

INTIMATE DISTANCE: THE BOUNDARY OF LIFE AND ART IN 'TO THE LIGHTHOUSE'

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That dream, of sharing, completing, finding in solitude on the beach an answer, was but a reflection in a mirror, and the mirror itself was but the surface glassiness which forms in quiescence when the nobler powers sleep beneath? Impatient, despairing yet loth to go (for beauty offers her lures, has her consolations), to pace the beach was impossible; contemplation was unendurable; the mirror was broken. *To the Lighthouse*, p. 202.

The abrupt shattering of a dream of union by some rude interruptive force is a pattern which is central in all of Virginia Woolf's work. The union so desired is almost always union with a protective feminine figure, and the disruption so dreaded is usually caused by a power which is identifiably masculine. Indeed, the very first pages of *To the Lighthouse* (1927) focus on Mr Ramsay's heartless disruption of the radiant moment of communion in dream shared by Mrs Ramsay and James; and the pictorial representation of this intimate mother-child dyad is the specific problem which engages Lily throughout the novel. To represent aesthetically the shattered 'charmed circle' of mother and child, and thereby come to some terms with the overwhelming experience of this loss is Woolf's desperate struggle in the novel as well. As she wrote in her diary (1953, p. 78) during the period when it was being composed, 'I have an idea that I will invent a new name for my books to supplant "novel". A new—by Virginia Woolf. But what? Elegy?'

Perhaps this imaging of the interrupted mother-child relationship can be seen in a larger sense as a means of representing and coping with the problem of loss which affects men on all levels, and it need not be taken as only a literal reference to a past historical moment in the individual's life. For the shattered dream of union leads to the continuous anguish of desire 'to want and want and not to have' (*Lighthouse*, p. 66).

Recent psychoanalytic theory has stressed the lasting effects of the traumatic dissolution of the infant's symbiotic union with the mother. The infant's first recognition of a separate, non-responsive world outside the domain of the previously omnipotent self is experienced as catastrophic loss. This leads, say the psychoanalysts, to a regressive orientation, towards a desire to recapture the lost unity, and yet towards an antithetical wish for independence. For truly to recapture the lost unity also means loss of the painfully developed separate self. The developing ego, then, must at each stage of life mediate between the desire for fusion and the desire for separation. As Mahler (1975) sums up:

One could regard the entire life cycle as constituting a more or less successful process of distancing from and introjection of the lost symbiotic mother, an eternal longing for the actual or fantasied 'ideal state of self', with the latter standing for a symbiotic fusion with the 'all-good' mother, who was at one time part of the self in a blissful state of well-being (p. 305).

And the process of mourning for that first catastrophic loss is never finished, nor is the first object of our love really relinquished. We seek its image in substitutive love-objects which become symbols for what was once immediately ours, and modes for regaining the dreamed of union in the present. Symbols, in so far as they both are and are not the object, provide us with a way of being-one and being-separate.

I

Surely, it would be crudely reductive to simplify the complexity of this novel to a claim that everything refers back to a lost union with the mother. The abrupt deaths, however, of Virginia's parents—especially her mother's—in her youth, clearly left Woolf with an exacerbated and ambivalent longing for them. *To the Lighthouse* seems as much an exercise in exorcism as elegy, as if by aesthetically conjuring their presences, she could both relieve herself of the pain of their loss, and yet be able finally to accept it, and leave them behind once and for all.

Thus the problem of psychological wholeness and aesthetic form merge in a particularly intense manner in this novel. The organizing coherence of art is a mode of coherence of the self in the face of loss:

Mrs. Ramsay making of the moment something permanent (as in another sphere Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent)—this is the nature of a revelation. In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and flowing . . . was struck into stability (p. 241).

Woolf was well aware, however, of the dangers involved in making the theory of art the theory of life. She constantly and ruthlessly exposes in *To the Lighthouse* the facts of death and the dissolution of even the greatest monuments of culture. She pushes the aesthetic vision to its limits and points to the impossibility of art's bearing the burden of all meaning and coherence, and its inability to make true reparation for what was lost. And yet, for her, there was no other alternative. Like Lily, she nevertheless strove to complete the vision, tried to make eye, object, brain, and heart become one—though she knew she could not recapture the past and that primal union, completion and harmony with the world.

Lily embodies this conflict between the desire for distance and intimacy, solitude and union, and meditates:

What device for becoming, like waters poured into one jar, inextricably the same, one with the object one adored? . . . For it was not knowledge but unity she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that would be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge . . . Nothing happened. Nothing! Nothing! as she leant her head against Mrs. Ramsay's knee (p. 79).

Again, the all-encompassing beneficent union is with the feminine, and the burden of creating and sustaining these intimate unions is cast on Mrs Ramsay: 'The whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her. Again she felt, as a fact without hostility, the sterility of men, for if she did not do it nobody would do it . . .' (p. 126).

And yet the novel also poses the question whether the philosophical problem of knowing reality, with which the men are so arduously engaged, does not also really result from a primal unacknowledged desire to have, to be at one with things, from a similar inability to accept the stark otherness of the world. Mr Ramsay's problem, 'subject and object and the nature of reality', is fundamentally only another circuitous attempt to bring mind and world together, to re-create and re-mould in the patterns of abstract thought a unified world-image. And Mrs Ramsay leans upon 'this admirable fabric of the masculine intelligence, which ran up and down, crossed this way and that, like iron girders spanning the swaying fabric, upholding the world, so that she could trust herself to it utterly . . .' (p. 159).

Both these modes of unity, however, conceal a subtle, destructive intent, which is the obliteration of the independent reality of others. Mrs Ramsay is accused of being manipulative, domineering, and presiding over destinies she fails to understand; Mr Ramsay's desperate need is for sympathy, ego-support and assurance 'that he too lived in the heart of life' (p. 59), and he is blind to his abuse and violation of the integrity of others. By implication, the whole world constructed on the girders of the male intelligence rests on a far less sturdy foundation than Mrs Ramsay thinks. The First World War echoes in the background of the book and then explodes at its centre, shattering again the dream of communion in both culture and the family. The analytic masculine mode of circuitous union through separation and violent destruction—which is a substitute perhaps for the inability to exist naturally in the centre of the circle of life—destroys the circle entirely.

The centre does not hold, and the question for both the men and the women is how to deal with the emptiness, the gap, and the pain of loss. For this project, male and female powers must join forces together. Mr Ramsay uses the power of his

relentless will to cut his way across the sea in fulfilment of Mrs Ramsay's dreams. And with his accomplishment, Lily can complete her paintings, fill the empty space at the centre of her canvas by striking a line down the centre.

To allow Mr Ramsay the achievement of reaching the lighthouse signifies, for Woolf, acceptance of the necessity of integrating the rough, interruptive forces of the male. For this is what Lily needs, what she terms 'distance'—detachment, fixing through impersonal kind of form, being able to hold on by being able to hold back, being one but being separate. And for the men, integration means, at the end, the ability to achieve closeness—to recognize the lighthouse close up, to see intimately the starkness and bareness of the thing itself, a reality which the women had known and fought all along. For the male distancing had also been, in a sense, a deflection from their supposed spirit of truth, from the reality they so tragically pounded to face.

But reality, as Woolf writes in *A Room of One's Own* (1928, p. 108), is 'very erratic, very undependable—now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper in the street, now a daffodil in the sun . . . It overwhelms one walking home beneath the stars and makes the silent world more real than the world of speech'. Or, in her celebrated argument for a different kind of novel in the essay 'Modern Fiction' (1925, p. 155), she urges:

Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness. Let us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than what is commonly thought small.

Yet these fragments and radiant moments are frail and evanescent and 'distant views seem to outlast by a million years (Lily thought) the gazer and to be communing already with a sky which beholds an earth entirely at rest' (*Lighthouse*, p. 34):

So much depends, then, thought Lily Briscoe, looking at the sea . . . upon distance: whether people are near us or far from us; for her feeling for Mr. Ramsay changed as he sailed further and further across the bay (p. 284).

Thus Lily needs this distant view to complete her picture, and he needs female intimacy and desire for union to complete his voyage. Yet both Lily's consummatory vision, and James' climactic reaching the lighthouse, are no epiphanies, no miraculous transcendences. Up close, the lighthouse is a stark tower on a bare rock, barred with black and white, not a magical castle. But, says James, 'No, the other was also the Lighthouse. For nothing was simply one thing. The other was the Lighthouse too' (p. 277). And to see that both are true, to incorporate and live both is Lily's quest: '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' (p. 300). It is not the merger or collapse or transcendence of life into art, or male into female, reality into imagination; they are, rather, different and separate perspectives which are constantly juxtaposed against each other, sometimes jarring, and sometimes joining—and life is lived on the razor edge between them, on the boundary.

II

Woolf's sense of edge and boundary, and of juxtaposed perspectives is often more spatial than poetic. And, indeed, the theme of boundaries is at bottom the same as that of interruption and violation of unities. Those enclosed boundaries, that is, which might constitute the parameters of the self, or the frame of the space of art, or the general delimiting contours of human life. The flattening out of the narrative in *To the Lighthouse* and the destruction of linear, progressive time, the emphasis on the visual, and on perception and perspective—are all aspects of Woolf's concern with boundaries, demarked spaces, rooms of one's own, and enclosing wholes that won't be violated.

The whole problem of boundary ambiguity is, as Slater (1968) writes, the essential issue of human sexuality. In his analysis of the symbol of the serpent as a representation of the 'oral-narcissistic dilemma' (that is to say, the conflict between the desire to merge, and the desire to be separate—union and distance again), Slater emphasizes the point that 'biologically, sexuality is fundamentally concerned with the dissolution and rearrangement of boundaries' (p. 102). The pre-

dominant feminine fear is of being penetrated, the masculine of being absorbed:

Both represent the disturbance of a static equilibrium—one in which nothing is either gained or lost. Such an equilibrium does not exist in nature, but only as a narcissistic fantasy of paradisiacal aloofness and detachment (p. 103).

As mentioned earlier, the loss of the illusion of oneness with the world, of completely enclosed self-sufficiency which infantile narcissism suffers, is the original cause of this 'oral-narcissistic conflict'. The love-hunger of the child who desires to envelop and be one with the mother engenders the concomitant fear of being engulfed; the infant needs to keep the mother inside forever, and yet also needs to affirm its separate, independent identity and integrity. This problem of boundary ambiguity, furthermore, is involved in all the basic issues of life and death, self and other, consciousness and unconsciousness, masculinity and femininity.

Slater maintains (p. 104) that the fear of the female in sexuality is 'internal shattering', and copulation is perceived as violation. Woolf's vision of reality as a shower of disconnected atoms and fragments which need to be joined can be seen to express this desperate sense of boundary ambiguity. In this same light, one can also further understand her obsession with enclosed spaces, the private life, her definition of reality as a 'semi-transparent envelope', and also, perhaps, her opinion in *A Room of One's Own* (p. 77) that good sentences are those which are shaped like 'arcades and domes'. Her constant fear is of the intrusive violation of these fragile, self-created spaces and moments of being. Mrs Ramsay is among those women in the novel whose burden it is to assemble the shattered fragments, and yearns, like Lily, like Woolf,

To be silent; to be alone . . . to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness . . . There was freedom, there was peace, there was, most welcome of all, a summoning together, a resting on a platform of stability. Not as oneself did one find rest ever, in her experience . . . but as a wedge of darkness (pp. 96–7).

This passage again expresses Slater's concept of the boundary ambiguity in the oral-narcissistic dilemma—the conflicting desires to be independent and apart, protected in a paradisiacal space,

and yet to be diffused, dark, absorbed, and lost in the whole.

As Bell (1972) has revealed in his biography of his aunt, Woolf had a particularly rude and traumatic introduction to sexuality through her cousin. From the nightmare of the repulsive gnomish man in the dark cavern in *The Voyage Out* (1920) to the grotesque image of the snake choking on a toad in *Between the Acts* (1941), sexuality, for Woolf, assumed all manner of threatening and terrifying disguises. That serpent image which surfaces in Woolf's last work is precisely the symbol Slater analyses as indicative of the oral-narcissistic stage where destructive incorporation is the predominant idea: 'A sexual encounter is experienced as a serpent combat—an emotional swallowing contest' (p. 102). And in *To the Lighthouse*, there is no version of genital sexuality; the incorporative threat is seen in relation to the parents, the first and primal love-objects.

The theme and ideal of bisexuality, which Woolf propounded aesthetically and lived out practically in Bloomsbury, is also according to Slater, 'an obvious solution to boundary fears' (p. 111). Awareness of monosexuality, in his view, involves a blow to the narcissistic ego. The desire to be bisexual is at bottom the desire for self-sufficiency and stems from the earliest period of psychic development: 'The desire for bisexual self-sufficiency is merely another version of the wish to be reabsorbed into the mother with its attendant and antithetical desire for autonomy' (p. 113). Its aim is a previous pregenital state of existence, which again is the symbiotic mother-child relationship. This union with the mother also represents knowledge, and the desire to incorporate parental knowledge implies again the desire to be one and the desire to be separate: 'to keep the mother for always, and yet be free of her, and free of need for her, the child devours her, becomes omniscient, but loses her forever' (p. 99). And that seems a most excellent summary of one of the central projects of *To the Lighthouse*, and of Lily's attempt to capture Mrs Ramsay in her painting, and of Woolf's writing the book.

To have the stark thing itself, and yet to re-create it imaginatively is in one sense a variant of the desire to merge, and be separate, to fuse with the world, and yet re-make it in one's own image.

The tension of this conflict is one of the sources of symbolism—that an object should be both itself and other simultaneously. Milner (1952) perceives fusion and identification of one object with another, the need to discover identity-in-difference, as the basis of all creative thinking, logical and artistic. These kinds of fusions are also boundary-violators, and in psychoanalytic terms, they are variants of infantile ‘oscillations’ between the illusion of union with the mother, and the fact of contact ‘which is another way of describing the discovery of an interface, a boundary . . . “the me” and “the you”’ (p. 94).

This tracing out of boundaries can be directly connected to Woolf’s concern with the visual, and especially with the eye in *To the Lighthouse*, although, on the one hand, preoccupation with the eye is a kind of displacement upwards of erotic energy. Like the beam of the lighthouse, the eye searches out and encompasses, penetrates, encloses its objects (is bisexual), and also traces lines and boundaries. It is never still and is continuously moving; it creates illuminated views by its shifts, juxtapositions of light and dark, and angles. It is also a diffuse centre, which though scanning outwards, can never turn around on itself and complete the circle; and at the centre of the pupil, too, is a wedge of darkness.

III

Woolf’s obsession with the eye makes painting one of the basic metaphors for knowing in *To the Lighthouse*. The prose style also diffuses its centre, dispenses with the omniscient narrator and linear time, and juxtaposes memories, events, and perspectives. Woolf’s novelistic style has its parallel in contemporary movements in art, and in the destruction of classical Renaissance perspective, which was itself a mathematical schema worked out around an illusorily-constructed vanishing point. It was a highly abstract, rational, intellectual way of organizing the canvas to give the illusion of reality—which has its obvious parallel in the philosophical construction of the world through Mr Ramsey’s logic (which also gives only the illusion of reality). As Sypher (1968, p. 76) points out in his book *Literature and Technology*, the Renaissance view of the world was based on a spectator-view of reality,

associated with the scientific impulse for detached observation, and ‘one of the difficulties is that the spectator is distanced—or estranged—from what is viewed . . . It is a theatrical vision’. The Renaissance view involved the conflict between the desire to be at once involved in the world, and to view it with detachment, and furthermore created the dilemma that the ‘objective’ world was man’s own creation, relative to the spectator point of view which he assumes.

Sypher maintains, however, that this scientific distancing which corresponds to the ideal plane in painting and the proscenium arch of the stage, was always recognized by the great painters and artists as an illusory device, and not mistaken as ultimate reality. In the late Renaissance, Mannerist and Baroque periods, artists specifically used techniques of conscious distortion to break the illusory plane and call attention to their own artifices. Shakespeare, for example, constantly broke the plane between stage and audience, often using the method of the double negative—of getting to reality by negating the illusion, showing up the shadow as shadow. And yet, as in Woolf, the baseless fabric of the vision always threatens to dissolve, and leave not a rack behind. But in that tension, on that boundary, in that core of darkness, lies the vision, the innermost self—something on the boundary between form and non-form, partaking of both, yet in neither, which both art and life are helpless to capture.

For Woolf, reality is not an objective fact, to be stalked and captured through the philosophical forays and attacks of Mr Ramsay by striking to the centre, casting aside illusion, imagination, and ambiguity on the way. Instead of striking and penetrating to the *centre*, where there is only a core of darkness, one must enclose, weave around this core a *circumference*—juxtapose, overlap, hold everything together in a frame. These two modes of knowing correspond, of course, to the male and female biological modes of knowing. In *To the Lighthouse*, knowledge and perception mean, not so much cutting a straight path to the object of desire, as circling around and around it, seeing it from many perspectives, as in a Cubist painting (mediating between intimacy and distance). The danger of directly becoming one with the object, whether by penetration or diffusion into it, is that

one then loses the perceiving self and forfeits the necessary distance between knower and known.

Cubist painting had destroyed the central vanishing point of illusionistic perspective. This recognition of and play with the ambiguous involvement of subject with object was, of course, a blow to the Ramsayish world of scientific and 'objective' analysis which had dominated Western thought since the Renaissance. Cubist aesthetics, however, paralleled contemporary discoveries in science. Sypher quotes Alfred North Whitehead, the philosopher of science:

'Matter-of-fact is an abstraction arrived at by confining thought to purely formal relations which then masquerade as the final real.' Mistaking the abstraction for the fact is misplacing concreteness. As therapist Freud failed to recognize that *the* scientific method is only a special way of symbolizing reality, that the scientific conception is, in Wittgenstein's phrase 'founded on the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are explanations of natural phenomena'. Since these laws structure reality only within their own logic, the meaning of reality must exist outside this logical scaffolding (pp. 208-9).

Cubist painting encompasses these insights, especially in its rejection of the three-dimensional artificially constructed space of Renaissance perspective. It was a new way of seeing space independently of illusionist perspective. Cezanne also went beyond the empiricism of Impressionism to the realism of the psychological process of perception itself. Cubist paintings, like Woolf's novels, were organized according to acts of perception—and this comparison is important, for Woolf's prose incorporates not a passive reception of sensation, but a moulding of it, and active combination of multiple viewpoints. Like the Cubists, Woolf was engaged in an attempt to overcome the limits of the old art—not to create new aesthetic illusions, but to make art and reality overlap a bit at the boundary. The intent is more realistic than aesthetic—a closer and more accurate perception of the ambiguous particulars of experience, not an aesthetic or intellectual distancing into abstract symbols and formulas. Both the Cubists and Woolf use techniques which try to capture consciousness prior to abstraction—simultaneity, juxtaposition, the sensation of the 'moment' not as a chronological second, but a composite of moments and memories held together in a frame. Picasso's Cubist portraits are similarly composites of fragments and different

points of view into a single image—exactly Woolf's definition of knowing someone.

In the techniques of both Woolf and the Cubists, perception is a combination of the eye's vision and the mind's conception, and art is not so much an imitation of nature, a mirror, as a struggle with it (Mrs Ramsay's old antagonist, life). Picasso, in 1923 (Fry, 1966), stated:

We all know that art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize truth, at least the truth that is given us to understand. The artist must know how to convince others of the truthfulness of his lies. . . . Nature and art, being two different things, cannot be the same thing. Through art, we express our conception of what nature is not . . . From the point of view of art, there are no concrete or abstract forms, but only forms which are more or less convincing lies. That those lies are necessary to our mental selves is beyond any doubt, as it is through them that we form our aesthetic view of life (p. 168).

Picasso's idea of necessary illusion is also Woolf's. Though art is at once a weapon against life, and life's completion, there always remains the emptiness, that shadow in the centre—death, loss, frustration of desire, impermanence. Both Mr and Mrs Ramsay's modes of form-making and necessary illusion are needed in the dream of completion, 'of sharing, of completing, of finding in solitude on the beach an answer' (*Lighthouse*, p. 202). But are these dreams, these forms, perceptions, conceptions, art, and philosophies 'but a reflection in a mirror, and the mirror itself was but the surface glassiness which forms in quiescence when the nobler powers sleep beneath? Impatient, despairing yet loth to go (for beauty offers her lures, has her consolations), to pace the beach was impossible; contemplation was unendurable; the mirror was broken' (p. 202). The dream of uninterrupted communion, then, is a reflection of a narcissistic mirror, and that knowledge is pain. The dream of wholeness is the dream of an impossible continuity, of filling the gaps. And, as has been seen, it is the novel's problem of coping with absence, death, loss which come as violent, unexpected interruptions. like Mrs Ramsay's death, in a short bracketed paragraph, in a subordinate clause: '[Mr. Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning stretched his arms out but Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, his arms, though stretched out, remained empty]' (p. 194).

IV

Many psychoanalytic theoreticians of art such as Milner (1952) and Winnicott (1971) view symbolization as the heart of the process of recovery, of filling the gaps, connecting self and other, past and present. Hartmann (1961), though, has a different view of how the artist perceives his own efforts at symbolic creation. Every great artist, Hartmann says, questions his art. Hartmann sees *To the Lighthouse* as primarily a novel about resistance: Mr Ramsay who resists by force of will, Mrs Ramsay who resists by a passive blending, and Woolf who resists by 'her continuous doubting of the continuity she is forced to posit ... Each artist resists his own vision' (pp. 72–3).

Yet while Hartmann maintains that this resistance can only take place in the space of fiction, I would maintain that for Woolf this resistance took place in—indeed took—her life. While Shakespeare had, for example, the advantage of being both playwright and actor on the stage of his dreams, Woolf could only enact hers in a more literary way, without the protection of the theatre.

Hartmann also speaks of two types of continuities in the novel: (1) plot—the 'real' movement of the novel; (2) prose—the 'mental' construction. It is the tension between both which he perceives as pointing to the unreality and arbitrariness of either, and the void they bridge. For him, Woolf's art is located precisely in this gap, between discontinuities, as an interpolation, not mimesis. Again, Hartmann's idea corresponds to the concept of boundary-ambiguity, to the issues of contact, interface, and the oscillations between self and other, nature and art, male and female—like the pulsating alternations of the lighthouse beam. It is the gap, the emptiness at the centre, the boundary that is ultimately significant: not the symbol which crosses the line and bridges the gap, but rather the juxtaposition of realities against each other. Winnicott (1971, pp. 20–4) describes a psychoanalytic case-history of a female patient whose internalization of a lost loved one made her feel that absence was a stronger, truer reality than presence. Her sense of loss became itself the way of integrating her experience. For her, also, the only real thing was the gap, the absence, what was not there.

Perhaps, though, this sense of gap and absence is particularly prominent in women—not so much by virtue of their anatomy, as by the conditions of their history, a history of which Woolf was acutely aware. Felman (1975), in an article entitled 'Women and madness: the critical phallacy', presents a most interesting critique of the whole question of absence and presence, which illuminates a kind of latent sexism in Milner's and other writers' idea that all thought, scientific as well as artistic, depends on seeing identities-in-difference, and finding symbolic continuities. From the conventional point of view, as discussed previously, the philosophical quest for logic and reason, and the artistic question are at bottom motivated by similar desires for unions, wholeness, identities-in-difference, and Mr and Mrs Ramsay are merely engaged in the same project in different ways. Felman criticizes, however, the very fundamental assumptions of Western metaphysics which privilege the idea of logos, centre, and presence within ideas such as Truth, Being, Reason; and which set up hierarchies and oppositions such as Presence/Absence, Being/Nothingness, Same/Other, and Identity/Difference. These oppositions subtly valorize the side of Presence, Being, Sameness, Identity, and subordinate 'negativity' and 'difference'—which are then transformed into the principles of femininity by men to whom the female is *his* opposite, other, negative. Identity, then, becomes *masculine* sameness and *male* self-presence. And thought thus focuses around, and is generated from, this concept of identity. I would say, however, that Woolf's vision and her prose precisely attempt to speak from the side of the other, the gap, the absence. But, of course, the problem is, How does one speak outside the logic of identity, without speaking madness?

The logic of identity and male self-presence becomes, according to Felman, male narcissism, with woman playing the role of reflecting mirror—as Mrs Ramsay does for Mr Ramsay. As Woolf (1928) more explicitly states in the well-known passage from *A Room of One's Own*:

Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size. Without that power probably the earth would still be swamp and jungle ... Whatever may be their use in

civilized societies, mirrors are essential to all violent and heroic action (p. 37).

Women, as Felman says, mediate man's own specular relation with himself, his own image. What he desires from women is not knowledge, but to be acknowledged. Perhaps, then, Hartmann is right in perceiving the major theme of *To the Lighthouse* as resistance—but it would be resistance as a feminine dislocation, a refusal to be a mirror, a setting up of new and different kinds of correspondences of realities, facts, and ideas. The distortions of the reflection, however, extract a price from women—madness and the grotesque. Woolf's art might be better understood in this light, and particularly its emphasis on discontinuities, differences, and its dissolution of a secure centre. Felman's own words are also an apt summation of Woolf's art. The real is defined

not as a consequence of reflections, as an effect of mirroring focalization, but as a radically de-centering resistance; the real as, precisely, Other, the unrepresentable as such, the ex-centric residue which the specular relation of vision cannot embrace (p. 10).

If this is the heart of Woolf's vision, then it is certainly not androgynous, but deeply and painfully feminine—expressing the core of darkness.

Though Woolf may seem to be trying to harmonize the male and female principles together at the end of the novel, I think her sympathy lay more with the arduous efforts of Lily to complete and articulate what was ultimately a private, feminine vision. But, then, the feminine vision has either to be silent, or laboriously work its way out of the constricting categories which had previously defined it, or simply be mad. Woolf struggled on all these levels. At its finale, the lighthouse remains yet apart from all the meanings woven around it—blank, obdurate, a unifying focus but not a transcendent symbol. An eye, but not a blank one; a passive mirror and searching beam—stark, magical, on the boundary between land and sea. But, finally, the mirror remained broken.

SUMMARY

To the Lighthouse deals with the central problem of the dissolution of the symbiotic union of the early mother-child relationship, and the

child's resultant quest for a lost primal unity and yet antithetical drive for independent identity. The problem of psychological wholeness also merges with the novel's constant meditations on completion of aesthetic form, and determines the very structure of the narrative and Woolf's style in general. The drives for union and separation, intimacy and distance also become sexually categorized as respectively masculine and feminine, and are perceived as both potentially creative and destructive.

Woolf's concern with boundary ambiguity reflects the concern with interruption and violation of unities, an 'oral-narcissistic dilemma', and her confused sexuality. It also determines her aesthetic vision and the fragmentation of her prose, her obsession with visual perspective and the eye in the novel. The prose style, which makes painting a central metaphor for knowledge, has important parallels with Cubism, and the Cubist reaction against the artificial mathematical illusions of Renaissance perspective. Woolf's style is especially similar to that of the Cubists in its use of juxtaposed perspectives and its attempt to capture psychological consciousness prior to abstraction. Like the Cubists, she opposes a logic that sets up an illusory reality, and attempts to create alternative models. Her style is a result of a kind of feminine dislocation, a dissolution of the secure centres of a male-dominated culture, and a new definition of the real.

TRANSLATIONS OF SUMMARY

Le Phare traite le problème de la dissolution de l'union symbiotique de la nouvelle relation mère-enfant dont la résultante chez l'enfant est la recherche de l'unité primitive perdue et le besoin antithétique de l'identité indépendante. Le problème du tout psychologique est incorporé dans le roman par des méditations constantes d'achèvement de la forme esthétique et détermine la structure narrative et, en général, le style de Woolf. Les pulsions d'union et de séparation, d'intimité et de distance, sont également classifiées sexuellement comme masculin et féminin respectivement et tous deux sont perçus potentiellement comme créatif et destructif.

Le souci de Woolf sur l'ambiguïté des bornes reflète le souci d'interruption et de violation des unités, 'un dilemme oral-narcissique' et sa sexualité confuse. Ceci détermine aussi sa vision esthétique et la fragmentation de sa prose, son obsession pour la perspective visuelle et l'œil dans le roman. Le style de la prose, qui fait peindre une métaphore centrale pour le savoir, est semblable au Cubisme dans sa réaction contre l'illusion mathématique artificielle de la perspective à la Renaissance. Le style de Woolf est spécialement semblable à celui des Cubistes dans leur emploi de perspectives juxtaposées et dans leur tentative de capturer la

conscience psychologique antérieure à l'abstraction. Comme les Cubistes, elle s'oppose à une logique qui s'établit d'une réalité illusoire et essaie de créer de modèles alternatifs. Son style est le résultat d'une espèce de dislocation féminine, d'une dissolution des centres qui assurent une culture de domination mâle et d'une définition du réel.

Zum *Leuchtturm* beschäftigt sich mit dem zentralen Problem der Auflösung der symbiotischen Einheit in der frühen Mutter-Kind Beziehung und der daraus erwachsenden Suche des Kindes nach einer verlorenen primären Einheit einerseits, aber andererseits auch dem antithetischen Trieb nach einer unabhängigen Identität. Das Problem der psychologischen Ganzheit verschmilzt auch mit den ständigen Meditationen des Romans über die Vervollkommnung der ästhetischen Form und bestimmt die eigentliche Erzählungsstruktur und Woolfs Stil im allgemeinen. Die Triebe nach Union und Trennung, Intimität und Distanz werden auch sexuell kategorisiert als männlich, respektive weiblich, und beide werden als potentiell kreativ und destruktiv erachtet.

Woolfs Beschäftigung mit dem Zwiespalt von Grenzen spiegelt ihre Beschäftigung mit der Störung und Verletzung von Einheiten, ein 'oral-narzisstisches Dilemma', wie auch ihrer verwirrten Sexualität wider. Sie bestimmt auch ihre ästhetische Vision und die Zerstückelung ihrer Prosa, ihre Besessenheit mit einer visuellen Perspektive und dem Auge im Roman. Der Prosastil, der das Malen zu einer zentralen Metapher des Wissens macht, zeigt wichtige Parallelen mit dem Kubismus und der Reaktion der Kubisten gegen die künstlichen mathematischen Illusionen der Renaissance-Perspektive. Woolfs Stil ist dem der Kubisten vor allem im Gebrauch von gegensätzlichen Perspektiven ähnlich, wie auch im Versuch, psychologisches Bewusstsein vor dessen Abstraktion zu fassen. Genau wie die Kubisten setzt sie sich einer Logik entgegen, die eine illusionshafte Realität auf-

stellt, und sie versucht, andere Modelle zu schaffen. Ihr Stil ist das Resultat einer Art von femininer Verrenkung, einer Auflösung der sicheren Zentren einer vom Mann dominierten Kultur, und einer neuen Definition des Realen.

Hacia el faro trata el problema central de la disolución de la unión simbiótica en la relación temprana madre-hijo, y sus consecuencias en el niño de búsqueda de una unión primaria perdida, así como la pulsión antitética hacia una identidad independiente. El problema de la totalidad psicológica va también unido en la novela a las constantes meditaciones sobre la completación de la forma estética, y determina la estructura misma de la narrativa y el estilo de Woolf en general. Las pulsiones hacia la unión y la separación, la intimidad y la distancia, también pasan a ser categorizadas sexualmente como respectivamente masculinas y femeninas, y son percibidas como potencialmente creativas al igual que destructivas.

El interés de Woolf por la ambigüedad de los límites refleja su preocupación por el tema de la interrupción y violación de unidades, un 'dilema oral-narcisista', y su confusa sexualidad. Determina igualmente su visión estética y la fragmentación de su prosa, así como su obsesión con la perspectiva visual y el ojo en la novela. El estilo de la prosa, que toma a la pintura como una metáfora central del conocimiento, tiene paralelos importantes con el Cubismo, y la reacción cubista contra las ilusiones matemáticas artificiales de la pintura renacentista. El estilo de Woolf es particularmente similar al de los cubistas en su empleo de perspectivas yuxtapuestas y en su intento de capturar la conciencia psicológica previa a la abstracción. Al igual que los cubistas, ella opone una lógica que presenta una realidad ilusoria, e intenta crear modelos alternativos. Su estilo es el resultado de una especie de dislocación femenina, una disolución de los centros seguros de una cultura de dominación masculina, y una nueva definición de lo real.

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