lily's "objet d'art" (56) that is a mediator between past and present, life and

[45] In *The Colors of Rhetoric*, Wendy Steiner offers a historical overview of the verbal-visual analogy, introducing the concepts of three fundamental figures of art historical and aesthetic inquiry: Simonides of Ceos, who considers "painting […] 'mute poetry' and poetry a 'speaking picture'" (5), Horace's *ut pictura poesis* (7), and Lessing, who, contrary to his predecessors, emphasized the differences of these modes of representations and raised a "clear-cut technical objection to the painting-poetry comparison […] [and] stressed its polysemy" instead (12).

death.[46]

Light and the act of seeing also gain substantiality and plasticity in a process whose ultimate goal is to come to terms with the self and subjectivity. *To the Lighthouse* exceeds seeing, the realms and potentials of the visually sensible, the presence of light and shadow, or the artistic instrumentality of colours of the painter's, Lily Briscoe's palette. The novel implicates the philosophical dimension of seeing as reflection, as the pre-requisite of human consciousness, the means of subject formation. Seeing, archetypally imagined in terms of outwardly emanating strokes, paradoxically, serves the introspection of the characters. The perceiving eye directed towards the external domain is immediately re-flected, turned back upon itself, consequently the spectator is transformed into a spectacle, into the object of his/her own perception. This constant oscillation of viewer and viewed, perceiving subject and perceived object determines the analytic framework that encompasses the theme of reflection both on the level of the evolution of human consciousness (self-reflexivity, subject formation) and a textually enhanced reflexivity (mise en abyme). The "neat trilateral symmetry" (Reed 31) of the narrative, the arrangement of "The Window" and "The Lighthouse" sections that create the setting for the in-between "Time Passes" prefigures a series of thematic and structural duplications. The middle chapter functions as the reflective axis of the narrative, the in-built mirror itself.[47] "Time Passes" is predominantly dark, abysmal, engulfing, yet, ambiguously enough, it is still capable of reflection, of making things visible. Its locus is the intersection of past and future, light and darkness, sterility and fertility, presence and absence, hence its centrality in my reading of the novel.

---

[46] A detailed introduction to Doyle's critical stance can be found in the chapter entitled "'Nature is on the inside'—An Overview of the Phenomenological Criticism of *To the Lighthouse*" leading onto a profound analysis of the relationship between Lily Briscoe's painting as the aesthetic space of the novel and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology.

[47] The structure of the novel, however, offers another reflective model. The two framing chapters can function as two mirrors facing each other, creating an infinite number of immaterial mirror images caught in-between the reflective surfaces. Merleau-Ponty adopts the same image to grasp the seemingly unattainable realm of the visible/tangible "which belongs properly neither to the body qua fact nor the world qua fact" (*Visible* 39) as a result of the reciprocity of the perceiving/perceived body similar to the chain of mirroring/mirrored images originating from the mirrors themselves, yet not being physically part of any of those surfaces.

In the first half of my analysis, I shall concentrate on the phenomenon of mise en abyme and its multifarious textual transfigurations, adopting Dällenbach's theory as the framework for a discussion of internal reflections. In the second section, "Time Passes" is in the focus of my inquiry; firstly, as the mise en abyme proper of the novel; secondly, as the representation of the visible and its chiasmic energy. In this section, I shall draw upon Merleau-Ponty's concept of the in/visible.

3.2. Structural reduplication—Thematic/Surface Replicas

The compositional framework of the novel through its often cited H shape (the design suggested by Woolf herself in her "Notes for Writing") prefigures the reflective schema of the horizontally positioned "Time Passes" section stretched between the two vertical pillars of Part 1 and Part 2. Through its apparent symmetry, the arrangement instantly evokes the themes of duplication and/or repetition. The text produces its own replicas, in the form of a large number of mirrored images: an extensive array of genres (Lily's painting as a visual text, Tansley's dissertation, Mr. Ramsay's academic writings, the Fisherman's tale, Carmichael's poetry) and locations (Lily's canvas as the expansion of artistic space, re-presenting the Ramsays' summer cottage; the set table as a mental landscape of colours and shapes for Mrs. Ramsay's musings and meditations).[48] These textual alter-egos reflect upon different facets of the main plot, revealing creation as a source of endless failures, frustration, impotence, suffering, and, at the same time, Beauty.

The common denominator of all these texts-within-texts is the implied motif of failure, the authors' either temporary impasse or their permanent crisis in life to succeed. The extent of the creators' sterility seems to vary depending on their sex or the nature of their chosen

[48] Diane Filby Gillspie examines the generic cross-fertilization between Woolf and Vanessa Bell in *The Sisters' Arts*. In the novel Lily Briscoe appears to fuse the sisters' talents into her character, which interrelatedness I shall analyze in connection with the structural reduplications of the text.

genres. Tansley's frustration concerning his professional advancement along with his constant irritation felt over the friction between his lower-class origin and the middle-class idling at the Ramsays' place echo Mr. Ramsay's own "barrenness" (Woolf, *TTL* 43) and his sense of being stuck.[49]

On the other hand, Lily's visual text and Carmichael's poetry suffer a crisis that is only temporary. Both of them will triumph in the closing section. The painter's regained visionary energy is fully realized in "The Lighthouse," whereas Carmichael's glory is mentioned in the single-sentenced fashion of "Time Passes." "Also, [Lily] remembered, smiling at the slipper that dangled from his [Mr. Carmichael's] foot, he was growing famous" (Woolf, *TTL* 210). Lily's fruitless attempts to capture the essence of Mrs. Ramsay run parallel to James's desperate longing to visit the Lighthouse (the two events mutually reinforcing the sense of lack and failure). The promise of accomplishment and success accompanies each brushstroke of the painter, and yet fulfilment does not come until the end of a ten-year-long interlude. The reader/spectator is denied of any strictly speaking ekphrastic representation of her painting, consequently there is hardly any possibility to judge the extent of artistic deficiency, the cause of her dissatisfaction, and the justification of her starting the whole process from scratch in the closing section. The conspicuous lack of any description of the painting may be attributed to its highly abstract, non-figurative and non-mimetic mode of representation, and even more significantly to the fact that the creative process enjoys priority to the finished product, and to any faithful pictorial expression. Also, the incorporation of a quasi-ekphrastic "translation" of Lily's canvas into the novel would annihilate the phenomenal presence and function of the "painting" generated by the text itself. Lily's work, through its formalist plasticity, offers an alternative communicative means to fill in the fissures of linguistic inadequacies, which

[49] "He reached Q. […] But after Q? What comes next? After Q there are a number of letters the last of which is scarcely invisible to mortal eyes, but glimmers red in the distance. Z is only reached once by one man in a generation. Still, if he could reach R it would be something. Here at least was Q. He dug his hells in at Q. […] In that flash of darkness he heard people saying—he was a failure—that R was beyond him. He would never reach R. On to R, once more R—" (Woolf, *TTL* 39).

naturally defies verbal description.

The other representative figure of the creative genius is Mr. Carmichael, although he performs this role in a controversial manner. J. Hillis Miller views Carmichael's poetry as the "fourth example of creativity in *To the Lighthouse*, once more covert, muted, obscure" (177).[50] Despite his opacity, or perhaps precisely as a result of it, his "mind coincides (perhaps with the help of opium) more closely than that of any other character with the mind of the narrator" (Miller 178). Carmichael's surreptitiously introspective quality through his hypothetical task of being the narrator equates the poet with language proper. In his analysis of the problematic of narration, Miller declares that "the narrator of *To the Lighthouse* is not a ubiquitous mind but language itself" (182). Considering the two claims, one might draw the conclusion that Carmichael is identified with language and subsequently with the narrator, which proposition gains reinforcement with respect to Carmichael's supposed mastery over language. Yet, the essential characteristic of poetic language, that is its disruption of conventional syntactic linearity and the causality of the narrative logic reinforces the subversive undercurrent of the novel. Carmichael's assumed occupancy of the narrator's position would result in his control and possession of the power imposed on narrative language, which is evidently undermined by his evaporating and visually charged poetic means. This would not amount to any "fixing" of the origin of the narration, since Carmichael remains defiantly elusive, hardly a character at all. If he signified a linguistic anchorage in any sense that could offer a putative stability solely. This resembles the motif of a plank grasped in the sea that momentarily satisfies the cyclic urge for meaning and solidity persuaded by the voice of Woolf's "The Mark on the Wall".[51] His function is all the more obscure since, both as

[50] Miller employs rhythm as the essential trope for creativity. In this manner, Mr. Ramsay's "rhythmically chanting poetry" (171), Mrs. Ramsay's inclination to bring people together, and Lily's painting process serve for him as the preceeding occurrences of the creative potentials, hence Mr. Carmichael and his poetry being the fourth.

[51] "Indeed, now that I have fixed my eyes upon it [the mark on the wall], I feel that I have grasped a plank in the sea; I feel a satisfying sense of reality […]. Here is something definite, something real" (Woolf, "The

a character and as an artist, he remains silenced.[52] This silence might repeat the logic of the absent ekphrasis of Lily's painting as well, with which their latent artistic relationship is also strengthened.

Carmichael's dubiously ubiquitous character makes him similar to Mrs. Ramsay's ever-present invisibility; despite their silent dislike and/or ignorance of each other, they are united under the aegis of creativity. Besides Carmichael's personal aloofness "giv[ing] no inkling of any inner thoughts or emotions whatsoever, if he wanted anything […] sunk as he was in a grey-green somnolence which embraced them all, without need of words" (Woolf, *TTL* 14), he is also absent through his most idiosyncratic product, namely poetry. Ferguson attributes the absence of Carmichael's poetry to his "distant perspective" in which his poetry originates and to his "lack of ego" (51) that results in the cultivation of impersonal poetry. Occupying the limbo between reality and opium-induced somnolence, existence and non-existence, Carmichael "is the sleeper who 'frames' the extended night" (Ferguson 54). By "extended night" Ferguson means the "Time Passes" section which is embraced by Carmichael's enervated acts of closure. "His is the last gesture of the day Woolf has recorded in 'The Window': 'Here Mr. Carmichael, who was reading Virgil, blew out his candle. It was midnight' (192). He is also the last to fall asleep when he, Lily, Mrs. Beckwith, and the Ramsays return after ten years: 'it all looked, Mr. Carmichael thought, shutting his book, falling asleep, much as it used to look' (214)" (Ferguson 54).

In my reading, Carmichael embodies the mechanism of presence through absence, consequently he possesses the very abysmal energies of "Time Passes," activated later on by Lily in her second attempt at the visual representation of Mrs. Ramsay, conjuring up the by that time already deceased model of her painting. Carmichael's withdrawal into an immense

---

Mark" 88).

[52] John Ferguson remarks that "Mr. Carmichael speaks a total of twenty-nine words in the novel" (47). Ferguson refutes Miller's claim of Carmichael's identification with "this impersonal, all-inclusive, all-keeping, all-annihilating perspective" (Miller 177) allegedly ascribed to the narrator.

passivity does not restrict his stealthy re-emergence in the life and space of the other characters, "looking like an old pagan god, shaggy, with weeds in his hair and the trident […] in his hand" (Woolf, *TTL* 225).[53] In the concluding words of his article, Miller suggests an androgynous fusion of Lily Briscoe and Carmichael, rooted in the rhythm of their creativity (189). To this merging, one may also add the figure of Mrs. Ramsay, whose creative potentials and her quasi-artist facet I shall elaborate in the course of my analysis of the Lily-Mrs. Ramsay dyad. Mrs. Ramsay's unity with the elusive Mr. Carmichael is suggested by their attitude towards language, the manner of their (lack of) utterances. Whereas Mrs. Ramsay seems to have doubts concerning the referentiality of language and creates her own alternative set of meanings out of the words she arbitrarily collects, practically bringing into existence an alternative mode of expression and language, Mr. Carmichael transcends the ordinary means of communication and positions himself beyond conventional linguistic constraints.

One might claim that Mr. Ramsay's habit of reciting poetry serves as a counterpart for Carmichael's poetic excellence, and/or a compensation for his own lack of creative inspiration. Mr. Ramsay merely reproduces a varied selection of the English literary heritage. "And his habit of talking aloud, or saying poetry aloud, was growing on him, she [Mrs. Ramsay] was afraid; for sometimes it was awkward" (Woolf, *TTL* 77). The "regular mechanical sound" (21) he produces while "beat[ing] up and down the terrace" (21) results in the complete loss of the original energy of poetry. Language loses its meaning through the automatism of endless recitals/repetitions, while his behaviour, resembling that of a lunatic, destabilizes Mr. Ramsay's position as paterfamilias and man of letters.

Mrs. Ramsay's telling the Grimm tale of "The Fisherman and his Wife," although it

[53] The obviously mythical allusion to Neptune is a recurrent and fruitful field of exploration for scholars. Jean Elliott actually extends the mythical framework one step further to Proteus, the "shepherd of Neptune's flock" (360). Elliott offers a long series of diverse roles (shaman, priest, seer, deity, sea monster, henpecked husband, Neptune), justifying her suggested focus of analysis in her essay "The Protean Image: The Role of Mr. Carmichael in *To the Lighthouse*." Not that Ferguson fails to impose a multiplicity of identities on the character of the poet. He also mentions the analogy with Neptune, however, Carmichael's figure appears in a more abstracted manner in his article than in Elliot's one.

seems to be similar to her husbands recitals, nonetheless represents yet another category within the network of textual doppelgängers. We might claim that her repeated act of storytelling is a double reproduction of the "barrenness" (43) of the male characters: both through its performative manner and its subject matter. The pattern of dropping the thread of the story and returning to it from time to time reenacts the previously discussed mechanical quality of Mr. Ramsay's reciting poetry, however, there is a crucial difference. Mrs. Ramsay does not repeat the same lines or series of events of the Fisherman's tale. She preserves the linearity of the story by following the successivity principle of narratives. Hence she occupies the locus of the storyteller, the mediator of coded truths and communal knowledge, conventionally taken by a man. Additionally, she also creates a communicative bridge between herself and her audience. On the other hand, her husband utters poetic splinters, reinforcing his self-centered isolation from the other family members or friends and repeating these fragments till they are hollowed out.

The other aspect that might seem to suggest the sense of failure or raise doubts about Mrs. Ramsay's choice of this particular tale is its very subject matter, perpetuating the conventional stereotypical image of the insatiable woman embodied by the Fisherman's wife, who brings disaster upon her family's head with her relentless greed. Mrs. Ramsay, however, transcends the prescribed pattern. Her unique experience, related to the act of storytelling, transfigures the verbal linearity and its inherent gender bias into an entirely new mode of art. The Fisherman's tale turns into a constitutive element of a melody, and Mrs. Ramsay transforms the verbal artefact, even if metaphorically, into music, the most abstract form of art. "[F]or the story of the Fisherman and his Wife was like the bass gently accompanying a tune, which now and then ran up unexpectedly into the melody" (Woolf, *TTL* 63). This capacity of engendering the emptied, muted, suppressed artistic formulations exceeds the potentials of a tale, the genre exclusively linked to her character throughout the novel. What

was previously silenced and made sterile by Mr. Ramsay now gains an invigorating twist through Mrs. Ramsay's perception.

> [I]t was poetry from the rhythm and the ring of exaltation and melancholy in [Mr. Ramsay's] voice. […] The words (she was looking at the window) sounded as if they were floating like flowers on water out there, cut off from them all, as if no one had said them, but they had come into existence of themselves […]. She did not know what they meant, but like music, the words seemed to be spoken by her own voice, outside her self […]. (120)

The quote describes, or rather enacts, a synaesthetic mixture of different sensory experiences; the description actually combines visual and auditory instances of perception. This resonating means of communication with the help of sonorous words does not necessarily convey meaning. The dislocated language intriguingly becomes part of the seeing body, tonal words simultaneously create inter- and intrapersonal relationships.

These textual replicas highlight the underlying power of alternative expressive modes, resulting in unorthodox uses of language by the marginalized characters of the (female) painter, the androgynous poet, and Mrs. Ramsay, the housewife. The manner they employ the pictorial, poetic, and musical layers of language (which are, each of them, metaphors of capacities within language) subvert the sovereignty of conventional narrative/verbal logic.

3. 3. Structural reduplications—Internal replicas/Mise en abyme

The emphatic employment of diverse instances of mise en abyme unveils the inherent self-reflexivity of the novel. Lucien Dällenbach defines the notion of the mise en abyme as "any internal mirror that reflects the whole of the narrative in simple, repeated or 'specious' (or paradoxical) duplication" (43). This definition suggests both the infinite capacity embedded in mise en abyme and its potentially deceptive quality although it is limited by its obviously simplifying tendency. Analyzing the theoretical problems of mise en abyme in his article "The Restricted Abyss," Moshe Ron challenges Dällenbach's concept of textual reflection, interrogating issues such as "totality," "reflection," "explicitness," "isolatibility," just to mention a few out of the nine aspects he addresses (422, 425, 426, 427).

The most problematic component of Dällenbach's approach is the allegedly holistic quality of internal reflection. Dällenbach's phrase "the whole of the narrative" indicates the inadequacy of his definition: his idea implies that the reflected image would be equal in size with the reflecting one, which would lead to the Borgesian absurdity of the map that is as large as the land it is supposed to represent.[54] This indicates an inherent limitation of the verbal mise en abyme, in contrast with visual internal mirroring, since the latter is capable of transcending, if not exceeding, the part-whole relationship of the reflected-reflecting structure. This additional capacity of the visual mise en abyme gains its significance in the analysis of the verbal-visual analogies of *To the Lighthouse*, in which the textually composed visual artifact, i.e. Lily's painting, adopts characteristics of a visual mise en abyme.

Other theoreticians, such as Jean Ricardou, representing the other extreme, view verbal mise en abyme as an instrument that "reveals what is absent from the context" (Ricardou qtd. in Dällenbach, "Reflexivity" 441). Ricardou discusses this innate capacity of

[54] Borges's "On Exactitude of Science" depicts the map whose perfection necessitates its excess of size, "a map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it" (Borges 325).

mise en abyme, arguing for the necessity of its insertion for the sake of showing what would otherwise remain invisible or inaccessible for the viewer/reader. The most often "quoted" paintings for the phenomenon of mise en abyme—Dällenbach's work is no exception—are Van Eyck's *The Arnolfini Couple* and Velázquez's *Las Meninas*. Both paintings incorporate a mirror into their own space which, conforming to what Ricardou said, reveals what is absent in the primary pictorial space: this absent space is the domain that is invisible from the beholder's point of view, yet, on the other hand, coincides with the space of the viewer. In his analysis of *Las Meninas*, Michel Foucault reflects upon the relationship between the embedded mirror and its surrounding reality: "In fact, [the mirror] shows us nothing of what is represented in the picture itself. Its motionless gaze extends out in front of the picture, into that necessarily invisible region which forms its exterior face, to apprehend the figures arranged in that space" (8). Consequently, the visual mise en abyme may exceed the limits of the visible, i. e. the pictorial context in which it is positioned. Dällenbach seems to ignore this crucial difference between the mechanism of the verbal and visual mises en abyme and its further implications. According to his argument, the verbal mise en abyme mirrors events, characters, names that are integral elements of the narrative. Even in the case of a so called "cover character" whose function is to represent the author—by definition an "outsider" in any narrative—there is some prior legitimization for its duplication; Dällenbach himself links this "authenticating" (*Mirror* 76) figure to the implied or "implicit author" (*Mirror* 76).

The prevalent coexistence of text and image in *To the Lighthouse* provides the ground for the inverted functioning of the verbal and visual instances of mise en abyme. The reciprocal design is played out on several levels of the novel: in the (self-)reflected direction of the perceiving eye/I (Lily and Mrs. Ramsay); the generic overlapping of pictorial and literary artefacts; the temporal/spatial intersection most emphatically appearing in the visually defined space of Lily's canvas; and the transcended temporal linearity of "Time Passes." This

chiasmic model dominates the whole of the narrative composition. Before introducing how these two distinct modes of internal mirroring, that of the verbal and the visual, take upon themselves the other's operational attributes, I sketch the diverse manifestations of mise en abyme in the narrative as a whole.

As I indicated at the beginning, (1) the most obvious mirroring taking place between Part 1 and Part 3 is produced by the compositional logic of the narrative locating the middle section, "Time Passes" in the position of the mirror itself. As a result of the novel's stylistic embeddedness in Modernist poetics (2) *To the Lighthouse* possesses predominantly visual qualities, thus Lily's painting(s) are the mises en abyme of the whole structure, in a quasi picture-within-a-picture arrangement. Although the novel can be read as a biography of Woolf's parents,[55] an autobiography, a therapeutic "elegy"[56] (Woolf's own term), or a renewed expression of grief over the insurmountable loss of the mother, Julia Stephen,[57] it can also be viewed as a portrait of Mrs. Ramsay both in a visual and a literary sense. This recalls a further instance of mise en abyme, (3) Lily's portrait of Mrs. Ramsay being the miniature visual embodiment of the more extensive verbal portrait by Virginia Woolf. Lily's character might be seen as the already mentioned (4) cover character for Woolf herself and (5) their artistic struggle to accomplish the creative vision as a twofold mise en abyme. A manifold internal mirroring is introduced through the arrangement of (6) the central female figures

---

[55] In his article focusing exclusively on the autobiographical aspect of Woolf's writings, Avrom Fleishman claims that "this autobiographical novel [*To the Lighthouse*] is not written from the author's reminiscental perspective; the point of view is not the child's but the parents'—how it must have been for them" (609).

[56] Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace consider *To the Lighthouse* along with *Between the Acts* "as generic hybrids" the former being termed "a novel/elegy" (73). Karen Smythe defines some of Woolf's works (among others *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, or short-fictional pieces as "Kew Gardens" and "The Mark on the Wall") as "fiction elegies" (65), whereas Goldman observes that "*To the Lighthouse* follows some conventions of pastoral elegy which [she] [relates] to the novel's engagement with tropes of colour, light and shade" (*Feminist Aesthetics* 168).

[57] Kelly S. Walsh explores the potentiality of the elegy as an aesthetic means that both Rilke and Woolf are allured by. The dehiscence left by the loss of someone, however, is only one triggering aspect of elegies. The insufficiency of language to express the inexpressible also induced modernist writers to "consciously hold onto loss […], to prolong the process [of mourning] indefinitely (Walsh 17-8). That is what Ramazani calls the "reopen[ing] [of] the wounds of loss" (Ramazani qtd. in Walsh 18), which act Walsh terms "a trope [for] the process of the modernist elegy" (18). Walsh also acknowledges that "Woolf's elegiac writing has an intensely personal element: […] *To the Lighthouse* [being] a feeling memorial for her mother" (9).

(Lily and Mrs. Ramsay) and their relationship to the triangle of Vanessa Bell, Virginia Woolf, and Julia Stephen, who serve as models for the characters and are intricately merged into them (Raitt 40-1). Besides the triad of female artists there is (7) Mr. Carmichael, a conspicuously silenced character, an artist himself, a poet, whose expressive instrument doubly reflects Woolf's visually charged poetic language.[58] And finally, the most intriguing occurrence of mise en abyme in the text (8) is the "Time Passes" section itself the detailed analysis of which I shall undertake in the course of the present chapter.

Characters, events, acts, abstract artistic ideals enfold each other, there is no or little possibility of separating them, one image is engulfed in another which in turn is already part of a wider structure. This pattern evokes Derrida's view of mise en abyme that "appears in virtually synonymous proximity to '*supplémentarité*' and '*différance*', [it] explicitly designates infinite regression: 'when one can read a book within a book, an origin within the origin, a centre within the centre, [which] leads us into an abyss ('abîme'), a bottomless and infinite duplication'" (Derrida qtd. in Dällenbach, *Mirror* 170). Besides the infinity of the mise en abyme, its power to engulf, to swallow up both the (interior) participants and the (exterior) observers, the very abysmal quality appears as immanent in the notion of internal mirroring. Considering the etymology of the term itself, and disregarding its heraldic origin for a while, mise en abyme means to take/position/put something into an abyss, a chasm, a void, the underworld, or chaos. This reveals the ambiguous nature of its function[59] that

---

[58] Carmichael's poetry is present in its absence (parallel to Mrs. Ramsay's presence after her death in Part 3). The reader has no access to his actual poetical works, his oeuvre becomes tangible through scattered allusions, mosaics of his growing fame and professional venerability, which echoes Lily's painting process, the lack of any, strictly speaking, ekphrastic representation of her pictures. Carmichael's poetry exemplifies the inadequacy and/or impossibility of representation the way Velázquez's canvas in *Las Meninas* turns its back upon the viewers, or Poussin's *Self-Portrait* (1650) shows a canvas with the sheer groundwork on it. The enigma, the essence, the form that lies behind/beyond reality inevitably remains invisible.

[59] André Gide claims that "'nothing sheds more light on' a narrative than its mise en abyme" (Gide qtd. in Dällenbach, *Mirror* 55) whereas Dällenbach offers a fourfold functional categorization of the mise en abyme: "[being] the most powerful textual signal and aid to readability, [it] can (1) use artifice to repragmatize the text, (2) seal directly or indirectly the text's vanishing points, (3) condense the text in order to provide a surview, and (4) render the text more intelligible by making use of redundancy and an integrated metalanguage" ("Reflexivity" 440).

enlightens through a misleading darkness, or presents a nonrealistic/representational duplication of the fictional reality. This abysmal, annihilating aspect of reflection achieves its climax in "Time Passes." The analogy between Woolf and the figure of the artist, the double presence of Lily's portrait of Mrs. Ramsay, or the thematic duplications within and between the chapters serve as easily distinguishable instances of the internal mirroring and lay down the groundwork for the culmination of this reflective pattern in the central chapter.

Lily's figure condenses three different characters into herself: Woolf, Vanessa Bell (Woolf's sister, a painter herself), and Mrs. Ramsay,[60] who indirectly signifies Julia Stephen, Woolf's mother. This latter claim is, however, justified only in case of reading Lily's painting as a "self-portrait." The link between the dramatized artist figure and the author is established through their identical objectives. Woolf "and her characters often search for a visual image to embody what words cannot express. […] [She] wants to write a novel about the silence beyond people's words" (Gillespie 117, 220). Lily similarly struggles to encompass the horizon of the invisible/unutterable, something which occupies the realms beyond the representational reality of the historically given. Her "interest is the essence of Mrs. Ramsay. […] [H]er intention [is] to express the truth [that] resides in images, shapes which suggest the private, essential Mrs. Ramsay behind the public, self-abnegating role. Like Woolf […] Lily seeks visual correlatives for emotional states and individual identities" (Gillespie 221, 222). Besides the emblematic images (beehive, the august shape of a dome, tombs of kings) with which Lily tries to delineate Mrs. Ramsay she often adopts impulsively conjured analogies.

---

60 Dällenbach offers three different criteria for the character that takes upon him/herself the representation of the author. Besides (1) a symbolic name or (2) a surname that can recall the name of the author, (3) "an identical or similar activity" can also reinforce the presence of the author through his/her mise en abyme (*Mirror* 77). This feature, however, evokes a further parallel between Woolf and the figure of Mrs. Ramsay, whose constant occupation is knitting, which, among its other functions ("a significant image of the working-in of different threads" [Raitt 49]; an act of creativity and connection resembling Lily's final vision [Emery 227]; the act that "epitomizes her gift for unifying the awareness of others in a shared moment" [Levy]; the instrument with which she "knits objects together […] offer[ing] comfort and togetherness" while the knitting needles themselves serve as "weapons against the all-consuming bouts of despair and obsession" [Brown 44];), clearly alludes to writing through linking one stitch/word (in)to the other. Thus, mise en abyme operates out of the strictly taken thematic framework and mirrors either the process of writing (Mrs. Ramsay's knitting), or that of reading/interpretation (Mr. Ramsay's reciting poetry, or Tansley's dissertation).

"She was like a bird for speed, an arrow for directness. […] She had recovered her sense of her now—this was the glove's twisted finger" (Woolf, *TTL* 55, 56). Lily's artistic urge to translate her immediate environment—human beings and the emotional and/or social relationships among them—to "visual correlatives" (Gillspie's term) naturally are not confined to Mrs. Ramsay. Mr. Ramsay's intellectual occupation hovers in the air "lodged now in the fork of a pear tree […] [as] a phantom kitchen table" (Woolf, *TTL* 28); whereas in the phase of mourning, his woe is depicted as "heavy draperies of grief" (Woolf, *TTL* 166). The central motif of fusion i.e. marriage is embodied by the iconic couple Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay themselves. "So that is marriage, Lily thought, a man and a woman looking at a girl throwing a ball" (Woolf, *TTL* 79-80). The collective experience reinforces their marital bond that is acted out in a shared visual sensation.

Woolf and Lily, through their respective works, share a generic instability. The narrative as a whole may bear the properties of a portrait, yet it also contains components of still lifes (the most emphatic example for this is the description of the dinner party and the bowl of fruits as the centrepiece[61]), and motifs of landscape painting, as well.[62] The very

---

[61] "Now eight candles were stood down the table, and after the first stoop the flames stood upright and drew with them into visibility the long table entire, and in the middle a yellow, and purple dish of fruit. What had she done with it, Mrs. Ramsay wondered, for Rose's arrangement of the grapes and pears, of the horny pink-lined shell of the bananas, made her think of a trophy fetched from the bottom of the sea, of Neptune's banquet, of the bunch that hangs with vine leaves over the shoulder of Bacchus (in some picture), among the leopard skins and the torches lolloping red and gold […] (Woolf, *TTL* 105).

[62] In his *Geography of the Gaze*, Renzo Dubbini explores the genre of landscape painting as a means of transforming the world into an image, a process deeply intertwined with the scientific and technological development of a particular era. "If landscape is a result of human labor, the image that effectively captures its characteristics and identifies its essential lines is a document that reveals a given society's aspirations and its ability to transform the environment" (Dubbini 10). The iconic centrepiece (even if it is created by Rose and not by Mrs. Ramsay) reflects the conscious and meticulous arrangement of the company as a micro-society. No wonder Mrs. Ramsay desperately guards the composition hoping that the constellation of the irreconcilably incongruous shapes and colours (i.e. Mr. Ramsay, her children, Bankes, Tansley, Lily) will last, the unity will be preserved. However, the very fact that the "arrangement of the grapes and pears, of the horny pink-lined shell, of the bananas" (Woolf, *TTL* 105) is created by Rose indicates her own aesthetic/artistic interest projected onto the landscape of colourful fruits, neither necessarily being a direct inheritor of Mrs. Ramsay's wife-host-mother role nor of Lily's independent yet slightly estranged artist status. Through the iconic centrepiece she prefigures a new social order, a possibility not yet offered to Prue, the eldest Ramsay daughter.

In her close "reading" of Lily's two paintings, Rowley claims that Lily's second painting shows generic characteristics of a landscape painting rather than those of a portrait (27). She considers this as a necessary outcome of Mrs. Ramsay's absence that "quite literally left [Lily] with only hedges and houses" (27). Rowley accentuates the mutuality of writing and the act of painting that "finally emerges as a response to 'emptiness'

presentation of the set table "[is] also a miniature world for Mrs. Ramsay's eyes to travel through. So still lifes become landscapes in Woolf's writing but […] landscapes closely related to mental states" (Gillespie 240). *To the Lighthouse* tends to offer a playful blending of generic borderlines between still life, landscape, conversation piece and portrait, a heterogeneity most plastically enacted by Lily's painting. The merging of the separate generic components serves as the ground of liberating form and colour of the painterly constraints enhancing what Clive Bell meant by "significant form."

To the Lighthouse is a unique contribution to this authorial transgression, its language becoming the generative means that embeds these pictorial renegades of interwoven generic expectations. The verbal medium often helps the painter to evoke an image or, paradoxical as it may sound, to visualize an abstract entity. In unison with the inherent logic of the text, the subversive endeavour to make someone present through absence, to offer visibility to the invisible domain, or to achieve knowledge in a radically non-empirical mode, language is capable of accomplishing its auxiliary role only through a deliberate surrendering of its conventional referentiality.

This unconventional usage of the verbal medium also produces the reflective bonding of Lily and Mrs. Ramsay. The Lily-Mrs. Ramsay dyad alters the status of Lily's painting and transforms it into a self-portrait, consequently defining the two characters as reflections of each other. Although this claim can easily be challenged by the extensive (auto)biographical documentation suggesting that the model for Mrs. Ramsay is Julia Stephen, there is ample textual evidence to corroborate the claim that Lily and Mrs. Ramsay also bear signs of a shared identity. Artist and model, ambivalently, are both immersed in a steady gazing at their

---

impossible to express in words" (28), by which she regards the genre of landscape painting as a possible resolution to the re-presentation of Mrs. Ramsay as the empty centre of her focus. As Rowley argues on, the act of painting also endows the painter with "some sort of beginning and some sort of love" (28) where beginning is meant as birth whereas love is considered as a universal affirmation of existential security both experiences being depicted in Lily's mind through emphatic bodily sensations. Such "experiences as they arise in the activity of painting substantially involve what Lily Briscoe calls 'these emotions of the body'" (Rowley 28) hence Rowley's preparing the ground for a phenomenological interpretation of the novel, more particularly the painter's intercourse with the world through the act of painting.

respective microcosms, accompanied by the constant "reading" of the others. There are particular roles and attitudes consciously never claimed or realised yet occasionally challenging both Mrs. Ramsay and Lily, which establishes a further link between them. Lily attempts to come to terms with such social expectations as offering sympathy (Woolf, *TTL* 165, 168), or care—even if it appears in paying a trivial compliment on Mr. Ramsay's boots (Woolf, *TTL* 167), or showing respect (Woolf, *TTL* 29, 99-101). Whereas Mrs. Ramsay, however, acting out the mother proper, hence not to be lost from the sight of the family and friends, she also longs for the bliss of solitude (Woolf, *TTL* 131). On the level of perception both of them tend to abstract and come up with a schematized vision of what preoccupies them. A characteristic feature of Lily in "The Lighthouse" is to keep a carefully measured distance from both Mr. Ramsay's gradually withdrawing sight and the closeness of the accompanying Mr. Carmichael, by performing a rhythmical, dance like movement between "the edge of the lawn" (Woolf, *TTL* 161) and her easel. By this, she also transforms her immediate space into a stylised network of vectors along which she makes her bodily and artistic moves. The same neat spatial arrangement defines Mrs. Ramsay's sensation leaving the company after the dinner party. "She felt rather inclined just for a moment to stand still after all that chatter, and pick out one particular thing; the thing that mattered; to detach it; to separate it off; clean it of all the emotions and odds and ends of things, and so hold it before her, and bring it to the tribunal where, ranged about in conclave, sat the judges she had set up to decide these things" (Woolf, *TTL* 122). The enormous fixity and stability of the moment of singling out one particular thing, the images of the tribunal, the conclave, and the judges are evocative of Lily's constraint for aesthetic order that she achieves as "the concentration of the painting" (Woolf, *TTL* 173) against the engulfing chaos. Mrs. Ramsay's longing for solidity and stylization is also performed by the typography of the brief passage. The manner she wants to isolate each moment of her being is captured through a series of semi colons, which,

at the same time, disembodies the experience and visualizes the essential thing as it appears, confronted by the imaginary circle of judges. Lily, on the other hand, employs a diverse range of abstract images to depict Mrs. Ramsay's essence: "the dome shaped bee hive" (Woolf, *TTL* 58) that in a short while transforms to "the august shape; the shape of a dome" (Woolf, *TTL* 58). Finally, the already indicated utilization of language for the sake of creation rather than representation (poesis rather than mimesis) characterizes both Lily and Mrs. Ramsay. While Mrs. Ramsay combines the aural and the visual attributes of language in a synaesthetic trope—"[t]he words […] sounded as if they were floating like flowers on water" (Woolf, *TTL* 120)—, Lily, naturally, lays emphasis on the visual-aesthetic quality of the alternative employment of language. "What was the problem? She must try to get hold of something that evaded her. It evaded her when she thought of Mrs. Ramsay; it evaded her now when she thought of her picture. Phrases came. Visions came. Beautiful pictures. Beautiful phrases" (Woolf, *TTL* 209). Lily equates linguistic units with painterly ones, phrases surface in her imagination as constituents of the visual, as solid blocks of the Post-Impressionist design, as Roger Fry imagined the transubstantiation of reality into art. The transformation of the evasive immaterial vision into a substantial composition is anticipated by Lily's pluralistic gesture of "getting hold of something."

The Lily-Mrs. Ramsay analogy is further reinforced by Mrs. Ramsay's apparent neglect of the painting:[63] there is no evidence in the text that she has stealthily approached the picture to have even one single glimpse at it. On the contrary, her attitude suggests her complete indifference towards the visual representation, her absolute lack of interest in Lily's work: "Mrs. Ramsay cared not a fig for her painting" (Woolf, *TTL* 56). This apparent detachment can be explained by the self-reflexive quality of the painting, hence Mrs.

[63] André Viola reflects on the status of Lily as being "an adopted, but marginalized daughter" (271), which he partly justifies by Mrs. Ramsay's disdain towards Lily's artistic merits. "Mrs. Ramsay reflects that what Lily may think simply 'did not matter' and, moreover, that 'one could not take her painting very seriously'" (Viola 271).

Ramsay's permanent access to and control over the portrait. She does not have to look at it to know what is in it, to "know" it. Mrs. Ramsay's supposed identity with Lily enables the former to see the work, the portrait through Lily's, the painter's eyes: whenever Lily beholds the picture, Mrs. Ramsay gains a simultaneous possibility to perceive it. The other reason for her distance is Mrs. Ramsay's status of being a work of art herself, self-contained and secluded from its environment. Mrs. Ramsay often appears in window frames, stretched out as a canvas, yet the characteristics of this image manifested in and through Mrs. Ramsay are diverse and shifting from the representation of the Platonic ideal of beauty, through the Renaissance representations of the Virgin Mary or a mimetic genre painting of the 19th century to a Modernist/Post-Impressionist abstract picture.

The other character whose qualities Lily bears is Vanessa Bell, through the primarily non-representational mode of the artistic expression, the radical abstraction or the frightening appearance of "[f]eatureless faces [that] can suggest a terrifying lack of identity" (Gillespie 176). The mother of three children, Vanessa Bell served as a mother substitute to Virginia. Hence the figure of Lily, in a stylized manner, conveys the duplicity of the artist-and-mother status perhaps as a shadow of the unfulfilled role of the married woman. Lily undoubtedly cultivates Vanessa Bell's technique of abstraction, a primarily non-mimetic form of representation, hence Mrs. Ramsay's transfiguration into a "triangular purple shape" (Woolf, *TTL* 58). Her stylized figure, the form of the purple triangle ambiguously perpetuates Bell's unidentifiable "featureless faces," which endows the figure's pictorial realization with the possibility of multiple subjectivity. Thus it is much less a signal of an authorial or conceptual crisis than the engendering embodiment of a primarily non-mimetic or even anti-mimetic artistic formulation that meets its verbal counterpart in Woolf.

3.4. "my hands become aware of each other"[64]—The Chiasmic Node

By shedding light on the underlying potentials of internal mirroring, both on a thematic level and in the structural depth of internal replicas, it becomes possible to disclose the subversive modality of the novel and subsequently my thesis. This approach incorporates the energy of the novel's poetic-visual language, the chiasmic inversion of the verbal and the visual characteristics of expression and an alternative mode of communication that is capable of conveying meaning through the absence of a subject of active agency. The aforementioned reciprocity evokes Merleau-Ponty's phenomenologically conditioned perception and mode of existence built around the preliminary intertwining of "the two 'sides' of our body, the body as sensible and the body as sentient (what in the past we called objective body and phenomenal body)" (*Visible* 136). He envisions the enclosed terrain as an abyss "that separates the In Itself from the For Itself" (Merleau-Ponty*, Visible* 137). The demarcation lines of the "phenomenal" and the "objective" are shattered, an artistic, aesthetic and literary transgression prevails both Merleau-Pontian phenomenology and the Modernist poetics best exemplified by the central section of *To the Lighthouse*.

"Time Passes" occupies the limbo of the narrative in a thematic, compositional, and temporal sense of the word. Virginia R. Hyman justifiably terms it an "apocalyptic vision" (145) that, quite contradictorily, undermines the notion of linearity suggested by the title. "Time Passes" is emphatically disruptive, as several critics observed:[65] it can be seen to stand

---

[64] Rilke (15).

[65] Kelley views it as "the dividing line between past and future, […] a breaking of the order […] the central line […] the symbol of the shattering change" (76, 105); Hyman depicts the central section as an overtly grim vision: "apocalyptic time is introduced, not only by reference to 'immense darkness,' but to flood. […] And the waves are seen as being *like* leviathans, making the universe *seem* to be battling and tumbling" (125, 131). Spivak also recognizes the middle section as a period of ultimate confusion. "In a certain sense, 'Time Passes' compresses 1894-1918—from Mrs. Stephen's death to the end of the war" (Spivak 35). Understandably, due to the immense emotional and psychic burdens, "Woolf those years was marked by madness" (Spivak 35); and as Spivak determinedly proposes "'Time Passes' narrates the production of a discourse of madness" (35). Raitt in a fairly similar manner highlights the disruptive quality of "Time Passes:" "The novel is constructed around an interruption. The obscenity of deaths, the stormy chaos and darkness of the middle section, cut short the idyll of the first part and ensure that nothing will ever be quite the same again" (32).

as a narrative/temporal counterpart to Lily's central line that simultaneously links and separates, serving as an indispensable condition for the equilibrium, the unity that the narrative tends to achieve along with Mrs. Ramsay and Lily. The density of "Time Passes," which covers a ten-year-long period in the life of the Ramsays, is also stressed by the brevity of the chapter. The most significant events and apocalyptic incidents form a series of death cases which is played out against the microcosm of the Ramsays and also against the collective, historical background: manifested through the deterioration of the summer cottage and, on a more universal level, the devastation of the Great War all over Europe. The otherwise unbearable losses within and outside of the domestic sphere of the Ramsays, however, are mentioned in single-sentenced lines, separated by brackets from the main body of the text. They appear with journalistic minimalism, as headlines in the family chronicles. However, verbal facticity and documentary reticence characterizes exclusively the palpable reality of everyday life. The quintessential quality of the chapter lies more emphatically in capacities of other nature. The temporal *tour de force* of "Time Passes" resides in its power to adjourn time, to cut into the flesh of the narrative linearity, to open up a fissure and suddenly assert a vertically functioning temporal perspective, a depth in the fabric of the narrative, or to "suspend narrative time" (Dällenbach, *Mirror* 72). In the wake of this depth (the temporal incision) a different compositional dimension is delineated, that is, space.

Due to the apparent temporal quality of Part 2, Dällenbach's categorization of the prospective, retrospective, and retro-prospective verbal mises en abyme may prove to be useful in tracing the manifold functional *loci* of the section. The very term "mise en abyme" already implies the imposition of a visual/spatial metaphor on the text, imagining it as an imploding plane or canvas, a plane that becomes three-dimensional "space" as a result of a subversive act or irruption. This spatiality of the plane may inevitably mean yet another intrusion of time within the body of the reflective plane of visuality; resulting in a further

coiling over of its own texture. "[T]he first (prospective) [mise en abyme] reflects the story to come; the second (retrospective) reflects the story already completed; and the third (retro-prospective) reflects the story by revealing events both before and after its point of insertion in the narrative" (Dällenbach, *Mirror* 60). Owing to its structural centrality, "Time Passes" performs the reflective synthesis of the events preceding and succeeding its own narrative locus, fulfilling its role as a retroprospective mise en abyme. In this sense, the central chapter appears as the *par excellence* mise en abyme, closely evoking the heraldic origin of the phrase, being embedded, framed, circumscribed by the texture of the novel. Yet, Dällenbach's definition of the retroprospective mise en abyme is not sufficiently clear; "[reflecting] the story by revealing events both before and after its point of insertion in the narrative," (Mirror 60) fails to state whether these revelations of anterior and posterior events or circumstances are successive or simultaneous. Is it anticipatory within the dimension that extends up to its "insertion"? From that point on, is it revelatory of the past? Can it perform the two at the same time? "Time Passes" operates both prospectively and retrospectively; thematically, it is simultaneously anterior and posterior to its own appearance in the narrative structure.

The simultaneity of the chapter's retroprospective reflection gains its significance with respect to the textual/visual analogy. Dällenbach examines inserted non-literary works of art as potential mises en abyme in the textual environment. He claims that "the work of art lends a polysemic richness to the narrative, […] it objectivizes the action being reflected and, above all, […] it has its own temporality, which annuls, or at least neutralizes, the time-scale of the story: […] [it] suspends narrative time […]" (*Mirror* 71-2). Due to the emphatically visual quality of the novel, with special emphasis on "Time Passes," the most conspicuously visually challenged section, the central chapter takes upon itself the role of the "non-literary" artwork in a compositional sense. The structural positioning of the two framing chapters is only one, probably the most obvious manifestation of duplication, mirroring, and (self-)reflexivity. Part

1 and Part 3 "form brackets[66] around the central section 'Time Passes'" in a thematic sense too (Goldman, *Virginia Woolf* 95). Similarly to the way in which the framing chapters enclose the trickster middle section, the latter in turn enfolds essential events, mainly those of oblivion, from the life of the Ramsays and the post-war world, presenting those incidents in brackets, thus reduplicating the Chinese box motif of enclosure folding upon enclosure. Both central and bracketed, "Time Passes" in its marginal and parergonal status, resists evident generic categorizations; owing to its poetic quality and its visual potential,[67] it fulfils the condition of a "generic shifter"[68] not exclusively as a result of the disruption of the temporal flow related to its larger con-text.

This is the point where the chiasmic inversion of visual and verbal mises en abyme becomes palpable. "Time Passes" behaves as a visual mise en abyme when it reflects entities that exceed the otherwise visibly designated frames of the pictorial domain. On the other hand, Lily's primarily "non-novelistic" (Dällenbach's term) intrusion accomplishes the requirements of a textual mise en abyme, reduplicating—although non-mimetically/non-figuratively—Mrs. Ramsay, the house, and, finally, through them the Lighthouse itself, all being ubiquitous throughout the novel. Besides the privileged central position of "Time Passes," the section serves as a point of convergence in the texture; hence its abysmal quality, both in its primordial darkness and via its reflective attribute. What it reflects is not exclusively Part 1 or Part 3, but their symmetrical/reflective relationship itself through its own entrapment among mirroring surfaces, reproducing an infinite series of duplications. The

---

[66] Goldman examines Woolf's typographical machinery, exploring the function of brackets and parentheses. "In *To the Lighthouse* the use of square and round brackets cannot be described simply as a typographical device, although this is certainly part of it. Virginia Woolf uses parentheses as something more than a mere device in the novel, for the whole form can be seen as a parenthesis" (Goldman, *Virginia Woolf* 96). See also Raitt (53-4).

[67] Paradoxically enough, its visuality is manifested through extinguished light/life: colours are totally negated in this section. The prevalent "colours" are black/darkness and white/light, one being the negative of all colours, the other encompassing all shades of the spectrum, even though devoid of radiation on its own right.

[68] Dällenbach defines the non-novelistic inserted work of art as a "generic shifter" (*Mirror* 72). He fails to evaluate the potentiality of such a shifter, his examples primarily revolve around literary (sub)genres. Apparently he disregards the generic polyphony and subsequent fluidity of the inserted novelistic/literary works, which I already exemplified by "Time Passes."

section turns into an engulfing black hole of the narrative, with a series of misleading mirror images and bent strokes of (artificial) light. "Time Passes" appears in the flesh of the narrative as the embodiment of the chiasmic relationship. It exposes itself as the mirror, the reflective surface that bends the stroke of light coming through "The Window," and, at the same time, it creates the space of a temporary engulfment with a sudden opening up of the realm lying beyond the mirror.

> [H]ow once the looking-glass had held a face; had held a world hollowed out in which a figure turned […]. Now, day after day, light turned, like flower reflected in water, its clear image on the wall opposite. […] *[L]ight bent* to its own image in adoration on the bedroom wall. […] Rubbing the glass of the long looking-glass and leering sideways at her [Mrs. McNab's] swinging figure. […] Some cleavage of the dark […] some channel in the depths of obscurity through which light enough issued to twist her face grinning in the glass […]. But in the very lull of this *loving caress*, as the long *stroke leant* upon the bed, the rock was rent asunder. (Woolf, *TTL* 141, 142, 143, 145, emphasis added)

Two images in the excerpts quoted above are particularly notable in the context of mise en abyme. Stroke is itself a recurrent image of the text, it is a multiple signifier of the intersection between time and space, the realistic (Mr. Ramsay) and visionary (Mrs. Ramsay/Lily) mode of existence, life and art. The two most dominant forms of its emergence are the strokes of light emanating from the Lighthouse and Lily's brush strokes. In its anthropomorphic quality ("stroking with its silver fingers;" "this loving caress" [Woolf, *TTL* 72, 145]) the stroke bears the attributes of corporeality and plasticity. It also brings light, both literally and metaphorically; the latter, that is, metaphoricity thus appears as an unalienable condition of visual perception and painting. The stroke motif arches over the narrative, fusing different stages of its own transfigurations, and also suggests the return of the novel's implied

dynamism.[69]

The phenomenon of the curved stroke ("light bent"), on the one hand, presents a physical impossibility, thereby reinforcing the non-realistic, illusory, anamorphic, and deteriorated position of the chapter, which necessitates an alternative perspective for the reader. The image of the stroke hence is made tangibly perceptible, which image especially in its imaginary juxtaposition with the painterly brushstroke, leaving its discernible marks on the canvas, provides substantiality, a materially engendered presence to light. This evokes Merleau-Ponty's meditations on the comprehensibility of the "'little phrase',[70] the notion of light," the nature of sound and music and their relationship to the invisible; the realm to which we could gain access only through the unveiled "carnal experience" of these sensibles (*Visible* 150). Their carnality rests on their integral attachment to the visible, their filmy disguise, "the secret blackness of milk," (Merleau-Ponty*, Visible* 150) their in-habiting the visible.

> Thus it is essential to this sort of ideas that they be "veiled with shadows," appear "under a disguise." They give us the assurance that the "great unpenetrated and discouraging night of our soul" is not empty, is not "nothingness" […]. As the secret blackness of milk, of which Valéry spoke, is accessible only through its whiteness, the idea of light or the musical idea doubles up the lights and sounds from beneath, is their other side or their depth. Their carnal texture presents to us what is absent from all flesh; it is a furrow that traces itself out magically under our eyes without a tracer, a certain

---

[69] The constant rhythm of up-and-down is a recurrent motif of the novel: (1) characterizing Mrs. Ramsay's movement inside the house, ascending and descending the stairs, or her eye-movements—"and pausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of the Lighthouse […]. Often she found herself sitting and looking, sitting and looking with her work in her hands" (Woolf, *TTL* 70); (2) representing Mr. Ramsay's fervid workings of the mind best depicted by his unruly and exuberant movements—"[Tansley] was sharing Mr. Ramsay's evening walk up and down, up and down the terrace" (Woolf, *TTL* 9); (3) Lily's brushstrokes that follow her forceful yet disruptive mode of applying paint on the canvas—"[…] She took her hand and raised her brush. For a moment it stayed trembling in a painful but exciting ecstasy in the air. […][S]he made her first quick decisive stroke. The brush descended. […] And so pausing and so flickering, she attained a dancing rhythmical movement […]" (Woolf, *TTL* 172).

[70] Merleau-Ponty interweaves his meditation with quotes from Proust's *Du côté de chez Swann* (*Swann's Way*).

> hollow, a certain interior, a certain absence, a negativity that is not nothing, being limited very precisely to *these* five notes between which it is instituted, to that family of sensibles we call lights. (Merleau-Ponty, *Visible* 150-1)

Ideas manifest the very condition of the visible, my carnal being, the relationship to my "voyant-visible" (Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy* 168) condition with the world. Thus, the visible does not formulate a mutually exclusive binarism with the invisible or rather the non-visible. The ideas, the constituents of the invisible are not devoid of substantiality, they cannot be located here or there, fixed, anchored to one particular locus. The invisible is multidirectionally enveloping and penetrating the visible, it is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere, inside and outside.

On the other hand, the figure of the curved stroke evokes the etymological origin of reflection. As Rodolphe Gasché observes, "*Reflectere* means 'to bend' or 'to turn back' or backward, as well as 'to bring back'" (16). The narrative turns back upon itself, it manifests an uneven surface of several instances of enfolding and invagination, generating an incessant fluctuation of the internal and the external; "Time Passes" becomes the navel of the narrative's embodiment. The apparent corporeality enhances the perception and comprehension of the invisible, the dimension beyond the mirroring plane. Although this (self-)reflexive attitude dominates the whole novel on several levels, it is intriguing to see what the reader/observer can behold in the mirror of "Time Passes." The reflected images haunt the abysmal regions of an otherwise anthropomorphically introduced non-human environment, the self-revelatory process implying the inevitability of a submergence into the abyss of invisibility/unconsciousness. Gasché views "[t]he abyss [as] the negative image by which Reason appears to and in reflection. Reflection must become this abyss, in which alone it has a standing. Only by destroying itself can reflection achieve this goal" (41).

"Time Passes" recreates the primary abnegation of the self in the process of reflection

in order to come to terms with the temporarily "lost" subjectivity. Text and story re-present the pulsating pattern of submergence/drowning in darkness, in the invisibility of the night that is irrevocably followed by the resurgence of the self. The paradox of light being encompassed in darkness is materialized at an earlier point of the novel through Mrs. Ramsay, who fulfills the double role of the viewing and vanishing point of the narrative, a point of simultaneous convergence and dispersal. This prefigures the compositional forces, the fluctuating rhythm, and consequently the generative ambiguities of "Time Passes."

> "[…] a wedge-shaped *core of darkness* something invisible to others. Although she continued to knit, and sat upright […]. Beneath it is all dark, it is all *spreading*, it is unfathomably deep. […] Her *horizon* seemed to her limitless. […] This core of darkness could go anywhere. […] *Losing personality* […] when things came together in this peace […] she looked out to meet that stroke of the Lighthouse, the long steady stroke […] she became the thing she looked at – that *light* for example. (Woolf, *TTL* 69-70 emphasis added)

The triviality of knitting, stitching one loop into the other bears an obvious resemblance to the horizontality of reading and writing, formulating an utterance or a sentence, while Mrs. Ramsay's poise presupposes the vertical axis primarily presented by the Lighthouse. Mrs. Ramsay's essential darkness engulfs the lucidity of the horizon that normally is attributed with a latitudinal minimalism, here empowered by her phenomenal presence, simultaneously conveys depth and plasticity. The experience of being engulfed in the infinite closure of the oscillation of light and darkness offers the possibility of approaching the self. The manner of Mrs. Ramsay's mental description of her interior landscape coincides with Merleau-Ponty's definition of the visible that appears as an indispensable category in his phenomenological concept of perception. "What we call a visible is, we said, a quality pregnant with texture, the surface of a depth, a cross section upon a massive being, a grain or corpuscle borne by a wave

of Being" (*Visible* 136). This abstract and rather elusive definition of the visible shows similarities with the lexical origin of mise en abyme that covers the abyss, unveiling the in-visible through blinding.

This mechanism is most discernibly performed by "Time Passes." The middle section behaves as the forcefield of Merleau-Ponty's "new post-Cartesian ontology of visibility and invisibility" (Johnson 35), condensing all his fundamental notions of this "new ontology." Galen A. Johnson highlights the pillars of Merleau-Ponty's theory of the (in)visible as: "Flesh, chiasm, reversibility, depth, transcendence, and vertical time" (35). These concepts signify different perspectives of the very same realm, namely, painting (a field of paramount importance for Merleau-Ponty), and its interacting participants: the observer and the observed, the seer and the seen, the painter and his/her model, the visible world, encountering each other in the plasticity of the visible. Conventionally these pairings operate in the context of the self/other, subject/object dichotomies. Merleau-Ponty's theory of the painter as the repository of "absolute" perception, however, transgresses the borderlines of this unidirectional progress from perceiver to perceived.

> The reversibility of subject and object that the painter experiences, is exemplified in our own bodies as a fundamental manifestation of Being. […] This reversibility is called "chiasm." […] Chiasm expresses the overlapping, criss-crossing, inclining and reclining found in the Greek letter *chi* (X). […] [T]he seer is caught up in the midst of the visible, that in order to see, the seer must in turn be capable of being seen. (Johnson 48)

Such reversibility rests on the, by definition, inter-relatedness of the one who looks, controls, performs an active agency and the other that functions as one among the myriads of visible things bearing the possessive look. They are not simply involved in a mutual relationship of exchangeability of their respective roles as looking/looked at, subject/object. They manifest

their belonging to the same texture, being carved out of the same flesh.

The oscillation of self and other, seer and seen, subject and object works on several levels in *To the Lighthouse*. Primarily, it is apparent through the constant shift of roles between Lily/painter and Mrs. Ramsay/model, since the latter controls her circumambient sphere with her steady gaze as much as the former with the painter's eye, hence their heightened potential of gaining access to "truth." The intertwining is also discernible through the intriguing relationship of Lily and Mrs. Ramsay as mirror images of each other, Mrs. Ramsay as the projection of Lily's failed (?) or willingly denied series of different roles, that of the wife, mother, the Victorian housewife, the ever-objectified model for (Renaissance) beauty. Lily's constant search for the essence of Mrs. Ramsay—who simultaneously embodies all of these roles and detaches herself from them, preserving a private domain for herself—signifies her inclination to comprehend her own self, the "true" self in the visionary sense, "*intimacy* itself, which is *knowledge*" (Woolf, *TTL* 57, emphasis added), finally visualized in the quasi-self-portrait.

Martha C. Nussbaum introduces a nature-inspired spatial metaphor for knowledge and cognition in her analysis of the mind in *To the Lighthouse*. She adopts the image of the bee hive,[71] a frequent motif of the novel, as the representation of human consciousness with the instinctually coded tendency of getting into the hive of the other. The hive is, on the other hand, sealed, thus "knowledge of the mind of another is […] [apparently] unattainable" (Nussbaum 731). Lily's method of visualising the mapping up of one's own consciousness is also achieved through spatial metaphors: "in the chambers of the mind and heart of the woman who was, physically, touching her, were stood, like the treasures in the tombs of

[71] "People are sealed hives full of bees that both attract other bees and keep them off" (Nussbaum 731). Nussbaum's analogy of the bee hive is probably generated by Woolf's frequently implied image of the hive and Mrs. Ramsay as the queen bee. She occupies the centre of the house/hive, neither intellectually nor authoritatively superimposed on the members of the colony, yet she represents vital cohesion for the others. Nussbaum's metaphor is, however, vaguely, if not superficially initiated, disregarding (natural) scientific laws. Strictly speaking, neither the hive is ultimately sealed (similarly to the human mind that is also an infinitely shifting structure establishing contact with the external environment), nor do they attract other bees, let alone, other hives.

kings, tablets bearing sacred inscriptions […]" (Woolf, *TTL* 57). Lily's manner of understanding Mrs. Ramsay's interiority is, unlike Nussbaum's, pursued with the help of culturally defined spatial metaphors bearing also emphatic signs of literacy, the dominance of written language. This material/external/cultural grasp on the human/organic/interior realm reinforces the dissolution of the subject-object dichotomy whose apparent discrepancy assists Lily in her vision of Mrs. Ramsay's essence as "sacred" and inscribed, with which she creates a certain depth and interiority for her model, reinforcing the spatial attribute of the metaphors. Mrs. Ramsay, in return, challenges her environment to be deciphered and intellectually incorporated.

Reading of "the mind and heart," however, demands the transfiguration of the seeking self, even if momentarily, to its opposite. A temporarily suspended selfhood is a doubly charged knowledge of the other and that of the self as other, as Nussbaum claims: "it feels as if to have that knowledge would be to be finally at home in one's own hive" (731). The self finds its own dwelling place in itself, self-knowledge provides the sense of coming home, the nature of which, however, raises further ambiguities. Neither of the architectural sites appearing in the narrative as potential dwelling places—the hive, the summer cottage of the Ramsays, the Lighthouse, or "the tombs of kings"—could function as a "home" proper. The queen bee is condemned of permanent inclusion and radical helplessness, the summer house is in a constant deterioration and decomposition along with its inhabitants, the Lighthouse is located on a tiny spot of land offering yet another form of imposed seclusion, whereas the sacred tombs enclose the remains of life. Nevertheless, the act of self-annihilation for the sake of the subject's potential (re)-emergence echoes the Hegelian reflective drowning of the self. "Reason thus drowns itself and its knowledge and its reflection of the absolute identity, in its own abyss: and in this night of mere reflection and of the calculating intellect, in this night which is the noonday of life, common sense and speculation can meet one another"

(Hegel 103).[72] The image of the engulfing abyss appears both in Lily's primary impression of Mrs. Ramsay as a tomb and in Mrs. Ramsay's own perception of herself as "the wedge-shaped core of darkness" (Woolf, *TTL* 69), which also reveals that self-reflection is a natural state of her life. Nussbaum also argues for the annihilation of the self as the pre-requisite of understanding:

> [F]or the presentation of the self as a possible object of knowledge may be a kind of self-change—or even, as Mrs. Ramsay thinks, a making of a nonself […]. [Mrs. Ramsay] likes to flee at times from the demands of others and to identify herself with her nonverbal meditations. […] The meditative realm is both the hidden self and, at the same time, the death of the self. (740)

The reversibility of self and other, however, is twofold; on the one hand, it is accomplished outside the self, on the other hand, there is an intrapersonal manifestation to it, namely the fact that one can become the object of its own searching for knowledge. Even though this further twist that enables us to (re)locate the boundary of self and other inside the subject does not disrupt the binaries themselves, it blurs their sharp contours, which results in the interchangeability and/or simultaneous occurrence of otherwise incompatible categories such as subject/perceiver and object/perceived. The self can objectify itself for the sake of coming up with a thorough understanding of its own hidden/inner realm echoing what Merleau-Ponty's termed as the reversibility/chiasm of seer and seen. "We say therefore that our body is a being of two leaves, from one side a thing among things and otherwise what sees them" (Merleau-Ponty, *Visible* 137). One can become the very object of its own perception, one can feel his or her hand touching its own hand, "so that the seer and the visible reciprocate one another" (Merleau-Ponty, *Visible* 139). The condition of permeability

[72] Gasché evaluates Hegel's analysis of the philosophical and Speculative/Absolute reflection, which differs from simple reflection in its lack of relating itself to the totality of the Absolute. "Because philosophical reflection belongs to the realms of understanding, it can grasp the true and real synthesis of opposites only if it inverts (*verkehren*) that synthesis into something opposed to that which it is the synthesis of" (Gasché 36).

between self and other for Lily is the human touch, the bodily contact with Mrs. Ramsay, "the woman who was, physically, touching her" (Woolf, *TTL* 57). "[…] [T]he visible spectacle belongs to the touch neither more nor less than to the 'tactile qualities.' We must habituate ourselves to think that every visible is cut out in the tangible, every tactile being in some manner promised to visibility, and that there is encroachment, infringement, not only between the touched and the touching, but also between the tangible and the visible […]" (Merleau-Ponty, *Visible* 134). The reciprocity of seer and seen within the field of visuality is enriched with the idea of "touch" that renders corporeality to the visible, which appeared formerly to be the very role of the "stroke" in the figurative economy of Woolf's text. Apparently, the insertion of the notion of the "touch" through its very physicality enables Merleau-Ponty to grasp the opacity of the visible and the position of the human entity within it. According to Cathryn Vasseleu's reading of Merleau-Ponty's concept of the visible, the latter "understands the chiasm corporeally, as medium of the enigma of sensible 'being'" (32). "[T]he experience of embodiment becomes the horizon of possibility for all intersubjective and objective relations" (Vasseleu 51). The carnality of perception is, at the same time, a pre-requisite of the visible and the result of the chiasm of perceiving bodies and bodies perceived. Merleau-Ponty conceives visible sensation/perception as a phenomenal extension through the notion of embodiment, which after all functions not only as the means of understanding but a possible way of communication, and along with that, the very instrument of this particular mode of expression. In the concluding phase of "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," Merleau-Ponty introduces the idea of "the sonorous being" (*Visible* 144) extending the field of the "seeing-visible" (*Primacy* 168) individual with yet another sensory realm of perception, that of hearing and sound. The way embodiment, the phenomenon of the tangible, and subsequently to this, corporeality function as the condition of perception, sound, hearing, and the phonetic dimension facilitates expression, an alternative mediation of the previously gained

understanding of the world. “This new reversibility and the emergence of the flesh as expression are the point of insertion of speaking and thinking in the world of silence” (Merleau-Ponty, *Visible* 144-5). The exceptionally rare instances of getting access into the other’s mind and the consequently gained knowledge are, however, as difficult, if not impossible, to communicate as the very process of acquiring that knowledge. “But if they knew, could they tell one what they knew?” (Woolf, *TTL* 57). Mrs Ramsay’s solution to this dilemma is her withdrawal from the public to the pre-verbal or rather the non-verbal. One of the exemplary instances of such attitude is all the more significant since the fields of vision, audition, and cognition are fused in an intimate scene of domesticity, that is, telling a bedtime story for the children.

> She could see the words echoing as she spoke them rhythmically in Cam’s mind, and Cam was repeating after her how it was like a mountain, a bird’s nest, a garden, and there were little antelopes, and her eyes were opening and shutting, and Mrs. Ramsay went on saying still more monotonously, and more rhythmically and more nonsensically, how she must shut her eyes and go to sleep and dream of mountains and valleys and stars falling, and parrots and antelopes and gardens, and everything lovely, she said, raising her head very slowly and speaking more and more mechanically, until she sat upright and saw that Cam was asleep. (Woolf, *TTL* 124-5)

The words Mrs. Ramsay sees being echoed in a sonorous manner are constituents of a quasi-bedtime story, whose images she strings to constitute a fairly loose narrative. The image splinters and the order in which they appear get enriched and transform from one act of story-telling to the other reinforcing the lack of fabula proper, and, at the same time, formulating different materializations of the same “story,” such as a dream or an enchanting rhyme. Due to Mrs. Ramsay’s “rhythmical,” “monotonous,” “nonsensical,” and “mechanical” recital—all

these qualities aiming at the musicality rather than the semantic reservoir of language—these words lose their primary function of conveying meaning through signification, they perform an aural effect on Cam instead. Meaning is thus manifested through the aural dimension finding its location in the form of cognitive resonances. The passage envisions Merleau-Ponty's secondary reversibility that of movement and sound. "As there is a reflexivity of the touch, of sight, and of the touch-vision system, there is a reflexivity of the movements of phonation and hearing; they have their sonorous inscriptions, the vociferations have in me their motor echo" (Merleau-Ponty, *Visible* 144). However, phonation and sonority are partly related to formulating verbal utterances, hence cognition and the expression of ideas are also rooted in the embodied subject. "Thus between sound and meaning, speech and what it means to say, there is still the relation of reversibility, and no question of priority, since the exchange of words is exactly the differentiation of which the thought is the integral" (Merleau-Ponty, *Visible* 145). Thought also emerges from the body, from one's corporeal relationship with other bodies and the world, hence, indirectly, related to the visible realm.

Mrs. Ramsay's performing the sonorous capacity of language is inserted between two related incidents of visuality. Since Cam finds the view of the boar's skull (an awkward piece of decoration for a nursery) unbearably disturbing Mrs. Ramsay covers it, after a failed attempt to find something in the drawers, with her green shawl, an emblematic piece of her clothing, which signifies her as such, partly because of its colour[73] and also due to their

[73] Stewart claims that "green [is associated] with aesthetic detachment and imagination" ("Need of Distance" 89). These qualities mark green as a characteristic colour of Lily, as Stewart himself evaluates on Woolf's colour scheme in his other essay exclusively analysing the function of colours in *To the Lighthouse*. "The color green is also associated tangentially with Mrs. Ramsay, and directly with Lily" (Stewart, "Color" 452). Green is also "the intermediate between yellow and blue" (Itten qtd. in Stewart, "Color" 452) by which he emphasizes Lily's stance "between her fellow artist, Carmichael, and her spiritual mother, Mrs. Ramsay" (Stewart, "Color" 452), the former being emblematically presented by yellow, the latter character most prominently by blue. Although green is only "tangentially" linked to Mrs. Ramsay, her occasional aloofness and her artistic/aesthetic aura justifies her bond with the colour of the shawl and also her metonymic relationship with it even in her physical absence later in the novel.

The palette of Woolf intrigued Goldman as well, who devoted the whole second half of her book *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf: Modernism, Post-Impressionism and the Politics of the Visual* (1998) to what she called Woolf's *Prismatics*. Goldman stresses the colour green as one of the vehicles of "the politically pyrotechnical aesthetics […] in the suffrage movement" (*Feminist Aesthetics* 168). She interprets the nursery

metonymic relationship established well before this scene. The covered skull becomes the very source of Mrs. Ramsay quasi-tale: "how lovely it looked now; how the fairies would love it; it was like a bird's nest; it was like a beautiful mountain such as she had seen abroad, with valleys and flowers and bells ringing and birds singing and little goats and antelopes…" (Woolf, *TTL* 124). After lulling Cam, she must appease James as well by the same act of covering the eyesore. The green shawl serves as a screen that does not show what protrudes from underneath this time but what is beyond the veil, as if it preserved the presence of the invisible hence turning it visible. "[James] made sure that the skull was still there under the shawl" (Woolf, *TTL* 125). The green shawl, however, does not serve exclusively to veil or unveil a segment of reality since it conspicuously showed an attachment to Mrs. Ramsay from the very beginning of the novel.[74] It appears as a framing device that first accentuates a visual piece of art then Mrs. Ramsay herself, establishing her pre-eminently visual and aesthetic quality within the entirety of the narrative. The act of framing doubly occurs, on the one hand, due to shawl "tossed over the edge of the frame" (Woolf, *TTL* 35) that originally secures the spatial limits of the painting, on the other hand, Mrs. Ramsay's "head [is] outlined absurdly by the gilt frame" (Woolf, *TTL* 35)—a recurring image itself—by which her figure gains an artistic equivalent. The scene closes with yet another sign of visuality, namely, the pictures being cut out by James, by which the narrative's extensive imagistic density surfaces. The shawl with its green radiation, subsequently, becomes the trope of expressive vision, a trigger of an alternative form of communication, a surrogate language conveying a visionary narrative. The communicative capacity of the visionary, however, enjoys other embodiments

---

room scene, more particularly Mrs. Ramsay's act as something that "bears the seeds of social and artistic progressiveness" (Goldman, *Feminist Aesthetics* 174). "Her green shawl imposes a Post-Impressionist colourist solution to the play of light and dark of skeletal structure. This may also be a proto-feminist act: the chiaroscuro which keeps women in the shadow of masculine light has perhaps been obliterated by a green cover potentially suggestive of a suffrage banner" (Goldman, *Feminist Aesthetics* 174).

[74] "Knitting her reddish-brown hairy stocking, with her head outlined absurdly by the gilt frame, the green shawl which she had tossed over the edge of the frame, and the authenticated masterpiece by Michael Angelo, Mrs. Ramsay smoothed out what had been harsh in her manner a moment before, raised his head, and kissed her little boy on the forehead. 'Let us find another picture to cut out,' she said" (Woolf, *TTL* 35).

too.

"The painter's *vision* is a gathering that makes possible a *speaking*. The painter's *line* is an expression of a particular color or thing but also is a transcendent line tracing the *Wesen* (*essence*) of things" (Johnson 53, emphasis added). Vision and language, image and word converge in the line, Lily's central line[75] that appears to be the signifier of all pictorial dilemmas for the painter, the locus of the artistic crisis, and the very means of the painting's final accomplishment. "There it was—her picture. […] With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. […] I have had my vision" (Woolf, *TTL* 225-6). The crucial act of drawing the line and the verbalization of her performative act concur, reinforcing the inseparability and chiasmic reversibility of the verbal and the visual spheres. The fusion of language and visual perception as joint contributors to the formation of the (speaking and viewing) subject seems to collapse the two Lacanian orders of subjectivity into one: the recognition of the "I" and the "non-I" in the mirror coincides with the utterance of the first person singular pronoun as the establishment and simultaneous reassurance of the subject. Merleau-Ponty displaces the model of the speaking and viewing subject into the visual realm and substitutes the Cartesian subject with the painter, the beholder of the invisible, the possessor of the "thinking eye" (Johnson 47). This can be achieved only if the roles of the seer/seen, spectator/spectacle are reversed in a chiasmic exchange. "[H]e who looks must not himself be foreign to the world that he looks at. […] [T]he vision he exercises, he also undergoes from the things, such that, as many painters have said, I feel myself looked at by the things, my activity is equally passivity […]" (Merleau-Ponty, *Visible* 134, 139). Lily often experiences the challenging look of the canvas especially at her second creative phase in "The Lighthouse." "She saw her canvas as if it had floated up and placed itself white and uncompromising directly before her.

[75] The Lighthouse, Mrs Ramsay sitting upright, all the architectural designs (the cathedral, the dome shaped hive, the kings' tombs recalling the pyramids), and "Time Passes" itself, through their verticality strengthen the significance of the central line, multiplying and disseminating its manifestation.

It seemed to rebuke her with its cold stare for all this hurry and agitation" (Woolf, *TTL* 171). This oscillation of the subject/object positions, as I already indicated in the elaboration of the Mrs. Ramsay/Lily analogy, also strengthens the sensory experience embodied in art.

In her evaluation of Velázquez's *Las Meninas* along with Foucault's reading of the painting, Estrella De Diego claims that: "[f]or [Foucault] the visual space becomes a kind of textual, linguistic space, the place where the conflict manifests itself. This conflict is not painterly at all, not even narrative, but linguistic, as it implies subjectivity, the very formation of the Self and the Other" (De Diego 157). The visual context of *To the Lighthouse* witnesses a similar conflict in the visual space that opens up through Lily's canvas or "Time Passes."

> [T]he problem of space remained […] taking up her brush again. […] For how could one express in words these emotions of the body? Express that emptiness there? […] To want and not to have, sent all up her body a hardness, a hollowness, a strain. […] It was some trick of the painter's eye. For days after she had heard of [Mrs. Ramsay's] death she had seen her thus, […] a shadow across the fields. The sight the phrase […] the vision would come to her, and her eyes […]. (Woolf, *TTL* 186, 194, 197)

Lily's lifted paintbrush in mid-air, the expression of her hesitation and, at the same time, her will to utter the line, to paint the phrase that best conveys the "essence" emerges as a speech act that gains its fulfilment at the very end of the narrative. Lily's emblematically suspended brush evokes Velázquez's own image in *Las Meninas* that condenses the successivity of time into one single moment and the linearity of an objectively given reality of the painter's microcosm in his studio. This act presents the intersection of time and space, its depiction conveys the so-called "pregnant moment" (Steiner 40) that condenses temporally distinguished dimensions and transforms narrative linearity to simultaneity of images. Alice van Burren Kelley introduces the notion of the line as the instrument of abstraction, "the

condensation of a real form into [its] simplest" (64), yet this form also invokes Clive Bell's "significant form" that emanates creativity proper (67). Density gives the line its power to express, to cover up the hollowness left behind by Mrs. Ramsay's death. Suzanne Raitt, on the other hand, evaluates the ambiguity of the line in a different manner. "Lily's line down the centre of her painting could be simply one of erasure. […] [A]n obliteration of Mrs. Ramsay as spectacle and as Idea" (35, 107). The trace of the line upon the canvas through its substantiality marks the "shadow across the fields" (Woolf, *TTL* 197), enabling the painter to activate her unique visionary potential, to represent what is invisible to the ordinary eyes. It appears to be an immanent part of seeing, the painter's vision in the Merleau-Pontian sense.

> Vision alone makes us learn that beings that are different, "exterior," foreign to one another, are yet absolutely *together*, are "simultaneity;" […]. The "visual quale" gives me, and alone gives me, the presence of what is not me; […] the proper essence [*le propre*] of the visible is to have a layer [*doublure*] of invisibility in the strict sense, which it makes present as a certain absence. (Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy* 187)

Hence vision does not merely mean a certain set of delirious images, a constellation of preconceived patterns; vision also embodies the very capability of seeing, sight, illumination. Vision comes alive in the final line drawn in the middle that also interrupts the continuity and fluidity of paint on the surface of the canvas. "Time Passes," the temporal interlude diagrammatizes this very act of suspension by occupying the knot of the X (Chiasm), being the point of spatial and temporal (visual and verbal) convergence and emanation. It incorporates the basic paradoX of the narrative: the painterly quality of the verbal medium, the potential for abysmal clairvoyance, the (re)presentation of absence.

The abundance of mises en abyme in *To the Lighthouse* draws attention to the inherent reflexivity of this modernist/Post-Impressionist texture. The investigation of internal

mirroring sheds light on the novel's prevalent visuality whose ultimate gain is the revelation of its chiasmic energy and the subsequent intertwining of dichotomous notions. *To the Lighthouse* and most tangibly "Time Passes" hold the mirror to the speculative self for in(tro)spection dominantly through visual perception, in the framework of a verbally created visual artefact. Whereas the whole of the narrative performs the reversibility of the verbal/visual domains, "Time Passes" reiterates the same model through the chiasmus of the perceiving subject and its object of perception. Corporeality and embodiment are the means of achieving subjectivity in the context of the invisible, performed by the middle section's engulfing abysmal substance.

4. The Pictorial Domain

4. 1. "The needles drip blots of blue"[76]—The Overview of Formalist Aesthetics of *To the Lighthouse*

The novelty of my analytic approach to Lily's canvas lies in focusing less on the exploration of her painting's legacy to Modernist, formalist, Post-Impressionist aesthetics, that is, the by definition painterly and artistic qualities, than on viewing her artefact as a phenomenologically modulated space. In this sense, evoking the trope of the *camera obscura* that I adopted for "Time Passes," Lily's painting is the screen upon which the sensory particles infiltrating the dark room are projected as one unified image. Nonetheless, Lily's work exceeds the mere realisation of its subject matter, which is also indicated by the generic shift of her second painting. As Alison Rowley observes: "Lily's attempt at something in painting that crucially involves Mrs. Ramsay as its subject ends up closer to the genre of landscape than it does to that of portraiture. Put more directly, the picture Lily Briscoe finally paints is not a Cézanne portrait but a Cézanne landscape […]" (27). A landscape encompasses a wide scope of the visible, occasionally incorporating human figures as organic components of the natural scenery and, assumedly, it also invites the painter/viewer into the represented space. The painting transfigures into a phenomenologically defined space, offering the defiance of Cartesian spatial arrangement and subjectivity through the confluence of seer and seen, the human entity and nature, or the relationship between physical space, memory traces (e.g. visions of Mrs. Ramsay), and the painter's body (Lily's corporeal apprehension of her surroundings). Rowley regards the role of paintings in the Woolfian milieu "as a response to 'emptiness' impossible to express in words" (28). In my view, Lily succeeds in her mission to achieve "intimacy itself, which is knowledge" (Woolf, *TTL* 57)—an effective alternative and,

[76] The citation comes from Woolf's "Blue and Green" (142).

eventually, substitute for that "other" knowledge that one encounters as "inscriptions on tablets" (Woolf, *TTL* 57)—singularly as a result of her corporeal measuring of distance/space, let that be physical space engulfing her or pictorial space generated by traces of her brush. For the series of urging questions[77]—she habitually confronts herself with—are reformulated in the closing section too and, by this time, she, however, offers a much more reassuring and declarative answer. "For how could one express in words these emotions of the body? Express that emptiness[78] there? […] It was one's body feeling, not one's mind" (Woolf, *TTL* 194).

In what follows, I shall give an outline of the major approaches that have been adopted concerning Lily's artistic achievement, her vision completed by the very end of *To the Lighthouse*. By mapping up the diversity of themes that academics have examined I would like to delineate the critical frame within which I can formulate my own analytic stance. These analyses range from purely formalist analogies between Cézanne, Fry, the Bells, Woolf and her character Lily Briscoe; through observations on such crucial Post-Impressionist/Modernist notions as order, vision, rhythm, the constitutive role of light and colour, the way they enclose, or even more significantly, they generate a space; to epistemological issues of the accessibility of the other ('s mind) and its subsequent

---

[77] "Was it wisdom? Was it knowledge? Was it, once more, the deceptiveness of beauty, so that all one's perceptions, half-way to truth, were tangled in a golden mesh? […] What art was there, known to love or cunning, by which one pressed through, into those secret chambers? […] Could the body achieve it, or the mind, subtly mingling in the intricate passages of the brain? or the heart?" (Woolf, *TTL* 57). At this stage, Lily only implies the answers by "leaning her head on Mrs. Ramsay's knee" (Woolf, *TTL* 57)—an act she indulges herself oftentimes or at least evokes the pleasure of her (bodily) sensation from time to time in her recounting the memories of Mrs. Ramsay. Her corporeal response is rather instinctive, hence the solution remains allusive.

[78] The motif of emptiness more often turns up as a demanding aspect of painting than a conscious technical choice of the artist. In *The Visual Arts, Pictorialism and the Novel*, Marianna Torgovnick introduces absence from a different light while she analyses Modernist writers' (James, Lawrence, and Woolf) exploitation of the visual arts to serve different literary purposes such as the "*decorative* use" (17) that is characteristic of all three artists concerned, the "biographically motivated use" (18) most discernible in the case of Woolf, "the ideological use" (19) present in Lawrence and also in Woolf, and finally, the "*interpretative* use" (22) that illustrates James's fictional mode the best. In the chapter "The Sisters' Arts: Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell," Torgovnick provides space for the elaboration of her meticulous classification with respect to the visually motivated art in Woolf's fiction. Naturally, she devotes considerable time for the analysis of *To the Lighthouse* and the figure of Lily Briscoe. Torgovnick draws the "an analogy here between Woolf's fictional and Bell's painterly techniques" (120), both being intrigued by a composition arranged "around an absent centre" (120) that she terms an "off-center composition" (120). For further ideas on the biographically and ideologically based mutual inspiration of the visual and the verbal arts see also respective parts of Chapter Four, "Art, Ideologies, and Ideals in Fiction: The Contrasting Cases of Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence" (124-42).

problematic of how to give truthfulness to the findings of human inquiry, how to represent the world. Critics have employed a variety of disciplinary frameworks, such as aesthetics, psychoanalysis, feminism, narratology, chromatics, phenomenology. The survey of the essential theorists and their criticisms henceforth is arranged in a primarily chronological order.[79]

In his "'Vision and Design' in Virginia Woolf" (1946), John Hawley Roberts introduces how Roger Fry's aesthetic theories influenced the writings of Woolf and advances how the understanding of his ideas shall "illuminate one's reading of Virginia Woolf, particularly *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* […]" (835). His central concern is to establish an analogy between the artistic expression of Cézanne and Woolf, with which they tried to defy the burdensome "plethora of old clothes" (Woolf, *Roger Fry* 172) weighing down both literature and visual art. Their most crucial objective is to ascertain the legitimacy of the replenished (re)presentation of reality, which Cézanne found in the purity of form. Evaluating Cézanne's tenets, Roberts views *To the Lighthouse* as "another[80] attempt to make form and meaning one" (Roberts 842) in the Post-Impressionist fashion. Roberts lays down the basis for subsequent criticism related to themes such as: the structured relationship of characters (844, 845), structural repetitions (844), the artistic compositionality (845), order (845), the novel's self-reflexive quality (847), the unity of the all-embracing structuring of the chapters (847).

---

[79] Some book length works on Modernist/Post-Impressionist poetics of Woolf and her fellow artists devoted partly to *To the Lighthouse* are missing from my review out of obvious reasons of the lack of space. For the relationship of visual arts and writing and the common characteristics of Woolf's and her contemporaries' see Dowling's *Bloomsbury Aesthetics and the Novels of Forster and Woolf* (1985) and Torgovnick's *The Visual Arts, Pictorialism, and the Novel: James, Lawrence and Woolf* (1985); for a more focused and profound exploration of the interaction between painting and fiction see Gillspie's *The Sisters' Arts: The Writing and Painting of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* (1988); a socio-political perspective on Modernist art see Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace's *Women Artists and Writers: Modernist (Im)positionings* (1994); a series of conference papers edited by Gillspie and Hankins dedicated to the topic *Virginia Woolf and the Arts* out of which Brandy Brown Walker's article aims at the psychoanalytic basis of Lily's artistic activity ("Lily's Last Stroke: Painting in Process in Virginia Woolf"s *To the Lighthouse*" [1997]); on the significance of beauty as an aesthetic and also socio-political category and means see Dalgarno's *Virginia Woolf and the Visible World* (2001).

[80] Roberts considers *Mrs. Dalloway* as the other primary text of his inquiry.

This particular order and unity rules Allen McLaurin's analysis of *To the Lighthouse* in his concluding chapter of *Virginia Woolf: The Echoes Enslaved* (1973) that Goldman terms as "an enormously influential study […] [that] sets the standards for sophisticated analyses of the painterly aspects of these[81] novels" (Goldman, *Virginia Woolf* 89). He exposes rhythm as the result of Mrs. Ramsay's ability "to get 'inside' the repetition" (McLaurin 178) that is the novel's innate pattern. The unity of form and meaning here transforms into Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay's "complementary" (McLaurin 184) vision, which gains realization in Lily's "aesthetic fusion" (184). This fusion enables artists and readers alike to perceive "in a flash of intuition […] the 'whole shape' […] the pattern of repetitions and the insight into repetition and rhythm throughout her [Woolf's] work which helps her to achieve this effect" (McLaurin 181-2).

Whereas McLaurin sheds light on the visionary design controlling both the textual and the painterly composition, Alice van Buren Kelley focuses on Bloomsbury's prime occupation, namely, the means of communicating the new order of reality. She explores Woolf's attempts at the representation of what Fry terms in his *Vision and Design* "a new and definite reality" (167) and, subsequently, at her new technique "to crystallize reality" (Kelley 62) in accordance with Post-Impressionist theory. *To the Lighthouse* is a prominent manifestation of her formalist experimentation, in which novel she tried "to make life stand still" (Kelley 62). Through the character of Lily Briscoe, Woolf expresses her design "to convey the truth" (Kelley 67) realized by solid colours. Kelley introduces the analogous relationship of painting and literature that both Fry and Woolf professed, by quoting the former, who claims that these different art forms aim at "the creation of structures which have for us the feeling of reality, and that these structures are self-contained, self-sufficing, and not to be valued by their references to what lies outside" (Fry qtd. in Kelley 68).

[81] The other novel concerned is *The Waves*.

Jack Stewart wrote a whole series of articles on *To the Lighthouse* focusing on such fundamental components of paintings as light, colour or space. In his 1977 article, he concentrates exclusively on the Lighthouse and its beam of light both of which he identifies principally with the figure of Mrs. Ramsay. "In her Lighthouse roles of wife, and mother, and creative anima, Mrs. Ramsay becomes an archetypal source of light and energy for others" (Stewart, "Light" 379). His claim, however, conveys an implicit ambiguity. The opposition of Mrs. Ramsay's essentially female roles and her male capacity for being "creative anima" are not irreconcilable, yet Stewart fails to perform such a critical gesture. Later on, he reinforces the duplicity by stating that "[t]he light is a lover and [Mrs. Ramsay] is its priestess or handmaid" (Stewart, "Light" 383). Woolf dismantles the conventional polarization of such roles by suggesting an androgynous stance for the artist, indirectly, even for Mrs. Ramsay. Stewart himself makes such a concession ("Light" 382) for the sake of reconciling the duality, not so powerfully and convincingly as Woolf does though; he does so much more to re-establish the role of the beam of the Lighthouse as a "'steady light' of Truth [which] is also a rhythmic 'stroke' of Energy,[82] fusing sense and spirit in a rapturous marriage of inner and outer, conscious and unconscious" (Stewart, "Light" 382). The capitalized terms of Truth and Energy—the latter with its rhythmic quality—preserve male dominance. Hence the potentiality of androgyny cannot achieve its full artistic strength, supposedly neither in the novel, nor in its criticism.

In his "Color in *To the Lighthouse*" (1985) and "A 'Need of Distance and Blue': Space, Color, and Creativity in *To the Lighthouse*" (2000), Stewart focuses on the aesthetic function of colours: in the former, along vectors like "flexible form," "constructive color" ("Light" 439), "plastic design" ("Light" 440) or "sensuous light" ("Light" 443). He provides a scrupulous analysis of each emblematic colour appearing in the texture of the novel,

[82] Norman Friedman examined the same rhythmic movement of the Lighthouse beam that evokes a similarity to Lily's brushstrokes (156) as they perform "a dancing rhythmical movement" (Woolf, *TTL* 172). See also Stewart, "Light" 386.

highlighting their close association with characters to make up "a structure of parts and […] a luminous whole" (Stewart, "Color" 449). Stewart recent article extends the critical scope, as he himself puts it: his "approach is pluralistic, borrowing from formalism, feminism, aesthetics, psychoanalysis, and phenomenology" (Stewart, "Need of Distance" 80). Apparently, he does so with relative success in covering satisfactorily all the fields he invokes at his introduction. While colours, most particularly blue, maintain their centrality, he exceeds their chromatic potentials (compared to his earlier work) to activate their implicit "architectural plasticity" (Fry qtd. in Stewart, "Need of Distance" 78) and, as he formulates it with the help of Ehrenzweig's words, "the unique power that colour has in creating and modulating space" ("Need of Distance" 90). Space, besides its physical givenness, becomes associated with "the dark space of memory" ("Need of Distance" 88) in Lily's mind, something that automatically evokes time and also bridges the spatial and the temporal. Thus, the painterly instruments of "[d]istance and blue [become] spatial and plastic equivalents for memory, emotion, and vision […]" (Stewart, "Need of Distance" 93), qualities that resonate Cézanne's formalism with renewed forces. His pluralistic analytic stance is complemented with some occasional hints at music that, along with the "painterly form, […] mark nodes of intensity" (Stewart, "Need of Distance" 93) fusing reality with vision. The latter artistic form being tribute to the interartistic reservoir of the novel, nevertheless, not being evaluated to the utmost.

Thomas G. Matro also employs formalist aesthetics as the fundaments of his analysis, referring to well-established Post-Impressionist notions such as "vision," "order," "unity," and "design" to support his inquiry of "formal relations and harmonies" (213) or the nature of truth and knowledge in *To the Lighthouse*. "As I have tried to show, the design of Lily's painting is also the 'design' of her thoughts […] the design of the novel. […] The painting

[…] becomes the symbol of the process of mind […]" (Matro 222).[83] Besides the representational, spatial, temporal or purely technical aspects of formalism, Matro opens up a new horizon in the novel's criticism and fuses the mechanism of formalist design with the problematic of the knowability of the world as a cognitive process. Thus the painterly activity Woolf calls for as an aesthetic support transforms into a philosophical response to the changing relationship between the individual and the world, the internal and the external.

In *The Sisters' Arts: The Writing and Painting of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* (1988), Diane Filby Gillspie maps the intricate interrelatedness of the sisters' artistic means through a rigorous biographical research and the evaluation of respective artistic techniques. She, among numerous other themes, draws analogies of Vanessa's featureless faces that resurges in Woolf's expression of "a lack or a loss of identity […]; [however] more often they suggest a transcendence of the individual to the communal and possibly to some eternal principles of order" (180)—the latter aspects being openly evocative of both the figure of Mrs. Ramsay and the all-embracing generative force of the novel. Gillspie discusses "the fusion of people and places" (189), the manifold relationship of the individual's mergence with his/her immediate and external surrounding and their withdrawal to intimate private cells and rooms (190, 191, 293); the recurrence of painterly genres of landscape and portrait paintings[84] (171, 222) in fiction or, the other way round, the appearance of "[v]isual artists […] [as] mock biographers" (166), to enable the sisters to fully exploit the possibilities of the cross-generic experiments; the relationship of space and time (174-5); or minute technical

---

[83] In her comparative evaluation concerning the figure of the painter and the function of visual arts in Proust and Woolf's fiction, Cheryl Mares highlights the "open-ended, nonconclusive design" (75) of Woolf's fiction for the sake of which "the impressions of form […] must be […] elusive" (75). She acts so in accordance with her determination to depict life in its "incessant process of creation, destruction, transformation, and renewal" (Mares 75). Thus Lily's canvas serves as a perfect "surface for projections" for the Woolfian paradigm. She "considers painting from inside the creative process, as *forma formans*; she does not present it from the outside, as a finished work, as *forma formata*" (Mares 76). Paul Goring claims almost the same while evaluating the visionary form of Lily's painting as being the very shape of the novel itself hence the emergence of the embedded painting as a text within a text (222). "So it is not a question of finishing the task of putting paint on to an incomplete canvas but of returning to the process of living through her vision, her picture" (Goring 228).

[84] See also Raitt ("Woolf, like Lily, was painting portraits […] recognisable pictures in words" [39]).

and/or art theoretical questions of Bell's and Lily's identical concern with abstraction and non-representational treatment of their subjects (175, 221). Naturally, Gillspie's whole book deals with these fields, the examples above, however, are directly associated with *To the Lighthouse*.

A similar investigation is pursued by Christopher Reed in his article "Through Formalism: Feminism and Virginia Woolf's Relation to Bloomsbury Aesthetics" (1993), in which he focuses on the appearance of formalism in the Bloomsbury aesthetics, more particularly, on how the "issues of language and representation […] began to attract Woolf's interest" (16) in what Reed calls "the second incarnation" (16) of formalism—the first being exclusively dedicated to pure form. Reed highlights the generative power of form and formalist aesthetics that serve an unconventionally realistic mode of writing that runs parallel with the painters' refusal "to contaminate their art with 'story-telling' [instead of which they] 'say what they have to say by shading greens into blues, posing block upon block'" (Woolf qtd. in Reed 21). The question of knowledge and omniscience delineates gender specific distinctions of a male preoccupation with the ultimate accessibility to one's characters and a female lack of a comprehensive understanding of reality. In this respect, Reed claims that "*To the Lighthouse* is Woolf's most eloquent investigation of the connection between formalism and feminism" (Reed 24).

As opposed to Reed, who traces the interrelatedness of formalism, feminism, and epistemology with visual aesthetics gaining the upper hand, Jane Fisher offers quite a different argument. She concentrates on "metaphysical questions (that ask what is the meaning of things) […] [and] the epistemological problem of how humans can ever know one another" (101, 103), confronting these approaches as represented by Mr. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe: the former being associated with linearity, the temporal, and indirectly, with language, the latter practicing "the simultaneity of […] insight; […] the silent unity of

painting" (Fisher 102, 108). Whereas the common observation of critics is that Lily's painting can meet the demands of being "a potential means of communication" (Fisher 108), Fisher's final argument challenges this assumption and argues for the capacity of words "to escape mortality and time" (109). According to Fisher, Woolf is reconciled with words and language, "the medium she denigrated only to reaffirm" (109).

George Smith exposes modernist aesthetics in a new light, rereading the interaction of the sister arts as "an intertextual and interartistic aesthetic based on the memory dynamics of *nachträglichkeit,* or deferred action" (67). Smith's use of Freud psychoanalytic notion and its implication as "a kind of memory that is at once spatial and temporal" (73), on the one hand, evoke the mechanism of modernist formalism and its generative power, the way the proper juxtaposition of forms creates architectonic spaces, almost immediately calling forth the problematic of realistic representation, which eventually raises epistemological questions of accessibility to knowledge about the world and our fellow human beings. On the other hand, the central motif of *nachträglichkeit*, namely, dreams—besides fusing the spatial (Mrs. Ramsay, simultaneity, the painterly) and the temporal (Mr. Ramsay, the linear, language)—due to their psychological context, touch upon subjectivity, which embodies another pillar of the hermeneutics of the novel not covered so far. "[T]he crucial significance in the dialogical interartistics between James and Degas and Woolf and Cézanne lies in the representation of poststructural subjectivity through the structure of *nachträglichkeit*" (Smith 82). Smith proposes a subversive frame to his argument, which he clearly indicates in the title of his article, "Woolf, Cézanne, and the Nachträglichkeit of Feminist Modernism," calling the aesthetics of the period concerned as "feminist modernism […] in which writers and painters of both genders join in dialogical opposition to dominant modernism" (67).[85]

[85] Alison Rowley also introduces "a dramatic conceptualisation of links at a *structural* level between psychic processes and formal relations in painting" (31). She "argue[s] that in *To the Lighthouse* Virginia Woolf, in her imaginative formulation of Lily Briscoe's painting activity, prefigures in fiction a psychic structure theorised over sixty years later," which Rowley earlier defines as "Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger's post-

Jane Goldman analyses the socio-political implications of modernist and post-impressionist aesthetics and suggests that "Woolf […] records social change in terms of new colours" (*Feminist Aesthetics* 142). As she claims later in a chapter evaluating *To the Lighthouse*, in the framework of a feminist colour-code, "Lily's transformative vision, [her] prismatics stand as an alternative to the patriarchal chiaroscuro threatening to engulf her" (Goldman, *Feminist Aesthetics* 171, 172).

In her *Helen Frankenthaler: Painting History, Writing Painting* (2007), Alison Rowley, a painter herself, endeavours to provide a reinvigorated art historical approach to American Abstract Expressionist painter Helen Frankenthaler's works by unfurling "the inscription of major [political, social, cultural] events" (xiv) mainly for the sake of defying "dominant formalist interpretations" (xiv) and in order to enable the viewer to see the paintings concerned as "history paintings" (xiv). Although at first sight her book does not bear any tangible connections to Woolf's novel, right in her preface she declares that "the painting made by the character Lily Briscoe at the end of Virginia Woolf's 1927 novel *To the Lighthouse* is Helen Frankenthaler's 1952 painting *Mountains and Sea*" (Rowley xiii). Besides this bold analogy[86] as the ground of her analysis, Rowley reads *To the Lighthouse* along three theoretical concepts: Freud's *fort/da*, Ettinger's *matrix* and *metramorphosis*, and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, the latter being integrated through Laura Doyle's article, "'These Emotions of the Body': Intercorporeal Narrative in *To the Lighthouse*" (1994). Rowley considers painting "as a temporal/spatial play of the material there/not thereness, mark/no mark, form/no form, of the figure/ground relation" (70). With this she marks its status as an intermediary category that conflates "Lily Briscoe['s] pacing the space between her easel and the view of the bay […] [which is] a movement of the whole body" (Rowley 58)

Freudian/Lacanian concepts of *matrix* and *metramorphosis* […] a psychic subjectivising process that corresponds with certain material and procedural characteristics of the activity of painting" (xiv).

[86] Since Lily's painting is scarcely described in the novel, a circumstance that makes such open claims almost impossible and which Rowley herself admits, it seems rather ambitious to make such an identification between the fictional/narrated and the actual visual artefacts.

not singularly of the painter's eyes, little Ernst oscillating move to master the absence of his mother, Merleau-Ponty's intercorporeal flesh, and, finally, Ettinger's *metramorphoses*,[87] as a "creative principle" (Ettinger qtd. in Rowley 70).

4. 2. "Nature is on the inside"—An Overview of the Phenomenological Criticism of *To the Lighthouse*

Before I continue with the exploration of the spatio-aesthetic component of the novel, it is imperative to provide an at least cursory overview of the novel's phenomenologically grounded criticism. Strange as it may seem, *To the Lighthouse* has inspired very few phenomenological interpretations. Even in cases when such an approach does appear, it is usually subordinated to different (sociological, narratological, feminist) concerns. In what follows, I shall introduce those interpretations that explore such perspectives in a more than tangential manner.[88] My aim is not to discredit or weaken the analytic merits of these studies but to reflect upon the yet uncovered potentials that lie in the encounter between Woolf's novel and French phenomenology, more precisely Merleau-Ponty's concepts.

The most comprehensively phenomenological engagement with Woolf is probably Laura Doyle's "intercorporeal" analysis of *To the Lighthouse*. She acknowledges the influence of the Merleau-Pontian legacy and directly calls for the necessity of re-encountering Woolf's

---

87 Metramorphosis which is the "aesthetic mode of trans-scription" (Rowley 61) of the matrix appears as "*[r]elations-without-relating* with the other—based on attuning of *distance-in-proximity* (and not on either fusion or repulsion)—reflecting and creating *differentiation-in-co-emergence* and accompanied by shared diffused and minimal pleasure/displeasure *matrixial affects* of silent alertness, open an *within/with-out* space" (Ettinger qtd. in Rowley 70).

88 Stewart's "pluralistic" ("Need of Distance" 80) analysis, on the one hand, is a good example for the collaboration of different theoretical schools; on the other hand, he is illustrative of the analytic practice that dedicates only a very limited space for the phenomenological exploration of Woolf's oeuvre (for the latter attitude see also Handley 17, 40; Rojas 451, 462). Analysing the rhythm of creativity that is so much characteristic of Lily's brushwork, Stewart makes a singular mentioning of Merleau-Ponty's idea with respect to the analogy that the French philosopher draws between the way words and brushstrokes are organized: both in language and in the visual arts the blank spaces in-between these constituents convey as significant meanings as the words or strokes themselves ("Need of Distance" 87). The anticipated phenomenological approach, however, remains fairly unexplored.

text and modernism in general through what she terms “another phenomenology” (Doyle 44, 45). Doyle considers the formerly adopted “universalized phenomenological conceptions of time and subjectivity” (44) as being extensively under the influence of postmodernist demotion (Doyle’s term) of both modernism and phenomenology. She employs phenomenology as one of her three interpretative pillars, the other two being feminism and language, more particularly narration. Delineating her main critical stance she claims that “[t]he single most important point of intersection between Woolf and Merleau-Ponty is their attention to the palpable rather than the impalpable as the source of […] narrative” (Doyle 46), where “palpable” most predominantly denotes the material and corporeal givenness of bodies disregarding their animate or inanimate origin. In accordance with this shared valuation of the thingness of bodies “both Merleau-Ponty and Woolf recognize random inanimate and nonhuman phenomena as alternative grounds of human narrative and temporality” (Doyle 46). The objecthood of bodies and/or the corporeality of things characterize their redefinition of language as well: whereas “Merleau-Ponty explores both the expressiveness of the body and the bodiliness of language […], [for] Woolf, speech has a status as an object, as a heard or seen thing, in addition to its function as a vehicle of particular meanings” (Doyle 48). As Doyle concludes in the introductory section of her article, the interchangeability of body and language sustains “the interplay of the visible and the invisible, the distant and near, the living and the dead” (48), categories conventionally considered as mutually exclusive. The first of the pairings has paramount importance for Merleau-Ponty, who views paintings as the stronghold of the chiasmic interrelatedness of the sentient and the sensible, what he develops in a short while into “a reflexivity of the touch, of sight, and of the touch-vision system” (Merleau-Ponty, *Visible* 144). The bridging of “the distant and near” as well as of “the living and the dead” is a vital concern both for Woolf and her fictional alter-ego Lily Briscoe. The former combination of extremes signifies the most

conspicuous artistic dilemma that Lily has to tackle in both phases[89] of her painterly activity. Nevertheless, the two paintings she works on challenge her differently. In "The Window" section she is primarily occupied with "[t]he question […] of the relations of masses, of light and shadows" (Woolf, *TTL* 59) in Fry's formalist fashion. On the other hand, her second encounter with her vision revolves doubly around the sense of a relentlessly gaping space—the immensely distant Lighthouse and the gradually vanishing sight of Mr. Ramsay and his children's boat as well as "the uncompromising white stare" (Woolf, *TTL* 171) of the canvas. This latter preoccupation induces an urgent need in Lily to fill up the emptiness of her painterly space in a figurative sense too, namely, the absence/abyss left behind by Mrs. Ramsay's death from "Time Passes" on. The third pair of interlaced categories aims at Woolf's primary objective with writing *To the Lighthouse* that functions as an elegy for her deceased mother.[90] The reconciliation of spatial/aesthetic and temporal/biographical distances is thus achieved through the realization of the intercorporeal arrangement of things, objects, bodies. These categories undergo a constant transfiguration from actual materialized entities of reality into tropes of abstract philosophical and aesthetic concepts.

> As in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, in Lily's world things such as tables and pear trees both mark and occupy, span and fill, open and displace, the distance between things or bodies. Analogously, […] Woolf's narrator uses the

---

89 A detailed exploration of Lily's final visionary achievement, the significance of her corporeal stance, her movement in-between the two poles of her existential and aesthetic space (the edge of the lawn, her viewing point of the sea and the Lighthouse, and her canvas), and her realization of her ultimate design will be provided in the chapter "'Heaven be Praised for it, the Problem of Space Remained'—The Pictorial Domain."

90 In *Moments of Being*, Woolf openly and rather crudely confesses the therapeutic effect of what writing *To the Lighthouse* eventually meant for her. Her lines are often cited by critics, first and foremost to contextualize the novel as her most extensively autobiographically inspired work: "It is perfectly true that she [Julia Stephen, Virginia's mother] obsessed me, in spite of the fact that she died when I was thirteen, until I was forty-four. […] But I wrote the book [*To the Lighthouse*] very quickly; and when it was written, I ceased to be obsessed by my mother. I no longer hear her voice; I do not see her. I suppose that I did for myself what psycho-analysts do for their patients" (Woolf, *Moments* 92-3).

In her article "Embodied Form: Art and Life in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*" (2001), Randi Koppen focuses on "the novel's therapeutic dimension and its closeness to biographical material" (375) from a phenomenological point of view. The critical outline of Koppen's article I shall provide hereafter in my phenomenological overview of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*.

> objects on which the characters focus in common—such as the urn of geraniums or the break in the hedge—as vehicles for demarcating and connecting […]. Objects in the world literally serve as the points of intersection carrying the narrator between character and character or past, present, and future. (Doyle 55)

Both the objects of Lily's painterly view and the words of Woolf's narration bear the paradoxical status of liminality, which quality along with their palpability and bodiliness (to adopt Doyle's formulation here), even though through different means, earn the status of intercorporeality that eventually enhances the coherence of spatial and temporal dehiscence.

As Doyle's primary concern with narration and the phenomenality of language does not open an interpretative space for the in-depth examination of the very palpability and thingness and/or objecthood of the characters' bodily presence, the identical stance of animate and inanimate bodies in their intercorporeality is only vaguely suggested at certain points of her article (48, 52, 68). Consequently, it also remains unexplored how these phenomenological "objects," i. e. human beings, function in the same manner as inanimate ones (e.g. kitchen table, pear tree, urn of geraniums or words) being "instruments of coherence" (Doyle 59). By this the Merleau-Pontian legacy also loses its potential strength in the analysis of the intersection of Woolf and French phenomenology. Besides the instrumentality of objects, let them be artistic or linguistic ones, there is little attention paid to the kinship of corporeal and intercorporeal spatiality and one's subsequent (self-)reflexion on his or her existential locus. Doyle rather concentrates on the latter as a communicative tissue that endows the Modernist artist and writer with reinvigorated expressive potentials to defy patriarchal silence and emptiness that occupies the female space of language. (Doyle 42)

In a close association with Doyle's study, Alison Rowley takes a short but productive detour for the sake of a Merleau-Pontian reading of *To the Lighthouse* along with her primary

concern of interpreting Abstract Expressionist painter Helen Frankenthaler's *Mountains and Sea* (1952). Her reconsideration of Doyle's analysis enables Rowley to reflect on some crucial points that are either missing from the article or stagnate on the level of mere implications, partly as a result of Doyle's prime interest in (inanimate and animate) things/objects/bodies as temporal and social mediators.

Rowley articulates the "different mode of embodied knowledge" (56) that Lily could activate in her painting, a potential leading to the establishment of an alternative aesthetics characteristic of Modernist formalism. Rowley highlights the novelty of Lily's expressive mode not so much as a representation of Mrs. Ramsay "but rather [as] her 'transubstantiation' as the flesh of the world" (57). Lily's own spatial presence and her conjuring of the phenomenal spatiality of her own environment, including Mrs. Ramsay, gain a more plastic elucidation in Rowley's work than in Doyle's argumentation. Probably, one cannot disregard the fact that Rowley herself is a painter, hence her analytic approach is infiltrated with a sensitivity to form and matter, to aesthetics in general. Whereas Doyle lays emphasis on the objecthood of the work of art, its subject matter, and the painter's body itself as all being parts of the intercorporeal world (64), Rowley claims that "space is corporealised in Lily's narrative" (57) and reads certain passages of the novel in an explicitly Merleau-Pontian fashion (57, 58) proving the tactile nature of Lily's textually generated canvas. She extends this corporeal vision onto the painter's body too which signifies "the site of that intertwining of vision and movement, subject/world [what] [Merleau-Ponty] calls 'flesh'" (Rowley 58). The identical feature of animate and inanimate spaces, the analogy of corporeal and intercorporeal spatiality, and the embodied knowledge of the world are the requisites of Lily's succeeding in the completion of her painting.

Both Doyle and Rowley mention the significance of distance as a crucial factor in Lily's success. Doyle views distance as an instrument of bridging the temporal gap of past and

present, present and future (67), as well as, the condition of challenging "the patriarchal code within which the mother's intercorporeality has been delimited" (68). Rowley considers distance as an aesthetic tool with which the sense of depth could be created on the canvas only to be filled by "a body moving through it" (58), resulting in the solution of Lily's long-term dilemma of spatial relations. Rowley admits the necessity of movement as well (a crucial term in Merleau-Ponty's corporeal vision) as the ultimate facilitator of conquering the glaring space of her canvas. "The solution is figured off the canvas not as an object but as a *movement* between the poles of proximity (the canvas) and distance (the edge of the lawn and the view across the bay) in the visual field" (Rowley 58). Rowley apparently disregards the importance of pointing out the equivalence between the painterly space and Lily's physical environment. The painter's free in-and-out move between these spaces, let alone her own bodily spatiality, emerges as a fundamental condition of her achievement. Through this Lily performs something very similar to what Merleau-Ponty formulated by quoting Valéry's dictum that "[t]he painter 'takes his body with him' […]. Indeed, we cannot imagine how a *mind* could paint. It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings. […] [T]hat body which is an intertwining of vision and movement" (*Primacy* 162).

This new manner of synergic relationship with the fabric of the world through a simultaneous visual and tactile-kinetic experience enables the painter to gain knowledge about the self and eventually to create subjectivity. Doyle's exploration of temporal coherence and continuity and her alternative intercorporeal narrative that "puts at risk the mother-burdening metaphysics of patriarchy" (68) ignore the emergence of either an artistic (that is Lily's) or a narrative (either the narrator's as a textual realization or Woolf's authorial) subject. Rowley formulates the same criticism while analysing Irigaray's reading of Merleau-Ponty: "Yet missing from both Irigaray's and Doyle's work with Merleau-Ponty is Woolf's crucial insight in *To the Lighthouse* about painting as the exemplary site of the inscription of a

subjectivising process in a different relation to the maternal-feminine, albeit inscribed within the inescapably phallic structure of the practice" (61). Rowley explores the psychic, social, and aesthetic facets of such subjectivising, yet the critical framework concerned is primarily employed to the analysis of Helen Frankenthaler's works rather than Woolf's novel or more particularly Lily's painting.

Randi Koppen engages not so much in a purely taken phenomenological interpretation of *To the Lighthouse* as in "the centrality of the experiencing body […] to Woolf's aesthetic theory and to her therapeutic project" (378). She delineates Woolf's distinction between the experiencing body, the social one, and the transcendent selfhood, emphasising that "[a]ttaining this true self entails 'losing personality' […], though not a loss of bodily grounding" (Koppen 380). She identifies Woolf herself as "a spatiotemporal, kinetic, somatic 'shape' of self" (Koppen 380) in her autobiographical essay, "A Sketch of the Past" (1939) and also as the means of mediation between physical reality and "the principle of transcendence or mystical essence of experience" (380). The bodily experience, Koppen argues, one's "relation to other bodies, objects, masses is fundamental to Woolf's thinking on selfhood, self-representation, and art" (Koppen 382). While formerly Koppen—reading Fry's concept of vision and design—establishes the dialectic of the typically modernist "notion of art as disembodied," i. e. vision, and its embodied form ("in the phenomenological or cognitivist sense of the term" [378]), namely, design, in the course of her article, later on she argues that Woolf's "aesthetic turn" (388), her "aesthetic-cognitive project" (389) gains its realization in the very same dialectic, naturally, through the figure of the painter's, Lily Briscoe's artistic achievement of vision and design. By this, in accordance with Koppen's concluding claim, Woolf can accomplish her therapeutic objective, too (389).

Koppen's article, as it is clarified at its very beginning, does not tackle the profundity of philosophical associations of the perceiving/perceived, or to adopt a Merleau-Pontian term

here, the lived body. What Koppen formulates as the "experiencing body" apparently is no more than its literally taken sense, "placed in a visual, spatial, auditive, olfactory, kinetic field; the term of reference here is phenomenal rather than phenomenological" (379). She focuses solely on the aesthetic aspects of bodily givenness (through Fry's and Hillis Miller's ideas), the way the experiencing body and its configuration with other bodies, objects or shapes function as an "enabling condition" (Koppen 386) of the artistic expression. Although the article mentions the self's being grounded in the body, the very emergence of such a self, the manner and conditions in which it is generated leave the reader with a conceptual and interpretative hiatus.

Mrs. Ramsay's last, yet, in a sense, most crucial appearance towards the end of the novel, her genuinely phenomenological presence when someone moves inside the house by which "an odd-shaped triangular shadow" (Woolf, *TTL* 218) is cast over the drawing-room steps also remains fairly undeveloped. As a result of Mrs. Ramsay's iconic shape Lily suddenly conjures up her former subject matter. "Mrs. Ramsay […] sat there quite simply, in the chair, flicked her needles to and fro, knitted her reddish-brown stocking, cast her shadow on the step" (Woolf, *TTL* 219). Mrs. Ramsay's phenomenal resurgence assumes her active instrumentality in the artistic process. The shadow appears doubly as a surrogate of Mrs. Ramsay. On the one hand, it is located at her former place that she occupied while she sat as a model for Lily, hence the most immediately linked part of the house to her visual equivalent. On the other hand, its shape is identical with Mrs. Ramsay's own "wedged-shaped" image and also with Lily's purple triangle, whose relationship I explored in the second chapter. Koppen reads the scene as Mrs. Ramsay's "materializ[ation] in *corpora*" (385), which yet again functions as "the enabling condition" (385) for Lily to accomplish her painting. This observation leaves the complexity of the rapid transfiguration of actual corporeality-shadow-form-phenomenological embodiment-design unreflected, its depth unexplored, which process,

nevertheless, reveals the chiasmic embeddedness of bodies in the flesh that could shatter boundaries of past and present, here and there, form and design. The Merleau-Pontian synergic mode of existence enables Lily to "move" freely between Mr. Ramsay's spatially distanced sail, the deceased Mrs. Ramsay's summoned presence (that bridges the otherwise unappeasable abyss between past and presence, life and death), and her own canvas, as the spatio-aesthetic modulation of her creativity.

4. 3. "Heaven be Praised for it, the Problem of Space Remained"

Lily's canvas, which opens up the third dimension, a perspectival "depth" in the texture of the narrative, functions as an interface for notions such as perception and knowledge of/about the world, (artistic) representation, human relationships, and painterly techniques. There is, however, a discernible shift of emphasis regarding Lily's artistic dilemmas in the course of the novel. Whereas in "The Window" section she desperately wants to take hold of the quintessential visual trope of Mrs. Ramsay, and, additionally, to find the painterly equivalent of reality, in "The Lighthouse" section, her attention is split between the technical, structural, and aesthetic issues and questions of metaphysical concerns. "[…] [Lily] asked herself, scraping her palette of all those mounds of blue and green which seemed to her like clods with no life in them now, yet she vowed, she would inspire them, force them to move, flow, do her bidding tomorrow" (Woolf, *TTL* 55). The isolated clods of paint confront Lily with the impossibility of a direct representation of reality. The image of mounds enhances the implied lifelessness and latent failure of her attempt. The conspicuous lack of movement and flow summons a pre-Cézannesque, empty space in which things and objects appear as props rather than organic elements of the composition. Lily's resurfacing predicament with respect to placing the axial line in the first version of her painting signifies

the constraint of the painting's supposedly representational space. "Yes, I shall put the tree further in the middle; then I shall avoid that awkward space" (Woolf, *TTL* 92, 94, 101, 111). Her experiment with transposing reality can only succeed when she is ready to realise what, in his discussion of Cézanne's spatiality, Gottfried Boehm terms as "the reality of nature […] [n]ot as fact or the state of things but the expression of a genesis" (70). Thus, the painter's perceptual and creative concern is no longer conditioned by a static and faithful reproduction but by a continual becoming.

Besides Lily's active agency and artistic urge to complete her painting, a meditative tone and a powerful inner interrogation accompany her creative procedure, following the cataclysmic intermission of "Time Passes." Lily expands the painterly space through transfiguring elements of reality onto the canvas by modelling her way into the depth of her painting (Woolf, *TTL* 174, 186, 188). At the same time, she finds herself "to be on a narrow plank, perfectly alone, over the sea" (Woolf, *TTL* 187) in a uniquely fertile solitude, a state she can afford for the first time in the narrative, accompanied solely by the silent, however, inspiring Mr. Carmichael, who signifies poetic language and artistic creativity.[91] Mr. Carmichael's submergence in Lily's microcosm is not accidental at this stage of her creative process. The expressive power of visuality and/or figuration strengthens by the juxtaposition of poet and painter, and subsequently by their respective artefacts both bearing the capacity to condense the attributes of the temporal and the spatial dimensions. Besides her artistic attachment to Mr. Carmichael Lily also "felt curiously divided, as if one part of her were drawn out there [over the sea] […]; the other had fixed itself doggedly, solidly, here on the lawn" (Woolf, *TTL* 171). Her sense of being divided is not limited exclusively to the physical duplicity of the shore and the sea as a geographically determined frame of creation. She also constrains herself to keep Mr. Carmichael "not too close […], but close enough for his

[91] I analyse the character of Mr. Carmichael and his poetry as a potential thematic replica of Lily's artistic achievement in the earlier chapter "Abysmal Reflections."

protection" (Woolf, *TTL* 161), while she experiences a total immersion in the space of her painting and faces the compelling question of how to translate the visible sphere into the language of art. "Against her will she had come to the surface, and found herself half out of the picture, looking, a little dazedly, as if at unreal things, at Mr. Carmichael" (Woolf, *TTL* 193). The passage reveals Lily's unique relationship with reality, the way the painterly space occupies the actual, physical environment of the painter, and also, how entities of reality become secondary compared to the figures and forms of the artistically generated universe.

The chapter is pervaded by Lily's posing such paramount questions as "What is the meaning of life?" (Woolf, *TTL* 175) or "Who knows what we are, what we feel? Who knows even at the moment of intimacy, This is knowledge?" (Woolf, *TTL* 187). The closing chapter is dominated by her inquisitive tone, the pervasive sense of uncertainty, Lily's and Mrs. Ramsay's (in her conjured up presence) drive to identify, to name, to define things of their reality,[92] by which the rhythm of the narrative and the urge to find a solution, a reconciliatory communicative means is intensified. Singling out things by pointing at them and offering a name apparently cannot establish a satisfactory apprehensive relationship between man and reality. The inadequacy of language is tangible in "The Window" section as well,[93] yet towards the closure of the novel affective and aesthetic communication is becoming imperative.

Securing a clearly circumscribable creative space appears to be an essential condition

---

[92] "'Oh,' she said, looking up at last at something floating in the sea, 'is it a lobster pot? Is it an upturned boat?'" (Woolf, *TTL* 174); "'Is it a boat? Is it a cork?' she [Mrs. Ramsay] would say […] 'Is it a boat? Is it a cask?' Mrs. Ramsay said. […] Aren't things spoilt then, Mrs. Ramsay may have asked (it seemed to have happened so often, this silence by her side) by saying them?" (Woolf, *TTL* 186, 187); "Little words that broke up the thought and dismembered it said nothing" (Woolf, *TTL* 193).

[93] "[…] for it was not knowledge but unity [Lily] desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge" (Woolf, *TTL* 57); "The words […] sounded as if they were floating like flowers on water out there, cut off from them all, as if no one had said them, but they had come into existence of themselves. […][Mrs. Ramsay] did not know what they meant, but, like music, the words seemed to be spoken by her own voice, outside her self, saying quite easily and naturally what had been in her mind the whole evening while she said different things" (Woolf, *TTL* 120). As the excerpts indicate, words and language lose their conventional function and either an extensive figurative condensation permeates them or they totally discard the one-to-one referentiality between signifier and signified.

for Lily to complete her painting. She draws a demarcation line between herself and Mr. Ramsay, while she secures the sight of him and his children on her horizon during the whole section. At the same time, she maintains her carefully measured proximity with Mr. Carmichael. She delineates her sacred space of creation by "[setting] her canvas firmly upon the easel, as a barrier, frail, but she hoped sufficiently substantial to ward off Mr. Ramsay and his exactingness" (Woolf, *TTL* 163). In this manner, Lily doubly marks the limits of creation: physically, by distancing all the other characters, the house, the Lighthouse, metaphorically, by attempting "to model her way into the hollow there" (Woolf, *TTL* 186) i.e. the space of visuality of her canvas. From the first "trembling" momentum (Woolf, *TTL* 172), the descent of her brush, Lily is preoccupied by the problem of space, "the hideously difficult white space" (Woolf, *TTL* 174), the potentiality of the depth of her canvas. Yet, her distance, both spatial and temporal, and the gaping emptiness of Mrs. Ramsay's formal corporeal presence call for a different visual representation, different, that is, from what could be offered by a rationally calculated perspective, the one that is misleadingly suggested by the "The Window" section, where Mrs. Ramsay frequently occurs in the drawing room window, as a framed beauty, as the object of admiration. Lily, at this decisive stage, experiences space unlike in the first chapter. In the closing section, she is in a continuous, rhythmic movement, walking back and forth between "the edge of the lawn" (Woolf, *TTL* 161, 169, 176, 185, 219, 225) and her easel, exchanging glances with the distant Lighthouse and the vanishing boat of Mr. Ramsay and his company, or noticing the proximity of Mr. Carmichael (Woolf, *TTL* 161, 173, 174, 186, 194, 195, 207, 210, 219, 225). The sight of the boat, Carmichael, the "puffing and blowing sea monster" (Woolf, *TTL* 207)—who hardly utters a word yet becomes involved in a continual conversation with Lily—,the tangibility of the empty drawing room steps, "the heavy draperies of grief" (Woolf, *TTL* 166)—with which Lily describes Mr. Ramsay's unbearable demand for sympathy—,"the squeak of a hinge" of the drawing-room window

(Woolf, *TTL* 212) or "some light stuff" that whitened it (Woolf, *TTL* 218): all these images serve as referential points for Lily with which she pursues a constant affective and perceptual interaction while she is painting her picture. This relationship of things, as visible, audible, tangible entities constitutes a phenomenological space that envelops Lily, positioning her as one among the things to be perceived.

In such a framework, as Merleau-Ponty observes, "[s]pace is no longer what it was in the *Dioptric*, a network of relations between objects such as would be seen by a witness to my vision or by a geometer looking over it and reconstructing it form outside" (*Primacy* 178). The Cartesian artistic space prescribes a mathematically calculated proximity of things and figures along with (and this, in fact, is even more significant an implication) the position of the painter/viewer as external to, hence, estranged and disembodied from the painted dimension. As Friedberg examines the function of windows, frames, and perspective itself in *The Virtual Window*, "the Cartesian subject [is] centered and stable, autonomous and thinking, standing outside of the world" (47). This "centred and stable" position necessarily confines the subject to immobility, which relationship is supposed to be controlling and apparently assures a complete understanding and knowledge of the image or the thing being looked at.

This appears to be radically different from phenomenologically defined spatiality, which is the dominant spatial configuration of the narrative, most tangibly presented in "The Lighthouse," the closing chapter. Not only Lily's perseverant movement defies fixity and rigidity of the Cartesian model of representation but her surrendering of the primacy of visual perception whose essence lies predominantly in the identification of the viewed things forcing them to fall dead within their respective categories. Lily, following the method of Cézanne's *réalisation*, "looked blankly at the canvas" (Woolf, *TTL* 171) or, at other times, the wall, the hedge, the step, the boat, all recurrent objects of her vision. She does so not out of some paralysis but because of a conscious disruption of anchoring her artistic observation merely in

the appearance of things, and opts for a reflection on the very process of seeing. On the one hand, the things she looks at are emphatically empty and devoid of their former role (e.g. the window being the frame of Mrs. Ramsay's beauty, the step being the "stage" for Mrs. Ramsay and James functioning as the models for Lily's painting). On the other hand, some of the objects of her vision like the sight of the boat or Mr. Ramsay and his children are withdrawing into invisibility, gradually changing their proximity from Lily. Hence seer and seen alike are in permanent movement drawing a rhythmical pattern of interaction. The way things lose their primarily functional identity Lily also leaves behind her social selves ("the old-maidish" [Woolf, *TTL* 161] single, the woman who cannot paint—Tansley's firm judgment of female artists—the one whose duty is to offer sympathy to Mr. Ramsay) for the sake of uniting herself with the metaphysical depth of surface appearances. "For what could be more formidable than that space? Hers she saw again, she thought, stepping back to look at it, drawn out of gossip, out of living, out of community with people into the presence of this formidable ancient enemy of hers—this other thing, this truth, this reality, which suddenly laid hands on her, emerged stark at the back of appearances and commanded her attention" (Woolf, *TTL* 172-3). Lily can secure victory over her "ancient enemy" if she is ready to perform what Boehm terms "contemplative vision" (36) concerning Cézanne's mode of perceiving nature. "This necessitates a particular mode of adherence, which is capable of viewing form and its content, as well as the structure of a painting and its effect upon its viewer simultaneously" (Boehm 36). The conflation of these constituent parts is expressed in the concept of *réaliser* which "verb fuses different appearances into one single act: seeing and the vision of nature, reflection and painting itself" (Boehm 36). The idea of merging the biologically determined perception and the recognition of "the other thing […] at the back of appearances" (Woolf, *TTL* 172) (as Lily formulates the quintessential invisible surfacing in front of her eyes) and the fusion of the mere procedure of displaying paint on the canvas with

the distilled metaphysical revelations of existence describe Lily's very creative process, especially in its altered form of her second attempt at the portrait of Mrs. Ramsay.

The eradication of Cartesian spatiality also results in the dissolution of the hierarchy among figures and forms having been additionally subjected to a single viewpoint of exclusive control. The idea of proportionality prescribes a cavernous spatial order in which hollows, things, and their encompassing space are heterogeneous in nature and origin. "Along with the abolition of the mathematical perspective, Cézanne eliminates the concept of the empty space that is populated by things. This arrangement is replaced by a dense, filled-up space, […] in which things are connected to their places, hence thing and place spring from the same source" (Boehm 68). This approach also suggests the painter's personal incorporatedness in the very sphere s/he depicts. S/he ceases to be an outsider to the painterly space: the artist paints from the inside in both senses of the word. Lily's lines and colours generate space the moment they fall upon the canvas, assisting her in the Cézannesque *réalisation*, the transposition of elements of reality into the painting.

> The brush descended. It flickered brown over the white canvas; it left a running mark. […] [A]nd so, lightly and swiftly pausing, striking, she scored her canvas with brown running nervous lines which had no sooner settled there than they enclosed […] a space. […] [H]er mind kept throwing up from its depths, scenes, and names, and sayings, and memories and ideas, like a fountain spurting over that glaring, hideously difficult white space, while she modelled it with greens and blues. (Woolf, *TTL* 172, 174)

The "running mark" is not only the first crucial trace of Lily's brushwork on the canvas, which being shortly accompanied by other similar strokes turns emptiness into a meaningful space. Its dynamism suggests the energy of Lily's creativity as well as it becomes the painterly equivalent of her bodily movement. The flickering brush transforms into a cluster of

running lines that in return engender a space which Lily furnishes with objects of her personal sphere. The free flux from elements of the external reality to the pictorial space, and, back again to Lily's privacy maintain the identity these spatial and temporal dimensions share. Lily creates space and its content simultaneously, condensing places, characters, and verbality into forms and their enveloping intersubjective space. Through the notion of memories, she does not restrict herself to the artistic transformation of spatial/visual elements but fuses spatiality with the temporal dimension, thus she recreates the totality of reality in her painting. Her focus is switching between the external and internal spheres: the object of her perception is as much the intangible opacity of the past, her memories, through which she preserves a corporeal link (for instance by crouching at the feet of Mrs. Ramsay on the steps) as the physically rendered immediate environment of the house. The manner in which Cézanne viewed space as being identical with its content, the things filling that space up, corresponds to Merleau-Ponty's idea concerning the relationship of the body and the world, the body being one among other objects and things inhabiting the world as such. "Things are an annex or prolongation of [the world]; they are incrusted into its flesh, they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the same stuff as the body" (Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy* 163). Thus, the contiguity of body and world makes the immersed subject's task of establishing the Sartrean existential distance more difficult, since the borderline of my being and the enveloping world is blurred. The realization of the body-world nexus, subsequently, my being as a subject, is optimized in visuality, since "[t]he eye lives in this texture as a man lives in his house" (Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy* 166). Merleau-Ponty's illustrative model envisions the multiple engulfment of the perceptive organ that dwells in the house of the human body that inhabits the texture of the world as an integral tissue of its flesh. House and body become naturally analogous.

In this conflation, my body's locus cannot preserve permanence, fixity, partly due to

the perpetual movement of things, the pulsation of the enveloping-enveloped bodies. Lily's characteristic movement that is reinforced by "a dancing rhythmical movement" (Woolf, *TTL* 172) drawn by her brush echoes both Cézanne's and Merleau-Ponty's idea concerning the mutual relationship of movement and perception. Cézanne examines the role of movement within the frames of the painterly space.

> [Movement] occurs in the upsurge of the painting, where one particular *tache* attains its context, where the "pre-objecthood" of elements differentiates itself into qualities of the landscape, transformed into aspects of things, into an experience of space, into the entire drama of unfolding nature. Time and movement do not occur *in* space as far as their origin is concerned; rather they produce *space and things*. (Boehm 69)

Lily worked out the fundaments of the Cézannesque colour scheme during "The Window" section, which gained completion in the substantiality and solidity of form-arrangements within a composition bearing the strength of "bolts of iron" (Woolf, *TTL* 186). "[S]he began precariously dipping among the blues and ambers, moving her brush hither and thither, but it was now heavier and went slower, as if it had fallen in with some rhythm which was dictated to her […] by what she saw, so that while her hand quivered with life, this rhythm was strong enough to bear her along with it on its current" (Woolf, *TTL* 173-4). Her hand and its elongation, that is, the brush, perform the rhythm dictated by the energy of surrounding objects of nature, which movement J. Hillis Miller terms as "the choreographed and choreographing dance" (171).[94] Lily as an organic part of the world, assisted by the capacity

[94] In his "Mr. Carmichael and Lily Briscoe: The Rhythm of Creativity in *To the Lighthouse,*" Miller elaborates what he considers the essential nature of Woolf's creativity that he introduces right at the beginning as "a matter of extrapolation, the projection out into the unknown of a life force, a constructive force, whether moral, collective, or artistic. […] [An] extrapolation reaching out from what is now and here toward what is there and not yet" (167, 168). Miller explores the various representations of this "buoyant élan" (167) on the level of essential characters, demonstrating how each of them in their own manner and with different success is driven by such energies. The focus of his essay falls on language and narration as an obvious yet elusive vehicle of creativity.

of vision, can internalize this generative pulsation, her body emerging as the extension of nature. The interlacing of time and space through movement defies the Cartesian fixity of the viewer and his/her corporeal distance and alienation from the world.

Movement of another nature than that of Lily's describes all essential characters of the narrative. They are all governed by different directionalities: some, in desperate search for anchorage, are drawn to Mrs. Ramsay, to her inextinguishable "capacity to surround and protect," to "the torch of her beauty," (Woolf, *TTL* 44, 47) like bees "drawn by some sweetness or sharpness" (Woolf, *TTL* 58). The same converging force motivates each act and movement of James, who, on the one hand, is unable to let loose the bond that ties him inseparably to his mother, and, on the other hand, longs frantically to visit the Lighthouse, a wish that comes true, naturally enough, after Mrs. Ramsay's death. Hence, a centripetal drive is completed, and James, along with Mr. Ramsay and Cam, reunite themselves with the absent Mrs. Ramsay. Mrs. Ramsay's movements, on the other hand, bear a centrifugal direction since she emanates light and creative energies continually. "[F]olding her son in her arm, braced herself, and, half turning, seemed to raise herself with an effort, and at once to pour erect into the air a rain of energy, a column of spray, looking at the same time animated and alive as if all her energies were being fused into force, burning and illuminating […]" (Woolf, *TTL* 42). The radiation of generative energies does not cease with her death, her absence. Lily conjures up Mrs. Ramsay's image or, it would be more precise to say that Mrs. Ramsay's phenomenal body always already filled up the Ramsays' space in an oneiric manner similarly to Lily's image of Mrs. Ramsay's presence in their life as the sensation of awakening after a dream. "For days there hung about her, as after a dream some subtle change is felt in the person one has dreamt of, more vividly than anything she said, the sound of murmuring […]" (Woolf, *TTL* 58). Mrs. Ramsay's phenomenal body, a space multidimensionally expanding, is summoned on Lily's perceptual screen, that is, her canvas, assisting her accomplishment of

producing aesthetic depth, the space of "reflection and subjectivity" (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology* 128).

> She saw her canvas as if it had floated up and placed itself white and uncompromising directly before her. […] With a curious physical sensation, as if she were urged forward and at the same time must hold herself back, she made her first quick decisive stroke. The brush descended. […] Down in the hollow of one wave she saw the next wave towering higher and higher above her. For what could be more formidable than that space? (Woolf, *TTL* 171, 172)

The moment of summoning upsurges as a continuation of Lily's "decisive stroke"—a loaded expression that functions here as a corporeal gesture, alluding to the stroke of the Lighthouse and that of the painter's instrument: firstly, by the literally taken brushstroke, secondly, by evoking light, an indispensable element of painting.[95] We actually witness the becoming of space, the metamorphosis of the two-dimensional white surface overwhelmingly gaping in front of Lily to a multifarious spatial modulation. The painter immerses herself in a harsh duel-like interaction with the canvas, which reveals the process of subject formation and reflexivity as a struggle. Her act is preceded by a series of hesitant inquiries concerning the proper point of entry, "the point to make the first mark" (Woolf, *TTL* 172). She is about to depict something not primordially given, not as a mere "translation of a clearly defined thought" (Merleau-Ponty, *Sense* 19) but rather executes the process through which that something springs into life, into visibility. Hence the oppositional forces drawing Lily into two different directions: a call for merging with the world and its organization as it appears only to the painterly eye, and, at the same time, a staggering movement, a moment of estrangement to enable herself to weld the experience into one single spectacle. The forceful

[95] I evaluate the designating power of the stroke in the chapter entitled "Abysmal Reflections" whose main concern is "Time Passes," the middle section of the novel. This phase plays a crucial role in the bridging of the two spatially organized sections, the framing chapters, by its predominantly temporal setting. Its central symbol is the Lighthouse presented, ambivalently, through extinguished lights, distorted reflections, and its solitarily haunting strokes, summoning the image of the dead Mrs. Ramsay as a spectral entity.

downward strike of her brushstroke, on the other hand, recalls Mrs. Ramsay's "flashing needles" with which she created spaces of domesticity. These procreative acts highlight the identical features of Lily and Mrs. Ramsay, which analogy I shall explore later on.[96] Lily's most prominent tool, the ultimate generative vehicle at this particular stage of artistic expression is the line.

> Figurative or not, the line is no longer a thing or an imitation of a thing. It is a certain disequilibrium kept up within the indifference of the white paper; it is a certain process of gouging within the in-itself, a certain constitutive emptiness […]. The line is no longer the apparition of an entity upon a vacant background, as it was in classical geometry. It is, as in modern geometries, the restriction, segregation, or modulation of a pre-given space. (Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy* 184)

Perhaps this indifference is what triggers Lily's "decisive stroke" and the oncoming battle she must necessarily fight against space and absence. Lily here simultaneously scores her own "in-itself" and that of the canvas that presupposes a contiguity with Mrs. Ramsay as a spatial design. The line's constitutive power enables the painter to demolish the conventionally acclaimed imitative instrumentality of the line as one of the fundamental pillars of mimetic representation. The canvas bears the imprints of the "pre-given space," i.e. Mrs. Ramsay, awaiting the painterly upsurge.

Prior to shaping her way into the "white and uncompromising" (Woolf, *TTL* 171) space of the canvas, Lily impulsively steps back to create a controlling distance. The painter, who willingly discarded the means of the mimetic mode of representation, faces a supreme

[96] John Hawley Roberts establishes the analogy between Mrs. Ramsay and Lily in his essay "'Vision and Design' in Virginia Woolf" (1946) based on their inclination "to create order" (845). Mrs. Ramsay tries to mend "the inadequacy of human relationships" (Roberts 844) and meets her end without a genuine and satisfactory solution to the problem of relationships, whereas Lily's "difficulty is to transfer […] design to the canvas" (Roberts 845). She also suffers from the lack of harmony and balance permanently struggling with the disequilibrium of the masses on her canvas.

hindrance, namely, the issue of how to "realize" (*réaliser* in Cézanne's sense) the world.

Lily's most prominent difficulty emerging in the creative process is twofold: firstly, she has to face the challenge of the engulfing emptiness of the canvas; secondly, she is confused about the means of transforming the circumambient reality into form, turning her vision into design. This latter problem takes on a protean diversity from the moment "[Lily] took her brush in hand […] [when] the demons set on her" (Woolf, *TTL* 23): the struggle with the surface elusiveness of colour for the sake of creating the underlying shape (Woolf, *TTL* 23, 54, 176, 186); the difficulty of grasping the essence of Mrs. Ramsay, of finding the analogous visual metaphor through which Lily can express her the most adequately (Woolf, *TTL* 55, 58, 59, 80, 175); "the problem of relationship, simultaneously human and formal" (Roberts 844), (Woolf, *TTL* 60, 80, 93, 94, 101 111, 161, 187); or the haunting empty space of the canvas (Woolf, *TTL* 92, 171, 172 173, 186, 195, 224). The issue of form and meaning emerges in a series of subtle painterly dilemmas for Lily, echoing Fry's own notions of artistic expression. John Hawley Roberts has made a vanguard attempt[97] to draw the parallel between Roger Fry's aesthetic ideals and Woolf's writing technique. Roberts introduces Fry's concepts partly through the art of Cézanne, who serves as an unquestionable model for the English art critic. "Realizing for [Cézanne is meant] […] the discovery in appearances of some underlying structural unity" (Fry qtd. in Roberts 842). Supporting this argument with ample textual evidence from both *Mrs. Dalloway*[98] and *To the Lighthouse*, Roberts goes on to claim that

[97] As Roberts himself reflects on it in his introduction, his essay published in 1946 is the first one that explores "the question as to whether or not any of Fry's critical ideas, as expressed in such essays as those collected in *Vision and Design* (1920) and *Transformations* (1926) or in the *Cézanne* monograph (1927), were in any way incorporated in Mrs. Woolf's work" (835). He analyses two of Woolf's novels *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927) which he considers particularly relevant for his purposes as these "were done at a time when Fry and Mrs. Woolf were most closely associated and because they [the novels] are […] the most striking and effective results of the influence […]" (Roberts 835).

[98] Roberts considers *Mrs. Dalloway* as the embodiment of "vibration and movement" (842) a painterly technique essentially characteristic of Cézanne. He enumerates other possible parallels between Cézannesque painting and Modernist writing technique. Among others, he mentions how the relationship of Clarissa and Septimus constitutes the Post-Impressionist form proper (837); or as another example, he offers the way Woolf makes "time and space an integral part of the novel's form" (840). By this she does not simply provide the historical and cultural framework for the story but, through the fusion of temporal and the spatial axes, "the novel's inner rhythm, a quality of continuity and flow" (Roberts 840) is also produced. This integral

both Cézanne and Woolf express this unity through "a rhythm of plastic movement" (Fry qtd. in Roberts 842). Fry's choice of words unveils two significant components of novels explored by Roberts: first, the continual thematic and compositional pulsation of the text (the series of openings and closures or the repetitive pattern of up-and-down movement); second, the plasticity owing to this dynamism, which incorporates visual and substantial qualities alike. Lily's figure fuses the aesthetic principles of Fry's and Cézanne's artistic theories, and, she becomes a substitute for both of them manifested through her artistic conflicts of grasping reality and the ceaseless confrontation with the implacable canvas.

Christopher Reed goes beyond Roberts's claims concerning the painter's figure being a representative of formalist artistic ideals. Roberts attributes the painter's presence in the novel to the influence of Post-Impressionist aesthetics in which Woolf got immersed at the time of writing *To the Lighthouse*. Although Reed does not disregard the formalist aesthetic context of these works (more precisely Woolf's novels till the 1920s) either, his analysis offers an alternative status for Lily's character: her being a trope for "Woolf's narrative technique" (Reed 22). "Woolf's technique is to mediate the narrative through layers of representation that deny traditional authorial claims to an omniscient knowledge transferable to the reader. Here[99] the painter's rejection of seeing-as-having is translated into the author's refusal to give authoritative knowledge" (Reed 22). Woolf exploits the theme of painting and indirectly the potentials of the visual signifying system for the sake of demonstrating how the conventional narrative voice, and, at the same time, language prove to be insufficient to get access to the characters and to express reality. The inability of Lily to represent her subject, that is Mrs. Ramsay, lies in Lily's insistence to get to know her in the same manner as a reader would demand the knowability of characters from the author, who supposedly has total command of

---

relationship, this rhythm is what Fry calls the "unity of structure" (Fry qtd. in Roberts 840).

[99] At this stage of the essay, Reed explores the formalist characteristics of *Jacob's Room* but he hurriedly adds in the oncoming section of his essay that in *To the Lighthouse* this method "is pushed to what has been widely judged a more successful level" (22) than in the earlier novel.

his or her fictitious world. (Joplin[100] qtd. in Reed 24) Unless she approaches her theme with "a disinterested, purely aesthetic gaze" (Reed 24) she cannot reach fulfilment. From the beginning the traces of an alternative perception in the form of bodily and spatial "intimacy […] which is knowledge" (Woolf, *TTL* 57) preoccupies Lily, yet she is still too deeply rooted in the observation of the physical reality in a "seeing-as-having" (Reed 22) manner. The formalist representation of reality gains its completion the moment Lily "simplifies, abstracts, and adjusts her image until it attains the independence from its model that makes it neither a substitute for the unattainable Mrs. Ramsay nor a symbol of 'universal veneration,' but significant in itself as an arrangement of form […]" (Reed 25). The condition of her "independence" is her model's absence, which enables Lily to realise her phenomenological intimacy, hence her knowability of Mrs. Ramsay and, indirectly, her own subjectivity. "Mrs. Ramsay has faded and gone, she thought. We can over-ride her wishes, improve away her limited, old-fashioned ideas. She recedes further and further from us" (Woolf, *TTL* 190). Lily even indulges in a somewhat malicious tone while she comments on Mrs. Ramsay's "old-fashioned ideas," the most hateful of those for her being marriage.

Reed introduces Lily's emblematic closing remark "I've had my vision" (Woolf, *TTL* 226) "as an acknowledgement that what neither they nor the reader have had is Mrs. Ramsay" (Reed 24). "Vision" is a fundamental expressive mode of the Modernists, a term adopted by Woolf as early as in her seminal essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (1924) in which she terms the figure of Mrs. Brown a "vision to which [she] clings though [she] know[s] no way of imparting it to the reader […]" (Woolf, "Mr. Bennett" 82). Mrs. Brown, who appears as "a mere figment of […] imagination" (Woolf, "Mr. Bennett" 83), functions as a reservoir of Modernist poetics: she is eternal (80), elusive, bearing "unlimited capacity and infinite variety" (87). Lily's sigh of relief, appearing as a gesture of avowal with respect to the

[100] Reed cites Patricia Joplin's dissertation here: *The Art of Resistance: Authority and Violence in the Work of Virginia Woolf*. Joplin draws a parallel between Lily's temporary failure to grasp the meaning of Mrs. Ramsay and Erich Auerbach's similarly failed reading of Woolf and her works.

significance of vision, suggests the acknowledgement of something more than simply not having Mrs. Ramsay. Vision thus embodies the very impossibility of knowing the other through a possessive grip, which always already implies a hierarchical relationship of the I and the other, and within that relationship, of the I's mind and its body.

The ordinary subject, unlike the painter's I/eye, is not able to view his or her own self as a given presence, as a representation with which s/he can take up a position as a viewer and summon the visibles given to his or her sight. The subject calls for an auxiliary means that assists the visual command of the world's flesh, which vehicle Merleau-Ponty terms vision. "Vision is not a certain mode of thought or presence to self; it is the means given me for being absent from myself, for being present at the fission of Being from the inside—the fission at whose termination, and not before, I come back to myself" (Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy* 186). He imagines vision as something primordial to cognition and language that enables the I to experience his being-in-the-world as an absence—a term evocative of Sartre's distance and Levinas' separation—, a paradoxical self-visualization of one's presence as an absence, as an invisibility. Each individual is a constituent part of this texture, i.e. the "simultaneity" of things, and, at the same time, one is absent to himself/herself at the moment of one's dehiscence from the flesh of the world. Vision, as M. C. Dillon formulates it in his article on Merleau-Ponty's "Eye and Mind," "certainly functions as his chief metaphor or model for perception in general" (164). Yet things appear to perception in the Merleau-Pontian visionary mode primordially, not as the individual knows them, as one speaks about them or as consciousness reflects on them. They appear prior to the cognitive process or verbality, as pure objects of the visible. Things in their primordial state do not show themselves to the ordinary spectator since the vision of the ordinary eye is trained to view the world through representations, mediated images of reality under the manipulative control of the gaze, in the Foucauldian sense of the term. Consequently, human perception for the sake of envisaging the

picture of the world needs a catalyst figure, through whom the constellation of things is developed onto the "photosensitive" surface of the canvas. The painterly vision is empowered to make the underlying structure as invisibility, the "emerging order" as Merleau-Ponty terms it (*Sense* 14), implicated, "incrusted" in the visible realm accessible to all subjects. The structure of things, the togetherness of bodies, shapes, figures is always already there, obscured by my very embodiedness, my oneness with the world. "The painter's vision is not a view upon the *outside*, a merely 'physical-optical'[101] relation with the world. The world no longer stands before him through representation; rather, it is the painter to whom the things of the world give birth by a sort of concentration of coming-to-itself of the visible" (Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy* 181). Lily often encounters her circumambient reality in a visionary manner expressed through images of forceful natural appearances such as "a ponderous avalanche," a dancing "company of gnats" or a "fountain spurting over" (Woolf, *TTL* 29, 30, 174). These instances all depict her manner of realizing the world as a powerful perceptive moment, a mental mapping triggered by some visual impetus to produce/realize reality in a confluence of disseminated sensory experience. "All of this danced up and down, like a company of gnats, each separate, but all marvellously controlled in an invisible elastic net—danced up and down in Lily's mind […]" (Woolf, *TTL* 30).

Duality characterizes the position of the painter: s/he plunges into the flesh of the world, discerns the exteriority of his/her encompassing universe from within, in accordance with Cézanne's paradoxical observation that "[n]ature is on the inside" (Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy* 164). The painterly vision, thus, illuminates our shared roots with the world, our equivalence with other things and bodies. "Quality, light, color, depth, which are there before us, are there only because they awaken an echo in our body and because the body welcomes them" (Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy* 164). Yet, this echo is triggered only through an indirect,

[101] Merleau-Ponty adopts Paul Klee's term here.

mediated relationship the viewer establishes with the painting. The painter, in order to take an apprehensive hold on reality, on the other hand, has to estrange himself/herself from that particular segment of the world s/he is about to transform into the artistic rendition. This estrangement initiates a stare of refreshed visual capacity, dispossessed of the falsities representation, otherwise, bestows on the world. Lily's primary experience on returning to the Ramsays' summer cottage carries a sense of radical detachment.

> The house, the place, the morning, all seemed strangers to her. She had no attachment here, she felt, no relations with it, anything might happen, and whatever did happen, a step outside, a voice calling […], was a question, as if the link that usually bound things together had been cut, and they floated up here, down there, off, anyhow. How aimless it was, how chaotic, how unreal it was, she thought, looking at her empty coffee cup. (Woolf, *TTL* 160)

The coherence that Mrs. Ramsay compulsively attempted to maintain in the introductory chapter is, by this time, utterly shattered. Her sense of dissociation confronts her with an "aimless," "chaotic," "unreal" environment. At this stage of her creative process, she is blind to the phenomenological potential of Mrs. Ramsay's physical absence. Her "empty coffee cup" as an ultimately domestic trope foreshadows the challenging hollowness of the canvas, which Lily has to face in a very short period of time. The loosened bonds prevail not only in Lily's view of the scene but in Mr. Ramsay's and the children's experience, as well. All of them try to overcome this emotional, structural, existential, and phenomenological chaos, naturally, by different means. Mr. Ramsay recites poetry to surmount disorder, letting the words hover in the air which carry on the rigor of the poetic arrangement, the controlling power of language. Fragments of William Cowper's "The Castaway" (Woolf, *TTL* 160, 161) infiltrate emptiness, fill up the nooks of the house and force Lily to turn the visibles into a cohesive model.

> ('Alone' she heard him say, 'Perished' she heard him say) and like everything else this strange morning the words became symbols, wrote themselves all over the grey-green walls. If only she could put them together, she felt, write them out in some sentence, then she would have got at the truth of things. […] Perished. Alone. The grey-green light on the wall opposite. The empty places. Such were some of the parts, but how bring them together? she asked. (Woolf, *TTL* 160-1)

She transplants the poetic material into the visual one to defy the overwhelming emptiness that stares back at her. First, the words lose their meaning while they appear on a symbolic platform along with all the other objects and things of the Ramsay household. Lily apparently attempts to restore the ordering constraint of language when she is confronted with her recurrent ontological questions. Yet, the manner in which she would "put together" her building blocks into a formulation that she herself terms rather vaguely as "some sentence" indicates the lack of power characterising the verbal medium, indirectly, Mr. Ramsay's impossibility to overcome his loss. The words are projected onto the wall of the house that becomes an intermedial canvas before the linguistic units find their places as aesthetic components of the painting. They resurface bare and detached, nevertheless, as equal constituents with colours and places. The fact that the words cast their colour traces on the wall of the house signifies the strategic significance of Mrs. Ramsay. Among other spatial structures, her analogy with the house endows her with the role of a medium between apparent disorder and eventual aesthetic synthesis.

Lily is challenged to "[exchange] the fluidity of life for the concentration of painting," (Woolf, *TTL* 173) a mission she struggles with all through the narrative most tangibly, however, in the closing phase that conveys a metaphysical overtone due to a constant interrogation of the self and a sense of existential doubt and anxiety. Lily exploits the

potentials of her detachment to unveil the mask of familiarity of her surrounding, and "[s]he set[s] her clean canvas firmly upon the easel, as a barrier" (Woolf, *TTL* 163). In his exploration of Cézanne's technique, Merleau-Ponty conditions the painterly access to the "deep structure" of the world on the process of defamiliarisation.

> We live in the midst of man-made objects, among tools, in houses, streets, cities, and most of the time we see them only through the human actions which put them to use. We become used to thinking that all of this exists necessarily and unshakeably. Cézanne's painting suspends these habits of thought and reveals the base of inhuman nature upon which man has installed himself. […] It is an unfamiliar world in which one is uncomfortable and which forbids all human effusiveness. (Merleau-Ponty, *Sense* 16)

The passage reflects upon the human existential framework as spatial, equating houses, streets, cities with objects and tools as extensions of the former. Considering the human body as yet another manifestation of spatial structures, our view is blocked by the corporeal proximity of fellow beings. The painter's primal encounter with the strangeness of the world and the depiction of this experience are what shake us as unfamiliar whenever we are confronted with a non-representational, non-mimetic work of art.[102] The spectator's astonishment originates in the crudeness of the world's primordial disposition with which we lost our innate relationship through socialization and the employment of signifying systems like language or the perspectival pictorial tradition. "The task before him [the painter] was, first to forget all he had ever learned from science and, second *through* these sciences to recapture the structure of the landscape as an emerging organism" (Merleau-Ponty, *Sense* 17). The painter has to enable himself/herself to facilitate the energies of the physical environment, and "the rules of anatomy and design" (Merleau-Ponty, *Sense* 17) even if these laws would

[102] Such an upsetting encounter is most conspicuously represented through the figure of Bankes, but Mr. Ramsay and Tansley bear similarly distrustful suppositions towards Lily's art and talent.

otherwise delineate different routes to his/her brushstroke. Lily activates Mrs. Ramsay's imaginative, visionary perceptive mode as much as Mr. Ramsay's "austere; […] bare, hard, not ornamental" (Woolf, *TTL* 170) kitchen table, the stylized symbol of his philosophical subject matter and his rational, scientific approach, a symbol offered to Lily by Andrew Ramsay as an ultimate clue to grasp the essence of Mr. Ramsay's scholarly work. Merleau-Ponty terms this fusion of the visionary imagination and the scientific bareness as "intuitive science" (*Sense* 17), with which he characterizes Cézanne's prime interest in nature, which he expresses through a technique very far from naturalism.

> Certainly she was losing consciousness of outer things. And as she lost consciousness of outer things, and her name and her personality and her appearance, and whether Mr. Carmichael was there or not, her mind kept throwing up from its depths, scenes, and names, and sayings, and memories and ideas, like a fountain spurting over that glaring, hideously difficult white space, while she modelled it with greens and blues. (Woolf, *TTL* 174)

Lily deprives her self of the particularities that turn one into a social entity: name, personality, appearance. She, perhaps not so drastically as Cézanne, strips herself to the extent that she, basically, becomes one with "the base of inhuman nature," as Merleau-Ponty formulated the fundamental nature of the Cézannesque visuality. The flow of scenes, names, memories constitutes itself as "forms in the mind" (Woolf, *TTL* 173), resurfacing from time to time on her mental canvas, awaiting transubstantiation onto the actual painterly surface. "To do this, all the partial views one catches sight of must be welded together; all the eye's versatility disperses must be reunited […]" (Merleau-Ponty, *Sense* 17). Order and unity claim ground with renewed forces in "The Lighthouse" section, naturally as substitutes for the lost referential point, i.e. Mrs. Ramsay, to compensate for the commonly experienced emptiness. Lily houses sensory scraps of her individual life and also the time spent together with the

Ramsays. These continually urge her to cast them into forms of substantiality, to enable them to inhabit the artistic space. Lily's painterly vision of reality is getting gradually blurred with her actual environment. She either moves towards the depth of the painting ["She went on tunnelling her way into her picture, into the past" (Woolf, *TTL* 188)] or, just the other way round, submerges from its profundity. "Against her will she had come to the surface, and found herself half out of the picture, looking, a little dazedly, as if at unreal things, at Mr. Carmichael" (Woolf, *TTL* 193). The painted sphere replaces reality, it challenges the latter as an alternative reality. The anchoring point between the two spheres is Mr. Carmichael, the most elusive, non-realistic character.[103] The apparent stability of Lily's physical reality, which is conditioned on Mr. Carmichael, is undermined by his very abstracted and obscure existence. This, in return, justifies the status of the painting as a legitimate surrogate for their immediate environment. Lily's vision bears resemblance to Mrs. Ramsay's experience of ascending the stairs and reaching out to stabilize herself by grasping the branches of the trees outside. Both occurrences represent the oscillation of two conventionally irreconcilable realms: the external-internal opposites, and the nature-art dichotomy.

In a conversation with Emile Bernard Cézanne, straightforwardly claims that he wants to make nature and art the same, by which the two realms become interchangeable (Cézanne qtd. in Merleau-Ponty, *Sense* 13). What lies in the centre of Cézanne's technique of holding an perceptive grip on the world is the reconciliation of the painter's multisensory experience of

[103] Augustus Carmichael, "basking like a creature gorged with existence" (Woolf, *TTL* 193) appears "not altogether [as] [a] pleasant old man" (Miller 171) and remains "obscure" (Miller 171) both as a character and as one of the novel's modes of creativity, as J. Hillis Miller describes him in his essay. Still he is hovering on the blind spot of every character's consciousness—in this sense he is, though negatively, analogous with Mrs. Ramsay. Being a poet he, by definition, belongs to the realm of figurativity and abstraction (as opposed to Mr. Ramsay's scientifically oriented mind; ironically, Carmichael turns out to be more successful towards the end of the novel, and achieves what Mr. Ramsay cannot, that is, professional immortality). "They went and published things he had written forty years ago. There was a famous man now called Carmichael […]" (Woolf, *TTL* 210). Carmichael's singularity is also indicated by his not showing any signs of emotional attachment towards or admiration of Mrs. Ramsay ("[A]nd yet every year, she felt the same thing; he did not trust her. […] Mr. Carmichael shrank away from her […]" [Woolf, *TTL* 46, 47]). Yet, exclusively he shares with her a mystical perceptive moment they experience in unison when he "too feasted his eyes on the same plate of fruit" (Woolf, *TTL* 105). It seems that only the two of them have eyes to perceive the energy transcending the composition, which aura exceeds the potentials of a merely eye-pleasing arrangement of shapes and colours.

things and the apprehension of the structure that holds human vision together. A subsequent stage to this process is how he transforms his understanding of the world into visuality, with which he provides reality a secondary substantiality. Even though this painterly vision is remodelled, it can function as primary reality for its spectators, who otherwise could not get access to the substratum of the natural scenery. In his exploration of Cézanne's aesthetics Merleau-Ponty calls this sensitivity "primordial perception" (*Sense* 15), which operates as a collection of the senses, an integrated simultaneity that knows no patterns of hierarchy. Primordial vision is devoid of the selectivity of our conventionally prefigured/prescribed, hence, learnt sensory experience, since the subject is exposed to an abundance of diverse perceptive modalities. Lily once complains about the difficulty of catching a full sight of Mrs. Ramsay: "One wanted fifty pairs of eyes to see with. Fifty pairs of eyes were not enough to get round that one woman with, she thought" (Woolf, *TTL* 214).[104] What is even more significant is, however, the amalgamation of the different sensory fields in a synaesthetic fusion. Although Cézanne's artistic mission flirts with the impossible due to the omnipresence necessitated by his vision, he attempts "to portray the world, to change it completely into a spectacle, to make *visible* how the world *touches* us" (Merleau-Ponty, *Sense* 19).

By mentioning the tactile sensation, considered traditionally as an inferior sense-organ, especially compared to sight, Merleau-Ponty reflects upon the human subject's immanence in the world, our indwelling as being perennially embraced by other objects/bodies with which we maintain an indivisible togetherness. He views the human body as "an intertwining of

[104] Norman Friedman describes Lily's perceptual excess "in terms of a multiple perspective" (152) which he attributes to the multiplicity of narration within which framework "each character is presented from at least two points of view. […] It is by this technique of alternation that each is rendered more or less in the round" (152-3). Friedman's approach doubly misinterprets the unique quality of such painterly perception: he disregards the fact that Lily voices the inadequacy of sight related exclusively to Mrs. Ramsay's figure not to all the other characters or her surroundings in general. The citation is meant to support his argument concerning the focus of the first section, "the relation of self to other" (Friedman 151) arguing that after the climactic scene of the dinner party "each solitary ego […] is blended with the others into a pattern of completion and harmony" (152), hence the necessity for such a complex perspective. Yet, Lily experiences her incapacity much later in the closing chapter where Mrs. Ramsay is present only as an emphatic absence. By then such polyphonic perception appears to be the sole mode of grasping the phenomenal essence of Lily's central figure and the focal form.

vision and movement" (Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy* 162), regarding the motor function as a fundamental completion of visual perception, since it is not only our eye that is moving while we look at something, but for the sake of monitoring a more extensive segment of our environment we constantly shift the position of our body, as well. Movement constitutes the image of our spatio-corporeal mode of existence, we get a comprehensive view of others and consequently of our own multidimensionality through getting into physical contact with things/bodies. Yet, the average corporeal entity can only take a cognitive grip upon the world as his/her own exclusive revelation of the being-one-with-the-world sensation. S/he cannot get access to the fabric of the world, the vision incorporating a universal coexistence of the seeing/seen, touching/touched bodies. In contrast, "[t]he painter lives in fascination. The actions most proper to him—those gestures, those paths which he alone can trace and which will be revelations to others […]—to him they seem to emanate from the things themselves, like the patterns of the constellations" (Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy* 167). The painter's fascination touches upon a certain invisible presence, something covertly obtainable within visibility. The words with which Merleau-Ponty describes the painter's manner of detecting the invisible, namely, his "gestures" and "paths," reinforce the artist's corporeal motility. The painter traces the world by getting in actual, physical touch with the constituents of the world, executing a continuous apprehending movement, arresting fellow objects, things, bodies in a comprehensive grasp. Sensory experiences of an entirely different nature distil themselves as a knot tied in Lily's mind (Woolf, *TTL* 171) which she carries herself "involuntarily, as she walked along the Brompton Road, as she brushed her hair, she found herself painting that picture, passing her eye over it, and untying the knot in imagination" (Woolf, *TTL* 171).

While Lily accomplishes her final vision, she recaptures Mr. Ramsay's up-and-down movement (his monotonous act accompanied by the similarly automatic recitals of poetry) with reinvigorated energies: on the one hand, by "stepping to and fro from her easel" (Woolf,

TTL 190), on the other hand, by repeatedly turning her scrutinizing eyes towards the shore and spotting Mr. Ramsay's boat on the sea. Additionally, the moment she reaches certain segments of the lawn, catching sight of the hedge, for instance, she evokes memories of the past holiday she spent with the Ramsays, in this sense, linking past and present as much as her own location on the shore with the distant view of the Lighthouse or the receding family. Lily's eyes, her visual perception is assisted and partially performed in her tactile-motor activity. The imaginary knot absorbs colours, light, shapes, odours, and sounds of things before it flings itself upon the perceptive membrane of Lily's mind to be transformed into a painting. The painter's body belongs to the fabric of the knot, it is condensed from identical sensory particles of the world. André Marchand[105] tells about a similar experience concerning the encroaching relationship of painter and world: "I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it.... I expect to be inwardly submerged, buried. Perhaps I paint to break out" (Marchand qtd. in Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy* 167).[106] At first sight it seems that Lily penetrates Charles Tansley's interiority when she "X-rays" the young man sitting across the dinner table. "Lily Briscoe knew all that. Sitting opposite him could she not see, as in an X-ray photograph, the ribs and thigh bones of the young man's desire to impress himself lying dark in the mist of his flesh—that thin mist which convention had laid over his burning desire to break into the conversation?" (Woolf, *TTL* 99). The passage unravels the manifold corporeal being, highlighting the opacity of one's accessibility to his own phenomenal positionality. Lily sees Tansley's psycho-social entanglement from a bone-deep perspective due to her own viewpoint that is in the inside of the intercorporeal flesh. Woolf smoothly reconciles the scientific metaphor with Lily's metaphysical stance, which blending characterizes the entirety of the novel on several levels. It is also evocative of what Merleau-

[105] French painter (1907-1998)

[106] I encountered Marchand's words in Merleau-Ponty's "Eye and Mind" in which the latter quotes from Georges Charbonnier's assemblage of thirty-six radio conversations with painters of the post-war period entitled *Le Monologue du peintre*. The conversations discuss impelling issues of art theory such as the question of the real and realism, or the tensions of abstraction and figuration.

Ponty calls "intuitive science" (*Sense* 17) with respect to Cézanne's attempt to capture "the landscape in its totality and in its absolute fullness […]" (*Sense* 17) by acknowledging the importance of science yet being able "to forget all he had ever learned from [it]" (*Sense* 17).

The difficulty of Cézanne's artistic achievement lies in its innate paradox, the tension between an irrevocably solid composition and the constantly transforming, fluid natural and physical world. Consequently, the artistic process, the continual becoming of expressive forms is an infinite emanation, an ever-renewed centrifugal radiation, "the continual rebirth of existence" (Merleau-Ponty, *Sense* 18). Lily's mind, which keeps "like a fountain spurting over" (Woolf, *TTL* 174) images ranging from trivialities to the most compelling existential questions, purifies these sensations into forms, into solidities. "In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and flowing (she [Lily] looked at the clouds going and the leaves shaking) was struck into stability. Life stands still here, Mrs. Ramsay said" (Woolf, *TTL* 176). Mrs. Ramsay's declaratory words, as a summation of Lily's aesthetic objectives, reinforce their analogous relationship towards the end of the narrative, which correlation was established much earlier. Stability reaches its fulfilment in the mapping of the voluminosity of things and their arrangement in a "lived perspective," a constructive depth not viewed from the outside as one unified spatial perspectival depth of the painting but as a depth that is bulging into all directions from within each and every object of the artistic vision. Mrs. Ramsay's phenomenal body functions as a model for all other forms, the "triangular purple shape" as her stylized substantiation submerges as the arch form of Lily's aesthetics. The generative colour arrangements provide forms with voluminosity, exceeding the potentials of shapes that spring into life as a result of a clearly distinguishable outline enclosing and demarcating one space from the other without the constitutive depth. "[F]or it was bright enough, the grass still a soft deep green, the house starred in its greenery with purple passion flowers, and rooks dropping cool cries from the high blue" (Woolf, *TTL* 24). The novel's

introductory section produces a wide range of such complementary colour schemes, not exclusively within Lily's artistic procedure, but on almost every layer of the narrative: from the social and emotional network of characters to the emblematic centrepiece, the rich dish of fruit at Mrs. Ramsay's ceremonious dinner party. "The razor edge of balance" (Woolf, *TTL* 209), however, concerns different fields in the second creative phase of Lily. The emphatic distance and emptiness show reality in its misty distortion where nothing can be viewed clearly or distinctively. Life at the receding shore in Cam's vision is designated "as if people were free to come and go like ghosts" (Woolf, *TTL* 185). Lily has to overcome the "uncompromising white stare" (Woolf, *TTL* 171) of the canvas, the immense gaping space that threatens her with its flatness.

> Heaven be praised for it, the problem of space remained, she thought, taking up her brush again. It glared at her. The whole mass of the picture was poised upon that weight. Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent, one colour melting into another like the colours on a butterfly's wing; but beneath the fabric must be clamped together with bolts of iron. It was to be a thing you could ruffle with your breath; and a thing you could not dislodge with a team of horses. And she began to lay on a red, a grey, and she began to model her way into the hollow there. (Woolf, *TTL* 186)

Lily describes the surface appearance of her painting almost as an Impressionist, which is not at all foreign to Cézanne's artistic vision either. "He stated that he wanted to make of Impressionism 'something solid, like the art in the museums'" (Cézanne qtd. in Merleau-Ponty, *Sense* 12). What turns Cézanne's and Lily's vision into something solidified rests, however, not exclusively on the voluminosity of colours but on the "bolts of iron," the underlying structure, "the emerging order" (Merleau-Ponty, *Sense* 14) that is the outcome of the phenomenal geometry, the "intercorporeity" that the embedded artistic subjectivity's

perceptions transposes into the work of art.

5. Conclusion

The poetics of *To the Lighthouse* unquestionably attracts numerous interpretative approaches out of which one of the most apparent is the novel's visual embeddedness owing to its Post-Impressionist legacy. Nevertheless, my analysis focused on the exploration of the painterly quality only tangentially. The examination of the artist character, Lily Briscoe, as a Cézanne surrogate or Roger Fry's imaginary disciple, as well as her works and technique soon gave way to issues of other nature. Her relationship with her artistic subject, Mrs. Ramsay designates a whole series of further social, emotional, and aesthetic associations among characters and, on a wider scale, it also illuminates the arrangement of animate and inanimate entities both in her immediate environment and, more significantly, on her canvas. This confronts Lily with two major artistic challenges. On the one hand, she struggles with the compositional balance of the painting, the proper combination of the blocks of colours, to realize "a thing you could ruffle with your breath; and a thing you could not dislodge with a team of horses" (Woolf, *TTL* 186). On the other hand, she is constantly preoccupied with the knowability of the self and the other, subsequently, with the transfiguration of reality into the visual medium. The former implies spatial relations, the latter affects subject formation, both being major thematic and artistic concerns of Modernism and Woolf.

Spatiality, primarily, evokes the notion of domesticity that "[Wyndham] Lewis correctly identified the essence of Bloomsbury's art" (Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms* 4). As Christopher Reed observes, domesticity was meant to be a socio-political act against Continental avant-garde tendencies that advocated city life, masculinity, and heroism represented by Le Corbusier and the rebellious fellow artist of Fry and Woolf, Wyndham Lewis, the co-founder of Vorticism (4). The indispensability of the domestic sphere and the

emblematic presence of the room in Modernist fiction, however, serve other aims, too. Michael Levenson first refers to the room as the space of creativity (4), which he later complements with the image of the room as the embodiment of its inhabitant as "the carapace of personhood," "a figure for the mind, the apartment of consciousness" (5). *To the Lighthouse* almost exclusively takes place in the summer cottage of the Ramsay family, which might conjure up the Victorian house that Levenson calls "a fantasy of spatial equilibrium and social articulation" (4). Yet, its subversive openness—its being a site of fluid interaction between the external/natural/untamed and the internal/cultural/controlled—turns the house radically into the antithesis of the Victorian spatial design. The summer cottage, nevertheless, is not simply an open structure endangering the internal order. It serves also as a refuge for most of the characters inviting them to produce their own separate inward spaces, cells, rooms in the interiority of the house. Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei evaluate the house-body analogy and claim that "houses and their accoutrements become living beings with names and personalities" (158), serving a more immediate interaction between the architectural structure and human consciousness. Although they touch upon several issues relevant for *To the Lighthouse*, too, they do not analyse profoundly the pictorial aspect of spatiality or the particular interior spaces and architectonic forms of the house.

In the first phase of my dissertation, I evaluated the diversity of natural, cultural, and artistic spaces of the novel, as well as their modernist and, more significantly, phenomenological interrelatedness. Viewing the house as a living organism, I attempted to exceed what the novel's socio-cultural and aesthetic embeddedness would primarily suggest, touched upon by scholars mentioned above. Besides the reflexivity of spaces with respect to their inhabitants, their past, memories, and essential attributes, a thorough observation of the architectural structures outlined the spatio-existential philosophical foundation of the novel, as well as that of my analysis. The way Mrs. Ramsay, the focal character, is located within the

house, a structure of multiple enclosures is generated, which evokes Levinas's concept of dwelling as an essential mode of existence grounded on spatio-corporeal givenness. Mrs. Ramsay is also juxtaposed, and subsequently identified with the window—framed and displayed as a work of art herself—the drawing-room steps or the stairs leading to the upper section of the house. All these architectural forms are situated on the threshold of conflicting spheres, even though they fulfil two contrasting functions simultaneously, namely, severance and linking. Liminality is an inherent quality of Levinas's notion of the body as the basis of human habitation and the resurgence of the self. Besides such intermediary components of the house, Mrs. Ramsay is introduced through a whole series of metaphorically presented spaces (dome-shaped hive, cathedral, tomb of kings, sealed vessel, intricate passages), all bearing the same ambiguous nature as the house itself. The emphatic visuality of *To the Lighthouse* provides the third pillar of its spatial configuration, played out in the painterly space of Lily's canvas as a confluence of the aesthetic, the corporeal and the architectonic aspects.

To accomplish Cézanne's and Fry's formalist unity and order of heterogeneous constituents Lily first has to map up the spatial relations of individuals and objects, including her own position within the intricate social and psychological network of the Ramsays' and their guests. This process is articulated through her meticulous measuring of distances and proximities "of masses, of lights and shadows" (Woolf, *TTL* 59) on her canvas. The house also experiences two oppositional forces: the centripetal mechanism of Mrs. Ramsay's relentless attempts to fuse the discrepant members of the company and to maintain the momentary bond between them, her act culminating in the dinner scene, one of the thematic axes of the narrative. In this respect, Mrs. Ramsay and Lily are alter egos of each other: the former acting within the microcosm of the family ruled by social expectations, the latter transforming her fellow beings and objects of reality to shapes and forms of her canvas to realise what Merleau-Ponty calls "an emerging order" commenting on Cézanne's technique

(Merleau-Ponty, *Sense* 14). The other direction defines a centrifugal dispersal forcing all entities to preserve separation and distance. These two essential modulations of existence delineate the philosophical framework of my analysis primarily covering "The Window" section that is ruled by spatial and aesthetic pulls.

Separation calls for Levinas's notion of dwelling that he considers the very basis of existence. "[R]ecollection, a work of separation, is concretized as existence in a dwelling, economic existence" (Levinas 154). Levinas imagines recollection as a withdrawal from the exteriority of the world, as an emphatic inwardness that conditions the self to be at home with itself, and, subsequently, to be. Things of reality, one among them the self in its intimacy, become distinguishable from each other by the same mechanism of separation and recollection. The logic of Levinas's model necessitates a further inwardness beyond the boundaries of the home, namely, the interiority of one's own body. Thus, notions of external and internal become fluid and constantly redefined. The liminality of home and body characterises both the Ramsay house and Mrs. Ramsay's corporeality. The summer cottage endures the constant intrusion of the natural sphere, a process greatly enhanced by the Ramsay children, who habitually bring in elements of the local flora and fauna. The house, however, yields to the external and/or natural forces metaphorically, too, primarily owing to its oneness with Mrs. Ramsay's body. The gradual deterioration of the house may also be suggested by Mrs. Ramsay's failure to fulfil her being a refuge for a homogeneous confluence of dispersed entities. The irreversible decay of the architectural embodiment culminates in the death of Mrs. Ramsay. "When these maternal figures die, the 'house itself seems to die as well'" (Garber qtd. in Briganti 155). Levinas's theory concerning the self's differentiation from the Other through separation supported the examination of Mrs. Ramsay's immediate relationship with the other inhabitants of the house, who form a collective subjectivity in contrast with the central female character. The alterity of Mrs. Ramsay remains elusive and

rejects representation for all of them, a circumstance most sensitively influencing Lily's artistic struggle.

Besides Levinasian categories of dwelling and separation the thematic, aesthetic, and philosophical composition of the novel is affected by another dynamism as well, that is, by the energy of distancing. This particular gesture appears as an ontological condition in Sartre's existential philosophy. "[B]eing-for-itself is to surpass the world and to cause there to be a world by surpassing it. But to surpass the world is not to survey it but to be engaged in it in order to emerge from it" (Sartre 326-7). First, the self has to make the world to be there, to create an existential distance for the sake of emerging from it. Its locus is conditioned by its being "engaged in" the fabric of the world. The self is not a scientist examining and, simultaneously, objectifying the world from the outside. Its position is integral, the world and ultimately its body within it, is to be surpassed from the interiority of its own reality.

The Sartrean disposition of distancing characterises the entirety of *To the Lighthouse*, detachment and seclusion appears on the thematic, structural, and aesthetic levels. Whereas Mrs. Ramsay performs an essential role yet again, her being a referential point for the others, the inevitable condition of "to-be-thereness," for her the surpassable body appears doubly. On the one hand, her exclusive association with the Lighthouse causes the latter to appear as the body to be surpassed, on the other hand, as a secondary detachment—her extended corporeal being—she frequently imagines herself as the iconic "wedge-shaped core of darkness" (Woolf, *TTL* 69), which is beyond the architectural and bodily arrangements. The notion of distance recurs with a renewed force in the closing section of the novel, too, yet with an altered function. Distance appears to be fundamental for the fulfilment of James's childhood wish of visiting the Lighthouse, whereas for Lily it is a unique means for accomplishing her second attempt at the visual transubstantiation of Mrs. Ramsay. As opposed to "The Window" section, distance is no longer approximated from Mrs. Ramsay's spatio-corporeal nexus that

denoted a fixed and solid point of reference but returns as a fluid and constantly transforming spatial, hence existential, condition. This situation compels Lily to dynamically change her position, in relation to her absent subject, i.e. Mrs. Ramsay, the house, the sight of the withdrawing Mr. Ramsay and his children in the boat approaching the Lighthouse, the accompanying Mr. Carmichael or her easel. The plasticity of space—including the hideously gaping emptiness of her canvas—surfaces as an apparently bigger challenge for Lily than the difficulty of finding the most expressive visual trope for Mrs. Ramsay, which prevailed her first creative phase.

The exploration of Mrs. Ramsay's bodily identity with her circumambient natural and cultural sphere and the confluence of her spatio-corporeal relations with the aesthetic considerations and realisations of Lily lead to the recognition of the novel's phenomenological legacy on a more universal scale. The spatially grounded existentialist analysis revealed that the textual fabric of *To the Lighthouse* performs the very same spatial and bodily transfigurations as the ones discussed in connection with Mrs. Ramsay. Cavernous spaces, divergent pulls, pulsating rhythm, and chiasmic relationships characterise the body of the text. Most tangibly "Time Passes," the central section produces such plastic modulations, even though seemingly temporality rules out spatiality. The chapter subverts the expected successive logic and suspends linear time, and it incorporates space in a very special sense. "Time Passes" is a non-place, it embodies the lack of space proper functioning as a *camera obscura* for the entirety of the novel. Lily observes the company at the dinner scene as if "the sense of things ha[d] been blown apart" (Woolf, *TTL* 80). The dispersed fragments of reality, the loose thematic, social, artistic threads attain their fusion in the central section's abysmal darkness to be projected on the screen of the third chapter that simultaneously presents the union of the family and the painter's eventual accomplishment of vision into design. Owing to the outstanding focal position, "Time Passes" houses various thematic and structural mises-

en-abyme. First and foremost, it reduplicates liminality of the introductory chapter, represented by the chapter's central trope, the window. It occupies the limbo between presence and absence, apparent order and constructive chaos, Sartrean distancing and Merleau-Pontian synergy. Without having light of its own, paradoxically, it turns visible what otherwise would remain veiled and, among other internal mirroring, it reflects the very chiasmic relationship of the framing chapters. Being a point of convergence and of emanation at the same time, it appears to be the node of the narrative. "Time Passes" performs structurally for the entire narrative what Mrs. Ramsay meant to execute socially, as well as existentially for the others in the first chapter. It generates the conditions for the accomplishment of fictional and painterly vision, the potential to come to terms with the verbal and visual expression of the absent Mrs. Ramsay.

The structural fusion prefigures Lily's phenomenological experience of a space marked out by the constantly withdrawing "brown speck of Mr. Ramsay's sailing boat," "the rubicund, drowsy, entirely contented figure of Mr Carmichael" (who accompanies, however, silently the painter), "the edge of the lawn" (her point of viewing the sea), the "extraordinarily empty" drawing-room steps (a place, formerly, closely linked to Mrs. Ramsay), and her easel (Woolf, *TTL* 89, 166, 185, 194). Apparently, Lily is confined within this space of fixed points of reference, yet none of the framing units appears as solidified. She easily adjusts herself to the fluctuating distances by performing "a dancing rhythmical movement" (Woolf, *TTL* 172) that is, eventually, the elongation of the swinging movement of her brush. Lily employs her whole body to perceive her reality that surrounds her with the absence of the family, the emptiness left behind by Mrs. Ramsay's death, the silence and aloofness of the poet, Mr. Carmichael, and the "uncompromising white stare" of her canvas (Woolf, *TTL* 171). For the sake of enabling herself to fill up the engulfing emptiness of the canvas,—that is, the final transfiguration of Mrs. Ramsay and, ultimately, the realisation of her own relationship with

what the mother of eight children embodies (marriage, motherhood, social order)—Lily has to trace up and inhabit the space of her being, including her own body within that circumscribed segment of reality. She is exposed to a multisensory experience, in which seeing, touching, kinetic occurrences, and sonorous stimuli come together. Lily has to renounce the prerogative of seeing and her former position of being the scrutinizing viewer of the scene and her model, which automatically forced her to keep an exacting distance from her subject. Whenever she could establish a corporeally based communication with Mrs. Ramsay, she got an insight into "the chambers of the mind and heart" (Woolf, *TTL* 57), yet while she was barricaded by her easel, preserving the Cartesian, perspectival locus she was unable to find the proper combination of forms and motifs.

Mrs. Ramsay's phenomenologically grounded presence established in the first part, keeps on affecting and assisting the life of those left behind. Her corporeal givenness is preserved and activated as, what Merleau-Ponty terms, "the thickness of the flesh" (Merleau-Ponty, *Visible* 135) by which he means an intercorporeal tissue of encroachments and invaginations of binary oppositions. Elisabeth Grosz observes the Merleau-Pontian notion of the flesh as "being's most elementary level" ("The Question of Ontology" 22). Flesh functions as a fundamental condition of becoming, it "does not just clothe subjects, objects, and their relations with its touch; it doubles back on itself as the invisible underside of the visible" (Grosz, "The Question of Ontology" 23). Its innate reflexivity is the repository of the subject's spatial being, the apprehension of our oneness with the world.

Merleau-Ponty believed in the mutuality of different sensory fields and viewed the human being as sentient-sensible. The reciprocation of categories as subject and object originates in the intertwining of the seer and the seen, secondarily, of the visible and the tangible, the body being the ultimate place of such chiasmic relationships. Yet, the body is encrusted in the world along with other bodies and things, similarly to the eye that is

enveloped by the body, thus, visual perception and a tactile-kinetic experience come together. Merleau-Ponty endowed the figure of the painter with the ability to perceive and comprehend the "indivisible whole" of Being (Merleau-Ponty, *Sense* 15). Due to the synthesis of the diverse perceptive modalities, the world opens up itself in its primordial totality for the eye and the body of the painter. Since body and the world share the same texture, the entwining of opposing categories takes place and repeats itself within the body of the painter, as well as outside of that, where the borderline between the internal and the external is already blurred and fluctuating.

Even if "The Lighthouse" section is marked by the absence of Mrs. Ramsay and the tangibility of distance, emptiness, a social and emotional vacuum, Lily, for the first time in the novel, is the closest to "hold the scene – so – in a vice" (Woolf, *TTL* 218). Mrs. Ramsay's non-being, the very lack of Lily's model, and the remoteness of the representatives of the scientific, perspectival, exacting perception, that is, Mr. Ramsay, Charles Tansley, and Mr. Bankes, compel Lily to open a fresh eye on reality. She has to learn how to view the world not through a series of mediated images and conceptions but the manner in which the complexity of reality unfolds itself before the innocent eye of the painter. "One wanted, she thought, dipping her brush deliberately, to be on a level with ordinary experience, to feel simply that's a chair, that's a table, and yet at the same time, It's a miracle, it's an ecstasy" (Woolf, *TTL* 218). Lily reveals the duplicity of her engagement in the world shortly before she makes the final touch on her canvas. On the one hand, she confesses her sharing a collective spatial sensation with the mundane simplicity of household items, rather from within, on the other hand, she formulates the necessity of the visionary stance, the one which happens simultaneously along with the former, from an external point of view.

The final confluence of the so far disparate spatiality (the corporeal of Mrs. Ramsay, the phenomenological of the house, and the aesthetic of Lily's painting) rests on Lily's

apprehension of their identity and her own oneness with them. The pictorial space challenges her with its utmost plasticity: once "the mass loomed before her; it protruded; she felt it pressing on her eyeballs" (Woolf, *TTL* 173), at other times, "she began to model her way into the hollow there" (Woolf, *TTL* 186) occasionally alluring her to immerse herself in the depth of that gaping emptiness (Woolf, *TTL* 193). The empty drawing-room steps no longer mean a threatening lack to the painter, since she knows the interior of that emptiness through her own journey to the innermost dimension of the painting. The phenomenological presence of Mrs. Ramsay, finally, is conjured up by "an odd-shaped triangular shadow over the step" cast by the movement of "some light stuff behind [the window]" (Woolf, *TTL* 218). Mrs. Ramsay's iconic triangular shape, her self-imposed trope resurfaces, yet again, serving as an ultimate evidence of her phenomenal existence.

Works Cited

Alberti, Leon Battista. *On Painting*. London: Penguin Classics, 1991.

Aquila, Richard E. "Two Problems of Being and Nothingness in Sartre's Being and Nothingness." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 38.2 (Dec., 1977): 167-186.

Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston: Beacon, 1969.

Batnitzky, Leora. "Encountering the Modern Subject in Levinas." *Yale French Studies* 104 (2004): 6-21.

Bell, Clive. *Art*. Ed. J.B. Bullen. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987.

Bianchi, Emanuela. "Receptacle/*Chōra*: Figuring the Errant Feminine in Plato's *Timaeus*." *Hypatia* 21.4 (Autumn, 2006): 124-146.

Boehm, Gottfried. *Paul Cézanne: Montagne Sainte-Victoire, Válogatott művészeti írások*. Budapest: Kijárat, 2005.

Bollnow, O.F. "Lived Space." *Philosophy Today* 31-39. n.d.

Borges, Jorge Luis. *Collected Fictions*. Trans. Andrew Hurley. New York: Viking, 1998.

Briganti, Chiara and Kathy Mezei. "House Haunting: The Domestic Novel of the Inter-war Years." *Home Cultures* 1. 2. (2004): 147–168.

Brogan, Michael J. "Nausea and the Experience of the 'Il y a': Sartre and Levinas on Brute Existence." Philosophy Today 45. 2 (2001). 9 February 2010. <http://elibrary.bigchalk.com/elibweb/elib/do/document?set=pbsissue&dictionaryClick=&secondaryNav=&groupid=1&requestid=issue_docs&resultid=5&edition=&ts=27FE2C87B29B36E56840BED03BDEED6E_1280694964293&start=1&publicationId=PB004150&urn=urn%3Abigchalk%3AUS%3BBCLib%3Bdocument%3B45855547>

Brown, Paul Tolliver. "Relativity, Quantum Physics, and Consciousness in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*." *Journal of Modern Literature* 32.3 (2009): 39-62.

Daigle, Christine. *Jean-Paul Sartre*. *Routledge Critical Thinkers*. London: Routledge, 2010.

Dalgarno, Emily. *Virginia Woolf and the Visible World*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001.

Dällenbach, Lucien. "Reflexivity and Reading." *New Literary History* 11.3 (1980): 435-449.

---. *The Mirror in the Text*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989.

De Diego, Estrella. "Representing Representation: Reading *Las Meninas*, Again." *Velázquez's* Las Meninas. Ed. Suzanne L. Stratton-Pruitt. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003: 150-169.

Dillon, M. C. "'Eye and Mind': The Intertwining of Vision and Thought." *Man and World* 13.2 (1980): 155-171.

Dowling, David. *Bloomsbury Aesthetics: The Novels of Forster and Woolf*. London: Macmillan, 1985.

Doyle, Laura. "'These Emotions of the Body': Intercorporeal Narrative in *To the Lighthouse*." *Twentieth Century Literature* 40.1 (Spring, 1994): 42-71.

Dubbini, Renzo. *Geography of the Gaze: Urban and Rural Vision in Early Modern Europe*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002.

Elliott, Bridget and Jo-Ann Wallace. *Women Artists and Writers: Modernist (Im)positionings*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Elliott, Jean. "The Protean Image: The Role of Mr. Carmichael in *To the Lighthouse*." *Studies in the Novel* 12.4 (1980): 359-368.

Elwood, Brian D. "The Problem of the Self in the Later Nishida and in Sartre." *Philosophy East and West* 44.2 (April, 1994): 303-316.

Emery, Mary Lou. "'Robbed Of Meaning': The Work at the Center of *To The Lighthouse*." *Modem Fiction Studies* 38.1 (1992): 217-234.

Etlin, Richard A. "Aesthetics and the Spatial Sense of Self." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56.1 (1998): 2-19.

Ferguson, John. "A Sea Change: Thomas De Quincey and Mr. Carmichael in *To the Lighthouse*." *Journal of Modern Literature* 14.1 (1987): 45-63.

Fisher, Jane. "'Silent as the Grave': Painting, Narrative, and the Reader in *Night and Day* and *To the Lighthouse*." *The Multiple Muses of Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Diane F. Gillspie. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1993. 90-109

Fleishman, Avrom. "'To Return to St. Ives:' Woolf's Autobiographical Writings." *ELH* 48.3 (Autumn, 1981): 606-618.

Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Friedberg, Anne. *The Virtual Window: from Alberti to Microsoft*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006.

Friedman, Norman. "Double Vision in *To the Lighthouse*." *Virginia Woolf* To the Lighthouse. Ed. Morris Beja. London: Macmillan, 1970.

Fry, Roger. *Cézanne. A Study of his Development*. New York: The Noonday Press, 1958.

---. *Vision and Design*. London: Oxford UP, 1981.

Gandelman, Claude. *Reading Pictures, Viewing Texts*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991.

Gillespie, Diane Filby. *The Sisters' Arts: The Writing and Painting of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell*. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1988.

Gasché, Rodolphe. *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986.

Goldman, Jane. *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf: Modernism, Post-Impressionism and the Politics of the Visual*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.

---. ed. *Virginia Woolf:* To the Lighthouse, The Waves. New York: Columbia UP, 1998.

Goring, Paul. "The Shape of *To the Lighthouse*: Lily Briscoe's Painting and the Reader's Vision" *Word and Image* 10.3 (July-September, 1994): 222-229.

Grene, Marjorie. “The Aesthetic Dialogue of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.” *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetic Reader: Philosophy and Painting*. Ed. Galen A. Johnson. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1993.

Grosz, Elizabeth. “Merleau-Ponty, Bergson, and the Question of Ontology.” *Intertwinings: Interdisciplinary Encounters with Merleau-Ponty*. Ed. Gail Weiss. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008. 13-29.

---. *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Handley, William R. “The Housemaid and the Kitchen Table: Incorporating the Frame in *To the Lighthouse*.” *Twentieth Century Literature* 40.1 (Spring, 1994): 15-41.

Hass, Lawrence. "Elemental Alterity: Levinas and Merleau-Ponty." *Intertwinings: Interdisciplinary Encounters with Merleau-Ponty*. Ed. Gail Weiss. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008. 31-44.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1977.

Hyman, Virginia R. To the Lighthouse *and Beyond: Transformations in the Narratives of Virginia Woolf*. New York: Peter Lang, 1988.

Ingram, Penelope. “’One Drifts Apart’: *To the Lighthouse* as Art of Response.” *Philosophy and Literature* 23.1 (1999): 78-95.

Jay, Martin. “Scopic Regimes of Modernity.” *Vision and Visuality*. Ed. Hal Foster. Seattle: Bay Press, 1988. 3-27.

Johnson, Galen A. ed. *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetic Reader: Philosophy and Painting*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1993.

Kelley, Alice van Buren. To the Lighthouse*: The Marriage of Life and Art*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987.

Kaplan, Andrew. “Windows: A Meditation on Modernity.” *Word and Image* 18.2 (2002): 162-72.

Koppen, Randi. “Embodied Form: Art and Life in Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*.” *New Literary History* 32.2 (Spring, 2001): 375-389.

Krieger, Murray. “The Problem of Ekphrasis: Image and Words, Space and Time - and the Literary Work.” *Pictures into Words: Theoretical and Descriptive Approaches to Ekpharsis*. Ed. Valerie Robillard and Els Jongeneel. Amsterdam: VU UP, 1998: 3-20.

Lee, Hermione. “Introduction.” *To the Lighthouse*. Ed. Stella McNichol. London: Penguin, 2000. ix-xliii.

Levenson, Michael. “From the Closed Room to an Opening Sky: Vectors of Space in Eliot, Woolf, and Lewis.*” Critical Quarterly* 49.4 (Winter, 2007): 2-20.

Levinas, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2001.

Levy, Eric P. „Woolf's Metaphysics of Tragic Vision in *To the Lighthouse.*” *Philological Quarterly* 75.1 (1996). 22 April 2010. <http://find.galegroup.com/gps/infomark.do?&contentSet=IAC-Documents&type=retrieve&tabID=T002&prodId=IPS&docId=A18681691&source=gale&srcprod=ITOF&userGroupName=ussd&version=1.0>

Lilienfeld, Jane. "The Deceptiveness of Beauty": Mother Love and Mother Hate in To the Lighthouse.” *Twentieth Century Literature* 23. 3 (1977): 345-376.

Mares, Cheryl. “Reading Proust: Woolf and the Painter’s Perspective.” *The Multiple Muses of Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Diane F. Gillspie. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1993.58-89.

Masheck, Joseph. “Alberti’s ‘Window’: Art-Historiographic Notes on an Antimodernist Misprision.” *Art Journal* 50.1 (Spring, 1991): 35-41.

Matro, Thomas G. “Only Relations: Vision and Achievement in *To the Lighthouse*.” *PMLA* 99.2 (1984): 212-24.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge, 2002.

---. *Sense and Non-Sense*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1964.

---. *The Primacy of Perception*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1964.

---. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1968.

Miller, J. Hillis. "Mr. Carmichael and Lily Briscoe: The Rhythm of Creativity in *To the Lighthouse*." *Modernism Reconsidered*. Ed. Robert Kiely. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1983. 167-89.

McLaurin, Allen. *Virginia Woolf: The Echoes Enslaved*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1973.

Naremore, James. "A World without a Self: The Novels of Virginia Woolf." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 5.2. (1972): 122-134.

Nussbaum, Martha C. "The Window: Knowledge of Other Minds in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*." *New Literary History* 26.4 (1995): 731-753.

Pedersen, Glenn. "Vision in *To the Lighthouse*." *PMLA* 73.5 (1958): 585-600.

Plato. *Timaeus*. Trans. Desmond Lee. London: Penguin Books, 1977.

Raitt, Suzanne. *Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990.

Reed, Christopher. ed. *A Roger Fry Reader*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.

---. "Through Formalism: Feminism and Virginia Woolf's Relation to Bloomsbury Aesthetics." *The Multiple Muses of Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Diane F. Gillspie. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1993. 11-35.

---. *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture, and Domesticity*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2004.

Rilke, Rainer Maria. "The Second Elegy." *Duino Elegies and the Sonnets to Orpheus*. Trans. A. Poulin Jr. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977. 13-17.

Roberts, John Hawley. "'Vision and Design' in Virginia Woolf." *PMLA* 61.3 (1946): 835-47.

Rojas, Yuko. "Proustian Reminiscence in *To the Lighthouse*." *Studies in the Novel* 41.4 (Winter, 2009): 451-467.

Ron, Moshe. "The Restricted Abyss: Nine Problems in the Theory of Mise en Abyme." *Poetics Today* 8.2 (1987): 417-438.

Rowley, Alison. *Helen Frankenthaler: Painting History, Writing Painting*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2007.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. London: Methuen, 1984.

Smith, George. "Woolf, Cézanne, and the *Nachträglichkeit* of Feminist Modernism." *Rereading Modernism: New Directions in Feminist Criticism*. Ed. Lisa Rado. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1994.

Smythe, Karen. "Virginia Woolf's Elegiac Enterprise." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 26.1 (1992): 64-79.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Unmaking and Making in *To the Lighthouse*." *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. London: Routledge, 1988. 30-45.

Steiner, Wendy. *The Colors of Rhetoric: Problems in the Relation between Modern Literature and Painting*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982.

Stewart, Jack F. "A 'Need of Distance and Blue': Space, Color, and Creativity in *To the Lighthouse*." *Twentieth Century Literature* 46.1 (Spring, 2000): 78-99.

---. "Color in *To the Lighthouse*." *Twentieth Century Literature* 31.4 (Winter, 1985): 438-458.

---. "Light in *To the Lighthouse*." *Twentieth Century Literature* 23. 3 (Oct., 1977): 377-389.

Taylor, Mark C. *Altarity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago P, 1987.

Todd, Sharon. "On Not Knowing the Other, or Learning *from* Levinas." *Philosphy of Education Yearbook*. *Philosophy of Education Society*. Ed. Suzanne Rice. 2001. 22 January 2010. <http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-Yearbook/2001/2001toc.htm>.

Torgovnick, Marianna. *The Visual Arts, Pictorialism, and the Novel: James, Lawrence, and Woolf*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985.

Vasseleu, Cathryn. *Textures of Light: Vision and Touch in Irigaray, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Vermes Katalin. *A test éthosza: A test és a másik tapasztalatainak összefüggése Merleau-Ponty és Levinas filozófiájában*. Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2006.

Walsh, Kelly S. "The Unbearable Openness of Death: Elegies of Rilke and Woolf." *Journal of Modern Literature* 32.4 (2009): 1-21.

Watson, Barbara Bellow. "On Power and the Literary Text." *Signs* 1.1 (Autumn, 1975): 111-118.

Woolf, Virginia. *Moments of Being*. Ed. Jeanne Schulkind. London: Pimlico, 2002.

---. "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown." *Collected Essays*. Ed. Leonard Woolf. Vol. 1. London: Chatto and Windus, 1966. 319-337.

---. *Mrs. Dalloway*. London: Penguin Books, 2000.

---. *Roger Fry: A Biography*. London: Vintage, 2003.

---. "The Mark on the Wall." *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Susan Dick. 2nd ed. San Diego: Harcourt, 1989. 83-89.

---. *To the Lighthouse*. Ed. Stella McNichol. London: Penguin, 2000.

The Abstract of the Dissertation

The poetics of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) unquestionably attracts numerous interpretative approaches out of which one of the most conspicuous is visuality owing to the novel's Post-Impressionist legacy. My analysis grew out of the painterly quality, too, yet the examination of the formalist relations of the textually embedded paintings led to the realisation of a wider compositional principle. This eventually delineated a spatio-corporeal quality prevalent in the entirety of the novel. Lily Briscoe's paintings, hence can be considered as textually generated pictorial alter-egos of *To the Lighthouse*. The interrelatedness of bodies and spaces necessitates an altered mode of perception and apprehension both from the artist's and the analyser's part, which eventually outlines the phenomenological embeddedness of the narrative.

Lily—a Cézanne surrogate or Roger Fry's imaginary disciple—encounters the significance of the analogy between the spatial and bodily relations of animate and inanimate entities inhabiting her immediate environment and the stylised blocks of colours, the "significant forms" (Clive Bell's term) of her canvas. By tracing up the spatial network of bodies and things, Lily, primarily, is confronted with a need for finding the proper visual equivalence for Mrs. Ramsay, which process unravels the difficulty concerning the knowability of the self and the other. Subject formation, as a subsequent concern for all of the characters, appears to be accomplished through the phenomenological apprehension of architectural, corporeal and aesthetic spaces. The confluence of space and the body triggered the fundamental interpretative framework of the dissertation: the spatio-existential philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Paul Sartre, and the embodied subjectivity of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

Structurally the novel's two framing chapters—unlike the central section that is

apparently temporally designated—perform different spatial relationships. Whereas "The Window" section is dominated by dispersal, separation, and distance, as well as by its central trope, that is, the window, the means of liminality, the closing chapter, "The Lighthouse," is characterised by synergy and convergence, a constellation of bodies, things, and their enveloping space. Mrs. Ramsay's centrality in the first part is complemented by her analogy with spaces (actual and metaphorical alike), first and foremost with the Ramsays' summer cottage. Her body as a spatial construction itself is located within the house, which arrangement produces a structure of multiple spatial enclosures.

This evokes Levinas's notion of the dwelling which he considers as a basic existential mode, an essential condition for the resurgence of the self. Levinas imagines dwelling as "recollection," that is, a withdrawal from the exteriority of the world, an emphatic inwardness. Due to the separation from the external sphere, the self experiences the sense of being at home with itself, subsequently, the potential to be, to resurge Levinas's concept determines Mrs. Ramsay's own subject formation procedure. Distance, on the other hand, as the other dominant structural force, characterises the relationship of the others towards Mrs. Ramsay, which calls for Sartre's notion of "to-be-thereness." The self has to cause the world, with which it shows contiguity, to be there, at an existential distance for the sake of becoming able to emerge from it. Mrs. Ramsay through her association with architectural spaces appears to be the surpassable body for the others, from which all the family members and their guests separate themselves.

"Time Passes," the central section of the novel, temporarily suspends spatiality, yet due to its highlighted structural position, as well as its reflexive quality, it functions similarly to Mrs. Ramsay within the composition of the entire novel. It serves as the limen of the narrative, a point of convergence and, at the same time, a viewing point. It reflects on, among other instances of internal mirroring, the very relationship of the two framing chapters. "Time

Passes" becomes the surpassed, distanced body for the first part, to enable the final aesthetic and existential accomplishment of the closing chapter.

"The Lighthouse" section inevitably experiences an altered spatiality. Bodies, things, forms resurface in a dynamic spatial modulation that is attributed with synergy. Even though distance prevails, it becomes a fluid category, the very means of outlining the organic relatedness of the formerly disparate components. Lily is forced to surrender her exterior position with respect to her painterly theme. Her new referential points (the Lighthouse, Mr. Ramsay, the empty drawing room steps, the staring emptiness of her canvas, etc.) do not signify fixity, they do not impose limitations on her, and she is no longer separated by her easel from the rest of the world. The surrounding world with all its bodies and things is in a constant movement, forcing the painter to constantly redefine the notion of distance and her own position within such a plastic space. She realises that she herself is encrusted in, what Merleau-Ponty calls, "the flesh of the world," an intercorporeal tissue of encroachments in which external and internal fluctuate.

Lily adjusts herself to this environment by performing "a dancing rhythmical movement" that is also the reformulation of her "agitated" brush. She perceives her reality by her whole body through the confluence of the visual, aural, and tactile sensory experiences. Consequently, the painter can conjure up the absent Mrs. Ramsay's phenomenal body and re-establish her spatio-corporeal relationship with her that enables her to transpose this relationship onto the canvas as a Cézannesque constellation of forms and spaces: her former vision turns into what Fry calls design, the ultimate order of forms.

Az értekezés magyar nyelvű összefoglalója

Virginia Woolf 1927-ben írt, *A világítótorony* című regényének poétikája kétségkívül számos kritikai megközelítést tesz indokolttá, melyek közül a regény posztimpresszionista és formalista elköteleződéséből fakadó vizualitás az egyik legkézenfekvőbb terület az elemzők számára. Doktori értekezésem a Paul Cézanne letéteményeseként és a festő, esztéta Roger Fry képzeletbeli tanítványaként is felfogható Lily Briscoe-t (a regény egyik központi alakját) és munkáit, formanyelvi sajátságait, technikáját ugyanakkor elsősorban tér- és testelméleti, valamint fenomenológiai értelmezői keretek között vizsgálja. Lily esztétikájának és festészeti formáinak és tereinek elemzése során a mű egészét átható szerkesztői elv rajzolódik ki. A szöveg szintjén konstituálódó festmények a narratíva alteregóinak is tekinthetőek. A regény szövedékében megjelenő testek és terek együttállása egy újfajta észlelői és értelmezői megközelítést tesz szükségessé.

A regény első részét uraló művészi kihívást az jelenti, hogy a festőt körbevevő valóságelemek megfelelő vizuális trópusokra leljenek, hogy a valóság térbeli viszonyrendszere és a Lily vásznának „szignifikáns formái" (Clive Bell terminusa) közötti analógia helytálló legyen. Miközben testek, dolgok és az azokat körbeölelő terek szövedékét térképezi fel, a festő ráébred az én és a másik közötti viszony megismerhetőségének nehézségeire is. Ez a felismerés az énteremtés problematikájával szembesít és rávilágít *A világítótorony* ontológiai kérdésfelvetéseire is.

A szubjektum létrejöttét az építészeti, korporeális és esztétikai terek fenomenológiai értelemben vett észlelése és megértése teszi lehetővé. Az értekezés értelmezői keretét három térbeli és testi alapokra helyezett lételmélet adja: „Az ablak" című első részt Emmanuel Lévinas és Jean-Paul Sartre fogalmai mentén elemzem, míg a zárófejezet Maurice Merleau-Ponty fenomenológiájának alkalmazását teszi indokolttá. A „Múlik az idő" című középső

rész, a két keretet adó fejezettel ellentétben, a térbeliséget sajátságos módon jeleníti meg, leginkább annak hiányaként, és szubverzív módon ugyan, de inkább az időbeliség jellemzi.

Az első fejezetet a szóródás, elválasztódás, távolság mechanizmusai szervezik. Mrs. Ramsay, a regény központi nőalakja, elsődlegesen a család nyári lakával, annak tereivel azonosítható. Teste révén maga is egy térbeli konstrukció, így a házba húzódása, annak belső tereiben való létezése egy többszörösen magába záruló térbeliséget eredményez. Ez a szerkesztői elv Lévinas „lakozás" fogalmát idézi meg, melyet a filozófus a lét alapvető feltételének tekinti. A lakozás elengedhetetlen mozzanata a „behúzódás" aktusa, a világ külsőlegességétől való visszavonulás, egyfajta bensőségesség, amely a szubjektum létrejöttének feltétele.

A lévinasi modell Mrs. Ramsay énteremtését szolgálja, míg a többi szereplő egymáshoz és Mrs. Ramsayhez való térbeli viszonyát hangsúlyosabban a szóródás és a távolság dinamizmusai alakítják. Ez a szervező elv a sartre-i szubjektum létrejöttét szolgáló feltételrendszert idézi, amelyben a világ és többi test „ott-léte", egzisztenciális eltávolítása és meghaladása elengedhetetlen előfeltétele az én felbukkanásának. Ez ugyanakkor nem ássa alá az én és a világ egyneműségét, az én előbb önmagát is meg kell haladja, hogy önmagává lehessen.

A „Múlik az idő" mindent elnyelő, feneketlen sötét kamrája, paradox módon mégis képes rávilágítani a két keretező fejezet kiazmikus viszonyára is. Enyészpotként begyűjti a „Az ablak" szóródó tematikus és esztétikai motívumait, majd előrevetíti azok későbbi egybefonódását kivételesen reflexív mivoltának köszönhetően. Köztes térként szolgál a két végletet jelentő térbeliség között, előkészítve a zárlatot uraló szinergiát, testek és terek együttállását.

A távolság mint térszervező erő „A világítótorony" című részben is jelen van, de ezúttal egy sokkal képlékenyebb tér körvonalazódik általa. A festő számára megújult kihívás a korábban

rögzített viszonyítási pontok (Mrs. Ramsay, a ház, a világítótorony, a szalonba vezető lépcsők) által körülhatárolt tér fluiditása, vásznának „kérlelhetetlen üressége", Mrs. Ramsay hiánya. Egy merőben új észlelés útján kell megtapasztalnia az őt körülvevő valóságot, feladva korábbi, állványa mögötti rögzített és elszigetelt pozícióját, mellyel festői témáját eltárgyiasította és ellehetetlenítette a vele való testi-térbeli azonosságot is. El kell sajátítania a Merleau-Ponty által „vad észlelésnek" hívott tapasztalati módozatot, amely a „világ húsát"– a testeket is magába foglaló testközötti képlékeny szövet, amelyben a testek és a világ folytonosan átlépnek egymásba, egymásba türemkednek – a nyelvi és medializált fogalomalkotás előtti állapotban konstituálja. A korábban szóródó, széttartó, elkülönülő valóságtöredékek „vad észlelése" és a világ húsával való azonosság fel- és elismerése teszi lehetővé Lily számára, hogy létrehozza a cézanne-i esztétika rendjét és a formák egységét, hogy – Fry fogalmait idézve – látomását kompozícióvá szilárdítsa.

Publications of the Author

Publications Related to the Thesis:

"Abysmal Reflections in Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse." *My Fulbright Experience Academic Years 2006/2007*. Ed. Nagypál Csanád. Budapest: Hungarian - American Commission for Educational Exchange, 2008. 225-235.

„Test-terek a világítóronyban. Architekturalitás és vizualitás jelentésképző összjátékáról Virginia Woolf A világítótorny című regényében". ("Corporeal Spaces in *To the Lighthouse*") *Debreceni D*

határán – Mrs. R *isputa*. 2009.10. 58-61.

"Framing Things—The Significance of Spatial Forms in Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse." *CrosSections Volume 2: Selected Papers in Literature and Culture from the 9th HUSSE Conference*. Ed. Andrew C. Rouse, Gertrud Szamosi and Gabriella Vöő. Pécs: Institute of English Studies, 2010. 205-210.

„A lét és a semmi amsay test-terei". ("In-between Being and Nothingness—Mrs. Ramsay's Spatio-corporeality") *Studia Litteraria Testinterpretációk*. 2011.1-2. 45-60.

"Heaven be Praised for it, the Problem of Space Remained:" The phenomenology of pictorial space in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse. The AnaChronisT, Journal of English and American Studies*. 2011.16 (to appear in 2012)

Other publications:

"'I hear with my whole body': Hajnal Németh's Dislocated Sonorous Bodies." *Acta: An International Scientific Journal of Sapientia University*. 2011. 4 (to appear in 2011)

Reviews:

Dubbini, Renzo. *Geography of the Gaze, Urban and Rural Vision in Early Modern Europe*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002. *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*. 9:7 (Spring 2003): 199-201.

Focus 2004 Special Issue on Film/Video Studies and British Studies szerk. Kurdi Mária és Sári László. Pécs: MacMaestro, 2004. *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*. 11.2 (Fall 2005): 253-256.

Criticism:

„Színek a világítótoronyban" ("Colours in the lighthouse") *Filmtett* (November 2003)

„Eleveszve lenni" ("Being Lost") *Filmtett* (September 2004)

„Vermeer lánya" ("Vermeer's Maid") *Filmtett* (October 2004)

Conference Papers Related to the Thesis:

2009 *HUSSE Conference*, Pécs; "Framing Things—The Significance of Spatial Forms in Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse"

2006 *Women as Subject, the Female Subject*, Debrecen; "The Snake with a Woman's Head—Iconoclastic Women in Sarah Dunant's The Birth of Venus"

2005 *Image/Text in the Multimedial Age*, Szeged; "The (Purple) Triangle of Verbal/Visual/Moving Pictures"

2004 *A Conference in English and American Studies*, Timisoara (Romania); "Visualisation of Spaces in the lighthouse"

2003 *HUSSE Conference*, Debrecen; "Talking Images"

2002 *Nő és férfi, férfi és nő* (Woman and Man, Man and Woman)—conference of the Centre of Gender Studies, Budapest; "Képes történetek" ("Picturing Stories")

Other Conference Papers:

2010 *Images Moving Across The Arts And Disciplines*: 12th Conference of the Laterna Magica Film Academy, Pécs; "'Were you thinking, were you feeling, were you thinking, were you feeling: am I alive?—Hajnal Németh's Dislocated Sonorous Bodies"

2009 *Ambiguity Conference*, Ruzomberok (Slovakia); "Sublime Cityscapes: Pictorial Spaces

in Wim Wenders's *The End of Violence*"