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Virginia Woolf, Modernism and the Visual Arts

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*Virginia Woolf, Modernism and the Visual Arts* -tutkimuksessa etsitään vastaavuuksia Virginia Woolfin romaaneista ja kuvataiteista modernismin viitekehyksessä. Tutkittavat teokset ovat Woolfin kokeelliset romaanit *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *The Waves* (1931) ja *Between the Acts* (1941). Tutkimukseni käsittelee modernismin käyttämiä keskeisiä esteettisiä keinoja Woolfin teoksissa, maalaustaiteessa, valokuvassa ja elokuvassa. Toinen tärkeä aihepiiri on feminiininen modernismi ja naistaiteilijat. Tutkimuksen teoreettisena viitekehyksenä ovat kirjallisuustieteen ja taidehistorian tutkimus sekä feministinen teoria. Erityisesti narratologinen teoria (Bal, Genette, Friedman, Rimmon-Kenan, Uspensky) ja kuvan ja sanan välisten suhteiden tutkimus ovat keskeisiä teoreettisia apuvälineitä esteettisiä piirteitä tarkasteltaessa. Tutkimuksessa käytetään myös muuta soveltuvaa teoriaa, esim. metaforan, valokuvan ja elokuvan analyysijä.

Tutkimukseni ensimmäisessä osassa selvitetään modernismin keskeisiä piirteitä kirjallisuudessa ja kuvataiteissa. Toisessa pääluvussa tutkin eräitä modernismin ideoita, jotka liittyvät aikaan ja tilaan. Aika on kirjallisuuden peruselementti ja tila puolestaan kuvataiteen tärkeä elementti. Moderni maalaustaide oli läheisessä vuorovaikutuksessa modernistisen kirjallisuuden kanssa, ja kirjallisuudessa esiintyy samanlaista fragmentaarisuuden ja samanaikaisuuden esittämistä kuin kuvataiteissa. Esimerkiksi kubismissa ja Virginia Woolfin teoksissa on havaittavissa samanaikaisuuden kuvaamista ja moniperspektiivisyyttä, mutta hänen romaaneissaan eri tavalla käsitettyinä ja esitettyinä kuin maalaustaiteessa. Samanaikaisuus on yksi "tilallisen muodon" (Joseph Frankin termi *spatial form*) ilmentymä Woolfin modernistisissa romaaneissa, ja tutkimukseni päättyy toteamukseen, että spatiaalisuus on Woolfilla ainoastaan efekti, jonka kirjailija luo käyttämällä erilaisia kirjallisia tekniikoita. Siten spatiaalinen muoto täytyykin aina käsittää metaforisesti, koska kirjallisuuden on kielen lineaarisuudesta johtuen aina tyydyttävä kuvaamaan tilaa ja samanaikaisuutta ainoastaan mielikuvina, joista lukija muodostaa tilakokemuksensa. Kuvataiteissa, erityisesti futurismissa, puolestaan pyrittiin kuvaamaan kirjallisuuden keskeistä elementtiä aikaa. Woolfin romaanit muistuttavat elokuvaa, koska molemmissa aika on ominaispiirre, johon nämä taidemuodot perustuvat. Olen analysoinut romaanien aikarakenteita käyttäen apunani Gérard Genetten jaottelua (*analepsis, prolepsis*). Myös elokuvakerronta rakentuu näille samoille muistelua ja tapahtumien ennakkointia ilmentäville tekniikoille, joita elokuvatutkimuksessa on kutsuttu nimillä takauma ja ennakkointi. Etenkin *Jacob's Room* -romaanissa Woolf käyttää elokuvan montaaiteknikkaa.

Yhdistän tutkimuksessani mm. valokuvan, impressionistisen maalauksen ja Woolfin hetkien kuvaamisen. Woolfin teoksista löytyy yhtäläisyyksiä James Joycen teoksien

yhteydessä käytetylle käsitteelle “epihanic moment”, joka on eräänlainen uskonnollisuonteinen elämyksellinen oivalluksen hetki. Liittän tämän “epifaanisen hetken” Henri-Cartier Bressonin valokuvan oivalluksen hetkeen, jota hän kutsuu “ratkaisevaksi hetkeksi”. Sekä Cartier-Bressonin, Woolfin että impressionistien hetkessä on sama haihtuvuuden ja hetkellisyyden ajatus kuin Baudelairin kuvauksissa modernin kokemuksen luonteesta. Eräs keskeinen kysymys tutkimuksessani on sanan ja kuvan suhde Virginia Woolfin romaaneissa. Tutkimuksessa todetaan, että Woolfin teksteistä on mahdollista löytää vastineita visuaalisille kuville erilaisten kirjallisten keinojen avulla. Näitä keinoja ovat esimerkiksi kuvaus, metafora ja *ekfrasis*.

Tutkimuksen kolmannessa osassa tarkastelen mm. Woolfin teosten yhteyksiä symbolismiin ja surrealismiin, Woolfin teosten monimerkityksellisyyttä ja metaforisuutta. Metaforisuus nähdään eräänä visuaalisuuden piirteenä Woolfilla, ja metafora ymmärretään mentaalisen kuvan verbaalisena kuvana Mieke Balin määritelmän mukaan. Esimerkiksi *To the Lighthouse* -romaanin käsitetään kokonaisuutena mentaalisenä kuvana, metaforana, jossa rinnastuu kaksi toisiinsa liittymätöntä kuvaa. Modernissa kuvataiteessa, esim. Marcel Duchampin teoksissa, metaforisuus liittyy ironiaan tai naissurrealisteilla ja Woolfin romaanin *To the Lighthouse* Mrs Ramsayn hahmossa luonnosta kumpuavaan luovuuteen.

Työni neljännessä osassa etsin feminiinisen modernismin representaatioita Berthe Morisot'n, Mary Cassattin, Gwen Johnin ja Vanessa Bellin maalauksista sekä Woolfin romaaneista. Esimerkiksi rinnastamalla Woolfin teokset naisimpressionistien teoksiin pyrin lukemaan impressionismia feminiinisenä taidesuuntauksena. Toisin kuin maskuliinisessa taidekriitikissä, feminiinisyys ymmärretään tutkimuksessani modernismin “toiseutena”, positiivisena tai arvovapaana ominaisuutena. Gwen Johnin kautta piirtyy kuva myös Virginia Woolfista sisäisen maailman ja mielen kuvaajana ja Vanessa Bellin taiteen kautta Woolf yhdistyy postimpressionistisen taiteen esteettisiin pyrkimyksiin ja keinoihin. Bellillä ja Woolfilla postimpressionismi perustuu vahvasti itse elettyyn todellisuuteen eikä konstruoituihin fantasioihin kuten esimerkiksi Picassolla ja Matisella.

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## INTRODUCTION

In *Virginia Woolf, Modernism and the Visual Arts* I am looking for parallels between Virginia Woolf's experimental novels and the visual arts in the context of modernism. Even though Virginia Woolf has become known chiefly as a writer, it is possible to see her also as a visualizer in words, or even in images, for she showed enthusiasm also for domestic photography. The family photographs taken and collected in albums by Woolf and her sister Vanessa Bell are reproduced in a recent study written by Maggie Humm *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures: Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell, Photography and Cinema* (2002). Furthermore, in her essay "The Cinema" (1926) Woolf discusses the possibilities of the new art form of cinema, its capacity of presenting thought without the help of words. She saw the huge potential of cinema not only in its visuality but in its power to express emotions, its speed and slowness, the exactitude of reality, and its power of suggestion (Woolf 1966b, 268-72). Related to the discrepancy between word and image, the aim of this study is to offer the reader of literature and the spectator of the visual arts new ways of reading different works of art by juxtaposing visual and literary art.

Virginia Woolf's novels are ideal material for this kind of study, because her work contains many allusions and connections to visuality and the visual arts. Her novel *To the Lighthouse* (1927) is a story of a female painter whose artistic creation and growth as an artist is one of its central themes. Woolf's fiction is linked with the visual arts also through their modernism, for modernism was a common phenomenon in music, literature and the visual arts. Modernist schools and movements were born in all the arts approximately at the same time in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Impressionism and Symbolism) and in the

first decades of the twentieth century. Impressionism, Symbolism, Futurism and Surrealism were movements both of literature and the visual arts, and many ideas, devices and stylistic innovations were shared by all arts. But these ideas were expressed differently in different art forms, according to their medium. Moreover, modernist literature is particularly visual, as Mieke Bal points out (1997, 168), although already the nineteenth-century novel may be characterized by an increasing appeal to visual display, for example in the works of Flaubert and Zola. As an example of modernist visuality Bal quotes a passage from *The Waves*. Virginia Woolf had also many connections with the art world, in particular through her participation in the Bloomsbury group of writers and Post-Impressionist painters. Woolf was in close contact and dialogue with the Bloomsbury painters, especially the influential modernist art theorist and painter Roger Fry whose writings on modernist aesthetics Woolf read.

The relations between different arts have interested writers and researchers already in the days of antiquity. Aristotle in his *Poetics* discussed the affinities between literature (tragedy) and painting, and called both the art forms imitations (Beardsley 1988, 159). Poetry has been compared to painting in Horace's *Ars Poetica*: "a poem is like a painting," (*ut pictura poesis*) and in the seventeenth century poetry and painting were often called "sister arts," as for example Dryden did in his preface "A Parallel of Poetry and Painting" to Du Fresnoy's *De arte graphica*. Dryden's analogy was based on their common objectives of unity, imitation, and controlling idea. (Beardsley 1988, 159; Kestner 1981, 102) Since poetry and painting were widely regarded as "sister arts" it was, as Beardsley notes (*ibid.*), natural to inquire whether the principles of both arts could not be derived from the same fundamental principles.

Lessing made in his *Laocoon* (1766) a distinction between the temporal arts, i.e. music, dance, and the novel, and the spatial arts, i.e. painting, sculpture, and architecture. Lessing distinguished between two categories of art: the spatial arts based on the co-existence in space and the temporal arts based on consecutiveness in time. The central characteristic of the spatial art is simultaneity, and of the temporal art succession. The temporal arts are also irreversible, while the spatial arts are reversible. According to Joseph Kestner (1981, 102-3), all forms of literature, as well as cinema, dance and music, are temporal, consecutive and irreversible. On the other hand, painting, sculpture, and architecture are spatial, simultaneous and reversible. (Ibid.) Joseph Frank (1963, 6), seeing the value of Lessing's theory, argues that *Laocoon's* importance in the history of aesthetic theory lies in the fact that Lessing offered a new approach to aesthetic form.

Joseph Kestner (1981, 103) points out that Lessing does not take into account the extra-medial effects by which the spatial arts create the illusion of succession or the temporal arts the illusion of simultaneity. In his essay "Spatial Form in Modern Literature" (1945) Joseph Frank has noticed that temporal arts do not have to express only meanings conveyed by the primary illusion of their medium — for instance language in the novel expressing succession — but by the use of different artistic devices they may also express spatial relationships. Frank argues (1963, 8-9) that "modern literature, as exemplified by such writers as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Marcel Proust, and James Joyce, is moving in the direction of spatial form; and this tendency receives an original development in Djuna Barnes' remarkable book *Nightwood*." According to him, these writers "intend the reader to apprehend their work spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence" (ibid.). Frank does not mention Virginia Woolf among the writers whose work he characterizes by the term spatial form, but in a later study Smitten & Daghistany's *Spatial Form in Narrative* (1981),

her work has been characterized in terms of spatial form. Frank's essay may be understood as an attempt to see the modernist novel as a more visual form of literature than the traditional novel. According to Frank (ibid.), on the level of aesthetic form, spatial form is a characteristic of both modern literature and modern plastic arts. Frank claims that the evolution of aesthetic form in the twentieth century has been identical in literature and plastic arts: both have tried to get rid of the time elements in their structures.

Although Frank's essay contains many allusions and analogies between literature and the visual arts he did not emphasize, however, the interart relations, nor did he suggest that modern literature was imitating the effects of the visual arts. Frank himself only points out that they had a parallel development in the early part of the twentieth century. In my study space and time are understood as central issues in the modernist novel and painting and in Woolf's fiction. An example of the spatialization of form in Woolf's novels is simultaneity (see ch. 5) which has a representation in the visual arts in Cubist paintings.

There exist many kinds of word-image/text-image studies both in art history and literature. According to Ville Lukkarinen (1998, 101), it is a problematic field of study in many respects, since we are dealing with two different semiotic systems, that of verbal language and that of visual image. How can language be understood as an image, or how can a picture be read as text or narrative? In the 1960s semioticians adapted the linguistic rules to the analysis of images and treated any work of art as a cultural sign. They pointed out that visual images, even realistic paintings and photographs, are in fact as conventional and arbitrary as verbal language. (Ibid.) However, a visual image differs greatly from verbal language, for example, an image cannot be analyzed and divided into phonemes, morphemes, and sentences, nor is it possible always to point out which is the *signifier* and the *signified* in a picture.

On the other hand, the visuality of literature has received attention in literary research in recent years, for example, such aspects as description in a narrative, the so-called *ekphrasis* research, which is concerned with literature where works of art are described and commented, and the issue of the intertwining of time and space in literature (Mikkonen 1999, 116, 139). Word-image studies have often been described as a discipline which combines both the research of art history and literary history. As a representative of this kind of studies Wendy Steiner has analysed the rhetoric and metaphoric nature of images as an issue connecting all research of art and literature. Also Mieke Bal, who is interested in *visual poetics*, has written word-image studies for instance on Rembradt's work. By visual poetics Bal means the research of visual and spatial aspects, the discursiveness of visual art and the possibilities of cooperation between the arts. (Ibid. 116-117) Bal has also written a study *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually* (1997) on the method of how to write an image and on how to read this image. It proceeds in developing this method through a "visual" reading of Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* and selections from *Contre Saint-Beuve*. Bal (1997, 3) points out that literature is a verbal art and the visual domain can only be presented within it by means of different subterfuges. The principle means of visualization are metaphor and description. The narrator describes what he/she sees: a space, a vision or a visual representation, which may be an image, a painting, an engraving or a photograph.

My study is concerned with the ways the modernist ideas are expressed in literature and the visual arts by juxtaposing Woolf's modernist novels and different forms of visual art, i.e. painting, photography and cinema. I have chosen as examples paintings and other visual art works which express parallel ideas or contain corresponding aesthetic devices with Woolf's fiction. The innovations of modern painting such as fragmentation, new conception of perspective and simultaneity influenced modernist literature, but also the impact of literature

and philosophy can be felt in modern painting. In my discussions I will deal in particular with the following modernist art movements: Impressionism, Symbolism, Post-Impressionism, Futurism, and Cubism. Photography and cinema are emphasized specifically in connection with time and space in the second part of the study.

The works which I will investigate are Woolf's modernist novels *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *The Waves* (1931), and *Between the Acts* (1941). In *Jacob's Room* Woolf started her experimentation of the novel form but in this novel she had not yet developed her technique of interior monologue which she used in her next novels *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. However, *Jacob's Room* already breaks many conventions of the traditional novel, for example by abandoning plot and the division into chapters and by introducing a fragmented, impressionistic narration built through juxtaposition of different scenes and descriptive passages. In *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf experimented for the first time the depiction of consciousness and used different devices to depict non-linearity, simultaneity, fragmentariness and momentary impressions, in other words, devices which were central features of modernist expression. In *Mrs Dalloway* these features of modern experience are connected to the experience of modern city life. Modernist painting also depicted modern city life and technological innovations, as we will discover in my study.

*Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *Between the Acts* share a structural resemblance: they all depict the events of one day, although different time schemes are embedded within these one-day structures. *The Waves* covers a time-span from childhood to maturity, but the interludes placed between the monologues all put together describe one day from dawn till dusk. In Parts II and III of the study I will study the temporal and spatial structures and devices of these novels and look for parallel techniques in visual modernism, photography

and cinema. In particular, I will interpret *The Waves* and *To the Lighthouse* as ambiguous works which in their suggestiveness and symbolism offer possibilities for finding analogies in the work of Symbolist or Synthetist painters. In *To the Lighthouse* and *Between the Acts* Woolf describes the work of a woman artist and the difficulties and prejudices which a female artist confronts in patriarchal society.

My study is an investigation of some central aesthetic devices and notions of modernism, but on the other hand, it is also a feminist reading of the modernist work of some women artists and the “femininity” of modernism. My first aim is to discover analogies between Woolf’s novels and the visual arts as regards some of modernism’s central ideas and aesthetic devices. I will look for ideas related to spatial and temporal features in modernism such as instantaneity, fugitiveness, simultaneity, and non-linearity, or aspects of ambiguity and suggestiveness. Another central aim of my study is to examine the work of modernist women artists and to discuss their contribution to modernism. I will look for the “otherness” of modernism through the works of “the feminine” characteristics of the Impressionists Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt, the English painters Gwen John and Vanessa Bell, and Virginia Woolf. The third aim of this investigation is to explore the relationship between word and image in the context of modernism. For instance, I will pay attention to verbal representations of visuality in Woolf’s novels such as metaphor, description, spatial form and *ekphrasis*.

The principal research methods are comparison and close reading. Especially in the analysis of spatial and temporal devices my study benefits greatly from narratological theories, but particularly in the chapters on the feminine modernism I rely on feminist theory. My purpose is to combine different theories of literature and art history in order to analyze my material with the help of theories that suit best the object of analysis at hand. Because the

study is interdisciplinary I have to draw from a variety of theories and sources, and therefore its theoretical framework may not always appear as uniform as in narrower investigations, for example in studies concentrating on fiction, or in studies focusing only on art. Also the feminist point of view requires its own theory. I will combine both old and new theory especially in the analysis of literary devices such as metaphors, symbols and narrative structures because this kind of theory does not change radically in the course of time the same way as the social discourses of contemporary literary and art studies.

The feminist theory which I apply in the last part of my study “Feminine Modernism” is related to the discussion of the gendering of art, on which for instance Norma Broude has paid attention in her feminist study *Impressionism. A Feminist Reading. The Gendering of Art, Science, and Nature in the Nineteenth Century* (1991). With the help of Broude’s theory I will connect Woolf to certain schools of modernism which I interpret in gendered terms. I will regender Impressionism as “feminine” after it has been gendered as “masculine” by many critics of the twentieth century. My aim in gendering Impressionism as feminine serves the purpose of finding common characteristics between female artists and Virginia Woolf in order to show that not all modernist art is what the masculinist art criticism suggests and that there is another modernism, the “otherness” expressed in the “feminine” characteristics of female artists and writers.

I have divided the study in four parts according to different general themes. The first part is a general introduction of modernist literature and art. Parts II and III are about some aesthetic and structural issues in Woolf’s fiction and parallel questions in the visual arts. Part IV concentrates on the analysis of women’s art and feminine modernism. Part II deals with some aesthetic questions concerning time and space in Woolf’s fiction. These issues are linked to analogous themes in photography, cinema and modernist painting, as well as the

philosophy of Henri Bergson. In Part III, I will discuss the symbolism in Woolf's novels and their relationship to Symbolist art. In chapter 9 I will introduce the work of women Impressionists Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt whose paintings I juxtapose with Woolf's novels and through a gendered reading of Impressionism find common themes in Woolf's and the women Impressionists work. In chapter 10, I will continue my search of representations of feminine modernism in the paintings of Gwen John and Woolf's novels. Chapter 11 explores feminine versions of Post-Impressionist art in the work of Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf.

## PART ONE MODERNISM IN ART AND LITERATURE

### 1. The Modernist Novel

It is an impossible task to define the modernist novel, and thus instead of a definition, I will present some central features of modernism. John Orr (1991, 619) has claimed that there is no such thing as the modernist novel. According to Orr, it is a critical artifact, largely Anglo-American in origin and use, and thus for example the French normally speak of “la modernité” and “le postmoderne.”<sup>1</sup> A special difficulty in the definition of modernism is that modernism can be seen either as applying to a particular period, or as describing a certain artistic posture, an attitude toward the modern (see Brooks 1991, 119). Instead of modernism, also Paul de Man speaks of “modernity” which does not only refer to one isolable historical period (de Man 1983, 148). The definition of the modernist novel depends also on who is giving the definition, at which historical moment and in which country the definition is given. It is likely that our sex, race, nationality, class and other related matters affect our point of view, the way we think about the modernist novel. For example, the traditional literary histories have usually excluded modernist women writers, or on the other hand regarded them as “minor modernists” leaving them in the shadow of “major modernists” such as Joyce, Conrad, Lawrence, Hemingway, etc. This was a usual practice especially before the 1980’s, the rise of feminist literary studies.

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<sup>1</sup> In the 1920s the term modernism became to be associated with experimentation in the arts instead of only a general sense of sympathy with the modern. However, the adjective ‘modern’ was still more emphasized than ‘modernism’ in works using the term ‘modernism’, e.g. *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* by Laura Riding and Robert Graves (1927), I. A. Richard’s *The Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and F. R. Leavis’ *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932) (see Faulkner 1977, Introduction, VIII).

The difficulty of defining the modernist novel is enhanced by the emergence of post-colonial criticisms which question the Eurocentric conception of modernism by pointing out that modernism was indebted to “primitive” cultures. The Europeans imported into Europe an alternative view of the world in the form of African masks, carvings and jewellery, which influenced e.g. the works of Picasso, Joseph Conrad and D. H. Lawrence (Ashcroft et al 1989, 156). The influence of primitive art on Picasso’s early Cubist works such as *Les Femmes d’Alger* (1907) is often cited in accounts of modernist art. The influence of primitivism and primitive art was felt in literature as well, for a great deal of modernist experimentation in both prose and poetry was inspired to some extent by Cubism. For example, the Cubist techniques of fragmentation, multiple perspectives and juxtaposition are used by the modernist writers as well. Direct Cubist influence is perhaps best exemplified by Gertrude Stein who consciously thought of her own literary experiments as parallels to modern painting. For example her book *Three Lives* (1909) was written in response to a portrait by Cézanne, and her literary “portraits” were modelled on the Cubist paintings by Picasso, Braque and Juan Gris. (MacLeod 1999, 202)

As Michael Bell (1999, 23) suggests, by the early twentieth century the primitive *alter ego* was seen more honorifically and a changing attitude to the colonial “other” reflects a changing self-perception in the European. For instance Freud was fascinated by primitive life, and C. G. Jung and D. H. Lawrence showed an interest in the repressed instinctual realm of the psyche. In Lawrence’s *Rainbow* (1915) a character has returned from colonial service in Africa, and through his African experience has made contact with a lost aspect of himself, i.e. a primitive “other.” According to Bell, Lawrence was the most important modern primitivist, but also the most serious critic of primitivism as a decadent symptom. (Ibid. 23-24) Like many modernists, Lawrence substituted “the primitive” for other categories which obsessed

him, e.g. miners and working-class men; vital masculinity (dependent on the right kind of femininity; phallic power; “the primitive,” natural harmony (Torgovnick 1990, 159).

According to Peter Faulkner (1977, 6), the modernist writers’ theoretical concern is one characteristic of modernism. Many modernist writers, e.g. Charles Baudelaire, Henry James, T. S. Eliot, E. M. Foster, Virginia Woolf and Gertrude Stein, wrote essays or theory on literature, and also among modernist painters an interest in theoretical matters was significant, for example Wassily Kandinsky, Kasimir Malevitš and Robert Delaunay wrote about art alongside with their practice of the art. Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) wrote essays on art, literature and other subjects including women, beauty and fashion. In his essay “Le Peintre de la vie moderne” he describes the psychology of the city dweller and the city experience which challenge the contemporary artist. Baudelaire gave his definition of modernity (*la modernité*) before modernism as an art movement came into being: for him modernity meant the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent. This modernity is half of art, of which the other part is the eternal and the immutable:

La modernité, c’est le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent, la moitié de l’art, dont l’autre moitié est l’éternel et l’immuable. (Baudelaire 1968, 131)

Baudelaire defines the city’s modernity through a figure which he calls *flâneur*, an artist and observer of the city life, whose aim is to derive “the eternal from transitory” and to see “the poetic in the historic.” (Butler 1994, 133) But how well the definition of modernity by Baudelaire describes the aspirations of modernist writers? In the present study I will also reflect this aspect of modernity in Virginia Woolf and see how her work represents the Baudelairean notion of modernity.

City life has been depicted from many different perspectives. Already urban novelists such as Dickens and Zola demonstrated their mastery of the interrelationships between groups in the city, but their city was rather like a village. On the other hand, Rilke in *The Notebooks of Malte Laurid's Brigge* (1910) describes his hero's reflections on Paris who can only find "solace" in a reminder of country life. But Rilke is also concerned by the Baudelairean isolated and divided psychology. This subjective experience in the town and its effects upon the consciousness is central to philosophers, writers and painters from Bergson to Joyce and Woolf. (Butler 1994, 134) Virginia Woolf describes the urban experience in *Mrs Dalloway* by using different techniques to represent the fragmentary nature of city life, e.g. simultaneity and the montage techniques, which will be discussed in detail later in this study.

According to Malcolm Bradbury, modernist art has had special relations with the modern city, both as cultural museum and as novel environment. Modernist writing has a strong tendency to depict experience within the city and therefore the city-novel and the city-poem have become one of its main forms. Among the city-novels are for instance Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground*, Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*, Sartre's *Nausea* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. As this list of authors from different countries representing modern city life hints, modernist urbanism was more than any one city. Modernism was an international movement and therefore the distillation of many capitals and nations. (Bradbury 1978a, 96-103) Among the cities of modernism are St. Petersburg, Berlin, Vienna, Prague, Chicago, New York, Paris and London. The bohemian city life of Baudelaire's Paris is very different from Virginia Woolf's London in *Mrs Dalloway*. Woolf's London rather corresponds with the description of London given by Bradbury as one of the

dullest capital cities: “one with no real artistic community, no true centres, no coteries, no cafés, a metropolis given to commerce and an insular middle-class life-style either indifferent or implacably hostile to the new arts” (Bradbury 1978b, 172). Woolf’s attitude, or that of her characters, towards the city in her narratives is not hostile. As Michael Whitworth suggests (2000, 153), throughout Woolf’s work the city is associated with life and love. The respectable and orderly London city life is celebrated in *Mrs Dalloway*:

In people’s eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June (MD, 6)

Unlike T. S. Eliot, as Whitworth (ibid. 153-4) puts it, “Woolf’s characters and focalisers do not dwell on sordidness, and they present beauty not as something existing in spite of urban life, but as emerging from its energy and motion.”

The same suspicious attitude as concerns the definition of modernism is to be found in the attempts to define the era of modernism among literary critics. As Faulkner (1977, 13) suggests, “any ascription to cultural movements is bound to be arbitrary.” He himself chooses to limit the literary modernism in his discussion to the two decades 1910-1930. The change to modernism was not sudden and it had its predecessors in the nineteenth century, e.g. Gustave Flaubert, Edgar Allan Poe or the French Symbolists, who may in many regards be considered the forefathers of the twentieth century modernists. According to Michael Bell (1999, 9) the peak period of modernism in the Anglo-American context is between 1910 and 1925. Marjorie Perloff argues that not all that has been called modernist art is modernist in the avant-garde sense. Perloff emphasizes that the avant-garde phase of modernism was

short-lived and she wants to separate the early modernist “Project” from later “modernist” conservatism, formalism and the suspect politics of such modernists as Eliot, Auden, Randall Jarrell and the Robert Lowell of *Lord Weary’s Castle* (1947). (Perloff 2002, 2-3)

Usually the 1920’s, the period called high modernism,<sup>2</sup> has been considered an important decade in literary modernism. Also Virginia Woolf wrote most of her modernist works in that decade. As I mentioned above, she also wrote literary criticism and many of her texts, especially *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) and *Three Quineas* (1938), have inspired contemporary feminist theory and are frequently quoted in literary criticism today. She also wrote an essay called “Modern Fiction” (1919) which may be regarded as an early theory of modernism, though Woolf herself was against rigid theory and hostile towards closed systems (Faulkner 1977, 33). Although Woolf’s theoretical essays should not be thought as an explanation of her fiction or her critical views identified with her intentions and achievements as a novelist, they may furnish new ideas among researchers and critics. For instance the following often quoted passage from *Modern Fiction* describes well the impressionism of the modernist novel including Woolf’s own fiction:

Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions — trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there; so that, if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there

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<sup>2</sup> High modernism is the period immediately surrounding The First World War and as a literary phenomenon is strictly limited to certain figures (Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis, James Joyce) who share some particular formal and conceptual characteristics (Brooks 1991, 119).

would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn as the Bond Street tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. (Woolf 1966, 106)

This passage describes the new freedom that the modernist novel had taken in depicting the inner reality of the mind which differed from the depiction of external reality of the Realist novels of the nineteenth century. Likewise, in the nineteenth century the Impressionists such as Monet and Cezanne grew away from the Realist painting when they refused to paint meticulously the outward appearances of things in order to give an illusion of reality. The Impressionist painters took liberty to express their personality in the paintings more than the tradition of realistic painting made it possible. Thus there can be detected an analogous development both in literature and painting, a development which started a little earlier in painting. Impressionism was also a literary practice, but it was less important than Impressionism in painting.<sup>3</sup>

Both Impressionism and Symbolism were important to the development of the modernist novel. According to Clive Scott (1978, 206), the symbolist revolution awakened an acute consciousness of language. "Symbolism contains within itself a shift from a

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<sup>3</sup> Impressionism is "[...] a literary practice which does not stress reality but rather the impressions of the author (or one of his characters). *Impressionism* may also be defined as an artistic theory which claims that the dominant purpose of literature is to explain effects upon intellect, feelings, and conscience rather than provide detailed descriptions of objective settings and events. Impressionism is a personal style of writing in which the author develops characters and paints scenes as they appear to him at a given moment rather than as they are (or may be) in actuality." (Shaw 1972, 198)

romantic to a modernly ironic aesthetic,” he adds and detects some things in common with Impressionism and Symbolism. Quoting Scott:

The vision of the Symbolist and the Decadent has accustomed us to the sensorily acute begetting the semantically or modally indefinite. It is typical of Verlaine, for instance, to *apprehend* things sharply but to see them only just, to catch distinct voices and cries which coalesce in the monotony of lament and under the sedation of memory. This must suggest comparison with Impressionism, with a way of building up a unified impression of light (or meaning or mood) by first breaking the subject down into specific energy-filled fragments. What drew Monet to the river at Argenteuil and the sea at Antibes was the fact that water acted as a prism and broke light up into its primary colours. The brush-stroke when seen from close-up looks bright and unambiguous, but from a distance and in the overall picture, it is nothing more than a half-tint. (Ibid. 218-219)

Also Arnold Hauser (1977, 183) points out that it is often difficult to distinguish Symbolism from Impressionism, for the two concepts are partly antithetical and partly synonymous. For example, Hauser suggests that even though there is a sharp distinction between Verlaine’s Impressionism and Mallarmé’s symbolism, it is not so simple to find the proper stylistic category for a writer like Maeterlinck. “Symbolism,” as Hauser writes (ibid.) “represents, on the other hand, the final result of the development which began with romanticism, that is, with the discovery of metaphor as the germ-cell of poetry [...]”

The Impressionist painters, like the stream-of-consciousness writers, were interested in catching a fleeting moment. In the modernist novel the study of the moment is concentrated around the concept *epiphanic instant*, which is familiar from the works of Joyce, Faulkner (see Orr 1991, 622-623), and Virginia Woolf. Also photography is connected with Impressionism and the epiphanic moment: the role of light is important both in photography

and Impressionist paintings and the photographer's momentary vision is as contingent as the painters' impression or the modernist writers' epiphanic moment.

Symbolism<sup>4</sup>, on the other hand, has been associated with such things as dreams and visions, mystic experiences and androgyny (Dempsey 2003, 41). Many critics have mentioned the influence of Édouard Dujardin's symbolist novel *Les Lauriers sont coupés* (1888) on James Joyce (cf. Drabble, 1985, 956; Friedman 1981, 454-6) and Virginia Woolf, for instance his experiments on psychological time and narrative point of view, his discovery of interior monologue which later became a familiar modernist mode, and his way of writing a novel with less stress on event and character than with the accumulation of image and symbolic device (Friedman 1981, 455-456). The French symbolist poets, such as Paul Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé and Arthur Rimbaud, created personal symbols in their musical poetry and painters followed their example (Dempsey 2003, 41).<sup>5</sup> We can find the use of personal symbols also in *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*.

Many modernist writers used myth as a means to juxtapose the present and the past. T. S. Eliot talked about a mythical method which could be used instead of a narrative method. According to Eliot (1965, 681) the mythical method "is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history." Yeats used his personal myths of gyres and cyclical history, and Eliot employed the fertility myths in *The Waste Land* (Whitworth 2000, 155-

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<sup>4</sup> The term is widely applied, but in its most useful and restricted sense refers to the period c. 1880–1895 (Drabble 1985, 956).

<sup>5</sup> French Symbolists are important in the background of Surrealism, and their influence is evident also in contemporary drama and brief fiction and in the novel since Flaubert. D. Hayman has shown the significant influence of Mallarmé on *Finnegan's Wake*, and Fiser identifies Marcel Proust as the greatest Symbolist of all (see Preminger 1979, 837). The Symbolist literary movement exercised an influence on painting (Odilon Redon, Gustave Moreau) and on a wide range of twentieth-century writers, including Pound, T.S. Eliot, W. Stevens, Yeats, Joyce, V. Woolf, Claudel, Valéry, Stefan George and Rilke (Drabble 1985, 956).

156). Eliot used Joyce's *Ulysses* to exemplify the mythical method, but according to Whitworth (ibid.) he understated Joyce's sense of comic or ironic discrepancies between myth and contemporary history, between the Homeric hero Odysseus and the advertising salesman Leopold Bloom. Whitworth implies that with his mythic method Eliot represented a conservative view of history in which the lives of every generation are fundamentally the same. Virginia Woolf, on the other hand, was more liberal and progressive than many of her modernist contemporaries, and, therefore, she did not consistently present the past as being more orderly than the present. It is true, as Whitworth suggests (ibid. 156), that in all her experimental work Woolf inserts glimpses of prehistory, but to her prehistory and myth are not identical. Woolf's primeval glimpses do not compose a narrative, but as Whitworth suggests, they function as interrogatives, questioning not only "civilization" but also mythic modernism, without providing any answers.

In the modernist novel the influences of contemporary science and philosophy are clearly discernible: Freud for the interest in the human psyche, Einstein and Bergson for an altered conception of time and place, Nietzsche for the pessimistic nihilism that is to be seen for instance in the works of Kafka. Henri Bergson's influence has been particularly significant for the stream-of-consciousness novel, whose major representatives are Marcel Proust, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Especially Bergson's concept of mind time called *durée* ('duration') affected the literary techniques. *Durée* is "the Bergsonian view of the present as composed of all the past that is present to consciousness, in a mixture of interpenetrating states of mental being" (Butler 1994, 158). The new attitudes toward time at the beginning of the twentieth century were also reflected in the simultaneist techniques of literature and art which were central to the modernism of the pre-war period (ibid.) For instance in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* different places or different incidents taking

place at the same time are being juxtaposed, or they are being seen from different perspectives at the same time.

Language is of utmost importance in modernist fiction. The revolution in literary techniques most clearly separates the modernist novel from the traditional realist novel. David Lodge (1978, 481) has been looking for generalizations about the language of modern fiction and has found the following features. It is experimental and innovatory in form, it is much concerned with consciousness (also with the subconscious and unconscious workings of the human mind), the structure of external objective events is diminished in scope and scale, or presented obliquely and selectively, in order to make room for introspection, analysis, reflection and reverie. The modern novel has no real beginning, its ending is usually open or ambiguous, the weakening of narrative structure and unity are compensated by other modes of aesthetic ordering such as allusion to or imitation of literary models, or mythical archetypes; or repetition-with-variation of motifs, images, symbols, a technique often called rhythm, leitmotif, or spatial form. Modern fiction eschews the straight chronological ordering of its material, and the use of a reliable, omniscient narrator; it employs, instead, a single, limited point of view, or multiple viewpoints, and it tends toward a complex or fluid handling of time, involving much cross-reference back and forward across the temporal span of the action. (Ibid.) Most of these features can be found in Virginia Woolf's modernist novels, but of special interest to my study are the features concerning images, symbols, multiple point of views, complex handling of time and spatial form. These features are related to the discussion on the relationship of her fiction to the visual arts.

According to Maria Dibattista (2000, 129), in comparison with James Joyce's texts Woolf's prose is poetic in the classical sense and retains the level of "meaning" as an important element, while Joyce often uses in *Ulysses* rough language, the language of those

grown up in the streets. For Joyce language was an end in itself. He experimented with all types of sentences, long and short, dialogues, inserted French and Latin words and phrases, meaningless repetitive words, notes of a song (ibid.). Joyce obviously wanted to shock and question the traditional way of writing, whereas Virginia Woolf, as Dibattista points out, might be characterized as a conservative in her use of language, most of all because she never, unlike Joyce, played with the material form of words, nor did she create anagrams or neologisms. Her language is literary language that avoids colloquialisms, slang or specialized jargon of scientific or social elites. (Ibid.)

The structures of Woolf's novels are carefully planned and original and each novel has its individual shape with multiple meanings. Even the apparently structurally simple novels *Mrs Dalloway* and *Between the Acts* contain patterns which reveal careful planning by the author. *Mrs Dalloway* has a one-day structure which folds round Clarissa's party, the climax of the novel. In *Between the Acts* the play is a device that structures the novel. In *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, which are composed of different narrative sections, the structures create symbolic connotations with different meanings in the reader's mind. As Eric Warner (1987, 51) points out, "criticism has not yet begun to do justice to the structural complexity of these works, reinforced as they are by a dense network of interlocking images, phrases, allusions, quotations and other linguistic devices."

Woolf writes in the third person even when she expresses the thoughts of a character thus using a narrative voice to represent the character's thoughts and perceptions. This kind of text and sentence do not represent the "real" stream-of-consciousness, but is a modification of the thought processes which should be narrated in the first person if they were meant to imitate people's thoughts realistically. According to Friedman (1975, 153),

Woolf uses a technique called multiple selective omniscience<sup>6</sup>. It is a technique which creates an illusion that the character is talking in the first person and in the present tense, although grammatically it may be related in the third person, past tense. In fact, Woolf uses a mixture of first and third person, present and past tense (ibid. 155). Maria Dibattista (2000, 132) has paid attention to the fact that Virginia Woolf merges the distinct “voice of the author,” in other words, the voice of the narrative person, with a language “voiced” by no one the reader can easily identify. Her fiction also combines different writing styles, such as poetic passages (the interludes in *The Waves*, *To the Lighthouse*), dramatic monologues (*The Waves*), as well as the representation of the characters’ thoughts.

There is one feature which makes Woolf’s fiction particularly modern, i.e. her way of combining features of poetry and prose in her novels. This mixture of different stylistic features is especially conspicuous in two of her novels, *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, but in the latter novel she “borrows” also from drama the dialogic form and the stage instructions (i.e. the interludes). Both novels contain poetic passages, interludes which are separated from the rest of the narration. In *The Waves* the interludes are marked with italics and in *To the Lighthouse* the interlude composes a chapter of its own in the middle of the novel. The style of the interlude in the latter novel differs from the style of the rest of the book: it is written in a dramatic fashion using means of poetry, even though it may be predominantly characterized as prose. In the interlude Woolf uses repetition, for example by repeating the word ‘together’ in the following sentence, thereby creating poetic rhythms: “At length, desisting, all ceased together, gathered together, all sighed together; all together

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<sup>6</sup> Selective omniscience differs from normal omniscience in that in the latter all is seen through the sensibility of the authorial narrator and when he chooses to clip into the minds of his characters, he reports what he sees there in terms of his own idiom and awareness (Friedman 1975, 153).

gave off an aimless gust of lamentation to which some door in the kitchen replied; swung wide; admitted nothing; and slammed to.” (TL, 145) On the same page it is possible to find consonantal alliteration, another poetic device: “The autumn trees, ravaged as they are, take on the flash of tattered flags kindling in the gloom of cool cathedral caves where gold letters on marble pages describe death in battle and how bones bleach and burn far away in Indian sands” (ibid.). Also her vocabulary and the combination of words refer to poetry, e.g. “the gust of lamentation”; “divine goodness;” “the chaos and tumult of the night;” “when dawn trembles and night pauses;” “feather-light fingers.” The repetition of consonants, “cool cathedral caves,” “bones bleach and bow,” “flash of tattered flags” create rhythmic patterns within the sentence. Woolf’s language has an air of classical poetry in its metaphoricity, alliteration, harmony, and rhythm. Although she is a modernist who breaks many conventions of the Realist novel, she nevertheless continues the traditions of classical literature as well.

Closest to poetry Virginia Woolf came in her most experimental novel *The Waves*. The novel, unlike her previous novels *Jacob’s Room*, *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, does not depict life or human consciousness “realistically,” but as a highly stylized work of art it approaches “abstraction.” It is almost impossible for the reader to form a coherent picture of the characters or the “events,” because the novel is composed of lines spoken by the characters in a random order, without the support of a plot or illustrations and comments by the narrator like in a traditional novel. The rhythmic alteration of different elements, i.e. the monologues of the characters and the interludes, give structural consistency to the novel and keep it together. In *The Waves* Woolf not only combines poetry and prose, but also prose and drama. In this novel we are not reading the characters’ thoughts, but listening to their soliloquies which they often speak in the first person like in a play:

‘I see a ring,’ said Bernard, ‘hanging above me. It quivers and hangs in a loop of light.’

‘I see a slab of pale yellow,’ said Susan, ‘spreading away until it meets a purple stripe.’

‘I hear a sound,’ said Rhoda, ‘cheep, chirp; cheep chirp; going up and down.’

‘I see a globe,’ said Neville, ‘hanging down in a drop against the enormous flanks of some hill.’

‘I see a crimson tassel,’ said Jinny, ‘twisted with gold threads.’

‘I hear something stamping,’ said Louis. ‘A great beast’s foot is chained. It stamps, and stamps, and stamps.’ (W, 1977, 7)

James Naremore (1973, 158) argues that all the characters in *The Waves* speak like phrase-makers, and all the language in the book has the same sensitivity to rhythm and metaphor, repetition and alliteration, even sometimes the same use of rhyme, euphony and assonance. Michael Rosenthal (1979, 146), on the other hand, disagrees with Naremore by saying that the languages in the interludes and soliloquies are entirely different, and I think he is right in pointing out that the language of the interludes is richly metaphoric and suggestive, whereas that is not the case with the soliloquies. Even though the sentences of the soliloquies in *The Waves* are usually rather simple and “ordinary,” and written in the form of statements like in a spoken language, there is, nevertheless, a touch of lyricism in the text. The speeches of the six protagonists give the impression of a magic verse or incantation going on endlessly and rhythmically like the waves of the ocean.

Rhythm is a feature of Woolf’s language and thus her novels may be characterized as rhythmic prose. As J. Hillis Miller (1983, 168) argues, Virginia Woolf’s style is characterized by the “prolonged sustained rhythmical movement, drawing breath again just when it seems about to stop, and continuing beyond a semicolon or even a full stop or the

numbering or naming of a new section.” As James Naremore points out (1973, 17), Virginia Woolf had expressed many times her desire to make her prose “more” poetic and more feminine, her wish to adapt the book to the body. Naremore, therefore, suggests that lyric poetry had more of the female way of seeing and that Woolf’s prose, when she was in her more poetic mood, has “a mannered rhythm and a slightly ornamental imagery.”

Before Virginia Woolf wrote her feminist essays, as Randall Stevenson (1992, 41) points out, Dorothy Richardson’s novel *The Pilgrimage* (1915-38) was concerned with women’s independence and the rejection of restraining social conventions, as well as the rejection of the conventions of fiction. Richardson was sceptical of male-dominated conventions in fiction and was seeking a feminine equivalent of masculine realism. Richardson’s fluid stream-of-consciousness was her version of this feminine prose. Richardson achieves a truer realism by presenting the freely associative thoughts of her protagonist Miriam. Also Virginia Woolf’s views in *A Room of One’s Own* suggest that the male structuring of society and civilization encourage women to split off in consciousness from the external world. According to Woolf, a room of their own is for women easier to establish in the private domain of the mind. (Ibid. 41-42) As Randall Stevenson suggests (ibid. 42), “women writers, such as Richardson and Woolf, may thus have been especially disposed to develop new narrative forms in which the workings of consciousness, split away from the external reality and the object world, could be fruitfully sustained and explored.”

## 2. Virginia Woolf and Visual Modernism

There exist many views on the question of which art schools are included under the heading of modernism. Does modernism start from Impressionism or not? In my study I have included Impressionism in modernism. More interesting than the definition of modernism in terms of different –isms is, however, to look at the important general issues that distinguish modernist art from non-modernist art, traditional art and the art forms which modern art set out to question and rebel against.

The most blatant issue which modernist artists questioned was the principle of reality illusion that had for centuries been the foremost principle in pictorial art. As Arnold Hauser (1977, 217) points out, there had always been a swinging to and fro between formalism and anti-formalism, but the function of art being true to life and faithful to nature had never been questioned in principle since the Middle Ages. Hauser proposes that Impressionism was the climax and the end of a development which had lasted more than four hundred years, and that Post-Impressionism first renounced all illusion of reality. Post-Impressionism was the great reactionary movement of the century whose aim was the rejection of Impressionism. In Hauser's view Impressionism prepares the ground for the development of deliberate deformation of natural objects by not aspiring to an integrating description of reality. (Ibid.)

Impressionism was a rebellion against the realist academic tradition in art the same way as the modernist novel was a rebellion against the traditional realist novel. Virginia Woolf protested against the conventional novel which she thought not to represent life in the right way by offering the readers the obligatory elements of plot, comedy, tragedy, love interest, and characters dressed according to the latest fashion (Woolf 1966b, 106). Impressionism was looking for a greater freedom of expression, as well as trying to find a

more “real” reality through a different attitude to perception by the artist. The artist did not see any more what he/she was supposed to see: he/she saw the world through the mind’s eye, an impression of reality.

In Cubism the issue of representation becomes problematic because the theory of Cubism is in deep contrast with the actual Cubist works. The theory of Cubism is based upon such principles as an “accurate representation of reality” and an “impulse towards realism” (Hintikka 1982, 11). As Jaakko Hintikka suggests, these claims appear unbelievable, because Cubist paintings distort human figures and objects and represent them as geometrical forms, which are hard to conceive as accurate representations of reality. The contradiction between theory and practice is not so tremendous as it first seems, since in Cubists’ work, as Hintikka explains, there is a spirit of concreteness, solidity and plasticity (ibid.). Also, as I understand it, Cubism may be seen as a contrary movement to modernist art with spiritual aims such as Wassily Kandinsky’s abstract paintings. Hintikka proposes that Cubism may be seen as an analogue to Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology, even though he refuses the thought that these movements were influenced by each other. Hintikka points out, however, that from a historical perspective both these movements were reactions to the same kind of earlier currents. Cubism was partly a reaction against Impressionism, and phenomenology a reaction against positivism and phenomenalism. Picasso has been told to have said that he does not paint objects as they look like, but as he knows them to be (ibid.). In other words, Picasso painted the ideas of things in his mind, not their actual appearance.

Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger (O.J.)* (1907) marks the beginning of Cubism (1907-1914), the most influential art movement of the twentieth century. During the second stage of Cubism, known as analytical Cubism (c. 1910-1912), Braque and Picasso analyzed objects so thoroughly that they became almost unrecognizable. Their pictures were nearly

monochromatic, usually restricted to brown and grey, so that matters of form received the viewer's primary attention. Analytical Cubism is a watershed in the development of modern painting because it invents a new kind of pictorial space. Cubists replaced the old tradition of deep perspective by a shallow space in which the distance between figure and background diminishes or disappears altogether. Thus Cubism introduces a new way of representing three-dimensional objects, when the painter could show the back and the front of a chair at the same time or paint a face with one eye viewed frontally and the other in profile. (McLeod 1999, 200)

Glen McLeod points out that a great deal of modernist experimentation in both poetry and prose was inspired to some extent by Cubism (McLeod 1999, 200). McLeod mentions the Cubist techniques of fragmentation, multiple perspectives and juxtaposition as part of the standard modernist repertoire, which also Virginia Woolf uses in her experimental novels. Woolf's novels may be seen also in the context of the Symbolist legacy, but unlike many Symbolists and the theosophical mysticism and spiritualism of Wassily Kandinsky, Woolf's symbolism is of secular nature, which in my reading is nearer to Freud's psychology of the unconscious.

After the Cubists came other artists who questioned illusionism and representation in art. The Surrealist René Magritte used literalism to question representational realism. In his famous painting *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (*This Is not a Pipe*, 1926) Magritte explores the relationship between words and things. Magritte engages in a critique of visual language, as James Harkness (1982, 5) notes in his introduction to an English translation of Michel Foucault's essay on Magritte *This Is not a Pipe*. Harkness explains how Magritte's philosophy concerns with Ferdinand de Saussure's theory on the arbitrariness of the sign, the conventional nature of the bond between the signifier and the signified (ibid.). Magritte uses

in his painting both text and image, and by means of words refuses the principle of illusion which is otherwise apparent in his realistically painted images. Magritte's paintings are studies on the nature and philosophy of art rather than images depicting the world. Similarly, we could think that Woolf's novel *The Waves* is a critique of the novelistic language and the conventional narrative, because Woolf has discarded many conventions of novelistic art. Woolf is questioning the novelistic means, procedures and techniques by replacing them with new ones, but is she also questioning the principle of fiction itself?

The artists were enthusiastic with new possibilities opened up by photography. Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell belonged to the first generation of women who were active photographers and cinema-goers from childhood. During the years from Woolf's birth in 1882 to the publication of her essay "The Cinema" in 1926,<sup>7</sup> photography became a career option for women and more than 3500 American women worked as professional photographers. Many women photographers trained as painters, but also many exhibited as amateurs. Women were active domestic photographers and actively contributing to the modernist photographic movements "The Photo-Secession" and "The Bauhaus". (Humm 2002, 18-19) Unlike public photography, snapshots in photo albums are readable only in context of family history and psycho-biography. As Maggie Humm (2002, 19) points out, metaphorically photo albums and the darkroom may be called "rooms of women's own" and modernist women's concern with "the ephemera of daily life" allows to explore the underlying psychic meanings that shape daily lives.

In her diaries Virginia Woolf writes about her visit to the cinema as early as 1915

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<sup>7</sup> Woolf's essay "The Cinema" appeared originally in different versions in *The Arts* (June 1926) and *The Nation and the Atheneum* (3 August 1926) as "The Cinema" and under the "Movies and Reality" in *New Republic* (4 August 1926) (Humm 2002, 187).

(Woolf 1977, 28), and later visits to see films by René Clair whose experiments with spatial and temporal dislocations influenced Woolf's own techniques (see Humm 2002, 76). In Berlin in 1929 Virginia Woolf together with her sister Vanessa saw Pudovkin's *Storm over Asia*, banned in England by the British Board of Film Censors. Vanessa enjoyed the film in purely visual terms, for its display of landscape and old Mongolian types (Spalding 1984, 228).

According to Humm (2002, 76), Woolf's own writings about cinema "have a keen-eyed modernist vision. In "The Cinema" Woolf understands well cinematic language which in her opinion differs from the devices used by literature. According to her, in cinema "eye and brain are torn asunder ruthlessly as they try vainly to work in couples, whereas in literature the brain knows a character, for example Anna Karenina, "inside of her mind." In cinema all the emphasis is on her teeth, her pearls and her velvet." Woolf also plays attention to the use of visual symbols and metonymies in films: "A kiss is love. A broken cup is jealousy. A grin is happiness. Death is a hearse" (Woolf 1966b, 270). We may read Woolf depicting the effectiveness of a moving camera, montage and a close-up, though she does not use these terms in her essay, as she is describing how at a performance of Doctor Caligari a shadow shaped like a tadpole appeared suddenly at one corner of the screen and how it "swelled to an immense size, quivered, bulged, and sank back again into nonentity" (ibid.). With this example Woolf wanted to pay attention to the possibilities of cinema to express emotions through visual symbols.

Both photography and Impressionism were involved in capturing a moment of reality and creating the effects of spontaneity and randomness. With Impressionism the role of the spectator in the creation of a work of art grew in importance and the freedom of interpretation started to play a bigger role in art, especially later in the twentieth century (cf. the "death of

the author” theory of Barthes). After Impressionism came other movements to continue the development towards greater freedom of expression which Impressionism had started. These new tendencies became known by the name Post-Impressionism. The term was coined by the British artist and critic Roger Fry who arranged an exhibition of French art *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* at the Grafton Galleries in London from November 1910 to January 1911. The exhibition included about 150 works and among the artists were Gauguin, van Gogh, Cézanne, Denis, Derain, Manet, Matisse, Picasso, Redon, Rouault, Sérusier, Seurat, Signac, Vallotton and Vlaminck. These artists were called by the names of Neo-Impressionists, Synthetists, the Nabis, Symbolists and Fauvists. In fact, Post-Impressionism was not a uniform movement, but a large notion used of art that Fry saw as either descending from Impressionism or being against it. (Dempsey 2002, 45)

Significant in this context is that the exhibition had an immediate effect on the British artists and writers, most of whom belonged to the Bloomsbury group. The second Post-Impressionist exhibition held in London in 1912 included a British department with the works by Vanessa Bell, Spencer Gore, Duncan Grant, Wyndham Lewis and Roger Fry. (Dempsey 2002, 48) Cézanne influenced Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant by liberating their art and inspiring them to concentrate on the tactile subjects of their immediate world, still lifes, portraits of friends and familiar landscapes (Thomson 1998, 66). Although the influence of these English artists in Britain amounted to little and none of them had disciples, the influence of the Bloomsbury group on taste was far-reaching, because the group had contacts within high society, literature, journalism, museums and politics. The discovery of Post-Impressionism was part of their challenge to established conventions, social beliefs and sexual repressions. (Ibid. 61)

In his article “The French Post-Impressionists,” later published in the collection of essays *Vision and Design* (1920), Roger Fry analyzes the French works of art in the first Post-Impressionist exhibition held in London. He points out, for example, that the Post-Impressionists did not attempt “to imitate form, but to create form, nor to imitate life, but to find an equivalent for life.” In fact, they did not aim “at illusion, but at reality” (Fry 1961, 190). Fry also notes how Picasso in his later works created a purely abstract language of form and thus gave up all resemblance to natural form. He pays attention to Matisse’s entirely new use of colour and the decorative unity of design, as well as the influence of Chinese art on his painting.

Virginia Woolf was closely in touch with the art world, not only through her sister Vanessa, but also through her Bloomsbury connections, especially Roger Fry whose essays she read and discussed with him. Sue Roe (2000, 169) argues that Vanessa Bell’s painting *A Conversation* (1913-1916), which depicts three women seated together at a window, had an influence on Woolf’s writing. This painting, her conversations with the painters and writers at the time together with Fry’s lectures on aesthetic form inspired new ideas on experiments in writing. Vanessa Bell has been reported to have noticed the closeness between Woolf’s story “Kew Gardens” and her painting *Three Women* (another name of *A Conversation*) in their design and form. The story depicts the colours and lights seen from the interior of a flower-bed. (Ibid.)

In Virginia Woolf’s fiction, reflections of Symbolist art may be found in symbolism, androgyny, and the correspondences between the arts. The Symbolists were inspired by ancient myths and adopted the idea of androgyny from these myths. Duality between the feminine and the masculine principle interested Woolf especially in the novel *Orlando*, and to some extent in *To the Lighthouse*. Although Symbolism is chiefly associated with France,

it is also an international movement and such diverse artists as Edward Burne-Jones and Edward Munch are regarded as Symbolists (Chilvers and Osborne 1988, 484). The Symbolist painting is often imaginary, mythical, or religious, and thus often distant from Virginia Woolf's novels, but the work of some Symbolist artists (or those who called themselves Symbolists) may be compared with her fiction, for instance paintings by Edward Munch, Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin, as I am going to demonstrate in the present study (see ch. 6).

On 11 April 1910 the manifesto of the Futurist painters Giacomo Balla, Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo and Gino Severini promised to show the frenetic life of the great cities and the exciting psychology of night life. For the Futurist the city means subversion of the museum-bound culture of the past, and the crowd of the city fascinates him. Futurist paintings depicting city life include Gino Severini's *Le Boulevard* (1911) which, as Christopher Butler explains, "shows strollers through the city as united by the pervasive rhythms of its triangular construction." (Butler 1994, 137-141) Cubism and Futurism shared an interest in the representation of simultaneity and duration, and the influence of Bergson's philosophy is related to the art of these movements (Dempsey 2002, 85-89). Futurists were also inspired by Eadweard Muybridge's photographs which studied the movements of people and animals, and the French physiologist Etienne-Jules Marey's chronophotographs inspired Giacomo Balla to attempt to represent movement in painting (ibid, 89).

According to Robert Atkins (1997, 83), Cubism assumed a more conceptual approach that regarded painting as a subjective response to the world. Cubists analyzed space and form by breaking objects into fragments and were interested in depicting an object from multiple perspectives. Modern urban experience fascinated many artists at the time and the term *simultaneity*, an aspect of the cult of the modern, was coined. For the poet Jules Romain it

meant the common immediate experiences of the teeming metropolis that bound its inhabitants together. (Ibid.) As Atkins notes (1997, 194), the shifting viewpoints indicating the passage of time and the term ‘simultaneity’ in Cubist and Futurist art seem to some observers convey Einstein’s thinking. On the other hand, the term simultaneity was employed by both the Futurists and Einstein to suggest the impossibility of the “now.” This, however, may be a coincidence, as Atkins (ibid. 195) suggests, for Einstein’s theories were entirely unknown to the artists at the time. Thus we may say that as much as Einstein’s theory, Cubist and Futurist art convey the frenetic pace and fragmented look of the modern city. Atkins, however, does not mention the influence of Bergson’s philosophy of time on the contemporary artists and writers as Christopher Butler does in his work *Early Modernism: Literature, Music, and Painting in Europe, 1900-1916* (1994, 142) and as I do in this study. The engineering marvels such as the Eiffel Tower and the aeroplane fascinated the artists at the turn of the century (Atkins 1997, 194-195).

In Robert Delaunay’s painting *Eiffel Tower* (1910) the juxtaposed views of the tower suggest its simultaneous visibility to all the city’s inhabitants (Cottingham 1998, 48-49). We can detect the same kind of interest in the collective experience shared by its inhabitants in the metropolis of London and the representation of simultaneous experiences in Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*. Woolf was also an urban artist who shared the Futurists’ interest in movement, new machines, technology and the need to express the dynamism of the modern city. “In her juxtaposition of modernity and the machine,” as Michael Whitworth suggests (2000, 155), “Woolf curiously and unexpectedly resembles the Italian Futurists, who celebrated the car, the train and the aeroplane; curiously, as she certainly had felt uncomfortable with their pro-war, pro-fascist posturing.” The antifeminism and elitism of some of the Futurists who survived the First World War led to their absorption into Fascism (Atkins 1997, 111). This

antifeminism of the Futurists is in deep contrast with Virginia Woolf's feminism and this is a feature of Futurism that I do not want to associate with her thinking. Nevertheless, the Futurists, as Butler (1994, 137) suggests, were the most important of the avant-garde groups in whose work life in the modern city was central, and the enthusiastic attitude towards modern city life with its crowd, city architecture and modern technology was shared also by Woolf.

Women painters and writers met many obstacles and prejudices in their careers. The Impressionists Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt have been given in art history almost exclusively gendered readings and their work has been characterized with such words as "feminine charm" and "womanliness" (see e.g. Thomas 1975, 55, 77) Female painters were often treated as amateurs, which is also the experience of the artist Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse*. As Lily's work is underestimated, her self-esteem is so injured that she will never even attempt to display her work in public. Woolf chose to depict woman artist as an amateur, even though she could have presented her as a professional. Woolf perhaps made Lily Briscoe an amateur to show how difficult it is to become a female artist in a male-dominated society and to show what prejudices and hostile attitudes a woman artist has to confront.

In her study *Impressionism. A Feminist Reading. The Gendering of Art, Science and Nature in the Nineteenth Century* (1991) Norma Broude takes up the practice in art historical writing of gendering eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century styles of painting. According to Broude (1991, 14), Impressionism, with its colorism and diffuse drawing, was described by conservative writers in the 1880s and 1890s as a "feminine" style of painting. They also regarded the Impressionist painter's relationship to nature as a "passive attitude toward nature." In the twentieth century criticism this conception of the "feminine" attitude and style

of painting were replaced by a contradictory discourse of Impressionism which saw it in scientific or masculine terms. Recent art history, as Broude notes (1991, 16), has begun to emphasize the role of “subjectivity,” not only in the art of the Impressionists but also in for example the Realist art of Courbet. Richard Shiff (1984, 7) has argued that Symbolism and Impressionism, as understood around 1890, were not antithetical but rather seen in terms of “subjectivity.” As Broude (ibid. 15) points out, the gendering of art began with Romanticism which appropriated feminine subjectivity for the arts. This kind of gendering of art, science and nature is part of patriarchal culture and it should be questioned and criticized, as Broude’s work suggests. It may, however, be used for example as a strategy of interpretation which I will apply in my analysis of the “feminine” modernism in the final part of the present study.

My method aims at a tactical insistence on sexual difference by looking at the “otherness” of modernism which has been gendered male in art history. This strategy suggested by Griselda Pollock seeks ways in which the difference of the feminine functions not only as an alternative but a dialectical method of releasing us from the binary trap represented by gender (see Wolff 2003, 88). In my analysis of the female artists I am not only paying attention to “the feminine” in their art, but also introducing the work of women artists that have received less attention in art historical accounts than their male colleagues.

## **PART TWO    TIME AND SPACE**

### **3. The Momentary Impression**

Impressionism was a school of painting born in the 1860s in France as a rebellion against both academic and romantic painting. Its aim was to capture momentary impressions of lights, movements and colours. The Impressionists opposed Romanticism's notion of art according to which art conveys the artist's feelings and the observation of nature is of secondary importance. The Impressionist painter wanted to depict fragments of reality in an impersonal manner, like a photographer who captures reality by means of a camera. (Hosiaislouma 2003, 347-348)

An Impressionist painting is often a landscape, a city view or a portrait. It has been painted intentionally in such a way that it looks blurred, and the painstakingly painted details, which are important in a Realist painting, are left out. The Impressionists used theories of colour and light in order to create more natural, even scientifically correct effects of light. This atomistic observation of the world produces, in fact, no more realistic pictures than the Realists' way of painting. The representatives of both schools used certain conventions to create certain kinds of pictures of reality that were linked to the historical and cultural situation of the period of their creation. According to the art historian Richard Shiff (1984, 13), in the accounts of Impressionism presented by art historians of the twentieth century the emphasis on objective truth and the association of Impressionism with "positivism" or "Comtean positivism" oversimplifies and distorts the Impressionist notion of "truth." Therefore, as Shiff suggests (*ibid.* 12), it is not possible to understand Impressionist art

adequately “without sufficient reference to its own subjectivity, the element to which Castagnary and other early critics were sensitive, and its own definition of ‘truth.’” In the development of modern art Impressionism was the first step towards modernism, abstraction and subjectivism. Thus it is possible to think that despite its objective to be scientific, Impressionism emphasized after all more the artist’s subjectivity, creativity and expression than a resemblance with reality.

In literature in *c.* 1890-1910 the school of Impressionism was developed on the basis of Realism, but it objected the detailed technique of description which was peculiar to Realism. Instead, Impressionism gave importance to personal impressions, neglected the polishing of the form which resulted in creating an atmosphere of momentariness and transience. Impressionist form in literature was also brief, episodic and sketchy. Impressionist prose often concentrated on the protagonist’s inner world. (Hosiaisluoma 2003, 347-348) As a literary style, Impressionism is not a very clearly defined phenomenon. According to Hauser (1977, 167), “its beginnings are hardly recognizable within the total complex of naturalism and its later forms of development are completely merged with the phenomena of symbolism.”

Impressionism is a personal style of writing, as Harry Shaw (1972, 198) explains, in which the author develops characters and paints scenes as they appear to him at a given moment rather than as they are (or may be) in actuality. “Impression” is also one of the central ideas of the modernist novel, an idea originating in the Impressionist painting. As Glen MacLeod (1999, 194) suggests, painters explored first the revolutionary possibilities of modernism and painting became the leading art form. Modernist writers draw parallels for their literary experiments from the visual arts (*ibid.*). Is it possible to find parallelism between Impressionism and the stream of consciousness novel? Virginia Woolf, for example,

depicts momentary impressions in her modernist novels and the moment is one of her central themes.

Although Woolf has not been characterized in literary histories as a writer of the Impressionist school she, however, shares some of its central characteristics. Like the Impressionists, Woolf depicts the moment and the inner world of the protagonists and creates effects of momentariness and transience. In her novels we frequently meet the idea that only the moment which is “here and now” has meaning in people’s lives. Woolf seems to say that we must respect the “random moment,” make as much out of it as we can, because there is nothing else in life except the moment. On the other hand, in the Impressionist painting the level of meaning is claimed to be absent (see e.g. Preminger 1979, 381; Kallio & al 1991, 232),<sup>8</sup> while in Woolf’s novels philosophical meaning is nearly always present in her depiction of moments and impressions mediated by an implicit narrator who represents the characters and their thoughts. Yet, in some sections of her novels (e.g. the interludes in *The Waves*) there are almost “pure visual impressions” or descriptions of nature without philosophical comments or psychological analysis of the characters, which may be compared to Impressionist paintings when they are understood as “surface phenomena” like photographs. The interludes in *The Waves* may be compared to photographs or landscape paintings in their objectivity, as has been implied also by Avrom Fleishman (1977, 153) when he points out that these passages are “rendered in a voice resembling that of a

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<sup>8</sup> The absence of feelings and objectivity was the aim of the Impressionist painters (and poets), but already the fact that they depicted the impressions of the painter is a proof that feelings and meanings are involved and the end result, i.e. the painting, is not an objective, mechanic reproduction of reality. As Richard Shiff implies, “impression” has different connotations, those associated with “a mechanistic account of the production of images by means of light” (cf. photographs), and on the other hand, the impression may refer to particularity, individuality and originality. For instance Monet tended to describe the Impressionist works as impressions rather than effects because of the subjective connotation of the term wishing to call attention to the particularity or originality of his sensation of nature. (Shiff 1984, 17-18)

conventional omniscient narrator, except that it is blankly objective in its treatment of natural phenomena.” However, like in an Impressionist painting, even in these interludes there are some signs of subjectivity, some interpretative elements. As Fleishman notes (ibid. 153), the omniscient narrator’s voice shows marks of a subjective consciousness in the form of metaphors, similes and “as if” constructions.

Some of the protagonists, for example, Clarissa Dalloway in *Mrs Dalloway* and Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, experience moments of beauty, illumination, stability and happiness. Woolf often describes moments when the characters feel togetherness with other people, or when they unexpectedly come across a moment of intense feeling with religious or sexual connotations. For example, she depicts Clarissa having such a moment, “a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush,” and how she at that moment “had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed” (MD, 36). This Woolfian moment of revelation is akin to James Joyce’s epiphanies. The untheological use of the term *epiphany* derives from James Joyce (cf. Savolainen 1987, 26; Orr 1991, 622). Joyce’s epiphanies are “secular versions of the sudden revelations of religious experience, illuminating the smallest or most immediate object of its vision,” whether it is “the dial on the Ballast Clock in *Stephen Hero*, or the girl on the strand with the ‘likeness of seagull’ in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.” (Orr 1991, 622.)

According to Ralph Freedman (1980, 135-6), the moment of epiphany for Woolf is an act of knowledge, an encounter between minds or between minds and things. It is a moment of awareness “in which all relations are briefly, and evanescently, apparent.” Freedman traces influences on Woolf’s “moment” from Wordsworth and Coleridge: Woolf herself has noticed that “the unconscious ‘lower mind’ perceives unity while the ‘upper mind’ dissipates itself in the facts of the day” (ibid.). But, as Freedman points out, this description is not only

Wordsworthian, but also suggests Bergson, Proust, Joyce's epiphanies and theories of Impressionist art. The epiphanic moment may, however, have also autobiographical origin, for as Pamela J. Transue (1986, 138) notes, many of the recurring images in *The Waves* for example, derive from Woolf's childhood, from moments of shock, of sudden recognition or perception about which Woolf wrote in her autobiographical piece "A Sketch of the Past". Her early years consisted largely of "non-being" or the "cotton wool" of daily existence where nothing special to remember happens. This "non-being" was occasionally interrupted by these moments of lasting perception. When Transue (ibid. 174) notes that the moments of insight or epiphany are more characteristic of the state of sleep, or just before falling asleep, her reading supports the Woolfian "view" that unity may be perceived better in the unconscious mind. Transue points out how for example in *Between the Acts* the countryside in its placidity provides a receptive state of mind for a moment of vision.

On the other hand, the epiphanic moment in *Mrs Dalloway* often refers to sexual or love experiences, and in the case of Clarissa these epiphanies, as Emily Jensen (1983, 162-4) notes, are feelings for a person of her own sex. Clarissa's loved one is Sally Seton who she is remembering in the novel from time to time. Woolf describes in *Mrs Dalloway* Clarissa's first moment of sexual fulfilment with Sally Seton, which may be characterized as an epiphanic moment:

She and Sally Seton fell a little behind. Then came the most exquisite moment of her whole life passing a stone urn with flowers in it. Sally stopped; picked a flower, kissed her on the lips. The whole world might have turned upside down. The others disappeared; there she was alone with Sally. And she felt that she had been given a present, wrapped up, which, as they walked (up and down, up and down), she

uncovered, or the radiance burnt through, the revelation, the religious feeling! (MD, 40)

Clarissa, having rejected religion, has found another means to express her sexual instincts. She has a sensibility to beauty and an ability to create aesthetic moments, “moments of being.” As Pamela J. Transue (1986, 105) says, Clarissa substitutes social event for sexual event. In the novel a moment of epiphany takes place also when Clarissa identifies herself with Septimus’s suicide. At the moment when Clarissa learns about Septimus’s suicide she becomes violently alive, life becomes meaningful to her when she realizes that death is not the only alternative one can choose. The ecstasy which Clarissa feels comes from the simultaneous awareness of life and death. (Ibid. 198)

Also to Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* the impression, or the momentary vision, is significant. When Mrs Ramsay goes deep into her fantasies she at the same time keeps looking at the lighthouse until she feels that she becomes the light she is looking at. At a moment like this Mrs Ramsay forgets herself and the world around her. The lighthouse beam and the sound of the sea give her a sense of peace and unity: they are things that do not change or disappear with time. But as for Mrs Dalloway in the other novel, the moment passes quickly, and a feeling of doubt creeps into her mind: she begins to think that there is no reason, order or justice in the world, and she knows that happiness does not last. With the change of mood in her mind, her attitude towards the light changes. She begins to see the light as pitiless and remorseless. Thus the reader realizes that she has the same paradoxical attitude towards the lighthouse and the sound of the sea as towards life. Mrs Ramsay’s identification with nature has mystical and romantic connotations. According to Pamela J.

Transue (1986, 88), Mrs Ramsay's blending with nature is very similar to that often described in Romantic poetry:

It was odd, she thought, how if one was alone, one leant to things, inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers; felt they knew one, in a sense were one; felt an irrational tenderness thus (she looked at that long steady light) as for oneself" (TL, 74).

Another epiphanic moment may be found at the end of *To the Lighthouse* where Lily Briscoe, the artist of the novel, succeeds in completing her painting, capturing her vision, finally being able to give it the last touch which is needed to express what she wants to say. Woolf describes the artist's short moment of intensive creative effort, which can be compared to her own writer's work in finishing her book:

Quickly, as if she were recalled at something. It would be destroyed. But what did that matter? She asked herself, taking up her brush again. She looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it was blurred. With 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. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision. (TL, 237)

Avrom Fleishman (1977, 120) has paid attention to the role of the lighthouse, the fortresslike tower acting as a source of illumination, as the "point of epiphany." In my reading, the tower acts in the novel as a symbol of hope and freedom and as a source of creativity, a fixed point in the instability of life, which gives the characters possibility to escape from the meaninglessness of daily existence and to experience moments of vision or perception. It provides them the fulfilment of dreams, gives them peace and stability, and a feeling of unity

with “nature” or with other people. Both Lily and Mrs Ramsay experience their epiphanic moments when they are guided by the lighthouse beam.

An Impressionist painter must have experienced the same kind of difficulties in trying to capture the fleeting impression of a moment of reality or in trying to depict the right atmosphere of a living situation. Woolf in her essay “The Moment: Summer’s Night” describes and discusses different impressions experienced by the writer on a summer’s night. She asks in the essay what composes the present moment, and like an Impressionist painter might have done, gives the answer: “it is largely composed of visual and of sense impressions” (Woolf 1966a, 293). Yet the Impressionist painter was not essentially interested in finding unity or a meaning of life like Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse*. As Kallio & al. (1991, 231) note, the Impressionists wanted to depict life in a new, objective way, to create fragmentary impressions of what the eye was able to see at a certain moment. The Impressionists considered the artist’s state of mind or emotions secondary, better still to be excluded altogether. The reality should be approached in an impersonal way, like a camera does (ibid.). However, as Shiff’s study *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism: A Study of the Theory, Technique, and Critical Evaluation of Modern Art* indicates, objectivity was only one aspect of Impressionist art, since there exist various contradictory views and definitions about the subjectivity and objectivity of the artistic movement. Besides, objectivity was more a goal for the Impressionists than an existing fact.

Photography is another form of the visual arts which provides parallel readings with the Impressionist painting and Woolf’s novels. Photography had a strong influence on painting ever since Louis Daguerre first told about his invention in 1838. This new art form had an immediate effect on portraiture and later in landscape painting, e.g. in Camille Corot’s work, because with a camera you could capture the look-alike of objects. (Welton 1993, 28)

Many painters, for example Degas, used a camera as a means to facilitate their compositional work. Especially the Impressionists imitated photography in its ability to catch a random glimpse of life through the camera lens. But for instance Monet never took up photography, although critics have detected in his paintings influences of the shadowy and shapeless after-images produced by the long-exposure photography of the time (see Petrie 1979, 12, 48).

We cannot know exactly which things influence an artist, but certain effects of photography may appear similar to the Impressionist painting. Monet's painting *Boulevard des Capucines* (1873), for example, has been compared with the photographs of the epoch on account of obscurity: the long-time exposure made the photographs blurred. The brush strokes representing people in the street in Monet's painting are also blurred and thus give the spectator an impression of movement. (Welton 1993, 29) This effect of motion comes close to the representation of action in the cinema. Also Futurist painters attempted to represent motion in their pictures by depicting the different stages of a moving person, dog or vehicle thus adding the time element to them. In painting it is not easy to represent time or motion because the art form is inherently spatial and immobile. In literature, on the other hand, time is involved in the linear progression of the reading process, and time may be expressed on the semantic level of language as well, i.e. in the narration of the story.

In Virginia Woolf's novels the characters frequently attempt to stop the time and the chaotic flow of impressions which their brains produce. Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* sees Mrs Ramsay as somebody who has an ability to make the moment permanent. The same way Lily herself tries in art to capture the shape of stability:

Mrs Ramsay saying 'Life stand still here'; Mrs Ramsay making of the moment something permanent (as in another sphere Lily herself tried to make of the moment permanent) — this was of the nature of a revelation. In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and flowing (she looked at the clouds going and the leaves shaking) was struck into stability. (TL, 183)

Lily, Mrs Ramsay, and also Mrs Dalloway in the other novel, have a talent of finding shape and stability in "the eternal passing and flowing." These characters have a need to look for enduring things in life, which is one way of stopping the time. Woolf seems to say that in the imagination it is possible to escape the anxiety which the eternal flow of time causes.

In *Between the Acts* Woolf is again looking for unity, which the audience is supposed to find together during a theatre performance. In this novel, too, there is an artist, Miss La Trobe, who is the director of the country pageant that is performed by the village people. Through the performance of the historical pageant Miss La Trobe wants to make her audience, at least for a moment, feel togetherness and understand that they all have their place in a larger historical pattern regardless of their financial or social position or personal characteristics. Shared moments of vision, in Miss La Trobe's philosophy, may bring a relief in anguish:

Now Miss La Trobe stepped from her hiding. Flowing and streaming, on the grass, on the gravel, still for one moment she held them together — the dispersing company. Hadn't she, for twenty-five minutes, made them see? A vision imparted was a relief from agony. (BA, 74)

Moments of synthesis or vision, as Pamela J. Transue suggests (1986, 167), may be reached through drama when in a dialectical process opposites, such as life and art, love and hate, unity and dispersal, find temporary reconciliation.

It is possible to see a connection between Virginia Woolf's characters and an Impressionist painter or a photographer in their attempts to capture a moment of reality from the ceaseless flux of time or "images." When everything looks perfect the photographer chooses the right moment to take a picture. The photographer must understand symmetric or geometric relations and see what is important in the depicted object. When Lily Briscoe is painting her picture of Mrs Ramsay she is also looking for the right geometric or symmetric relations and chooses the right moment when everything looks perfect, but she can later change her picture whereas the photographer has only that one moment. Henri Cartier-Bresson<sup>9</sup> has written about the "decisive moment" in photography, about the instantaneity that is involved in photography. He explains that a photographer is dependent on timing and has to choose the right moment: "Of all the means of expression, photography is the only one that fixes forever the precise and transitory instant. We photographers deal in things that are continually vanishing, and when they have vanished, there is no contrivance on earth that can make them come back again" (Cartier-Bresson 1998, 27).

To Cartier-Bresson photography means dealing with reality. The task of a photographer is first of all to perceive reality, not to manipulate it while shooting nor the results in the darkroom, because "these tricks are discernible to those who have eyes to see." He sees the task of a writer easier in this respect: the writer has time to reflect, to accept and

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<sup>9</sup> Henri Cartier-Bresson, who had studied painting with André Lhôte in Paris and painting and literature in Cambridge University in 1928, developed a serious interest in photography in 1931. His book *Images à la sauvette (The Decisive Moment)* was first published in 1952 in Paris. (Weaver 1989, 454)

reject. (Cartier-Bresson 1998, 27) The writer of fiction, on the other hand, manipulates reality, he/she does not simply record the events, but everything that he/she writes is filtered through his/her own personality, all the observations are subjective visions. Although subjectivity, personality and imagination play a greater role in the work of a writer than that of a photographer, they both may find the truth, capture a unique moment of reality, which conveys the essence of the depicted object, person or event.

Like Cartier-Bresson, Clarissa Dalloway, in her constant fight against time and ageing, tries to stop the flux of time, to transfix it. The diminishing life-span and growing old worries Clarissa, but she realizes that each moment of life is valuable and the enjoyment of each moment is the secret of happiness. She understands that the whole world must be created anew every moment in her mind. She also feels the fragmentariness of existence in her own split personality. Her inner self and the outward appearance are in constant conflict with each other:

Laying her brooch on the table, she had a sudden spasm, as if, while she mused, the icy claws had had the chance to fix in her. She was not old yet. She had just broken into her fifty-second year. Months and months of it were still untouched. June, July, August! Each still remained almost whole, and, as if to catch a falling drop, Clarissa (crossing to the dressing table) plunged into the very heart of the moment, transfixed it, there — the moment of the June morning on which was the pressure of all other mornings, seeing the glass, the dressing-table, and all the bottles afresh, collecting the whole of her at one point (as she looked into the glass), seeing the delicate pink face of the woman who was the very night to give a party; of Clarissa Dalloway; of herself. (MD, 41-42)

The image in the mirror symbolizes Clarissa's aspiration to define her identity and her surroundings. The passage above, in which Clarissa makes a conscious effort to create her life and the moment of the particular morning of June, suggests Henri Bergson's idea on duration (*durée*) as a free creation. Life, as Georges Poulet (1959, 35) points out, is continuous creation in the sense of Bergson and the twentieth-century thinking, which is what Clarissa's conscious act may be thought to represent. It is not creation by God, but creation by the mind. Every instant when we act, we create that action and at the same time we create ourselves and the world. (Ibid.) As Maggie Humm (2002, 80) remarks, in *Matter and Memory* Bergson states that we inaccurately think of perception as a kind of photographic view, when in reality "the photograph is already taken," and every perception is already memory.

Fascinating about portraits, as Cartier-Bresson notes, is the way in which they enable us to trace the sameness of man. He writes about the importance of the first impression in making a good portrait:

What is there more fugitive and transitory than the expression on a human face? The first impression given by a particular face is often the right one; but the photographer should try always to substantiate the first impression by "living" with the person concerned. The decisive moment and psychology, no less than camera position, are the principal factors in the making of a good portrait. (Cartier-Bresson 1998, 31)

In this passage the thought of the transitoriness of an expression is very Baudelairean (cf. Baudelaire 2001, 191), for he as well stressed the fluidity of modern life and praised painting for its ability to express the constant change central to the experience of modernity. Baudelaire, however, did not yet understand photography as a form of art capable of

expressing these fugitive and transitory features of modern experience, even though photography was a product of the era which fascinated him (Price and Wells 2004, 13).

Woolf's novels frequently set forth her interest in the artist's creative problems similar to those Cartier-Bresson writes about in his book: in *To the Lighthouse* there is the painter Lily Briscoe, in *Orlando* the fantastic androgynous poet Orlando, in *The Waves* there is the writer Bernard and in *Between the Acts* the director Miss La Trobe. These characters struggle with problems of timing, they are looking for the right moment when they could capture the essence of life, like Cartier-Bresson was waiting for "the decisive moment," which is, as Derrick Price puts it, "a formal flash of time when all right elements were in place before the scene fell back into its quotidian disorder" (Price and Wells 2004, 73). The momentary vision is important to Miss La Trobe, who had made the spectators "see" for twenty-five minutes. She finds a relief from agony through this moment of vision which she shares with the spectators of the pageant. Bernard in *The Waves* ponders about the relationship between words and visual impressions:

'These moments of escape are not to be despised. They come too seldom. Tahiti becomes possible. Leaning over this parapet I see far out a waste of water. A fin turns. This bare visual impression is unattached to any line of reason, it springs up as one might see the fin of a porpoise on the horizon. Visual impressions often communicate thus briefly statements that we shall in time to come uncover and coax into words. [...]' (W, 127-128)

We find Bernard in the Italian room at the National Gallery looking at Titian's paintings and comparing painters to poets, who, according to him, are "not chained to the rock," and thus achieve the silence and sublimity. He goes on to explain the difficulty of grasping ideas, how

they escape easily and how later in some moment of revelation the poet may grasp them. (Ibid. 105-106) It is true what Barthes (1980, 52) says about a painting communicating silence. Silence is an effect much harder to achieve for a writer who suddenly by means of one single word is able to change a sentence from description to reflection. Reflection and the world of ideas are constantly present in written works of art, either by means of characters' dialogue and thoughts, or through a narrator.

Contingency is a characteristic often associated with photography (Barthes 1980, 52) and photography has a reputation of being the most realistic of the mimetic arts (Sontag 1978, 51), although contingency and realism are just some of the many means which photography can use. Photographs can be manipulated and made fictive or fantastic and portraits and still lifes may be carefully planned in advance. In manipulated and planned photographs chance plays no bigger role than in paintings or novels. Important in all the mimetic arts is that the artist is trying to create a representation or an *impression* of reality.

Roland Barthes suggests that the photograph is outside meaning, because it is contingent upon its referent (cf. Price and Wells 2004, 32). The photograph's relationship to reality is different from that of the painting or the novel, because the photograph, especially the press photograph, is a mechanical analogue of reality. Barthes has paid attention to this special status of the photographic image by claiming that the photograph is a message without a code. However, this straightforward relationship to reality discussed by Barthes applies better to the press photograph and not so well to the artistic photograph. In artistic photographs, just as in other art forms, e.g. literature, painting, and film, a code is included, which is the treatment, the "art" or the rhetoric of the photograph (Barthes 1979, 17-18). Even though it is true that all the arts (including photography) have a code and thus are not outside meaning, Impressionism and the stream-of-consciousness novel tried to imitate the

contingency of reality, which the photograph may be thought to grasp better than other means of expression. A stream-of-consciousness writer imitates the verbal processes in the human mind, and an Impressionist painter imitates the visual perceptions received by the brains. Also a photographer imitates the visual impressions of a human being looking at reality. Although the photograph is a piece of reality, it is also an interpretation of reality and the reality is not the same to every one. Woolf in her novels, on the other hand, despite her interest in the “random moment” was in continuous search for meaning in both art and life.

A picture, whether a painting or a photograph, is characteristically immobile, while a modern novel is a continuous stream of impressions imitating the chaotic instability of the human consciousness. Yet a painting and a photograph can exceed its immobility if an artist/photographer represents continuity, change, or narration by means of a series of paintings or photographs. Claude Monet in his *Haystacks* and *Rouen Cathedral* series has captured the alterations taking place in a landscape or a city view in a series of paintings depicting the same view or object in different seasons and weathers. The series paintings by Monet may be compared with Virginia Woolf’s descriptions of the different movements of the sun, the alterations in the sky, changes in colours, waves and landscape in *The Waves*. Like Monet’s paintings, these descriptive passages of nature in *The Waves* imply the passage of time by changes in the landscape.

In Monet’s painting we may read signs of subjectivity implicit in the word ‘impression’. Also in this respect Monet may be likened to Virginia Woolf. Monet’s art, according to Richard Shiff (1984, 8) was regarded in the 1890s in both Impressionist and Symbolist terms. In Virginia Woolf’s novels symbolism is central as well, as I will demonstrate later in this study (see ch. 6). In the writings of many early critics of the Impressionist art the terminologies and practices of Impressionism and Symbolism are almost identical. For

example in Gustave Geoffrey's introductory essay to the exhibition of Monet's *Meules* series (1891), a personal friend of the artist spoke of Monet's colours and forms as analogous to emotionally expressive gestures and implied that the paintings expressed symbolic content. But, Monet, in Geoffrey's opinion, resembled also an Impressionist painter in his sensation of the ephemeral instant. Symbolism and Impressionism were in many respects closer to each other than has usually been suggested. For example, as Shiff points out (ibid. 12), both Impressionist and Symbolist art exemplified the ways of discovering the real or the true. Also the mode of perception was more significant to the Impressionist and Symbolist artist than the vision seen or the image presented. They both sought the elusive immediate, and both the Impressionist's "impression" and the Symbolist's "symbol" represented a vision. (Ibid. 10-12)

The immobility of a photographic image can be exceeded by means of a reportage or a picture story. This juxtaposition of photographs is comparable to the series of paintings by Monet. Henri Cartier-Bresson describes the difficulties in trying to capture the essence of an event through a series of pictures:

The picture-story involves a joint operation of the brain, the eye, and the heart. The objective of this joint operation is to depict the content of some event which is in the process of unfolding, and to communicate impressions. Sometimes a single event can be so rich in itself and its facets that it is necessary to move all around it in your search for the solution to the problem it poses — for the world is movement, and you cannot be stationary in your attitude toward something that is moving. Sometimes you light upon the picture in seconds; it might also require hours or days. But there is no standard plan, no pattern from which to work. You must be on the alert with the brain, the eye, the heart, and have a suppleness of body. (Cartier-Bresson 1998, 24)

Films get even closer to the essence of life. Cinema with its fast flowing images resembles Virginia Woolf's changing impressions even more than Monet's series paintings or a photographic picture story. Film is composed of photographs that flow before the spectator's eyes so fast that he/she is not able to separate them, look at them or remember them. Jean-Paul Sartre has pointed out that the reading of novels creates no mental pictures in our minds, and in this respect reading in its imagelessness is the opposite of photograph's "image-totality" (see Barthes 1980, 139).

Impressionist paintings do not have any meaningful details that touch the viewer particularly, because they are beautiful pictures which are not even meant to cause any great disturbance in the spectator. Likewise, some of Virginia Woolf's impressionistic novels, especially *Jacob's Room*, leave the reader devoid of feelings; nothing in them touches the reader particularly. In *Jacob's Room* nothing happens, instead, the reader receives multiple impressions in a continuum around the main character Jacob Flanders.

Parallels may be drawn between Impressionist paintings and descriptions in Woolf's novels. For instance, efforts to capture the right atmosphere by means of colours and light, which were the central aims of Claude Monet, may be compared to Virginia Woolf's descriptions of changing colours and lights in a scene depicting gradual changes in the sea and the sky in the first interlude of *The Waves*:

The sun had not yet risen. The sea was indistinguishable from the sky, except that the sea was slightly creased as if a cloth had wrinkles in it. Gradually as the sky whitened a dark line lay on the horizon dividing the sea from the sky and the grey cloth became barred with thick strokes moving, one after another, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually.

As they neared the shore each bar rose, heaped itself, broke and swept a thin veil of white water across the sand. The wave paused, and then drew out again, sighing like a sleeper whose breath comes and goes unconsciously. Gradually the dark bar on the horizon became clear as if the sediment in an old wine-bottle had sunk and left the glass green. Behind it, too, the sky cleared as if the white sediment there had sunk, or as if the arm of a woman couched beneath the horizon had raised her lamp higher and the air seemed become fibrous and to tear away from the green surface flickering and flaming in red and yellow fibres like the smoky fire that roars from a bonfire. Gradually the fibres of the burning bonfire were fused into one haze, one incandescence which lifted the weight of the woollen grey sky on top of it and turned it into a million atoms of soft blue. The surface of the sea slowly became transparent and lay rippling and sparkling until the dark stripes were almost rubbed out. Slowly the arm that held the lamp raised it higher and then higher until a broad flame became visible; an arc of fire burnt on the rim of the horizon, and all round it the sea blazed gold. (W, 5)

The above description of a view of the morning sky and the sea might be read as instructions to an Impressionist landscape painter or as a verbal equivalent or visualization of an imagined Impressionist painting. Woolf depicts the colour effects in the morning sky with the colour words of yellow, red, blue, green, white and grey, and hands them over to the reader to blend in his or her imagination like, as Joseph Frank (1963, 25) puts it, “the Impressionist painters juxtaposed pure tones on the canvas, instead of mixing them on the palette, in order to leave the blending of colors to the eye of the spectator.” Metaphoric expressions and personifications such as “the sea was slightly creased as if a cloth had wrinkles in it,” “the wave paused, and then drew out again, sighing like a sleeper whose breath comes and goes unconsciously,” “the dark bar on the horizon became clear as if the sediment in an old wine-bottle had sunk and left the glass green,” “the sky cleared as if the

white sediment there had sunk, or as if the arm of a woman couched beneath the horizon had raised her lamp higher” may be understood as an artistic expression, a subjective poetic vision that for example in a Monet painting is expressed through creative brushwork and the choice and arrangement of colours. Light and colour make Monet’s paintings alive and “real,” they bring for instance the sunshine into the picture (cf. *Haystacks, late summer*, 1890-91) without the sun actually appearing in the picture. The reader of this passage in *The Waves* interprets the verbal description of alterations in colours and forms as an image of gradual stages of change. Similarly, the viewer of Monet’s landscape paintings interprets the colours and lights as living vibrating organisms, as perpetually changing shades and nuances in nature. In the art of both artists we encounter the forever flying time and reality, the Bergsonian *durée*. Yet the reader may also see this depiction of dawn as a metaphor of the childhood of the characters.

*Jacob’s Room*, as well, may be compared to an Impressionist painting in its “use of colours”: Woolf uses frequently colour words the same way as an Impressionist painter uses his brush, adding a little colour here and there. She often “paints” with the Impressionist pure palette as well, using the colour words blue, green, yellow, red, and also white, the colour which the Impressionists used as the background colour in their canvases (cf. the quoted passage from *The Waves* above). Butterflies of different colours are depicted in the following description in *Jacob’s Room*:

Back came the sun, dazzlingly.

It fell like an eye upon the stirrups, and then suddenly and yet very gently rested upon the bed, upon the alarum clock, and upon the butterfly box stood open. The pale clouded yellows had pelted over the moor; they had zigzagged across the purple clover. The fritillaries flaunted along the hedgerows. The blues settled on little bones lying on

the turf with the sun beating on them, and the painted ladies and the peacocks feasted upon bloody entrails dropped by a hawk. Miles away from home, in a hollow among teasels beneath a ruin, he had found the commas. He had seen a white admiral circling higher and higher round an oak tree, but he had never caught it. An old cottage woman living alone, high up, had told him of a purple butterfly which came every summer to her garden. The fox cubs played in the gorse in the early morning, she told him. And if you looked out at dawn you could always see two badgers. Sometimes they knocked each other over like two boys fighting, she said. (JR, 21-22)

In this image of butterflies there is to be sensed the evasiveness of life, the randomness of impressions which are caught by the human mind. Also an Impressionist painting captures these evasive moments, the random impressions of scenes, landscapes or city views. An image in *Jacob's Room* is constantly changing and evolving, it is not bound to one place like a painting. For example, in a painting of butterflies we are able to see only one space, only one random moment, whereas in a short passage of a novel the reader may move from place to place and capture many impressions. In a novel, of course, there are no colours; there are only colour words that describe the "observations" of the narrator, which the reader has to translate in his mind into an image. Thus descriptions of visual observations by the narrator can be understood as visualizations in a novel. Since *Jacob's Room* is predominantly a descriptive novel concentrating on depicting different views of nature and interiors of different rooms, it may be considered largely a visual novel.

The sketchlike finish of Impressionism is a feature of Woolf's novelistic technique which she assumed when she started her career "from scratch" in her short stories, and as Jean Guiguet indicates (1965, 238), she also sought to retain the quality of a sketch in her novels. In her fiction she has the following characteristics mentioned by Guiguet which belong more to the novella than the novel:

The lightness of touch, the way the colours shade off indefinitely, the precision of anecdotes scribbled in the margin, so to speak, the slightness of the illusory present, the schematic, distilled flashbacks to the past, the fragmentary characters glimpsed through the consciousness of other characters (ibid.).

This sketchiness described by Guiguet characterizes well Woolf's first experimental novel *Jacob's Room*. The form of the novel lacks elaboration; it has an air of instantaneity and spontaneity. As Transue (1986, 51) notes, Jacob emerges as a composite of other people's fleeting impressions of him and it is impossible to form a coherent story from these pieces of conversation and the point of view is constantly shifting. Winifred Holtby (1978, 117) calls Woolf's writing method in *Jacob's Room* a "cinematographic technique," thus probably referring to the montage technique which Woolf uses.

The brushwork of Monet's paintings *Boulevard des Capucines* (1873-4) composed of patches of colour suggests rather than defines form (see Petrie 1979, 10). The same kind of imprecision and suggestiveness is to be found in *Jacob's Room*. The novel concentrates on the descriptions of spaces around Jacob, the places he visited and the rooms he inhabited. But Jacob is never present, nothing precise is told about his character or his thoughts. He remains an obscure figure and a mystery to the reader. Also the structure of the novel is very loose, even though there is a chronological order of events, which, however, can scarcely be called a plot in the traditional sense of the word. Instead of a plot or psychological analyses of character, impressions follow one another in a fairly random order. Arnold Hauser (1977, 175) sees in the Impressionists' attempt to arrest the fleeting hour and in their aim to live in the moment a revolt against the routine and discipline of bourgeois practice. Virginia Woolf

has the same rebellious attitude towards “bourgeois” traditional literature, which she attacks in some of her essays, e.g. in “Mr and Mrs Bennett” and “Modern Fiction.”

#### **4. The Fusion of Temporal Dimensions**

Henri Bergson’s influence on the twentieth century art is significant, particularly on such concepts as time, space and memory. His philosophy has directly or indirectly influenced all the art forms: literature, music, painting and film. The impact of his thinking can be noticed in the modernist novel, for example in the stream-of-consciousness novel of Marcel Proust, Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, and in the visual arts for instance in Cubist techniques such as collage, and in the compilation film.<sup>10</sup> The development of the new art forms photography and cinema influenced the older art forms such as painting and literature as they provided new possibilities and techniques for the representation of modern life and culture. Especially cinema was influential with its special characteristic of representing time and movement. Likewise, Maggie Humm (2002, 80) cites Woolf having claimed in 1932 “I may say that I have never read Bergson,” though Humm does not indicate her source of information.

It is difficult to track which direction the influences go, and, as Michael Hollington (1978, 431) notes, we do not have to prove that Thomas Mann read Bergson or Marcel Proust admired him to detect his importance to their art. Neither do we have to prove Bergson’s influence on Woolf,<sup>11</sup> even though the general belief is that Woolf never read Bergson. For

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. for the compilation film von Bagh, 2002.

<sup>11</sup> See e.g. Dahl 1970, 15; Ward 1968, 116-117; Church 1963, 70 on Bergson’s influence on Woolf.

instance, in his dissertation<sup>12</sup> on Woolf's conception of time in her works Erik Wiget (1949, 17-18) denies Woolf ever having read Bergson despite his conviction of Bergson's indirect influence on Woolf. Wiget has found in Woolf's novels among other things the representation of Bergson's concept *durée* (duration) related to the chaotic flow of consciousness, in which the unity of the past, the present and the future can be felt (ibid. 17).

Henri Bergson is among the philosophers who believe that "the act of the mind" is essential for the existence of time and space. This is to be seen in his special notion of mind time, which he calls *durée*. First of all, he makes a distinction between two kinds of time: the time of physics<sup>13</sup> and the time of consciousness, i.e. *durée*, or pure duration. Bergson explains in his influential work *L'Évolution créatrice* (1963, 494) what he means by the concept *durée* which he frequently uses in his philosophical works: "[...] 'durée réelle' signifie à la fois continuité indivisée et création" ('real duration' means both undivided continuity and creation). According to my interpretation, he means that it is impossible to separate past moments from present moments, that time is a continuum, which the human mind organizes into different units. Bergson argues that space is necessary for our ability to observe time, and that duration and movement are mental syntheses, not real things. He also observes that duration takes an illusory form from a homogenous environment, and that the hyphen between space and duration is simultaneity, which can be defined as an intersection of time and space (ibid. 74). In *Time and Free Will* (1960, 100-107) Bergson explains that *durée* is qualitative by its nature, and therefore it cannot be measured unless it is symbolically represented in space, whereas the time of physics is quantitative and measurable.

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<sup>12</sup> Erik Wiget's dissertation *Virginia Woolf und die Konzeption der Zeit in ihren Werken* (Zürich, 1949) is a philosophically and thematically oriented study which does not discuss literary and aesthetic devices.

<sup>13</sup> The time of physics is approximately the same as clocktime, see Susanne Langer, *Feeling and Form. A Theory of Art* (1953, 111).

Bergson's ideas on time, space and simultaneity have found their echo in modernist art, but questions of time and space have preoccupied artists and theorists long before modernism. G. E. Lessing in his study *Laokoon, oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (1766) was the first to pay attention to the problems of time in art (cf. Valkonen 1985, 17). Lessing made a distinction between two categories of art: the time-arts and the space-arts. The time-arts music and literature are based on consecutiveness in time, and the space-arts painting, sculpture and architecture are based on co-existence in space. Music can express its material both consecutively through melody and simultaneously through harmony, but the novel can only suggest simultaneity by using illusion-creating devices, because language, unlike music, is by its nature merely consecutive. (Mendilow 1965, 23, 216) This distinction between time-arts and space-arts is based on the perception of a work of art by the observer. Yet, for example in modernist sculpture, usually categorized as space-art, there are mobile works of art where the time element is central, e.g. Alexander Calder's mobiles, whose shape shifts and alters during the perception thus getting its full meaning through consecutive forms evolving in sequences.

Language, the substance of literature, is constructed in time. Although language is forward-moving, sequential and irreversible, its other level, that of meaning, enables it to express other temporal relations besides linearity. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (1983, 44) distinguishes between two different time systems in narrative fiction: that of story-time, which usually means a linear succession of events, and that of text-time, which refers to the time spent in the process of reading the text. Text-time is one-directional and irreversible and therefore necessarily linear, while story-time may involve returns to a past point in the story or anticipations of future events. In Gérard Genette's narrative theory (see Genette 1972, 77-120) these returns to the past and anticipations of the future are aspects of time order, in

other words, they are discrepancies between story-order and text-order (Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 46).

In the literature of modernism the impression of chronology has been deliberately broken off by leaps into the past or to the future. The stream-of-consciousness novel is probably the most conspicuous example of this, but it is also a feature to be found in other works of modernism. The change in collective sensibility, as James McFarlane (1981, 82-84) suggests, which took place at the beginning of the twentieth century, had its effects first of all in art, science and philosophy. Influential in philosophy was Bergson's thinking which argued for the recognition of subjective logic, and Einstein's Relativity Theory which argued for the relatedness of space and time, as opposed to space and time as distinct and discrete elements. This change in collective mentality was reflected in the works of modernist literature and in various modernist literary movements. (See *ibid.*)

The stream-of-consciousness novel was born between 1913 and 1915 when three writers, Marcel Proust, Dorothy Richardson and James Joyce began to write approximately at the same time fiction that depicted internal reality (Edel 1955, 11-12). These writers were influenced by other writers, e.g. by the French writer Eduard Dujardin and his work *Les Lauriers sont coupés* with its discovery of a new technique, *monologue intérieur*, and psychological time, and on the other hand by French Symbolist poetry. (Friedman 1981, 453-455) Virginia Woolf became influenced by Proust, Joyce and Richardson, and according to Hermione Lee (1977, 22) *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1917) and the first chapters of *Ulysses* (1922) made a strong impression on Woolf and so she started in 1922 with *Jacob's Room* her experimentations of the stream-of-consciousness techniques.

One of the essential features of the stream-of-consciousness novel is a new conception of time. In this genre, consciousness moves freely in time and these movements are fluid and

unbound by arbitrary time concepts (Humphrey 1954, 9). The following passage by Robert Humphrey describes well the workings of psychological time in the genre:

The premise is that the psychic processes, before they are rationally controlled for communication purposes, do not follow calendar continuity. Everything that enters consciousness is there at the "present moment"; furthermore, the event of this "moment," no matter how much clock time it occupies, may be infinitely extended by being broken up into its parts, or it may be highly compressed into a flash of recognition. (Ibid. 42-43)

The underlying philosophy of the stream-of-consciousness novel is influenced by Henri Bergson's psychological time theories (Edel 1955, 28; Humphrey 1954, 120). The conviction behind this novel genre is that consciousness is like a flux, and that mind has its own time and space values, different from those of the external world. Thus flux and *durée* are aspects of the psychic life for which new methods of narration had to be created, if writers were to describe them. (Humphrey 1954, 120)

Also in Virginia Woolf's literary techniques there are clear analogies with Bergson's thinking, although her narrative is not always naturalistic imitation of the psychic processes. To deal systematically with the depiction of psychological time, the Bergsonian *durée* and the free ordering of the dimensions of time, i.e. the past, the present and the future, I shall apply a classification system outlined by Gérard Genette in *Discours du récit. Essai de méthode* (1972). Genette distinguishes in a narrative between *analepses* and *prolepses*,<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> 'Analepsis' is equivalent for the term 'flashback' or 'retrospection' and 'prolepsis' is similar to 'foreshadowing' or 'anticipation' (see Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 46). The term 'flashforward' has also been used, especially in cinematic contexts (cf. also 'flashback'). A 'flashback' is an insertion within a narrative of an account of earlier events (Beja 1979, 312).

which are terms to describe the deviations in the chronological line of events: an *analepsis* is a reference or a return to past events (in relation to the moment to which the story has progressed), and a *prolepsis* is a reference to future events. Both *analepses* and *prolepses* can be external or internal, i.e. refer to a time earlier or later with respect to the time of narration. (Genette 1972, 90-114)

The concepts of *analepsis* and *prolepsis* are applicable for the following analysis of time in Virginia Woolf's novels, even though I shall not go into the details of Genette's complicated classifications. At the beginning of *Mrs Dalloway* there is an internal *prolepsis*: Clarissa Dalloway refers to the event which will take place at the end of the novel, i.e. the party which she will arrange in the evening of the same day. The planning of the party is actually the connecting thought of the whole novel. The shifting of thoughts happens fluently in Woolf's fiction, because she is using the psychological association technique. With this technique it is easy for the writer to jump from the past or the present to the future and back again, because it imitates the thought processes of the human mind. This *prolepsis* at the beginning of the novel is important both for the structure and the plot of the novel.

Since *Mrs Dalloway* is a novel composed of the thoughts and feelings of its characters, it is unavoidable that it deals with their memories as well. A person met suddenly in the street can be an impulse for a character to move back in time. For example, Clarissa starts recalling the earlier phases of her life after she has met accidentally in the street her friend Hugh Whitbread when she is strolling in London. Hugh reminds Clarissa of Peter Walsh, another friend of hers, who was in love with Clarissa when they were young. In the middle of these memories, however, the reader is being reminded of the present moment:

So she would still find herself arguing in St. James's Park, still making out that she had been right — and she had too — not to marry him. (MD, 10)

She had reached the Park gates. She stood for a moment, looking at the omnibuses in Piccadilly. (MD, 10)

The *analepses* concerning Peter Walsh are external, since the events remembered have happened before the beginning of the novel. As we can see in the extracts above, Woolf uses the third person narrative, an omniscient narrator<sup>15</sup>, who “reads” the minds of the characters, instead of a “camera” point of view, or the dramatic mode<sup>16</sup> used for example by Hemingway in short stories such as “Hills Like White Elephants”, Henry James in *The Awkward Age* (1899), *The Europeans* (1878) and *The Sacred Fount* (1901), as well as John Dos Passos in *The Big Money* (1936) (see Friedman 1975, 155). Woolf's choice of multiple selective omniscience is well justified because the author-narrator has a definite function in the story, i.e. to bring “irony, compassion, philosophical range and depth” (cf. *ibid.* 157) or psychology of the characters into the narrative. The *prolepses* in *Mrs Dalloway* are especially important for the narrative structure of the novel. Mostly they are short comments concerning the party about to take place in the evening, whereas the *analepses* are long passages acting as essential descriptions of the lives of the characters.

The reminders of the past in Woolf's novels are similar to the *catalysts* – a device which Marcel Proust used in his fiction to turn the attention to past events. There is another name for this device referring to its initiator: the *madeleine*<sup>17</sup>. The *madeleine* is usually a

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<sup>15</sup> Stream-of-consciousness is a subdivision of selective omniscience. Woolf uses a mixture of first and third person, present and past tense.

<sup>16</sup> In the dramatic mode the author and the narrator have been eliminated, as well as the depiction of mental states. The information given to the reader is limited to what the characters do and say, their appearance and setting resemble stage directions (Friedman 1975, 155).

<sup>17</sup> *Madeleine* or catalyst differs from leitmotif, since it is not a thing repeated in the narrative.

thing or an object (Church 1963, 84, 89). In Virginia Woolf's fiction also a place, a person or somebody's words may function as a *madeleine*. For example, in *Mrs Dalloway* (1975, 66) the words "the death of the soul" start a process of remembrance in Peter Walsh's mind. The words make him move back in time to events and people associated to those words. This is an example of an external *analepsis*, since the events remembered are outside the story-time of the novel.

In *To the Lighthouse*, *analepses* and *prolepses* do not have a great significance and their frequency is quite small compared to *Mrs Dalloway* where they are an essential element of the narration. However, the two major sections of *To the Lighthouse* called "The Window" and "The Lighthouse" could be thought to represent a *prolepsis* and an *analepsis* symbolically. In "The Window" -chapter the characters are positively looking forward to the future and James Ramsay supported by his mother is planning an expedition to the lighthouse, which could be a metaphor of light, love, future and the continuity of life. On the other hand, in "The Lighthouse" -section all the characters are looking back to the times when Mrs Ramsay was still alive. Especially Lily Briscoe seems to be stuck with the past, the happy times which she is trying to capture again in her painting. With the memory of Mrs Ramsay and her magic skill to understand life and unify people, Lily is able to find the missing element in her painting, an element that makes it complete.

There are some occasional smaller *analepses* in *To the Lighthouse*, for example, when William Bankes returns to the past while looking at the faraway sand hills, which function as a *madeleine* for an external *analepsis* concerning Mr Ramsay and himself:

Looking at the far sand hills, William Bankes thought of Ramsay: thought of a road in Westmorland, thought of Ramsay striding along a road by himself hung round with

that solitude which seemed to be his natural air. But this was suddenly interrupted, William Bankes remembered (and this must refer to some actual incident), by a hen, straddling her wings out in protection of a covey of little chicks, upon which Ramsay, stopping, pointed his stick and said 'Pretty — pretty', an odd illumination into his heart, Bankes had thought it, which showed his simplicity, his sympathy with humble things; but it seemed to him as if their friendship had ceased, there, on that stretch of road. After that, Ramsay had married. (TL, 25)

This *analepsis* leads William Bankes to speculations about his relationship with Mr Ramsay that changed after the incident in Westmorland. This is probably the reason for the survival of the memory in William Bankes's memory. The most effective *analepsis* is at the end of the novel when Lily, while finishing her painting in the same place where she started it ten years earlier, relives the past moment with the Ramsays and their guests. The painting functions as a catalyst for the memory. This scene is a good example of Virginia Woolf's skilful and smooth changes between the time dimensions, the movement of thoughts from the present reality to the past image and back again: the image rises naturally from the situation. The magic aura of this image from the past stresses the theme of the whole novel: that people and events remain in other people's minds, and even longer in their works, particularly in art. We may think that art is the revival of the past, and Lily's painting is the revival of the past moment on the beach: "And as she dipped into the blue paint, she dipped into the past there. Now Mrs Ramsay got up, she remembered." (TL 195).

In Woolf's last novel *Between the Acts* there are not many *prolepses*, but there are quite a few *analepses* which are important thematically. The themes of the novel are artistic creation, time and the impossibility of unity between people. The *analepses* in the novel are

either imaginative reconstructions of the past (p. 10-11) while reading *The Outline of History*, as Mrs Swithin does, or childhood experiences relived:

Tempted by the sight to continue her imaginative reconstruction of the past, Mrs Swithin paused; she was given to increasing the bounds of the moment by flights into past or future; or sidelong down corridors and alleys; but she remembered her mother — her mother in that very room rebuking her. 'Don't stand gaping, Lucy, or the wind'll change...' (BA, 11)

The choice of historical periods in the pageant, as David Leon Higdon points out (1977, 126), were probably inspired by H. G. Wells who had written *The Outline of History* which Mrs Swithin reads. In *Between the Acts* there are also some *madeleines*, e.g. when Mrs Swithin is called by her nickname. When she hears the name Cindy she plunges into her childhood memories (p. 19-20). Another *madeleine* for Mrs Swithin is the word 'fish', which again reanimates her childhood.

Especially in the above-analyzed three novels, *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *Between the Acts* Virginia Woolf uses *analepses* and *prolepses*, because they give expression to the Bergsonian *durée*, in other words, time in the human mind where the temporal dimensions of present, past and future are fused in the continual flow of impressions and memories. *The Waves*, on the other hand, is not made up of movement between different temporal dimensions, but its time is a chronological passage from childhood to maturity of the six protagonists, their minds being followed simultaneously. As Eric Warner points out, despite the sustained present tense, the characters in the novel are "linked to a clear temporal progression, a steady sense of time passing" (1987, 92). The devices used in the novel to mark the progression of time are the interludes which may be seen as metaphors of the

different ages in the characters lives. But Woolf uses in the novel also the “repetitive” mode, as Warner notes (ibid. 95), which in Gérard Genette’s terminology is placed under the category of frequency. In *The Waves* this means that an event is told more than once, for instance, at the farewell dinner for Percival in the fourth section the six characters return to their past and re-tell the occurrences of their earlier narrative (ibid.).

Time is a fundamental element especially in the cinema, because it presents a continuum of images and sounds composing a story the same way as a novel does with words and in both art forms the retrospection of past events and anticipation of the future are normal practices. Jacques Aumont (1994, 183) points out that time in cinema is the present tense, the “now-time,” which is what the psychological novel (or the stream-of-consciousness novel) strives to depict as well. When we are looking for parallels between literary and cinematic techniques in the representation of temporal dimensions, the most obvious analogy for Genette’s *analepsis* is flashback, a term used often in literary analysis as well. Because images have no grammatical tenses, as Moris Beja explains (1979, 272), in movies flashbacks are often introduced by slow dissolves or by ripples across the screen or other visual announcements. In some modern films, however, the past may be introduced with quick cuts, for instance in films such as Alain Resnais’ *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959) and *Last Year in Marienbad* (1961), Fellini’s *8 1/2* and Bergman’s *Wild Strawberries* (ibid.). When a cinematic device such as flashback is adapted for literature, as Morris Beja explains, the effect is often quite different. In a novel a flashback may be handled so that we are aware of its being an element out of the past. This is more difficult to accomplish in a film, because images have no tenses and therefore they are always in the present tense (ibid. 79).

Discussing *Jacob’s Room* (1922) Adrian Velicu notices that Woolf, when trying to cover more time, places and events in fewer words, uses a technique of leaping from one

moment and place to another, without explanatory links (1985, 31-31). Velicu sees in this device a connection to a cinematic technique of *montage*.<sup>18</sup> According to Yrjö Hosiainluoma (2003, 597), montage is in particular a feature of impressionistic literary works such as Woolf's *Jacob's Room*. Like Velicu points out, *Jacob's Room* is a novel in which practically nothing is revealed about Jacob's mind, unlike in Woolf's subsequent novels where the main characters' experiences are followed through their own thoughts (ibid. 31). In this kind of novelistic technique it is more natural to use sudden cuts or montage because the protagonist is observed from outside by other characters or the narrator. *Jacob's Room's* is not constructed by means of the *analepsis/flashback* device for the simple reason that we are not reading the thoughts of the protagonist and therefore memories belonging to mind time are irrelevant. Usually in *Jacob's Room* a sudden cut in the narration is marked typographically by a blank line:

She was on her way to sit to Nick Branham the painter.

She sat in a flowered Spanish shawl, holding in her hand a yellow novel. (JR, 111)

However, some quick *analepses* and anticipative passages can be detected in *Jacob's Room* as well (cf. Blackstone, p. 58; Velicu 35), but it is especially the one-day novels *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *Between the Acts* depicting the present moment that more

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<sup>18</sup> Many critics who have examined connections between James Joyce's art and film have noticed his use of a technique extraordinarily close to what film critics and theorists mean by montage. However, many novelists used a similar technique even before the invention of film, for example Flaubert in the scene at the fair in *Madame Bovary* and Charles Dickens, as well as Lawrence Sterne already in the eighteenth century (Beja 1979, 75) Sergei Eisenstein became famous for his innovative montage technique. In Eisenstein's montage technique some fundamental aspects remained constant throughout his career. Firstly, montage always involved the juxtaposition of disparate elements. Secondly, these juxtaposed elements were the techniques of the film medium and they were all equal in their potential as montage devices: sound, colour, depth, editing rhythm, etc. (Thompson 1981, 5).

frequently use *analepses* and *prolepses*. In these novels the transition between the temporal dimensions, e.g. from the present to the past, takes usually place by means of introductory words by the narrator, which correspond to visual announcements in films. For example in *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf uses phrases like “she could remember” (p. 9), or she makes a transition by means of a *madeleine*, which in the following extract is the words “the death of the soul”:

‘The death of the soul.’ The words attached themselves to some scene, to some room, to some past he had been dreaming of. It became clearer; the scene, the room, the past he had been dreaming of.

It was at Bourton that summer, early in the nineties, when he was so passionately in love with Clarissa. There were a great many people there, laughing and talking, sitting round a table after tea, and the room was bathed in yellow light and full of cigarette smoke. (MD, 66)

There have been attempts also in films to depict stream-of-consciousness, for example by the French Impressionists, who conveyed discontinuity by telling the story as a series of brief flashes. René Clair’s *Entr’Acte* (1924) contains impressionist montage sequences. (Valkola 1993, 47) A common conception is that the novel is more appropriate to the presentation of inner mental states than the film, which, on the other hand, depicts better what people do and say. Likewise, it has been claimed that mental states — memory, dream, imagination — cannot be as adequately represented by film as by language. According to this conception film cannot render thought and thought externalized in space is no longer thought. Morris Beja objects these claims by saying that putting words on pages is also an act of externalization and that thought is not necessarily only verbal. (Beja 1979, 57) Indeed, it is

possible to represent mental states through images, or with a combination of all the artistic devices used in films. For instance, verbal means such as the *voice-over*<sup>19</sup>, narration, and dialogue are used to solve a fundamental limitation within the visual image, in other words, the difficulty of conveying abstract concepts. Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* uses extensively the voice-over, but it presents visually the flashbacks and silent dreams of the protagonist Isak Borg. (Ibid. 58) According to Jörn Donner (1962, 127), *Wild Strawberries* is a film in novel form, and it frees film art from conventional dramatic structure and the naturalistic development of events. The film's time conception, as Donner points out, has its roots in Strindberg, Proust, Joyce and Faulkner. Bergman's film uses interior monologue and the Bergsonian time conception, Surrealism, dreams, mind's associations and disassociations. (Ibid.)

Sergei Eisenstein, who was interested in adapting *Ulysses* into film, believed that film, even more strongly than literature, could make the associative processes of the stream of consciousness accessible, comprehensible and vivid (Beja 1979, 58). As the discussion above shows, a flexible arrangement and fusion of the past, the present and the future typical of the stream-of-consciousness novel can be accomplished also by means of different cinematic devices. Both in modernist literature and modern cinema since the 1960s there has been a trend toward seeing and representing the existence as fragmented and discontinuous. For example Alain Robbe-Grillet explains his and Alain Resnais' conception of the fragmented reality and temporal fusion in *Last Year in Marienbad* as follows: "the total cinema of our mind admits both in alternation and to the same degree the present fragments

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<sup>19</sup> *Voice-over* is the voice of a narrator, or a character who may be in the shot but who is not talking aloud, heard off-screen "over" the visuals (Beja 1979, 316).

of reality proposed by sight and hearing, and past fragments, or future fragments that are completely phantasmagoric” (Beja 1979, 76).

This fragmented narration and representation of time in film is very close to the Woolfian narrative technique. Woolf discusses in her essay “The Cinema” (1926) the possibilities of cinema to present contrasts “with a speed which the writer can only toil after in vain” (Woolf 1966b, 272). She compares film to dreams in its flexibility to present different images. When Woolf explains how “the past could be controlled, distances annihilated, and the gulfs which dislocate novels [...] could by the sameness of background, by the repetition of some scene, be smoothed away.” With these words she in fact explains the possibilities of the montage technique. The development of the new art form inspired also Bergson to compare the mechanism of our ordinary consciousness with cinema: “Le mécanisme de notre connaissance usuelle est de nature cinématographique” (Bergson 1963, 753). In his *Évolution créatrice* (*Creative Evolution*) he explains how the cinematograph creates an impression of continuous movement out of a series of static images. Likewise, the flux of images in Woolf’s novels runs fast like images in a reel of film. Sometimes the images may be freezed for a while when “time stands still,” or when a character experiences an epiphanic moment, but thereafter the flux of images continues.

The inspiration of the Bergsonian time conception can be found in modernist painting as well, even though painting is not characteristically a time-art. According to Butler (1994, 142), the idea that a work of visual art could express this kind of temporal process came to French art criticism with early Cubist painting. The Futurists’ passion for movement and change for their own sake derived from Bergson, who at that time was popular among the advanced intelligentsia of Italy (Osborne, 1981, 210). For example, the Futurists attempted in their urban visions to imply the Bergsonian processes of memory by making spatial

equivalents for psychic duration. As an example of these attempts is Luigi Russolo's painting *Memories of a Night (Ricordi di una notte)* (1911). Russolo represents memory and dream by superimposing incompatible images of an implied consciousness within the same pictorial space. The consciousness is that of a young woman whose face appears at the upper left and in profile on the right. The temporal succession in the thoughts of the woman is indicated by the rising sun above and the electric lights below. Associations and memories in her consciousness are represented by different images: a group of men, a running horse, shadowy houses, and elongated figures walking through the streets. (Butler 1994, 143) In my reading, the attempt to depict consciousness in this painting is clumsy and it is difficult for the spectator to understand the purposes of the artist. On the whole, the stream-of-consciousness novel and the film represent the Bergsonian free flow of consciousness and the fusion of temporal dimensions more convincingly and naturally than the Futurist painting.

The Futurists borrowed from the Cubists their techniques of interpenetrating planes and simultaneous presentation of multiple viewpoints, but they used them for the purpose of suggesting movement and change, which differed from the Cubists' original ideas (Osborne 1981, 211). It is easy to agree with Christopher Butler (1994, 152) when he says that free associationist psychology of early modernism was more important to the Futurists than the abstraction of Cubism. In Cubism the idea of simultaneity and multiple perspectives, which I will discuss in the following chapter, is more important than the representation of movement, the Bergsonian time, and the consciousness with its free order of temporal dimensions.

To conclude this discussion of the representations of the dimensions of time in Woolf and different forms of the visual arts, we may take a brief look at Joseph Frank's essay "Spatial Form in Modern Literature" (1945) where we find a connecting thought between modernist literature and painting in the lack of depth (i.e. flatness) of painting and the lack of

historical depth of modernist literature. Joseph Frank argues that “by the juxtaposition of past and present history becomes ahistorical” and “time is no longer felt an objective, causal progression with clearly marked out differences between periods” (1963, 59). With these words Frank describes modernist literary works that have the same kind of time structures as Virginia Woolf’s modernist novels, e.g. Proust, Joyce, Pound, and Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood*. In this timelessness Frank finds a parallel with the plastic arts by arguing that “just as the dimension of depth has vanished from the sphere of visual creation, so the dimension of historical depth has vanished from the content of the major works of modern literature” (ibid.). Frank explains that the act of juxtaposition eliminates “any feeling of sequence” and that “past and present are apprehended spatially.” In a similar vein, in Woolf’s modernist novels where she fuses the temporal dimensions, as we have seen in the above analysis, historical depth has disappeared in most of her modernist novels (except in *Orlando*, and to some extent in *Between the Acts*) and they may, indeed, be understood spatially, in other words, space has replaced historical time. This fusion of the past, present and future is, however, only one aspect of the spatiality in the modern novel, which I will discuss more thoroughly in the next chapter on simultaneity and multiple perspectives.

## **5. Simultaneity and Multiple Perspectives**

In the traditional novel the representation of simultaneous events and experiences is not a common practice, because the novel concentrates usually on one point of view and because the main interest of the novelist is to narrate a story. However, Flaubert’s county fair scene in *Madame Bovary* serves as an example of the representation of simultaneous perceptions in a

nineteenth century Realist novel. Joseph Frank (1963, 14-15) calls Flaubert's method cinematographic: a method in which Flaubert cuts back and forth between the various levels of action. In the modernist novel the action takes place during a short period of time, usually a day, which often entails different locations, or different consciousnesses. In the stream-of-consciousness novel there are many point of views, and usually simultaneous events or thoughts are represented. But since language is linear and proceeds in time, the writer has to invent techniques and devices to create an illusion of simultaneity of several incidents or simultaneous thoughts by different people.

Different forms of art — poetry, prose, painting and cinema — represent simultaneous events or experiences, and this is not just a modernist preoccupation, although the interest in simultaneist techniques is central to the modernism of the pre-war period. According to Christopher Butler (1994, 158), the simultaneist techniques of modernism aimed at disrupting the conventional view of reality by causing surprise. Within modernism the interpretation of collective states of consciousness grew in importance under the influence of the sociology of Durkheim and the depth psychology of Jung and his theories of the archetypes of the collective unconscious. In modernist poetry states and events beyond the speaker can be presented as if they were in simultaneous interpenetration, independent of any single source of perception or observation. (Ibid. 158-9)

Also Virginia Woolf has done experiments on simultaneist techniques in some of her novels, perhaps in *Mrs Dalloway* they are best exemplified. Sue Roe (2000, 179) also points out that “Virginia Woolf was working towards a kind of simultaneism in *Jacob's Room* by opening out contrasting glimpses, one after another.” Virginia Woolf, as Roe notes (ibid.) found a narrative equivalent for simultaneism in Dorothy Richardson's novel *Pilgrimage*. In a

review of Richardson's book *Tunnel* Woolf admires her method of writing, the depiction of Miriam Henderson's consciousness:

The reader is not provided with a story; he is invited to embed himself in Miriam Henderson's consciousness, to register one after another, and one on top of another, words, cries, shouts, notes of a violin, fragments of lectures, to follow these impressions as they flicker through Miriam's mind [...] (Woolf 1979, 189).

Woolf describes in the review also the simultaneity of different places in the consciousness of Miriam: "We find ourselves in the dentist's room, in the street, in the lodging-house bedroom frequently and convincingly; but never, or only for a tantalizing second, in the reality which underlies these appearances" (ibid. 190) In this depiction of Miriam's consciousness in Richardson's novel the reader is in a sense in several places simultaneously when the different scenes of different places intermingle in the character's consciousness. This is one case of simultaneity. Woolf uses in *Mrs Dalloway* another type of simultaneity, which is the simultaneity of several characters' experiences of the same events by means of juxtaposition of the different consciousnesses.

The idea of simultaneity, however, may have come to Woolf from the French painter Jacques Raverat who suggested it in his letters to her by the time she was writing *Mrs Dalloway*. In their correspondence they discussed how difficult it is to express simultaneity in literature, which is easily available to painters. Raverat saw the difficulty about writing in its linearity: "Surely, when you are writing you are not clearly conscious on Page 259 of what there was on Page 31? But perhaps that's only because I'm not a writer, & in fact do not naturally think in words" (quoted in Bell 1982, 106). Raverat suggested to Woolf painterly ideas of simultaneity so that she could avoid what she called the "formal railway line of

sentence” (see Bell 1982, 106; Higdon 1977, 128). Cubism, which questions the fixed viewpoint, is an example of the use of simultaneism in painting. According to Sue Roe, cubism challenged the old idea that the viewer’s eye, when looking at a painting, moves through time. Instead, seeing becomes incompatible with the idea of an image produced “instantly,” as in photography. (Roe 2000, 190)

In literature, the easiest way to indicate that two or several events or experiences are simultaneous is to use a narrator who is telling the reader that the events take place simultaneously. But since the stream-of-consciousness novel depicts the inner reality by trying to give an impression that there is no narrator,<sup>20</sup> simultaneity must be expressed by means of different literary devices. One of these devices in *Mrs Dalloway* (pp. 16-20) is the use of the motor car of a royal person, or the Prime Minister (his identity is unknown). The car moves in different parts of London and the people gathered along the streets watch it passing. The novelist changes the focus from person to person, or rather from mind to mind, and because all these people watching the car have observations and thoughts about the car, the reader knows that these events or thoughts are taking place simultaneously. An effect of simultaneity of several events can be created in cinema with a moving camera, which in film technique is known by the name *camera drive*, or by means of montage, in other words, by showing alternately different persons watching the car proceeding. In films, however, the

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<sup>20</sup> The point of view used by Virginia Woolf in her stream-of-consciousness novels has been called “multiple selective omniscience” by Norman Friedman. This technique gives the impression that the character is talking in the first person and in the present tense, although grammatically the text may be in the third person, past tense. (Cf. Friedman 1975, 152-153). Another term frequently used of Virginia Woolf’s writing technique is indirect interior monologue (cf. Humphrey, 1955, p. 30) or narrated monologue (cf. Uspensky 1983, 42). Woolf combines also other techniques of the stream of consciousness with indirect interior monologue; mostly it is combined with direct monologue and in *The Waves* she uses the soliloquy as a stream-of-consciousness technique (Humphrey, 1955, 29-30, 37).

spectator cannot “see” the thoughts unless the director uses other means besides images, such as the *voice-over*, to *tell* the characters’ thoughts.

Since *Mrs Dalloway* has two protagonists, Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith, who do not meet each other in the novel, they have to be presented separately and depicted in different places at the beginning of the novel. But because Woolf wants to draw parallels<sup>21</sup> between these two characters and to show them living in London at the same time, walking the same streets but not meeting each other, Woolf places them on the same location to observe the same thing, the passing of an important vehicle. Through this enlarged description of a short moment, which is in fact a depiction of different consciousnesses, she offers her reader several points of view of the incident instead of only one in the manner of the traditional novel. Critics have been eager to read thematic meanings in this parallelism of Clarissa and Septimus. It is true that Clarissa and Septimus have many things in common: it has been pointed out that they both cite Shakespeare (Jensen 1983, 171), but what is more important is that they are both disappointed in their love lives. According to Emily Jensen (*ibid.*), Septimus has lost his loved one, a man called Evans, and with it his ability to feel and to love. Moreover, he has become shell-shocked in the war. But also Clarissa is suffering in her loveless marriage, because as a young woman she was in love with a woman called Sally Seton, but she chose to marry Richard Dalloway for the sake of social norms. In her outwardly happy, well-to-do life Clarissa, who leads a loveless life, may be almost as desperate as Septimus who ends his life by jumping out of the window. We may draw a parallel between Septimus’s physical suicide and Clarissa’s metaphoric suicide, her loveless life with Richard Dalloway. (*Ibid* 162-179)

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<sup>21</sup> Virginia Woolf intended Septimus to be Mrs Dalloway’s double (see Velicu 1985, 44).

The technique of observing an object or event from many angles simultaneously is also a device used by the Cubist painters. The Cubist painter, however, is more interested in the depicted object, e.g. a vase or a man, than in the viewers of the object, whereas in *Mrs Dalloway*, the observers of the motorcar and their different interpretations of the situation are more important and interesting from the reader's point of view than the motorcar. The painter is interested in showing the different sides of the vase or the man, its front and back, how it looks from the ground and from the sky, all at the same time.

As Boris Uspensky (1983, 2) notes, in painting and in other visual arts point of view is primarily connected with perspective. In European painting since the Renaissance linear perspective, a single static point of view, has been a norm. In visual art, point of view refers to the viewing position of the spectator of a work of art, which may be internal or external. The internal observer is located within the represented world and the external observer is located outside the represented world. In the case of linear perspective the observer is looking at the picture from the outside, the picture is seen as a view from a window, and thus the point of view of the spectator may be considered as corresponding to that of the artist. On the other hand, in ancient representations and medieval art the artist placed himself in the centre of the represented space. (Ibid. 134-135) Mieke Bal uses the term *focalization* and *focalizer* in analyzing visual images by means of narratological concepts. According to Bal (1997b, 146), "focalization is the relationship between the 'vision,' the agent that sees, and that which is seen." The focalizer is the point from which the elements are viewed (ibid.). In narratology focalizer is not necessarily identified by the narrator, but it is possible to have also a character-bound or a spectator-bound focalizer in literary or visual narratives. Like Gérard Genette (cf. 1972, 206-7), also Bal distinguishes between internal and external focalization

(ibid. 148). According to her, in internal focalization a character participates in the fabula<sup>22</sup> as an actor, in external focalization an anonymous agent situated outside the fabula is functioning as a focalizer. Tutta Palin (2004, 286) points out that in a representational visual image focalization need not be based on a character's gaze. Also other elements such as perspective and the direction of light may focus the spectator's gaze and in a picture there may be more than one focalizer (ibid.).

Also in modern art the distortions of linear perspective is a common practice, and like ancient art, modernist art often represents the depicted views or objects flat. In a painting it is difficult to depict simultaneity of experiences of different people by means of perspective, whereas in literature you may create an illusion of simultaneity by changing the point of view and referring in the narrative (or narrated monologue) to the same point of time and/or the same place, for example as it has been done in *Mrs Dalloway*. As the Cubist examples above show, different perspectives in pictorial art are manifested mostly in the forms of the depicted objects and in the position of the spectator or artist.

In Margaret Church's (1963, 92) opinion the car in *Mrs Dalloway* is a unifying device which relates all the characters of the novel. On the other hand, it is also a means to indicate simultaneity of events and thoughts, and the sameness of place: the unity of time and space. In *Mrs Dalloway* (pp. 23-4) there is another device comparable to the motor car: an aeroplane flying over London which the characters are watching. The aeroplane scene is even a better example of a technique of creating an effect of simultaneity, because all the characters are able to see it exactly at the same time in the sky, even in places distant from each other. The aeroplane again functions as a unifier of people who are watching it, for it

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<sup>22</sup> A fabula is a series of logically or chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors. A story is a fabula which is presented in a certain manner. (Bal 1997b, 5)

gives them all a new experience and wakes them up from their daily routines. The aeroplane, like the motor car, besides symbolizing people's unity is also a structural device marking simultaneity. In her novels Virginia Woolf often dispels the isolation and loneliness of her characters by making them share a common experience. For example, this incident of the aeroplane writing with smoke some message in the sky gives the people simultaneously some kind of hope or promise, an answer to their secret wishes.

Michael Whithworth proposes (2000, 146) that the aeroplane scene unites a disparate group of characters and raises the issue of the nature of the crowd in the urban environment. And most importantly, as Whithworth explains, the aeroplane scene suggests many perspectives that are relevant to Woolf's modernism: intellectual, technological, social and literary. According to Whithworth (ibid.), the aeroplane suggests that modernism was also a response to technological innovation, as the following extract from *Mrs Dalloway* shows with its references to Einstein, speculation, mathematics, the Mendelian theory:

Away and away the aeroplane shot, till it was nothing but a bright spark; an aspiration; a concentration; a symbol (so it seemed to Mr Bentley, vigorously rolling his strip of turf at Greenwich) of man's soul; of his determination, thought Mr Bentley, sweeping round the cedar tree, to get outside his body, beyond his house, by means of thought, Einstein, speculation, mathematics, the Mendelian theory [...] (MD, 32)

The aeroplane and the car create effects or illusions of simultaneity, because in literature you cannot really present various events or experiences simultaneously due to the fact that language and reading are consecutive by their nature (cf. previous chapter). In painting, however, it is easier to create an illusion of simultaneity, because its primary illusion is space. The spectator of a painting is able to perceive the whole painting almost

simultaneously and also the events in one scene of a painting are interpreted by the viewer to be simultaneous. In painting it is as difficult as in literature to represent various incidents or scenes taking place at the same time. For that reason in painting, too, you have to create illusions of simultaneity by different devices. In Cubism the interest in simultaneity lies not in presenting two or more events or persons simultaneously, but in the observation of the spectator, his possibility to see an object from various perspectives simultaneously. This is of course impossible in reality, but the Cubist painting at least attempted to depict the world realistically through an intellectualized vision.<sup>23</sup> According to the ideas of Cubism, the spectator of a Cubist painting is in movement; he/she perceives the object from all possible angles while he/she is moving around it. You may argue, however, that the way in which the Cubists depicted their objects is far from realistic, as Joseph Frank does by noting that in the work of Braque, the Fauves and the Cubists the naturalistic principle has lost its dominance (Frank 1963, 28).

The fragmented, distorted figures of Picasso and Braque do not correspond to our conception of realistic art created according to the principle of verisimilitude and they do not look like the objects they represent. The Cubists wanted to challenge the conventional Western notion of art and the Renaissance perspective, which according to them had been considered the only alternative of “looking” at the world. The same way as the Cubists, modernist literature was breaking the centuries-old conventions and self-evident truths of narration, point of view, language and style. However, Joseph Frank (1963, 28) argues that Proust and Joyce are still loyal to the naturalistic principle the same way as for instance

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<sup>23</sup> The Cubists represent real objects and depict them as they are known, but it is clear that physical perception does not function this way. The Cubists memorize different sides and perspectives of the object and depict them all simultaneously. Thus Cubism is not an optical and Impressionistic realism, but a conceptual realism. (Chilvers and Osborne 1988, 129)

Cézanne, presenting their characters in terms of commonplace details, descriptions of circumstance and environment usually regarded as verisimilar. Similarly, we may argue that Virginia Woolf in most of her novels is following the principle of verisimilitude, but in her case this is not the whole truth, for in *Orlando* fantastic elements break the naturalistic principle.

In painting, according to Rakel Kallio (1991, 660), there were several different attempts to represent simultaneity besides Cubism. Even a term called *simultanism* was coined by Robert Delaunay for his colour method by which he tried in 1912-1913 to create impressions of space and forms in a picture. This period is known in art history by the name Orfism. Delaunay borrowed the term from M.-E. Chevreuil, whose work on colour harmonies and simultaneous contrasts has been a guide to Post-Impressionists as well. The idea of Delaunay was that the form and movement in a picture should be based entirely on colours and colour contrasts, which would be observed simultaneously. (Ibid. 660)

On the other hand, the Futurists understood by simultaneity in painting the simultaneous depiction of memories and the present moment in the same picture, i.e. the Bergsonian *durée*. The Futurists exalted the dynamism and simultaneity of modern life, which was an interest shared widely in the milieu of the avant-garde with the rise of new technologies and forms of mass-entertainment — the automobile, aviation, electric lighting, cinema, cycling, team sports (Cottingham 1998, 47-48). In *Mrs Dalloway* there are signs of this interest in the urban dynamism and modern technologies (automobiles and aeroplanes) as well as the interest in the depiction of simultaneity, as the analysis above shows. The meaning of the term ‘simultaneity’ for the Futurist painters in 1912 was “the simultaneity of states of mind in a work of art” and the picture was supposed to be “the synthesis of what one remembers and what one sees” (ibid. 48), which is very close to the aims of the

stream-of-consciousness writers and for example *Mrs Dalloway* exemplifies amazingly well these purposes.

Interestingly, there is a similarity between *Mrs Dalloway* and Robert Delaunay's painting *Tour Eiffel* from 1910 (painted much earlier than *Mrs Dalloway* appeared), a subject to which he returned many times. Both works emphasizing the collective metropolitan identity present an object simultaneously visible to all inhabitants of the city, the Eiffel Tower in Paris and the aeroplane in London. In *Mrs Dalloway* there are also other objects that create collective, simultaneous experience for the city dwellers: the motor car and the public clocks in London, especially Big Ben, whose sound is heard simultaneously by all Londoners. The clocks are used structurally in the novel to indicate the passage of time, to notify the reader what time of day it is. On the other hand, the clocks indicate that different people are in different places at the same time. The next passage exemplifies the simultaneity of the experiences of Clarissa and Septimus which the announcement of time by Big Ben emphasizes:

It was precisely twelve o'clock; twelve by Big Ben; whose stroke was wafted over the northern part of London; blent with that of the other clocks, mixed in a thin ethereal way with the clouds and wisps of smoke and died up there among the seagulls — twelve o'clock struck as Clarissa Dalloway laid her green dress on her bed, and Warren Smiths walked down Harley Street. Twelve was the hour of their appointment. Probably, Rezia thought, that was Sir William Bradshaw's house with the grey motor car in front of it. (The leaden circles dissolved in the air). (MD, 104)

Besides the symbol of collective experience, the Eiffel Tower, there is in Delaunay's picture a painterly issue concerning simultaneity that has a close affinity with Woolf's structural

experimentation. Both works are juxtaposing different perspectives and thus attempting to create the reader/spectator an illusion of simultaneity. The distortions of perspective which *Tour Eiffel* manifested were Delaunay's response to the ideas of the Futurists and the poetry of Jules Romain, who also attempted to capture the immediate experiences of the teeming metropolis that bound its inhabitants together (Cottington 1998, 48-52). In *Tour Eiffel* the tower is seen simultaneously from different perspectives: the top of the tower is seen from the air and the base is seen from the ground. The juxtaposed views suggest its simultaneous visibility to all the city's inhabitants. In the *Tour Eiffel* painting the issue of perspective may be interpreted as concerning multiple internal viewers who are looking at the represented object from different perspectives. Here the focus is not only on the depicted object, i.e. the Eiffel Tower, but also on the viewers or the simultaneity of their viewing experience.

Delaunay, however, was not the first to present such perspectival juxtapositions in painting. Picasso and Braque had already in their paintings of 1907-8 used similar devices their aim being most of all to challenge the conventionality of painting, even though a contemporary critic and artist Jean Metzinger understood them to represent Bergson's notion of duration, the successive and the simultaneous (see Cottington 1998, 52). The Cubists were not, however, so much interested in the collectivist ideas or philosophical aspects as with purely painterly interests and experimentation with form. In Woolf's work both these concerns are combined: she shows an interest in both the "collective experiences" with philosophical, Bergsonian connections and formal experimentation.

In *To the Lighthouse* the concept of simultaneity has symbolic connotations. Structural as well as symbolic simultaneity can be detected in the third part of the novel. This part of the book is divided into thirteen chapters. In the first two chapters Lily Briscoe, Mr Ramsay and his two children Cam and James have gathered together in the deserted Ramsay house after

ten years' absence and separation from each other, and Mr Ramsay together with his children is planning an expedition to the lighthouse situated on a tiny island.

The eleven subsequent chapters of the "The Lighthouse" section of the novel compose a description of simultaneity by juxtaposing two experiences and two locations. In every second chapter Mr Ramsay and his children are in a boat on the sea approaching the lighthouse, and respectively in every second chapter Lily Briscoe is on the shore finishing her painting, i.e. reaching her aim, her "lighthouse." This juxtaposition technique is familiar from cinematic language, i.e. changing the view alternately by means of montage. The culmination of the two juxtaposed experiences in the "lighthouse" episode is the simultaneity of the reaching of the lighthouse by Mr Ramsay with his children and the completion of the painting by Lily Briscoe. Perhaps Virginia Woolf has not planned this simultaneity only for the sake of formal experimentation, for in this simultaneity it is easy to see symbolic connotations. The simultaneous reaching of the lighthouse and the completion of the painting may be understood as symbolizing the sameness and parallelism between life (symbolized by the reaching of the lighthouse) and art (symbolized by the completion of the painting). Their parallelism is further emphasized by the similarity of Lily's two comments in the last short chapter, when she, while looking at the lighthouse, realizes that Mr Ramsay has reached the lighthouse:

'He has landed,' she said aloud. 'It is finished.' (TL, 236)

This comment is a reference to Mr Ramsay and the reaching of the lighthouse, but with the following comment she refers to her painting:

It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision. (TL, 237)

This symbolical parallelism and simultaneity could mean that Lily has finally found herself as an artist, understood the relationship between life and art, their inseparability, life (the memory of Mrs Ramsay) giving a vision to art. At the same time also Mr Ramsay realizes that Mrs Ramsay was right: one should be more understanding towards other people. So Mr Ramsay finally after all these years discards his self-centered attitude and consents to go to the lighthouse with his children.

In *Between the Acts* there are further connotations of simultaneity. It is a matter of interpretation whether you consider the fantasy events of the play and the watching experience by the audience two simultaneous events. In a way the audience is living in the world of the play, but on the other hand, the watchers are living in their private worlds simultaneously as they are entering into the events of the play. The title of the novel itself, *Between the Acts*, already suggests two worlds, the world between the acts and the acts themselves. Structurally Woolf indicates simultaneity by juxtaposing parts of the play with the remarks or thoughts of the members of the audience. This juxtaposition could also suggest that in people there exist simultaneously two worlds: concrete reality and imagination.

This kind of simultaneity differs from the ones in *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, where there are two or more events disconnected from one another, situated in different locations, whereas in *Between the Acts* the experiences take place at the same place. However, there is a symbolic meaning in this simultaneity as well. Since the play represents different

phases of history, the simultaneity of different dimensions of time, the coexistence of the past and the present could also be read as the Bergsonian *durée*.

*Between the Acts* has a loose structure in comparison with *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*. James Naremore (1973, 220) has pointed out how the idiosyncratic and artful transitions that can be found everywhere in *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* are absent in *Between the Acts*. Instead, in Naremore's opinion (ibid.), it has a disjointed character which is characteristic of modernist classics such as *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses*. *Between the Acts* (like *Jacob's Room*) is composed of fragments, small scenes that are put together in a seemingly haphazard way, as if there was no advanced plan by the author, and so they resemble more real life than works of art. In *Between the Acts* Woolf cuts from person to person before the play begins, during the performance, and after the curtain falls. She uses in the novel the same kind of fragmentary montage technique that is a common practice in films. Woolf and the films both show the reader/viewer small episodes depicting the characters' lives, dialogues or thoughts taking place simultaneously in different places.

In *Between the Acts* Woolf presents again her idea of unity between people. The audience of the pageant is supposed to share a common experience and find harmony by watching the play together, at least for a moment, before they split up again. This attempt to create a feeling of unity, however, proves to be unsuccessful. The director of the play Miss La Trobe calls it a failure, because the audience does not understand the message or meaning of the play. The writer and director of the play may be understood as the *alter ego* of Virginia

Woolf herself,<sup>24</sup> since in all her novels Woolf has been looking for unity between people and in this last novel she as a writer may be thought to fail in this respect as well. Alex Zwerdling (1986, 312) supports this reading by stating that it is “a distortion to read *Between the Acts* as essentially celebratory work affirming unity and continuity.” The loose, fragmentary structure of the novel fits well with the thought that Woolf has lost her belief in the possibility of unity and spiritual connection between people. The novel is written on the eve of the Second World War, which confirms the reading that unity is impossible in a world where people are going to destroy each other. The words “orts, scraps and fragments” uttered in the play are all that Isa remembers of the play, and also the reader’s impression of *Between the Acts* is “orts, scraps and fragments” after closing the book. The unity which Woolf had been looking for in most of her previous novels and is still looking for in this last novel (or is she?) is more like a wish that will remain unaccomplished.

In *The Waves* as well we may find cases of simultaneity, for example a simultaneity of different time structures. The novel has a twofold structure: on the one hand, it is organized by the principle of one day, on the other hand, it is the description of a lifetime of six persons. The interludes describing nature and the movements of the sun all put together cover the span of one day, while the rest of the text between these interludes covers the lifetime of the characters from childhood to old age. There are correspondences between these two time structures, i.e. early morning in nature corresponds to childhood in human life and evening equals old age. This structure of the novel emphasizes the fact that people have simultaneously two cycles of time on which they are dependent. There is yet another type of

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<sup>24</sup> Another connection to Woolf as a writer, as Pamela J. Transue notes (1989, 176), is the fact that Miss La Trobe falls into depression and despair when the performance is over, like Woolf did after finishing her novels. Also Sue Roe (1990, 160) claims that in the character of Miss La Trobe there is much in common with Woolf, for example, in her determination to break new artistic ground, her compulsion to innovate and her intense personal involvement in her work.

simultaneity in the novel: the six major characters are approximately the same age and live their lives also at the same time, side by side. Virginia Woolf meant these six characters to be one (see Velicu 1985, 89) stressing the sameness and unity of human experience. She tells the lives of these characters through their thoughts, by means of soliloquies with very little insertions by the narrator (only the comments usual in plays and dialogues, i.e. “said Susan“). The narrative creates a schizophrenic feeling in the reader’s mind, because all the thoughts of the six persons are intermingled in such a way that it is impossible to form a clear picture of their lives and their characters. Woolf seems to say that people have two different realities simultaneously: the detachedness of the individual mind and the connection with the community of other people, which both make up the human experience of life:

We have come together (from the North, from the South, from Susan’s farm, from Louis’ house of business) to make one thing, not enduring — for what endures? — but seen by many eyes simultaneously. There is a red carnation in that vase. A single flower as we sat here waiting, but now a seven-sided flower, many-petalled, red, puce, purple-shaded, stiff with silver-tinted leaves — a whole flower to which every eye brings its own contribution. (W, 85)

*The Waves* offers the reader six different viewpoints, six different aspects of life. It is in a sense like a Cubist painting, which enables the spectator to see different sides of the represented object, with the difference that in a Cubist painting it may be assumed that there is involved only one focalizer whose intellectualized vision is represented in the painting. In *The Waves*, on the contrary, there are six “focalizers” and six different “visions” of the world. *The Waves* and a Cubist painting have in common the fragmentation of form, the juxtaposition of forms and images in space. For the spectator a Cubist painting is difficult to understand as a representation of real objects or people, and the reader may have problems in

imagining or visualizing *The Waves*, because both works are conceptualized art, or art for art's sake: they both approach "abstract art" in which meaning comes chiefly through aesthetic form.

The Cubist painting (Picasso, Braque, Villon, Metzinger) depicts external reality, objects and their structural relations, while *The Waves* describes inner reality of the characters. There were, however, exceptions to the Cubist practices, for instance Marcel Duchamp depicted subjects as he experienced them in his inner world. Duchamp took his subjects from his own life; they were memories or fantasized events. (Hautamäki 1997, 21) Like Woolf, Duchamp was interested in mind time or experienced time in the Bergsonian sense. Duchamp made a distinction between a picture's *appearance* and inner *apparition*, and sought for a suitable technique to present his apparitions, but had to admit that it is difficult to express them in a painting (ibid. 21-22). According to Irmeli Hautamäki (ibid. 21), in his Cubist self-portraits *Nu (esquisse), jeune homme triste dans un train* (1911-1912) and *Nu descendant l'escalier* (1912) Duchamp argued against the Cubists. The Cubists' conception of time differs from Duchamp's: in their art conception the spectator is in movement picking different aspects and making observations of the object and then combining them in the picture. Thus the painting has several perspectival vanishing points, instead of only one. In Duchamp's pictures the method is reverse: the spectator stays still while the subject is in movement. There is no longer a perspectival, pictorial space in the painting. Duchamp's Cubist self-portraits imitate cinema and look like Etienne-Jules Marey's time photograph series depicting for example the movements of a running person. (Ibid.) In Duchamp's paintings and Marey's photographs there is yet another interpretation of the notion of simultaneity: the simultaneity of movements which are "frozen" and made visible in the picture.

The *collage* technique<sup>25</sup> used in paintings, photographs and films is a method of representing simultaneous events or phenomena in the same painting. In films you can either juxtapose several (moving) images in a shot, or use montage to juxtapose consecutive images, thereby giving the spectator an illusion of simultaneity. When the montage technique is used in films the spectator understands easily that the juxtaposed images are supposed to be taking place at the same time, because there is action in these images. In a painting or a photomontage you have to use additional devices to indicate simultaneity of actions, for example by means of a title.

Although Woolf and other modernist writers create spatial form by using techniques of juxtaposition, montage and other literary, painterly and cinematic devices, the spatial-form narrative is also a “creation” by the reader. As Jeffrey R. Smitten (1981, 21) suggests, “spatial-form narratives place a greater burden on the reader’s synthetizing power than do more conventional temporal narratives.” The reader has to work out the syntax of the narrative and create a visual image in his/her mind in order to grasp space, the novel’s secondary illusion. According to Mikkonen (2005, 226), in spatial form the text makes the reader consider simultaneously aspects of the world or characters which have been depicted in stages. In many of Virginia Woolf’s novels fragmentation and juxtapositions create in the reader’s imagination the same kind of effects as the viewer of a painting has, for example, the reader can “perceive” simultaneously many parts of the image, and the novel is concentrating on descriptions of places and things that may be “seen” instead of plots developing in sequence. Both in modernist painting and modernist literature you can “see the view” from many perspectives at the same time. This also creates an effect of spatiality in the reader’s

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<sup>25</sup> In literature and films the term “montage” is used instead of “collage.”

mind. Especially *Mrs Dalloway* is a good example of spatial form; it not only creates the effects of space of paintings, but also those of the spatiality of films, a possibility to be simultaneously in many places. Nevertheless, literature always has to be satisfied only with a representation of space, because space is not part of its essence, i.e. the linear verbal language. Literature speaks of space, describes places, buildings, landscapes, and therefore these spaces exist only in the imagination of the writer or the reader. As Genette notes, painting is a spatial art because the representation of a painting takes place in space (i.e. the canvas). Architecture, on the other hand, does not speak of space, it actually is space. (Genette 1969, 44)

To summarize, nearly all the cases of simultaneity in Woolf's novels are part of the modernist experimentation in the form of the novel, but in Woolf's fiction these structural devices have thematic and symbolic content as well, while in the visual arts, e.g. in Cubist and Futurist works of art, the formal or technical experimentation is the main concern.

## **PART THREE THE ART OF SUGGESTION**

### **6. The Symbolic Mode**

In his article “The Language of Modernist Fiction: Metaphor and Metonymy” (1978, 483-484) David Lodge discusses Roman Jakobson’s distinction between metonymy and metaphor in literary language. Jakobson suggests that realistic writing is metonymic, whereas Romantic and Symbolist writing is metaphoric. Since modern fiction is generally thought to have a Symbolist bias, it is nearer to metaphor than metonymy. The latter in Jakobson’s theory is a characteristic feature of the traditional novel. Even the titles of the novels, as Lodge suggests, prove this to be true: the moderns favoured metaphoric or quasi-metaphoric titles, e.g. *Heart of Darkness*, *The Wings of the Dove*, *A Passage to India*, *The Rainbow*, *Parade’s End*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Ulysses*, *Finnegan’s Wake*. (Ibid.) We could add to this list of metaphoric titles Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves*, *The Voyage Out*, *Night and Day*, *Jacob’s Room*, *Between the Acts*.

According to Melvin J. Friedman, the novels of Henry James, Marcel Proust, James Conrad, William Faulkner, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf are in some sense fictional inheritances from French Symbolist poetry. The Symbolist novel, as Friedman calls the modernist novel, is characterized by fragmented narrative that is connected through images and symbols rather than exterior events. (Friedman 1981, 453) But also Symbolism and Surrealism have a common ground: they are both concerned with subjective experience and the unconscious. Virginia Woolf’s fiction has some things in common with both of these artistic movements, for instance the interest in subjectivity and inner experience. Like in

Symbolism and Surrealism, there is something inexplicable and mysterious in her novels. In Woolf's fiction you can sense the suggestiveness of Symbolism which is communicated by means of symbols and metaphors.

In the same vein as Virginia Woolf, the Symbolist painters such as Edward Munch, Paul Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh<sup>26</sup> emphasized the priority of suggestion and evocation over direct representation and explicit meaning. Her use of symbols and poetic forms is also akin to the devices used by the Symbolists. Stylistically, the Symbolist painters differed greatly. Many artists were inspired by the same kind of imagery as the Symbolist writers, for example the theme of the *femme fatale*, but Gauguin and his followers chose much more down-to-earth subjects, e.g. peasant scenes (Chilvers & Osborne 1988, 484). In fact, it is not easy to find thematic sameness for instance in the Symbolist paintings by Gustave Moreau or Odilon Redon and Virginia Woolf's fiction. The similarity lies rather in the atmosphere and modernist language than in the subjects. There is a consistent occurrence of symbols and archetypal imagery in Woolf's novels, especially in *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*.

In the visual art, according to Bonelius (2004, 27), there are two kinds of symbols: those with culturally determined fixed meanings and those with personal meanings. In older art, religious symbols have particular conventional meanings. Especially art in the Middle Ages was rich in pictorial emblems, and the paintings were read as narratives. Typical symbols in pictures with the Virgin Mary are a book symbolizing wisdom and piety, or a lily as a symbol of purity. Water in these pictures symbolizes purity and a strawberry refers to

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<sup>26</sup> Munch and van Gogh are also Expressionists and Gauguin a Synthetist, but the work of these artists has been characterized in art historical accounts also as Symbolist, although more representative of Symbolism are such artists as Odilon Redon, Gustave Moreau, Puvis de Chavannes. However, if we accept the characterization of their own Symbolist work which Gustave Moreau and August Rodin gave, i.e. "a quest for the 'inward feeling'" (Pierre 1994,151), we can call just as well Munch, Gauguin and van Gogh Symbolists, for that is an apt description of their painting.

justice. Symbolism connected to religion appears in later art as well, but conventional symbols are by no means only related to religion. The seventeenth century favoured heavy symbolism, e.g. in the *vanitas* still lifes. Their purpose was to represent the transitoriness of life with concrete imagery of extinguished candles, skulls, torn sheets of writing paper, broken columns and urns, dark colours and many other symbols referring to death. Besides conventional symbols in portraits, such as books, sheets of paper and pens referring to the learnedness of the model, also personal symbols were represented. (Ibid. 27) Also within Symbolist art, especially in paintings with theosophical and religious tones, conventional symbols have been used, but among Symbolists, too, there has been free, personal use of symbols, which in fact was the original idea in French Symbolist poetry. In his painting *Apparition* Gustave Moreau brings together symbols of castration, guilt, the soul resisting the temptations of the flesh and the spirit surviving the annihilation of the body (Pierre 1994, 151). In Odilon Redon's paintings there are symbols of a dream world unconnected with allegory, and Eugène Carrière's smoke screens symbolize the fog of emotions (ibid.).

In Virginia Woolf's novels symbols are multidimensional, ambiguous and personal like the symbols in modernist poetry and painting. An example of such an ambiguous symbol in Woolf's fiction is the lighthouse. It may be interpreted in several ways, also conventionally. In church art the symbol of a lighthouse tower is frequently used in the significance of the tower guiding with its light the "ship of life" in the right direction (Biedermann, 1993, 374). Each interpreter of Woolf's works projects his/her own interests and aspirations on them. Pamela J. Transue sees the lighthouse as a symbol of the merging of the masculine and the feminine, the phallus and the eye (1986, 91). Although Woolf herself claims that she meant nothing by the lighthouse (see Bell 1972, 106), the reader easily interprets it as a symbol. Perhaps it is because Woolf has managed to create a poetic

atmosphere of mystery around the tower that each reader wants to interpret it as a symbol of whatever he/she associates it with. N. C. Thakur (1965, 79) has interpreted the lighthouse in Woolf's novel as a symbol of the eternal and the immutable. On the other hand, Norman Friedman (1975, 349) writes that the lighthouse beam "symbolizes quite clearly that the problem of subject and object and the perception of the nature of reality is a matter of opposites held in dialectic relation." Hermione Lee (1977, 132) has yet another interpretation of the meaning of the lighthouse, even though a somewhat hesitant one: "To some extent this light is identified with Mrs Ramsay's creation of harmony and rhythm, and she herself appropriates it, as Clarissa does the bells of London, finding it expressive of certain qualities in herself and of certain moments in her experience [...]." Lee gives the lighthouse another significance identifying it as a concrete tower with Mr Ramsay. The duality of meaning is supported by the following passage of the novel:

The Lighthouse was then a silvery, misty-looking tower with a yellow eye that opened suddenly and softly in the evening. Now — James looked at the Lighthouse. He could see the white-washed rocks; the tower, stark and straight; he could see that it was barred with black and white; he could see windows in it; he could even see washing spread on the rocks to dry. So that was the Lighthouse, was it?

No, the other was also the Lighthouse. For nothing was simply one thing. The other was the Lighthouse too. (TL, 211)

Friedman (ibid. 341) warns us against too much simplification in the interpretation of Woolf's images and symbols, since the ambivalent internal states depicted in the novels are expressed through images whose symbolism is also many-sided and ambiguous. Among the many-faceted symbolic structures of the novel, Friedman has detected also universal

symbols and archetypal patterns,<sup>27</sup> for example in water imagery. The term “lighthouse,” as Avrom Fleishman suggests (1977), has a symbolic dimension when it is understood as referring not only “to the stark tower on a bare rock,” but also to the house of the family, which shining in the darkness is a place of plenitude and vitality, when Mrs Ramsay is still in the house. But when the family leaves the house in the “Time Passes” chapter it is no longer a “lighthouse”: “The lighthouse is left; the house was deserted. It was left like a shell on a sandhill to fill with dry salt grains now that life had left it” (TL 156). The water imagery functions for Lily both as a destroyer and a preserver (ibid. 353). In general, as Friedman (ibid. 347) notes, the imagery of the book may be characterized by this aspect of duality. For example, most of the time the lighthouse beam symbolizes for Mrs Ramsay peace, rest and the triumph over life, but when her mood changes the light turns pitiless and remorseless. Thus the lighthouse beam may be interpreted in many different ways according to how you read it and what things you associate with it. It could symbolize inspiration, stability, security and love, but just as well quite opposite things such as hardness and the cruelty of life.

Similarly, the symbols in *The Waves* can be interpreted in many different ways. N. C. Thakur (1965, 105) reads the waves and the sea as symbols of life and reality:

Just as ripples rise out of the sea, grow into separate waves, rise higher and bigger, then break and subside into the sea becoming part of it again, in the same manner human beings take birth as different individuals, like Bernard, Neville, Louis, Susan, Jinny,

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<sup>27</sup> Joseph L. Blotner has done a mythical reading of *To the Lighthouse*. Blotner interprets the novel by means of two myths: the Homeric Primordial Goddess the Kore and the Oedipus myth (see John B. Vickery, ed. *Myth and Literature: Contemporary Theory and Practice*, 1966). Also Maria Dibattista has read *To the Lighthouse* through the Oedipus myth and by means of Christian mythology in her essay “To the Lighthouse: Virginia Woolf’s Winter’s Tale” (see Ralph Freedman, ed. *Virginia Woolf: Reevaluation and Continuity*, 1980).

and Rhoda, and passing through infancy, youth, and old age, ultimately rest in reality, and there, achieving 'fusion with eternal spiritual principal', continue to exist.

Thakur also traces archetypal symbolism in the novel. There is unresolved ambiguity in the treatment of the waves, as Hermione Lee (1977, 168) points out and at the same time asks whether the waves are meant to suggest human lives or whether they are impersonal forces of fatality. The waves could be understood as symbolizing the individual consciousnesses, as Thakur notes in his analysis of the novel (ibid. 116).

In my reading, they could symbolize the thought processes in human mind that proceed without cessation, or simply represent the forces of nature. On the other hand, according to Hans Biedermann, traditionally in many myths of creation water has stood for a source of life and a place of birth, but it has also been understood as a destructive element annihilating life. From the point of view of psychology, water is a symbol of deep unconscious layers of personality. Thus also the traditional meanings of water are dualistic: it is the source of life, yet on the other hand it refers to death and annihilation. (Biedermann 1993, 406-7) These conventional meanings provide convincing readings of the 'waves' symbol in Woolf's novel, particularly "the symbol of deep unconscious layers of personality" could be a plausible explanation of this image. "The waters of annihilation," an expression Woolf used in *To the Lighthouse* (p. 205), is in accordance with the traditional meanings of water referring to both life and death. As Norman Friedman notes (1975, 354-5), "the waters of annihilation" is a key phrase which has a symbolic function and is associated with the water imagery in Woolf's works. The phrase "waters of annihilation" recurs in Woolf's story "On Being Ill," and according to Friedman (ibid.) it may be connected to the thought of rebirth in both of Woolf's texts. In these texts water has ambivalent meanings, which are the conventional

meanings of water described by Biedermann above: the source of life, or rebirth, as Friedman puts it, and death and annihilation.

Even though Virginia Woolf's fiction may be seen containing mythical and archetypal imagery, her production is not predominantly based on myths. In this respect her prose differs considerably from a typical Symbolist painting which often illustrates ancient myths or figures and has fantastic elements. Modernist literature, also Virginia Woolf's, is firmly rooted on modern reality without imaginative beings, such as angels or gods, nor fantastic elements or stories (except to some extent in *Orlando*). In Woolf's novels story and plot are secondary to description of impressions, feelings and thoughts of the subjective mind. Many symbolist paintings may be understood as allegories, which are symbols based on convention or reason, but there are also Symbolist works of art in which the symbols are ambivalent and ambiguous. According to José Pierre (1994, 1916) an example of such ambiguous symbolism is Gustave Moreau's paintings depicting modern or historical female figures, e.g. Delilah, Helen of Troy, Leda, and Salome. These paintings symbolize at the same time the figure itself, something unconscious or hidden, and female mysticism (ibid. 16-17).

Although Symbolist paintings are often related to myths or religious themes, they may also have modern subjects and be associated with personal experiences and sentiments. Symbolism represented by Edward Munch's Expressionist works or Paul Gauguin's Synthetist paintings is in its expressive means closer to the modernist expression of Woolf's stream-of-consciousness novels. In Munch's and Gauguin's art symbolic relations and emotions may be expressed by means of colour and line, while Woolf evokes symbolism through form and structure.

In Edward Munch's painting *The Cry* (1893)<sup>28</sup> colours are used to suggest inner feelings, the strong anguish or horror experienced by the crying figure in the painting. The sky is filled with agony in the red and yellow which are used as a sharp contrast to the somber colours of the rest of the picture. Similarly, Vincent van Gogh understood the suggestive power of colours when he explained that to express the love of two lovers, one should use "the marriage of complementary colours, their combinations and contrasts, the mysterious vibrations of colours coming together" (Huyghe 1977, 163). Van Gogh explains: "For a thought behind a brow, use rays of a light color against a somber background; for ardor of being, a beam of the sunset; and use red or green in painting terrible human passions" (ibid.). According to a contemporary critic of van Gogh (see Shiff 1984, 7), van Gogh himself regarded his material means of colour and line as expressive, not imitated, and as techniques of symbolization. According to Shiff (ibid.) this was the essence of Symbolism in painting: "to direct pictorial means toward the expression of 'Ideas' rather than the observation of objects." Yellow was an important colour to van Gogh, which is not surprising when we think of his lovely yellow sunflowers, full of the glow of life and sunshine. To van Gogh love was everything and painting was to him an act of love. He was devoted to obliterating the individual before the divine and he was trying to project outward the light that emanated from him. Vincent van Gogh had a religious feeling in his use of colours, and he was said to have been passionately fond of yellow, the colour of divine clarity. Also when he painted portraits he tried to find radiance in his models and translate it by suitable colour schemes. (Huyghe, 162-163.) This kind of thinking has a lot in common with Symbolist ideas, i.e.

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<sup>28</sup> Edward Munch's *The Cry* is regarded as an icon of existential anguish. His work often included the symbolic portrayal of such themes as misery, sickness, and death.

religious undertones or colour symbolism, even though van Gogh is usually categorized as an Expressionist painter.

Colour, however, may be interpreted in many different ways. If yellow signified divinity to van Gogh, the spectator may understand quite differently his yellow sunflowers or yellow wheat fields. Rather than divine light and radiance, I would for instance interpret the yellow colour as the beauty of nature and enjoy the colours purely as colours. Conventionally, on the other hand, yellow is understood as related to gold and thus symbolizing sunshine, divine light and eternity, just as van Gogh experiences this colour. Yet yellow may be attributed with negative connotations as well: it has been believed to symbolize anger and jealousy for instance, the colour of bile (Matikainen and Sarvas 2004, 39). In modernism the subjectivity of symbolism is central, whether it is in the self-expression of the artist/writer or in the eyes of the beholder who interprets the work of art through his/her own experiences and world view. The symbolism in the works of van Gogh, Munch or Virginia Woolf may be thought to be unconventional and ambiguous and thus it may be analyzed in various ways.

Paul Gauguin also used colours to express emotions in his Synthetist and Symbolist-oriented paintings. The expression of his paintings was simpler and more reduced, less romantic, i.e. more modernist, in their language than that of the more “romantic” Symbolists, such as Gustave Moreau, Odilon Redon or Puvis de Chavannes. In his later paintings Gauguin was inspired by the primitive art and the Tahitian nature and people. Gauguin, like Woolf in her fiction, used modernist means to express symbolic content. For example in his painting *The Vision after the Sermon*, known also by the name *Jacob's Struggle with the Angel* (*Lutte de Jacob avec l'ange*, 1888), he has painted on the canvas both the vision and the people who are watching this vision. The people gathered as a large group in front are watching and praying simultaneously and their superstitious fears are projected

before their eyes as a “performance” where Jacob is struggling with the angel. The vision is painted with imaginative bright colours to show the intensity of feelings experienced by the people after the sermon. Especially the red colour of the ground emphasizes the unreal, fantastic nature of the vision. The devices used in the paintings such as the absence of perspective, the exaggerated size of the figures in front, the fusion of two worlds in the same picture — reality and fantasy — belong to the modernist language of art. But the painting has also symbolical relations and many inexplicable elements.

As Richard Shiff points out (1984, 6), “the simplified rendering of volumes, the broad outlining, and the flat, unmodeled passages of brilliant color” signified for the contemporary critics “the motivating force of an ‘Idea,’ or mystical vision.” This painting meant no longer the observation of external reality, but revealed through “a purified language of visual forms, the world of symbolic correspondences” (ibid.). Gauguin was interested in expressing his own feelings and personality in his paintings: he painted many self-portraits in which his moods and different mental states were represented by different pictorial devices. Likewise, Virginia Woolf was writing her own life in her fiction and some of her novels have autobiographical elements, e.g. *Jacob’s Room* and *To the Lighthouse*. As Galaya Diment (1987, 77) writes, the autobiographical nature of *To the Lighthouse* is very well established. “*To the Lighthouse* is going to be fairly short, to have father’s character done complete in it; and mother’s; and St Ives; and childhood [...],” Woolf wrote in her diary in 1925 (cited in Diment 1987, 77). Many critics and also Woolf’s sister Vanessa Bell have seen Mrs Ramsay as a portrait of their mother. In a letter to Virginia, Vanessa describes her amazement at the likeness of her portrayal of Mrs Ramsay with their mother (Bell 1972, 128). Pamela J. Transue is among the critics (1986, 61) who argue that *Jacob’s Room* was created as a

reaction to Woolf's brother's Thoby's death, since there are so many resemblances between Jacob's and Thoby's lives, for example their studies in Cambridge and their early death.

The same way as Symbolist and Expressionist painting, Woolf is saying things through suggestion, not by actually stating what she wants to say. "Reality lies behind phenomena, not in them, and the essence of human beings can only be captured by what they don't say," as Irma Rantavaara (1954, 152) points out and continues to explain the symbolism of *The Waves* as follows:

Nowhere in her novels does Virginia Woolf so painfully feel the inadequacy of words as a medium of conveying the symbolic content of a familiar experience. Although *The Waves* illustrates the common experience, it is not linked to every-day life by the same use of seeming trivialities as in the earlier novels. It takes a further step in a contrary direction, towards the depths of the mind, into the borderline of the irrational and the subconscious, into a region where the accepted common language is not enough — of which *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake* offer the best examples. Virginia Woolf, too, feels the need of "some little language such as lovers use, broken words, inarticulate words like the shuffling of feet on the pavement." The adjectives she uses tumble suggestively on top of each other: "a painful, guttural, visceral, also soaring, lark-like, pealing song" bores itself into the reader's mind, although the author herself finds words inadequate and is dissatisfied with "these flagging, foolish transcripts, how much too liberate, how much too reasonable!" "Music, and the silent kingdom of paint," would offer much better adaptable ways of expression than words. She tries — without discarding the normal language — to come as near to both in her language as possible, especially in *The Waves*, where the rhythm and the word-painting form an essential part of its attraction. (Ibid. 154-155)

As the above citation suggests, Woolf attempts to convey meaning through musical and painterly means as much as language allows a writer to experiment. Here we come to the area

of synaesthesia, which was an interest shared also by Symbolism. The reference above to the irrational and the subconscious is an aspect in Woolf's fiction that has also a relationship to Surrealism, the movement that had an interest in the subconscious and the dream. Woolf, however, does not depict dreams, but she describes the mind of a mentally ill person, and here she comes close to the Surrealists' interests, for they, too, were interested in madness. Septimus's hallucinations of red flowers growing through his flesh, or a dog becoming a man, resemble Surrealist paintings or poems. André Breton's interest was directed towards aspects of madness which were associated with imagination such as hallucinations and illusions, and he considered them important sources of enjoyment. Breton defends "the mad" who in his opinion are most of all victims of their imagination (Breton 1988, 15).

Salvador Dali's interest in paranoia produced paintings with burning giraffes, flowing bent watches and female figures with protruding open drawers. Surrealist painters used this kind of symbolism in their depiction of dreams, the subconscious or fantasies,<sup>29</sup> but the interpretation of the symbols is not apparent, for the spectator cannot "know" the private world depicted in the paintings. The symbols and figures in them remain ambiguous. Dali created his method which he called "critical paranoia" on the basis of Surrealist theory of automatism. According to Dali's theory the artist should cultivate genuine delusion as in clinical paranoia but at the back of his mind remain aware that the control of the reason has been deliberately suspended. Dali's method rests on the assumption that the delusions of a paranoid person are based on reality. (Kaitaro 2001, 97) The paranoid visions of Septimus Warren Smith are also based on reality. For example, the red flowers that grow through his

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<sup>29</sup> Dali used Freudian motifs and concentrated on sexual imagery (see Fer 1993, *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism. Art Between the Wars*, New York, New Haven and London in Association with the Open University: Yale University Press, p. 200).

flesh have their origin in the red roses of his bedroom wallpaper. And, like the Surrealist artist according to Dali, also Septimus has an awareness of reality when through the voice of the narrator he is looking for an explanation for his paranoid visions:

Heaven was divinely merciful, infinitely benignant. It spared him, pardoned his weakness. But what was the scientific explanation (for one must be scientific above all things)? Why could he see through bodies, see into the future, when dogs will become men? It was the heat wave presumably, operating upon a rain made sensitive by eons of evolution. (MD, 76)

The technique of automatism of the Surrealists may be read as analogous to the stream-of-consciousness technique used by Woolf. In both techniques the artist produces associations in trying to imitate the subconscious processes of the mind. According to André Breton (1988, 36), pure psychique automatism is the Surrealist method by which a person expresses verbally, through writing or some other manner, the real functioning of thinking. The Surrealists' intentions, however, were different from Woolf's: they aimed at the strangeness of images and the confrontation of distant realities (Kaitaro 2001, 47-8). Woolf's novels, with the exception of *Orlando* and the mad thoughts of Septimus in *Mrs Dalloway*, are realistic in their depiction of the world, while the Surrealists based their art on fantasy.

Some critics have argued that colours in Woolf's novels have been used allegorically to symbolize some important issues of the text. Lena Sundin's dissertation *Iconicity in Writing Process: Virginia Woolf's "To the Lighthouse" and Gerald Murnane's "Inland"* (2004) interprets colours as expressions of iconicity in *To the Lighthouse*, recalling the role of colours in Byzantine sacred art as distinguishers of important persons and events. In Sundin's study colours denote for example absence, death, fruitfulness, etc. In her theory, the purple

colour in Lily Briscoe's painting, which stands for Mrs Ramsay, "signifies the most elevated stage in a process of emancipation or redemption" (Sundin 2004, 51). This purple triangle then, according to Sundin "indicates the presence of a process of transformation similar to the spiritual transformation occurring in the Christian soul that was originally modelled on the alchemical process of purpling, iosis, whose highest stage was the purple colour" (ibid.). Thereafter Sundin compares the models of Lily's painting, Mrs Ramsay and her son James to an archetypic, iconic Madonna and Child. In my reading, this kind of allegoric interpretation of colours is not convincing, since Woolf herself never expressed any interest in religious themes nor did she intend her works to have straightforward symbolic meanings, for instance she claims that she did not mean anything by the lighthouse (cf. Bell 1972, 106). Sundin is convincing, however, when she connects Mrs Ramsay and James to classical paintings of Madonna and the Child. The references in the novel to art and painting are numerous, as has been pointed out by Monroe C. Beardsley (1981, 406-7) when he notes that "there are at least half-dozen works of art that are important to the story: Carmichael's poetry, Lily Briscoe's painting, the Boeuf en Daube, Rose's centerpiece, Mr Paunceforte's style, and Mrs Ramsay herself." And as Beardsley suggests, the recurrent images of art make art itself become symbolic in the novel.

In another recent study colours in *The Waves* and *To the Lighthouse* are interpreted symbolically. In her allegorical reading of Woolf's colours and aesthetics *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf: Modernism, Post-Impressionism and The Politics of the Visual* (1998) Jane Goldman argues that in Virginia Woolf's novels aesthetic concerns such as colour and light were inseparable from political and feminist concerns. According to her interpretation, in *The Waves* and *To the Lighthouse* colours have feminist connotations (e.g. she talks about suffragette colours in Woolf's texts) and she associates them more with

aspects of Post-Impressionism than Impressionism. Colours, Goldman suggests, are symbols of hidden feminist messages, which seems to me an implausible theory, for why would Woolf have wanted to hide her political and feminist messages and opinions in a “code language” in her elegiac novels such as *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* when she discussed these questions openly in her essays (*A Room of One’s Own*, *Three Guineas*) and to some extent in the themes of her novels. I think that it is possible, however, to look for Post-Impressionist ideas and principles in certain aspects of Woolf’s novels, just as possible as to find parallels for them in Impressionism, but it is not a very convincing argument to claim that Woolf would have used certain colour words to convey feminist symbolism. Despite Goldman’s preference of Post-Impressionist interpretations, she, however, admits that for instance in the interludes of *The Waves* “the colours’ subordination to light is perhaps impressionistic, whereas the use of colour to express shadow suggests a Post-Impressionistic abandonment of chiaroscuro [...]” (Goldman 1998, 189).

According to N. C. Thakur (1965, 54), *Jacob’s Room* is the first novel in which Virginia Woolf has, like the Post-Impressionist painters, used colour symbolically. He compares “the pale yellow light, and something yellow-tinted and sulphureous” to the dark and lemon yellow colours of van Gogh’s *The Night Café*. These colours of Woolf would then suggest Phlegethon, the river of fire in Hades, and thus become symbols of dread and fear. In Thakur’s study, however, everything seems to be interpreted in terms of symbolism, but his interpretations are just one way of reading Woolf’s novels. Minow-Pinkney (1987, 84) thinks that *Jacob’s Room* is not as successful in its pursuit of symbolism as *To the Lighthouse*. According to her (ibid.), the latter novel illustrates modernism’s general tendency of metaphoric (symbolist and mythopoeic) representation of experience.

The reading of symbols in Wool's modernist novels and the Symbolist and Surrealist painting should not be allegoric or one-dimensional. As the above analysis of different, sometimes antithetical, symbolic meanings suggests, the symbolism in modernist art and literature is ambiguous and many-faceted, allowing room for different interpretations.

## 7. Correspondences of the Arts

Symbolists were interested in correspondences between the arts. The idea came from Charles Baudelaire and his sonnet "Correspondances" (1857) in which he presents two kinds of correspondences: those between the material world and spiritual realities, and those between the different human sense modalities, i.e. *synaesthesia* (Preminger 1979, 837):

Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.

Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,  
Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies. (Baudelaire 1973, 19)

Synaesthesia refers to "the perception, or description of the perception, of one sense modality in terms of another" (ibid. 839). Virginia Woolf's language is poetical and rhythmical and her prose has visual elements as well, as Irma Rantavaara suggests (cf. the previous chapter). Woolf's fiction does not contain just synaesthetic elements, or correspondences between the arts, but correspondences between different literary genres as well — autobiography, poetry, drama and prose — which was a typical feature of the modernist novel as well.

In synaesthesia different sense experiences are being fused, colours may have a sound, a scent may have a colour, or a shape may have a sound. One of the most common forms of synaesthesia is the hearing of colours. In this experience the person always combines a certain note with a tone of colour according to its pitch. Another common form of synaesthesia is letter synaesthesia, in which every number or letter is sensed to have a certain colour. (Sarmas 2004, 70) A well-known example of the latter is Arthur Rimbaud's poem "Voyelles" where Rimbaud composes a poem based on the synaesthesia of different vowels expressing colours:

### VOYELLES

A NOIR, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu : voyelles,

Je dirai quelque jour vos naissances latentes :

A, noir corset velu des mouches éclatantes

Qui bombinent autour des puanteurs cruelles,

Golfes d'ombre ; E, candeurs des vapeurs et des tentes,

Lances des glaciers fiers, rois blancs, frissons d'obelles ;

I, pourpres, sang craché, rire des lèvres belles

Dans la colère ou les ivresses pénitentes ;

U, cycles, vibrations divins des mers virides,

Paix des pâtis semés d'animaux, paix des rides

Que l'alchimie imprime aux grands fronts studieux ;

O, suprême Clairon plein des strideurs étranges,

Silences traversés des Mondes et des Anges :

— O l'Oméga, rayon violet de Ses Yeux! (Rimbaud 1984, 91)

In Rimbaud's poem each vowel A, E, I, U, O of the French language corresponds to a different colour, A is black, E is white, I is red, U is green and O is blue. This synaesthesia, the mixing of two sensations perceived by two different senses, hearing and seeing, may of course be just a play with ideas, a result of poetic imagination, although some people can actually have experiences of fusing two senses. In the visual arts, too, it is possible to use synaesthetic effects or the spectator may have synaesthetic experiences in the reception of the work of art. For example, the spectator may experience colours and forms of a painting as sound. In Munch's painting *The Cry* the expressiveness of the lines and brightness of the red and yellow are so strong that we can actually imagine that we hear the cry that comes out of the figure's wide open mouth. Synaesthetic experience is not strictly speaking exactly the same thing as the correspondences of the arts, which does not necessarily refer to the fusion of sense experiences. Symbolist critics draw parallels between the arts, for instance Redon's paintings were compared with the poetry of Baudelaire and Edgar Allan Poe with the music of Claude Debussy (Chilvers and Osborne 1988, 484). On the other hand, synaesthesia is also a rhetorical figure used in literature to denote the combination of words that refer to different senses.

In literature synaesthesia must be understood metaphorically, since language cannot be thought in terms of the senses. Language is not similar to sound unless literature is read aloud. But if literature is read silently, as usually is the case, we cannot identify the language of literature with the senses. Through words literary texts may evoke images before our eyes, a writer may for example "paint pictures" by means of a description. But not all description in literature is related to the visual, for also sounds, smells, feelings, ideas, events and characters may be described by the narrator. Mostly the visual in a novel concerns the description of visual perceptions whose objects may be a landscape, nature, people's appearances and

clothes, buildings, furniture, and animals. Some novels, on the other hand, are composed mainly of dialogue.

In the novels which I have explored the use of synaesthetic figures is not conspicuous although Woolf's prose is poetic (after a brief survey I did not come across any). Nevertheless, in her books many analogies can be drawn between the visual arts and literature. Sue Roe (2000, 167) suggests that Virginia Woolf incorporated a synaesthesia into her writing style by which Roe does not, however, refer to the use of rhetorical figures. Many other critics have noticed the visuality of Virginia Woolf's texts. Woolf's works have been compared to Cézanne, Manet, Monet, Picasso, some critics see her as an Expressionist, some as an Impressionist (Rantavaara 1953, 123). Virginia Woolf also uses many ideas and techniques that are familiar in the visual arts, in painting, photography and film. Sue Roe's article "The Impact of Post-Impressionism" (2000) explores the influence of Post-Impressionist painting on Virginia Woolf's artistic development. Roger Fry, a painter and member of the Bloomsbury circle, was the person who introduced the Post-Impressionist ideas to Virginia Woolf. She, for example, read Fry's essays on aesthetics in the collection *Vision and Design* and found there many ideas that she applied in her later work (1920) (cf. Roe 2000, 168). In the essays Fry wrote on the Post-Impressionist principles, among which were the idea that art should not only imitate life, but to find equivalents for it, that one chief aspect of order in a work of art is unity, and that vision and design are bound together (Fry 1961, 34, 190).

According to Fry some kind of unity is necessary for the contemplation of the work of art as a whole. This unity in a picture is achieved through a balancing of the attractions of the eye about the central line of the picture. (Fry 1961, 34) Virginia Woolf expressed her interest in this idea of the central line in her conversations with Fry, and according to her own words,

applied the idea to her design of *To the Lighthouse* (see Bell 1972, 129). A novelty in modern art was the importance of subjectivism, a feature which is clearly present also in Woolf's art. In art subjectivism meant that form itself had psychological connotations, and Roger Fry argued that the graphic arts are above all the expression of imaginative life, not the mere copying of actual life. (ibid. 22-26) The various methods by which an artist arouses the spectator's emotions Fry called "the emotional elements of design." These elements are the rhythm of the line, mass, space, light and shade, and colour. According to Fry, nearly all these emotional elements of design are connected with our physical existence. (Ibid. 36-37) Rhythm, which is an important aspect of Woolf's writing, may be understood as an emotional element in her prose. Fry proposes that rhythm arouses the spectator's emotions and has physical and bodily connections. Also the notions of perspective, which the Post-Impressionist painters were working on and which I have discussed in chapter 5 in connection with simultaneity, affected Woolf profoundly, as Roe points out (1990, 17). Fry, however, does not discuss the perspectival questions in "An Essay in Aesthetics."

As Sue Roe (ibid. 168) points out, in Post-Impressionism subjectivity found its expression paradoxically in surface. This paradox also Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* is trying to solve while she is painting Mrs Ramsay's portrait. Lily has to work out how the vision she wishes to communicate in her painting through lines and colours will be expressed in the right way, how to express her subjective vision by means of composition and colours. In fact, *To the Lighthouse* as a whole is a metaphor of artistic creation with all the elements that are needed in it, including death and pain and the passing of time. The painting of a picture has obvious analogies to a writer's work, which becomes clear at the end of the novel when Lily has accomplished her vision at the same time as Woolf has accomplished her

novel. Woolf describes in many instances of the novel the difficulties in the creative process of the artist, the differences between planning the work and its realization:

She looked blankly at the canvas, with its uncompromising white stare; from the canvas to the garden. There was something (she stood screwing up her little Chinese eyes in her small puckered face) something she remembered in the relations of those lines cutting across, slicing down, and in the mass of the hedge with its green cave of blues and browns, which had stayed in her mind; which had tied a knot in her mind so that at odds and ends of time, involuntarily, as she brushed her hair, she found herself painting that picture, passing her eye over it, and untying the knot in imagination. But there was all the difference in the world between this planning airily away from the canvas, and actually taking her brush and making the first mark. (TL, 178)

In the novel visualization is the description of visual perceptions or impressions by the narrator or the characters.<sup>30</sup> In writing it is possible to use the same ideas as in painting, for example, the ideas and innovations of Post-Impressionism, such as simultaneism, multiple perspective, flatness, etc. However, I think that the use of modernist ideas does not necessarily make the novels “look like” Post-impressionist paintings. The fragmentation of form in a work of Picasso, e.g. a multiplicity of dimensions in a single face, for example, is not the same thing in visual terms as the fragmented narration in Woolf’s fiction. On the other hand, it is possible to think that the descriptive passages, which may be understood as depictions of the character’s or narrator’s visual perceptions, are closer to synaesthesia in literature than the use of the modernist ideas of painting such as fragmentation or perspectival

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<sup>30</sup> According to Mieke Bal (1997b, 4), “Literature, after all, works within the medium of language. If we take into account this self-evident fact, then each visual image is first of all a verbal image and refers only indirectly, at the level of its meaning, to the visual images of other categories.”

issues, because descriptions are easier to translate into “visual images” in the mind than for instance fragmented forms.

In Woolf’s novels the narrator, often representing the characters’ thoughts and observations, depicts visual perceptions by means of colours, lights, shadows and their effects on nature (cf. above Fry’s emotional elements), or by describing the things and furniture in a room, but in Woolf’s novels these visualizations are only quick flashes, momentary impressions, which change into some other thoughts or associations, as usually happens in consciousness. In *To the Lighthouse* Woolf explains “[...] how life, from being made up of little separate incidents which one lived one by one, became curled and whole like a wave which bore one up with it and threw one down with it, there, with a dash on the beach” (TL, 55). The following passage in *To the Lighthouse* exemplifies how quickly colour effects and other visualizations shift into other things, for example events and actions, and then the mind returns to colour impressions again:

‘It suddenly gets cold. The sun seems to give less heat,’ she said, looking about her, for 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. But something moved, flashed, turned a silver wing in the air. It was September after all, the middle of September, and past six in the evening. So off they strolled down the garden in the usual direction, past the tennis lawn, past the pampas by red-hot poker like braziers of clear burning coal, between which the blue waters of the bay looked bluer than ever. (TL, 23-4)

*To the Lighthouse*, however, is not the best example of a “visual novel” in Woolf’s production, although it describes Lily Briscoe’s Post-Impressionist paintings and their

compositional and colour principles. It is rather a psychological novel, interested in the characters and the working processes of an artist.

Mieke Bal discusses Woolf's descriptive passages in *The Waves* and connects them with narrative sections in novels, which are called *pauses* by the terminology of structural narratology. A pause is a narrative section in which no movement of the fabula time (cf. footnote on p. 85) is implied. Many novels by Virginia Woolf alternate the presentation of slow unimportant events with lengthy descriptive passages, and it is often hard to notice the difference between the presentation of events and the descriptions of objects, so that the story proceeds like a long descriptive flow (Bal 1997b, 53). The descriptive interludes in *The Waves* could be seen as descriptions of the visual observations of somebody who has seen these scenes of nature (they are presented by an omniscient narrator), but they resemble also Impressionist paintings (see my analysis in ch. 3). The narrator, describes his/her observations of lights and shadows, colours and forms in nature like a landscape painter expresses them with his/her brush. The following passage exemplifies well typical features of literary description, i.e. detailed narration, the gradual presentation of the depicted "object" and the creation of real life effects (Mikkonen 2005, 234):

The sun rose higher. Blue waves, green waves swept a quick fan over the beach, circling the spike of sea-holly and leaving shallow pools of light here and there on the sand. A faint black rim was left behind them. The rocks which had been misty and soft hardened and were marked with red clefts.

Sharp stripes of shadow lay on the grass, and the dew dancing on the tip of the flowers and leaves made the garden like a mosaic of single sparks not yet formed into one whole. The birds, whose breasts were specked canary and rose, now sang a strain or two together, wildly, like skaters rollicking arm-in-arm, and were suddenly silent, breaking asunder.

The sun laid broader blades upon the house. The light touched something green in the window corner and made it a lump of emerald, a cave of pure green like stoneless fruit. It sharpened the edges of chairs and tables and stitched white table-cloths with fine gold wires. As the light increased a bud here and there split asunder and shook out flowers, green veined and quivering, and pealing a faint carillon as they beat their frail clappers against their white walls. Everything became softly amorphous, as if the china of the plate flowed and the steel of the knife were liquid. Meanwhile the concussion of the waves breaking fell with muffled thuds, like logs falling, on the shore. (W, 19-20)

This interlude contains many aspects to which an artist pays attention when he/she is painting a landscape; the artist has to observe different colours, shadows and shades in nature, or how the light affects the scene, which are all essential elements in Impressionist paintings. However, in this passage also subjective, interpretative elements are present, for example in the following comparisons: “The birds, whose breasts were specked canary and rose, now sang a strain or two together, wildly, like skaters rollicking arm-in-arm, [...]” and “a cave of pure green like stoneless fruit” and “the waves breaking fell with muffled thuds, like logs falling.” These comparisons accentuate the presence of the subjective mind, the narrator in the observational act, which could be compared with what the Post-Impressionists or Expressionists did in their paintings by painterly means in order to achieve their subjective vision (cf. Fry’s principle of subjectivity).

The interest in the visual arts is emphasized in small details of Woolf’s fiction as well. Besides the central metaphor, Lily’s painting, in *To the Lighthouse*, paintings and other related issues are mentioned in several places of the novels. In *To the Lighthouse* (p. 83) William Bankes mentions the names of Rembrandt, Michaelangelo and Titian when he is telling Lily about the paintings he has seen in the museums of Rome and Madrid. In another

scene of the novel Mrs Ramsay is knitting her stocking in front of a copy of a painting by Michaelangelo hanging on the wall with her head outlined by the gilt frame (see TL, 36). The intertextual allusion to Michaelangelo's painting links Mrs Ramsay to Michaelangelo's Madonnas. This kind of intertextual allusion to visual arts is one example of the use of *ekphrasis* in literature. *Ekphrasis* does not have to be only *depictive* (see Mitchell's and Heffernan's definition of *ekphrasis* below); it can also be *attributive* or *associative*, according to the definition of *ekphrasis* by Valerie Robillard (Hollsten 2003, 122). According to Hollsten, intertextual allusions may include artist's name, style, and genre, and the title of a work of art. The allusions to painters in *To the Lighthouse* are examples of attributive *ekphrasis*.

*Jacob's Room* is constructed to a large extent on descriptions of perceptions; it is built on the juxtaposition of small tableaux. Robert Kiely (1983, 147) compares *Jacob's Room* to a still life: "the easel is ready, the room has been prepared, but the model's chair is empty. Instead of fleshed-out portrait, what we find more nearly resembles a still life, a painstakingly careful arrangement of objects within a frame." The still life, *nature morte*, is a striking metaphor to describe the novel, since Jacob himself is absent in the novel. Like the painted objects in a still life, in *Jacob's Room* things are often depicted by the narrator, for example, the things and furniture in Jacob's room where Jacob is never present. Perhaps Woolf intentionally planned this absence of the protagonist, since Jacob is a portrait of her dead brother Toby Stephen, at least according to various interpretations of the novel. If Jacob/Thoby is dead, he does not occupy his room any more; instead what is left is the empty room with the things in it: *nature morte*. As Kiely (1983, 154) points out, "Woolf's descriptions of Jacob's rooms are the major set pieces of the novel and the ones that best illustrate the artistry of confinement and release." As description can be considered a

counterpart to visualization in literature, the comparison of *Jacob's Room* to a still life is very apt:

Jacob's Room had a round table and two low chairs. There were yellow flags in a jar on the mantelpiece; a photograph of his mother; cards from societies with little raised crescents, coats of arms, and initials; notes and pipes; on the table lay paper ruled with red margin — an essay, no doubt [...] (JR, 36)

In this extract the narrator enumerates things, which is a typical feature of description in literature (see Mikkonen 2005, 232). The depiction of Jacob's room has elements of a type of description which Mieke Bal (1997b, 42) calls the referential, encyclopedic description. The main objective of this type of description is to convey knowledge.

In *Jacob's Room* colour words are used frequently, which is another reference to visualization in narration. The narrator describes a painting as follows: "As for pictures — a maiden in a large hat offered roses over the garden gate to a gentleman in eighteenth-century costume" (JR 100). This verbal description of the painting is an example of *ekphrasis* according to the definition given by A. W. Heffernan and W. J. T. Mitchell of *ekphrasis* as a verbal representation of visual representation (Hollsten 2003, 120). The visual representation in *ekphrasis* can be ornaments, such as Achilles' shield in the *Iliad*, or an urn in John Keats' poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn," sculptures, photographs or paintings (ibid.). *Ekphrasis* involves both the translation of a visual work of art into words and the translation back into an image in the reader's mind (Mikkonen 2005, 263). This example of *ekphrasis* does not give a detailed description of the painting, a description which would inspire the reader to "see" the painting in front of his/her eyes (see ibid. 262). In a successful *ekphrasis* the writer pretends to see the object so clearly that he/she makes the reader see it as well. An author who

masters *ekphrasis* has a skill to describe and interpret what he/she sees in such a way that he/she captures the reader's attention. (Ibid.) Woolf, on the other hand, leaves her readers a possibility to use their imagination in the visualization of the paintings.

There is a reference to synaesthesia in the book as well: "Sometimes one thing, sometimes another, to confirm her philosophy that colour is sound — or perhaps it has something to do with music" (JR, 102). This reference proves that Woolf was aware of the Symbolists' interests in synaesthesia. Woolf describes also the other side of the painter's work: the work of the female model who sits to the painter Nick Branham. But in the same context she describes the painter's work, the difficulty of capturing the beauty of a woman in a picture:

As for the beauty of women, it is like the light on the sea, never constant to a single wave. They all have it; they all lose it. Now she is dull and thick as bacon; now transparent as a hanging glass. The fixed faces are the dull ones. Here comes Lady Venice displayed like a monument for admiration, but carved in alabaster, to be set on the mantelpiece and never dusted. A dapper brunette complete from head to foot serves only as an illustration to lie upon the drawing-room table. The women in the streets have the faces of playing cards; the outlines accurately filled in with pink and yellow, and the line drawn tightly round them. Then, at the top-floor window, leaning out, looking down, you see beauty itself; or in the corner of an omnibus; or squatted in a ditch — beauty glowing, suddenly expressive, withdrawn the moment after. No one can count on it or seize it or have wrapped in paper. Nothing is to be won from the shops, and Heaven knows it would be better to sit at home than haunt the plate-glass windows in the hope of lifting the shining green, the glowing ruby, out of them alive. Sea glass in a saucer loses its lustre no sooner than silks do. Thus if you talk of a beautiful woman you mean only something flying fast which for a second uses the eyes, lips, or cheeks of Fanny Elmer, for example, to glow through. (JR, 111-112)

This passage could be a description by an Impressionist painter telling about his difficulties in seizing the right moment and the fleeting beauty that never stays still. It could also be a description of a photographer trying to find the decisive moment in order to capture the beauty of the model. Parallels could be drawn also to the work of a stream-of-consciousness writer: Woolf could in this passage just as well have described her own creative process in writing her novels. The passage may be characterized as a metaphoric metonymy following the classification by Mieke Bal (1997, 262). In metaphoric metonymy contiguity is the dominating principle of construction. Another feature is that metaphors are made of each individual component, and the text is of a very metaphoric nature. In general, Woolf's texts can be characterized by a high degree of metaphoricity in the descriptive passages.

In *Jacob's Room* there is another painter at the beginning of the novel who is painting a landscape picture. Woolf describes again the creative process of the artist this time paying attention to the choosing of colours from the point of view of composition and expression:

He struck the canvas, a hasty violet-black dab. For the landscape needed it. It was too pale — greys flowing into lavenders, and one star or a white gull suspended just so — too pale as usual. (JR, 6)

In *Jacob's Room* Woolf herself is very much involved in choosing the right colours, for she is depicting different objects and views by means of a frequent use of colour words, which could be called word painting. However, the difference between a painting and word painting is that the colours and other effects are not stable in literature. The picture in a novel is in constant movement and little alterations are taking place as you read the text:

The Scilly Isles were turning bluish; and suddenly blue, purple, and green flushed the sea; left it grey; struck a stripe which vanished; but when Jacob had got his shirt over his head the whole floor of the waves was blue and white, rippling and crisp, though now and again a broad purple mark appeared, like a bruise; or there floated an entire emerald tinged with yellow. (JR, 45)

The visualization of a landscape in *Jacob's Room* takes place by means of a series of juxtaposed images, which, merging into one another, compose a series of pictures as in a film. In *Jacob's Room* many painters are mentioned: Titian, van Gogh, the Italian painters of the Renaissance, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. These painters, however, have no particular relevance in the novel, except perhaps by showing the learnedness and cultural interests of the protagonist, whose room is decorated by some of these painters' works and who possesses books on the painters.

In *The Waves* Virginia Woolf is looking for analogies and differences between the two art forms, painting and writing. Bernard, who is a writer, is in the Italian room at the National Gallery looking at the paintings, especially at a blue Madonna painting by Titian, and comparing the freedom of a painter to the servitude of a poet: "I doubt that Titian ever felt this rat gnaw. Painters live lives of methodical absorption, adding stroke to stroke." (W, 105). Bernard thinks that painting is somehow easier to control than making phrases: "Lines and colours almost persuade me that I too can be heroic, I, who make phrases so easily, am so soon seduced, love what comes next, and cannot clench my fist, but vacillate weakly making phrases according to my circumstances" (ibid.). In Bernard's opinion painters are not chained to the rock like poets, and therefore are able to achieve silence and sublimity in their work. Woolf does not describe in detail the paintings Bernard is watching at the National Gallery (she only mentions them by name or subject matter), but the paintings serve as an

inspiration of aesthetic and philosophical speculation to Bernard. As Kai Mikkonen suggests (2005, 233), pictorial references affect and work up the semantic structures of a novel. Thus we could see the Madonna paintings in the National Gallery as an inspiration to both writers, Bernard and Virginia Woolf, and in a sense understand them as guiding and forwarding also Woolf's narration.

Charles Baudelaire, not only making analogies between colours, sounds and perfumes in his poem "Correspondances," is also looking for parallels between paintings and poems. In his poem "Les Phares" Baudelaire presents the idea that the great artists illuminate mankind (1973, 19), a theme which had already inspired the romantic poets, who considered both artists and poets to be magicians and guides. But Baudelaire adds to this idea the thought that the role of a poet is to express by means of words what a painter expresses with colours, the same thought that Bernard utters in *The Waves*. The poem is inspired by the following great painters whose names begin each new stanza: Rubens, Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Puget, Watteau and Delacroix. Also Virginia Woolf is making parallels between different artists in her novels. In several of her novels she depicts the work and creative problems of different artists: in *To the Lighthouse* there is a painter, Lily Briscoe, in *Orlando* and *The Waves* there is a poet, and in *Between the Acts* there is a playwright, Miss La Trobe. These artists represent different art forms but they share the sameness of the artistic creative process, even though they have their basic differences as well.

## 8. Ambiguity in Images

Metaphor is of particular interest in a research which draws parallels between verbal and visual art, since the notion of metaphor contains visual aspects. Metaphor is not only a verbal concept, but may be used also in the analysis of visual images. I apply here Mieke Bal's definition of metaphor as a verbal image of a mental *image*.<sup>31</sup> Metaphor is characteristically ambiguous, as William Empson has shown in his work *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), and this ambiguity is an important common denominator in the metaphoric readings of art and literature. According to Empson (1949, 5-6,) "'Ambiguity' itself can mean an indecision as to what you mean, an intention to mean several things, a probability that one or other or both of two things has been meant, and the fact that a statement has several meanings." From this definition by Empson we may infer that ambiguity has something to do with multiple meanings, indecision and uncertainty. If a metaphor inherently has all these connotations, we may think that it is also a notion referring to a greater freedom of interpretation, in other words, the work of art with metaphoric meanings is not "simply just one thing," but many things at the same time and different things to different interpreters. As I have mentioned earlier, modernist art is characteristically metaphoric — especially modernist novel and Symbolist, Surrealist and Expressionist art — and due to its ambiguous character the role of the interpreter is accentuated in the reading process. The creative aspect of metaphor is important in Coleridge's revolutionnary notion of the mind. Coleridge saw it as an "active, self-forming, self-realizing system," which imposed itself on the world, and creatively

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<sup>31</sup> Mieke Bal (1977a, 4) explains that it is possible to think of metaphors as verbal images of mental images and descriptions as verbal images of perceptual images.

adapted and shaped it. Thus imagination acts as the chief instrument in this process. (Hawkes 1972, 43)

*Metaphor* and *symbol* are very close in meaning and it is not easy to explain their differences. Both concepts refer to a substitution of some idea or image by another. The concepts of *allegory*, *metaphor* and *symbol* are all related, and allegory and metaphor used to have the same significance as symbol has had later in everyday language (Kallio 1991, 714). Therefore, if we want to differentiate metaphor and symbol as analytical tools<sup>32</sup>, I suggest that metaphor could be used to refer to more unconventional ideas and images in a work of art, both in literature and visual art. Metaphor could be restricted to highly personal, creative use in art and literature, which has a special connotation of subjectivity. In other words, metaphor would be free of all kinds of conventional uses and artistic conventions and function as a sign of individuality. Ambiguity, in the words of E. H. Gombrich (1989, 264), “cannot be seen – it can only be inferred by trying different readings that fit the same configuration.” In Gombrich’s thinking (ibid.) similes and metaphors “testify to the powers of the creative mind to create and dissolve new classifications.” Gombrich mentions Georges Bracque as an example of a modern artist who spoke of “the ease with which a file can become a shoehorn, a bucket a brazier” (ibid.). This example of Bracque brings out the aspect of human creativity, which is especially conspicuous in the metaphoricity and ambiguity of modernist art.

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<sup>32</sup> According to Wellek & Warren (1966, 186) the terms *image*, *metaphor*, *symbol* and *myth* overlap semantically. It has been suggested by Middleton Murray that the term ‘image’ would be used to include both ‘simile’ and ‘metaphor’ as terms of rhetoric, and that the image is not only visual but it may be auditory as well. Like ‘image’ ‘symbol’ appears in widely different contexts and different purposes. It appears as a term in logic, in mathematics, in semantics and semiotics and epistemology, theology, the fine arts and of poetry. The shared element in all these current uses is probably that of something standing for, representing, something else. (Ibid. 186-211)

In the following analysis I apply I. A. Richards' analytical terms of metaphor<sup>33</sup>, *tenor* and *vehicle*, which are meant to designate the two parts of metaphor. Woolf's novels can be understood as mental images, as metaphors, where two unrelated images are juxtaposed. For example, the novel *To the Lighthouse* as a whole is a metaphor.<sup>34</sup> This metaphor consists of two parts, the first part (*vehicle*) of the metaphor is an image of the lighthouse as a building in the sea throwing light to those at sea, the second part of the metaphor (*tenor*) consists of the cycle of nature, the alternation of days and nights, which is to be read in the structure of the novel, the middle section representing night and the first and last sections standing for day. You may then project different readings to this metaphor. The tenor part of the metaphor, that of the natural cycle which is read in the novel's structure, has often been interpreted as referring to the lighthouse beams, two long strokes of light and between them the shorter period of darkness. If this reading is accepted, we can establish an unexpected resemblance between these two unrelated ideas, which ordinarily do not have any resemblance, but which in this poetic context get this special connotation.

In *To the Lighthouse*, in the local texture of the writing there is a great density of metaphor and simile. As Minow-Pinkney (1987, 85) points out, metaphor is also a thematic concern of the book. She interprets the polarity of Mr and Mrs Ramsay as an opposition between literal meaning and metaphoricity when Woolf contrasts the rigorous propositional discourse of the philosopher with the symbolic language of art.

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<sup>33</sup> I.A. Richards developed the analysis of metaphor in his work *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936) (see Hawkes 1972, 43).

<sup>34</sup> Also Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* in its entirety has been compared to a cathedral. The work has been seen as a collection of stained-glass windows and thus can be considered as having a visual form, a spatial form as opposed to temporal and sequential. (Bal 1997a, 3-4)

It was a splendid mind. For if thought is like the keyboard of a piano, divided into so many notes, or like the alphabet is ranged in twenty-six letters all in order, then his splendid mind had no sort of difficulty in running over those letters one by one, firmly and accurately, until it had reached, say, letter Q. (TL, 39-40)

According to the interpretation of James Naremore (1973, 128) metaphors in *To the Lighthouse* serve a special function: to keep the *reader* at a distance from the characters' consciousness. The metaphoric approach to Mr Ramsay's cognitions, i.e. the alphabet metaphor read by Naremore as the author's comment on Ramsay's thought, keeps the *author* at a distance, and at the same time implies a blend of irony and affection (ibid.).

The identification of Mrs Ramsay and the light of the lighthouse is a metaphor with antithetical meanings: "With some irony in her interrogation, for when one woke at all, one's relations changed, she looked at the steady light, the pitiless, the remorseless, which was so much her, yet so little her, which had her at its beck and call [...]" (TL, 75).

'The window' may be conceived as a metaphor in *To the Lighthouse*: the window refers to seeing, to vision and to visual art. Mrs Ramsay has a habit of sitting by the window contemplating, "having visions," looking through the window and making observations of life. When she is looking through the window she symbolically "sees another world" into which she escapes. The title of the first part of the book is "The Window" and thus this title further enhances the centrality of the window image in the book. On the other side of the window Lily Briscoe is painting Mrs Ramsay who poses as the model of her painting. Here the window image refers to Lily who is looking and seeing Mrs Ramsay from an artist's perspective, her vision as an artist. The window image is also associated to a painting as an object since both window and painting are rectangular in shape and have frames. Furthermore, the window metaphor is a connotation to Woolf's own position as the writer of

her novel who is writing the life story of her dead mother. Woolf is remembering and looking at her mother from a closer perspective in the first chapter titled "The window." In the final chapter titled "The lighthouse" after her death she looks at her from a distance and as an artist completes her vision simultaneously as Lily completes hers.

*Jacob's Room* is the first of Woolf's novels in which she introduces the image of the moth (see Richter 1980, 13). In the novel the moth is a recurrent image, which is connected to Jacob and his interest in butterfly collection. Woolf returned to the image of insects round a lantern in an essay "Reading" written shortly after *Jacob's Room* (see Fleishman 1977, 56). Also in the essay "The Death of the Moth" Woolf explores the theme of the death of the moth, and in *Jacob's Room* Woolf associates the moth image with death. At the beginning of the novel butterflies appear in the descriptions of Jacob's childhood when the children are catching butterflies (JR, 20-27). The images of butterflies may be read as having antithetical meanings. The daytime butterflies such as blues, admirals, fox cubs, commas, yellows, badgers, etc. may be associated with life, freedom, sunshine and play when they fly over the moor or circle high around an oak tree. The daytime butterflies are metaphors whose tenor, or subject, is the carefree child's life of Jacob who is catching butterflies. But a moth which Rebecca has caught has the antithetic connotation of death inherent in the idea of butterfly (an animal with a short life-span): "Rebecca had caught the death's head moth in the kitchen". (JR, 21) The moth is a dark butterfly which lives by the night. In the moth image death casts its shadow over Jacob's life which will be short as the life of a butterfly.

Harvena Richter (1980, 13), on the other hand, reads the moth as a symbol of the questing creative mind. According to Richter, Woolf employed the moth image later in her career in *The Waves* where it grew in importance. Richter suggests that in *The Waves*, which climaxes her concern with this theme, the public and private meanings of the moth emblem

are fused, and the writer and her work become one. In Richter's reading the meaning of the moth metaphor have connections to Woolf's childhood, her illnesses and personal relationships as well as her determination to understand her own creative process. (Ibid.)

In *The Waves*, as Eric Warner notes, Woolf's prose has many features of lyric poetry: "an arch, elevated style, an incantatory rhythm and, increasingly, a suffusion of simile and metaphor" (1987, 39). At the micro level of the text Woolf often uses similes rather than metaphors. Similes, which are akin to metaphors<sup>35</sup>, Woolf uses consistently for example in the interludes of *The Waves*:

The birds, whose breasts were specked canary and rose, now sang a strain or two together, wildly, like skaters rollicking arm-in-arm, and were suddenly silent, breaking asunder. (W, 19):

The wind rose. The waves drummed on the shore, like turbaned warriors, like turbaned men with poisoned assgais who, whirling their arms on high, advance upon the feeding flocks, the white sheep. (W, 51)

In the last example Woolf draws through personification a vivid picture of the waves, which with the war imagery creates violent associations related to the remorselessness of nature. In another interlude the waves are again described as something monstrous: "The waves fell; withdrew and fell again, like the thud of a great beast stamping." (W, 101). The waves are also described by means of a personification: "The waves massed themselves, curved their backs and crashed." From these examples we may infer that Woolf wants to fuse the animate or human world with her idea of the waves. In *Jacob's Room* and in all her other novels, as T.

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<sup>35</sup> According to Geoffrey N. Leech (1973), simile is an overt, and metaphor a covert comparison.

E. Apter (1979, 37) notes, Woolf has two recurring images which mark two different aspects of consciousness: “the eternal movement of life and death in waves crashing against the rocks, and the marking of time by the sound of a bell.” In *The Waves* the interludes may be read as metaphors also at the structural level of the novel. For example, Makiko Minow-Pinkney (1987, 155) interprets them as images or dreams occurring inside the narrative consciousness, for towards the end of the book Bernard returns to the opening scene with the dawn sky and seascape described in the first interlude.

When we read the title of the novel *The Waves* metaphorically, we realize that the novel does not give any one explanation to this metaphor, but in the mind of the reader it remains an ambiguous image with multiple meanings. For example, it could refer to the “ebb and flow” of the human mind, a reading which the stream-of-consciousness technique of the novel supports. On the other hand, it could mean time and its eternal flowing, since Woolf was very much preoccupied with questions concerning time in her novels. It could also refer to the natural cycle, the alternation of day and night and different seasons, because the waves have a regular beat and rhythm, like the seasons and the diurnal alternation. All the images that Virginia Woolf recurrently borrows from the world of water, as Jean Guiguet (1965, 408) explains, create a profound intimacy and harmony between her nature and water. Avrom Fleishman (1977, 157) has found in the monologues of the characters identification with the waves and concludes that the soliloquists themselves are waves in a deeper symbolic meaning, not in the sense of a simile, i.e. “men’s lives pass and expire like waves on the shore.” The soliloquists, as Fleishman continues to explain, “imagine themselves as waves, think in wavelike rhythms, and model the scenarios for their lives on the sound and structure of the waves” (ibid.) The dominant metaphor of the work indicated by its title is the waves; it

is both an image of the waves, and a symbol or vision of the rhythmic nature of life and also refers to the lives of the characters.

‘The waves’ may be simply an image of the sea and the waves, which necessarily does not have to have any further implications. On the other hand, the idea of the waves may be thought as poetic or aesthetic device, something which enhances the novel’s visuality and accentuates its impressionistic character. The reader is faced with indecision when he/she has to decide which reading is the correct one. We may infer that ‘the waves’ as a metaphor is something which cannot be divided and analyzed,<sup>36</sup> whereas ‘the waves’ as a symbol is something more precise and rational. The Romantics in accordance with the Platonic view of metaphor emphasized the unity that lies underneath surface distinctions and ignores clear-cut boundaries (Hawkes 1972, 44). The Romantic notion of the imagination stresses the imaginative faculty’s connective power, and sets it against the divisive character of another faculty: the reason, or discursive analysis (ibid. 36-37). Metaphor is nearer to a visual image, and symbol rather suggests language, which is the tool of logical thinking and, therefore could be thought to be more rational and analyzable than an image. Often metaphor and symbol are used in art criticism more or less as synonyms. In this study, however, I want to differentiate them, because I want to emphasize the ambiguous and visual elements inherent in a metaphor.

Especially in *Mrs Dalloway* the images of time are frequent. The clocks or bells of London are used as leitmotifs to suggest the impersonal passing of time, as the reminders of mortality and the limited life-span. The sounds of the church bells or the public clocks

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<sup>36</sup> An image is also inherently continuous (see Lukkarinen, 1998, 102, and the introduction of the present study).

express human emotions for the characters who hear them and their feelings are fused with the sounds:

And why had he been so profoundly happy when the clock was striking. Then as the sound of St Margaret's languished, he thought, she has been ill, and suffering. It was her heart, he remembered; and the sudden loudness of the final stroke tolled for death that surprised in the midst of life, Clarissa falling where she stood, in her drawing room. No! No! he cried. She is not dead! I am not old, he cried, and marched up Whitehall, as if there rolled down to him, vigorous, unending, his future. (MD, 56)

The 'bells' and their sounds are personified images or sounds of the changing emotions in Peter Walsh's consciousness. When he is walking along the streets of London he feels Clarissa's presence in the sounds of St Margaret's bells. In these metaphors it is rather the hearing than the vision that is accentuated although we may visualize the bells and their motions as well. Among the literary genres, personification is especially frequent in folktales, fairy tales, children's literature and to some extent also in love poems (Palmgren 1986, 120). The use of personification, which connects human characteristics to inanimate things, may be seen as having its origin in primitive thinking and the myths, but also in children's way of seeing things. In the eighteenth century Giambattista Vico noticed the "poetic" wisdom possessed by primitive people which evolved through metaphors, symbols and myths towards abstract and analytical modes of thought. Vico saw an analogy in the movement from childhood to maturity and in that from "primitive" societies to "civilized" ones. The language of children is robust, vigorous and concrete compared with the abstract distinctions and categories of adult "rational" speech. (Hawkes 1972, 38-39) The association of primitivism of personifications suits well with the aspect of primitivism inherent in

modernism. In the context of Woolf's metaphorical language, where the personification has its role in the depiction of the mind and the thought processes of the characters, personifications may be seen as architypal or "childish" elements in the text. Thus it is possible to think that in personification as a typical feature of the unconscious architypal levels of the human mind, as depicted in Woolf's novels such as *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Waves*, the fusion of human characteristics for example with clocks or the waves would express the "unconscious child" which lies beneath people's exterior behaviour.

Also the Romantics such as Shelley, Wordsworth and Coleridge emphasized the primitive origin of metaphor in "primitive" thinking and in the nature of human language (see Hawkes 1972). To the Symbolists and the Surrealists, on the other hand, the example of Romantic artists was important (see e.g. Atkins 1993, 186), and as we have seen in the present study, Woolf, among other modernists, may be seen in the context of Symbolism. Woolf's use of metaphors and symbols in the depiction of the consciousness of her characters is thus connected to the Romantics' notions of the importance of imagination and metaphor in the human language and thinking and the primitive origin of metaphoricity. As Pamela J. Transue (1986, 95) has proposed in her analysis of *Mrs Dalloway*, the image of Big Ben with its "leaden circles" is an apt metaphor for the novel's structure that may be understood as circular and centered, which in Transue's opinion represents for Woolf the female consciousness. Yet, as Transue admits, the Big Ben imagery offers many other implications as well, for elusiveness and symbolic openness is typical of Woolf's fiction.

Although metaphor is originally a concept of verbal language, it is possible to interpret images in terms of metaphors as well. Visual and verbal metaphors differ, however, first of all in their expression. According to Iina Hellsten (1997, 78), in a visual metaphor the expression may be solely visual or consist of a combination of the visual and verbal

representations. A visual metaphor is based on the representation of an abstract idea by means of a concrete form. In visual terms a chair does not exist in general as it does verbally, but it is always a particular certain kind of chair. (Ibid.) Charles Forceville, who has studied pictorial metaphors in advertising, classifies metaphors in the following way: 1) metaphors in which only the other part – usually the *source domain* (another term for vehicle), sometimes also the *target domain* (corresponds I. A. Richard's tenor) is explicitly represented; 2) metaphors in which both parts (source and target domain) are clearly represented (Forceville 1996, 109-133).

In painting, the other part of the metaphor is often missing in the picture; it exists only in the imagination or interpretation of the spectator. For example, Vincent van Gogh's paintings may be understood metaphorically as representing the inner states and feelings of the painter or the spectator, not only as pictures depicting reality, i.e. landscapes, buildings or still lifes. Another example of a metaphoric reading of paintings is provided by Edward Hopper's paintings, e.g. *House by the Railroad* (1925), which may be interpreted as representing loneliness and isolation, although the pictures themselves are very realistic images of buildings and people. The metaphoric reading is inspired by the atmosphere of the paintings, the simplicity of composition, barrenness of the scenes, choice of subjects, and the depiction of night scenes. On the other hand, it is also possible to read Hopper's pictures simply as realistic scenes from American life.

As an example of modernist paintings which can be interpreted metaphorically I analyze Marcel Duchamp's Cubist self-portraits *Jeune homme triste dans un train* (*The Sad Young Man on a Train*, 1911) and *Nu descendant un escalier* (*Nude descending the Staircase*, 1912). In *Jeune homme triste* the vehicle of the metaphor is the image of a series of motions composed of lines, which acts as the representation of the tenor, or subject, to which reading

also the title of the painting refers. According to the analogy principle of metaphor there should be some kind of similarity between the two parts of the metaphor (the pictorial and the verbal). In this case a connection is to be found in the idea of movement depicted in the painting which is also inherent in the notion of 'train'. In *Nu* the tenor/subject refers more explicitly to movement represented in the painting than in Duchamp's other painting. These two paintings by Duchamp are example of visual metaphors which combine visual and verbal elements. According to Irmeli Hautamäki (1995, 133), the title *Nu* is written on the lower left corner of the painting, which was an exceptional and new practice in the history of painting.

A more daring example of metaphor in modernist painting is another painting by Duchamp, the readymade *L. H. O. O. Q* (1919), in which Duchamp explores the close connection between irony and metaphor.<sup>37</sup> In his work Duchamp uses a copy of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* painting where he has added a moustache into Mona Lisa's face. In the conventional analysis of metaphor the woman in the painting is the vehicle and the moustache — a symbol of the male gender — is the tenor. In *L. H. O. O. Q* both parts of the metaphor (tenor and vehicle) are in visual form. Normally in a metaphor it is the likeness of vehicle and tenor that produces a metaphorical relationship. But in ironical metaphor it is rather the contrast between tenor and vehicle, i.e. in the case of Duchamp's painting woman=man/masculinity, which produces irony in the painting. Leech (ibid. 174) points out that metaphor and irony can arise from the same linguistic source, i.e. the violation of co-occurrence conditions. This shows that irony and metaphor are both modes of interpretation, in other words, they are not so much part of the text as part of the reader's

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<sup>37</sup> See on ironical metaphor in Leech 1969, 173.

response to the text. The possibility of multiple interpretations of Duchamp's readymade makes it ambiguous. The equation the quinessential femininity=macho masculinity in *L. H. O. O. Q* may be interpreted as a representation of androgyny which interested Duchamp as a theme also in some of his other works. It could also be read as a mockery of the bourgeois art institution which idolizes certain works of art or certain artists, or sees art as an investment. The title, which is nonsensical, further enhances the irony of Duchamp's work. The story connected to the origin of Duchamp's *L. H. O. O. Q* reveals the playful nature of Duchamp's work that springs from the DADAist spirit of provocation, the tendency to conceive modernist art as a game or a puzzle with multiple or contradictory meanings.<sup>38</sup>

Although Woolf's work in general is more "serious" than Duchamp's, occasionally she, too, wrote ironic or playful texts, for example in her novel *Orlando* she plays with the idea of Orlando changing sex. With her androgynous character Woolf creates a work of art that is as ambiguous and ironic as Duchamp's readymade of Mona Lisa. Duchamp's interest in androgyny is not, however, linked with feminist interests, while Woolf developed her theories of androgyny in her feminist essay *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf was intrigued by Coleridge's words about a great mind being androgynous (see Woolf 1994, 106). On the basis of this idea of androgyny Woolf probably created her "man-womanly" or "woman-manly" character Orlando. While Duchamp with his *L. H. O. O. Q* attacks the rigid art institution and questions its values, Woolf criticizes in *Orlando* women's position through

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<sup>38</sup> The story behind the painting related by Irmeli Hautamäki is the following. The *Mona Lisa* in Louvre was sheltered by a bulletproof glass in order to protect it from thefts and saboteurs. This protective measure irritated art lovers who claimed that glass separated them from the magical smile of Mona Lisa. A contemporary caricaturist made a drawing in which a museum attendant with a moustache is admiring himself in the bulletproof glass protecting Mona Lisa. Thus in the picture the man's figure gets mixed with Mona Lisa's lovely face. Also Duchamp's painting is covered by a glass. Duchamp's message seems to be, as Hautamäki suggests, that Mona Lisa's smile is a trap into which the spectators have fallen often enough, and therefore they should already be looking for new smiles. (Hautamäki 1995, 160-1)

her androgynous figure who discloses the artificiality of gender roles and shows that both the feminine and the masculine sex are in harmony in a fully developed mind.

In Surrealist paintings metaphoric readings may be applied to the fantasy world. Whitney Chadwick (1985, 145) has discovered in Surrealist women painters' work nature as metaphor for women's reality. Men Surrealists mystified the relationship between woman and nature and saw woman as the other, as something different from man. In Rita Kernn-Larsen's *Les Deux Demoiselle's* (1949) two women-trees (*femme-arbres*) virtually merge in the picture the idea of woman and nature, i.e. woman=nature, and André Masson's *La Terre* (1939) "depicts the sensuous contour of the earth itself, redolent with associations of fertility and death" (ibid.). Chadwick argues that women artists were quick to appropriate the identification between woman's creative powers and those of nature, which was one of the chief themes of male Surrealists (ibid. 142). The identification of the unconscious and female nature in the women Surrealists' work makes the images of women and nature metaphors of artistic creation (ibid.). In *To the Lighthouse* the character of Mrs Ramsay is a metaphor in which fertility (nurturing mother of many children), her identification with nature (her immersion into the sea and the lighthouse beam), her beauty and creativity (in human relations) all come together.

Traditionally in men's art women have been identified with nature and this identification refers nearly exclusively to women's reproductive role, but as Chadwick argues in Surrealist women's work nature may be associated with women's artistic creativity. Examples of other nature metaphors in women's Surrealist painting are Nusch Eluard's *Photo-collages* (c. 1935), Rita Kernn-Larsen's *Apple* (1934) and Frida Kahlo's *Two Nudes in a Forest* (1939). According to Chadwick (ibid.) Kahlo's and Eluard's pictures reveal a more personal identification between woman's reality and the forces of nature than in men's

paintings. Kahlo's painting which depicts two nude women in a forest may also be read as an ironic metaphor of the theme of Adam and Eve in paradise. The picture has clear allusions to lesbian love that introduces irregularities and contradictions to conventional images of heterosexual love in art. The ironic metaphors of Duchamp, Kernn-Larsen and Kahlo are examples of what Geoffrey N. Leech (1969, 219) calls spatial puzzles: "Spatial 'world' denuded of conventional clues to interpretation," whereby modern painters force the observer into an awareness of his/her visual inferences.

E. H. Gombrich in his *Art and Illusion* (1960) shows how much of "reading a picture" depends on imagining what is not in fact there (see Leech 1969, 218). A few dots and strokes of paint, as Leech (*ibid.*) explains may suggest a distant crowd of people in a similar way as a few linguistic clues may suggest a situation which we project into a poem. In interpreting a poem, too, we apply the literary counterpart of what Gombrich calls "the consistency test".<sup>39</sup> The test means, as Leech (*ibid.* 218-219) explains, that we discard all the interpretations that do not fit in with the rest of "the world within the poem", or as regards paintings, meanings which are incompatible with "the world within the picture." Modern art and literature, as the examples of ambiguity and metaphoricity from Woolf and modernist art show, has the special feature of creating contradictions and irregularities. Cubism, for example, according to Gombrich (1989, 239-40), "succeeds in countering the transforming effects of an illusionist reading [...] by the introduction of contrary clues which will resist all attempts to apply the test of consistency."

Although Woolf occasionally uses irony in her texts the images in her novels are predominantly lyrical. The images of nature, such as the waves and the butterflies, bring her

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<sup>39</sup> Gombrich defines the "consistency test" in the following way: "the possibility of classifying the whole of an image within a possible category of experience" (Gombrich 1989, 200).

closer to the Romantics, but her structural and narrative experimentation makes her a modernist. As I suggested above, Woolf may be connected to the Romantics' notions of the importance of imagination and metaphor in the human language and thinking, and to Coleridge's conception of the primitive origin of metaphor which shows in her architypal imagery and the use of personifications. Through her nature metaphors she also establishes a kinship with the Surrealist painters, especially with the women Surrealists. The consistency and recurrence of Woolf's images heightens their lyrical and ambiguous effects by bringing different nuances into the texts and thus reenforce their interpretation as metaphors.

## **PART FOUR FEMININE MODERNISM**

### **9. Virginia Woolf and Feminine Impressionism**

Since the late nineteenth century Impressionism has been interpreted in art history and criticism in terms of gender. At the turn of the twentieth century Impressionism was gendered as female both by its conservative critics and its avant-garde competitors, but later in the twentieth century art historians and critics regendered it as masculine when the masculinist criticism wanted to emphasize the “scientific” aspect of Impressionism and the Impressionists’ interest in the colour theories of the epoch. Norma Broude (1991, 174) argues that modernist tradition has aggressively gendered itself as male, which according to her is an erroneous interpretation of modernism. I argue that Impressionism was a feminine art school, “an art that was based on the subjectivity of vision and that emphasized the expression of feeling and emotion generated by contact with nature” as Broude describes it (*ibid.*). I will read Impressionism as a feminine art in order to make a more balanced interpretation of the different schools or tendencies of modern art than it has been done in the masculinist art criticism. My contention that there are several kinds of modernisms, both masculine and feminine, is a strategic choice to question the widely spread conception of modernism as a masculine art. The notion of “the feminine,” as Janet Wolff (2003, 87) points out, “has a history as the basis for the confirmation of the distinct, innate, and inferior characteristics of women and their work.” My analysis of “the feminine” is a reversal of these negative conceptions of femininity. I want to argue that the femininity of Impressionism and the work of women Impressionists is a neutral or a positive characteristic.

In *A Room of One's Own* Virginia Woolf discusses women as writers, and asks whether literature written by women is different from that written by men. According to her, many male writers' books "celebrate male virtues, enforce male values and describe the world of men" (Woolf 1994, 110). As a female reader Woolf finds the books of John Galsworthy and Rudyard Kipling lacking all feminine characteristics and "all their qualities seem to a woman [...] crude and immature" (ibid.). Woolf believes that a fully developed mind "does not think specially or separately of sex" (ibid. 107), but it is androgynous (ibid. 106), woman-manly or man-womanly (ibid. 112). Although Woolf is against sex-consciousness in writing a novel and believes that it produces one-sided or bad literature, she admits that women's literature is clearly different from that produced by men: "It would be a thousand pities if women wrote like men, or lived like men, or looked like men, [...]" (ibid. 95). In fact, Woolf encourages women to write books that suit best their lives and their circumstances:

The book has somehow to be adapted to the body, and at a venture one would say that women's books should be shorter, more concentrated, than those of men, and framed so that they do not need long hours of steady and uninterrupted work. For interruptions there will always be. (Woolf 1994, 85)

Women's literature, and painting, have been different because women's lives have been different. For instance, Jane Austen's and other nineteenth-century novelists' texts, as Woolf explains (ibid. 77) were shaped by the influences they received while sitting in the common sitting-room where they learned the observation of character and the analysis of emotion.

Some schools of modernism appealed to women more than others because they were closer to women's interests, psychological inclinations or biological predispositions, or simply women's social reality. Impressionism opened possibilities for women to become

artists, because the subjects were no longer restricted to nationally or historically important subjects nor portraits of patrons and because Impressionism liberated art from academic painting. This is one reason to regard Impressionism as the beginning of modernism. It was the first “modern” movement that liberated women from the undemocratic system of art education which favoured men and higher social classes. The subjects of Impressionist art which were from everyday life — either outdoor views or portraits of ordinary people — appealed to bourgeois women who lived their everyday life in the private sphere. In the paintings of female Impressionists Berthe Morisot and May Cassatt we meet frequently subjects of bourgeois women’s daily lives. Griselda Pollock has made a survey of the spaces represented in their paintings. Pollock (1988, 56) lists the following spaces: dining-rooms, drawing-rooms, bedrooms, balconies/verandas, and private gardens. As Pollock notes, the majority of these spaces are private areas or domestic spaces. According to her (ibid.), the engagement with the Impressionist group was attractive to some women because subjects of domestic social life hitherto classified as mere genre painting were accepted as central topics of painting. Thus Impressionism both made painting possible for women and was concerned (to some extent) with their social reality. Morisot’s and Cassatt’s paintings depict exclusively their own gender and children, and also male Impressionists depict women (which were often courtesans and prostitutes), so that also in this respect Impressionism could be called a feminine art. Impressionism may thus be seen as a “document” of women’s lives.

Virginia Woolf could also be called a representative of feminine modernism. She depicts the lives of middle-class women and men, but mostly her protagonists are women. In *To the Lighthouse* she juxtaposes the feminine and the masculine principle in the characters of Mr and Mrs Ramsay and in my reading she opts for the feminine principle. Mr Ramsay is a stereotype of the masculine rational way of thinking, representing scientific, objective, hard,

selfish and unemotional attitude towards life, and Mrs Ramsay is the quintessential feminine woman, tender, loving and understanding. She is identified in the novel with creativity: she is an “artist in life” and a source of inspiration to others. In the character of Mrs Ramsay the aspects of emotion, subjectivity of vision, identification with nature, and humanism may be compared with the characteristics of Impressionism mentioned above by Norma Broude. It is not hard to notice that the characteristics of Impressionism and those of Mrs Ramsay are almost identical. Likewise, the features of masculine modernism, such as objectivity and neutral or unemotional scientific attitude, are close to the character of Mr Ramsay. Thus on the thematic level Woolf’s novel may be said to represent the “values” of Impressionism when understood as a feminine art in the feminist reading.

Mrs Ramsay’s identification with nature does not signify that, due to her motherhood, she somehow would resemble nature or be part of it any more than men are part of it, as the masculinist discourse proposes, but it rather means that she is closer to nature because it comforts her, gives her inspiration and functions as a source of creativity, as I have mentioned in chapter 8 in connection with Surrealist feminist painters. Usually to read women as nature is an attempt to bereave of them intellect, which according to masculinist discourse is reserved only for men. According to Norma Broude, in the Western philosophical tradition the gendering of nature as female may be found already in the writings of Plato (the *Timaeus*) and Aristotle (*On the Generation of Animals*). Aristotle divided the cosmos into the heavens, conceived as immutable and perfect and gendered as male, and the earth that was subject to generation and decay was gendered as female. (Broude 1991, 145) In my reading of *To the Lighthouse* or Impressionism, to talk about the contact with nature does not mean that women are less intellectual or intelligent than men, nor that their only function in society is motherhood. Such a reading of the novel is contradicted for

instance by the personage of Lily Briscoe who represents intellectual or artistic womanhood, although her artistic talent is being questioned constantly by men in the novel, especially by Charles Tansley who keeps whispering the words “women can’t paint, women can’t write” to Lily so often that she starts believing them herself.

Mrs Ramsay represents the Victorian stereotype of femininity, the Angel in the House,<sup>40</sup> which Woolf describes in her essay “Professions for Women.” The Angel in the House is an unselfish, sympathetic woman who sacrifices herself daily. In the essay Woolf comes to the conclusion that “killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer” (Woolf 1979, 57-63). Woolf relates how she herself was forced to struggle with this phantom. In *To the Lighthouse* she liberates women from Victorian womanhood by presenting an independent woman who is searching for her identity as an artist. According to Barbara Hill Rigney (1984, 239), Woolf has two types of heroines: those who are painters, writers, or musicians, creators of art, and those who create of themselves “objects of vision.” This latter category of characters who lose their subjectivity and identity as they assume the traditionally male-defined role of art-object include Clarissa Dalloway who enjoys to be the centre of her party as she enters the party room, aware of the excitement her entrance causes, Mrs Ramsay who sits “framed” in a window as an object of admiration to passing spectators, and Jinny in *The Waves* who “enters a candle-lit room, seats herself in a gilt chair and arranges her dress so that it billows around her” (ibid.). Woolf, I would suggest, juxtaposes two possible role models for a woman: the old model of housewife, mother and object of admiration, and the new model of working woman and artist, a role which at the time Woolf

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<sup>40</sup> “Angel in the House” derived from Coventry Patmore’s best-selling nineteenth-century poem (Bowlby 1995, 78).

wrote her novels was still rare. Woolf does not clearly state which of the roles is better for a woman, but rather shows the reader the difficulties and advantages in both roles.

In her identification with nature the character of Mrs Ramsay have clear affinities with Romanticism, as Pamela Transue (1986, 88) suggests. According to Transue, Mrs Ramsay's physical presence loses its distinctness and blends with nature in a manner similar to that often described in Romantic poetry. The image of the waves is also used in Woolf's fiction as a means to merge nature and human beings. In many other respects as well Woolf's novels resemble Romantic literature or painting. The novels are much involved with what Broude (1991, 149) calls the socially constructed feminine attributes of emotion, intuition and empathy that characterized the Romantic period. Besides the mystical identification with nature Woolf's fiction may be seen to give expression to the Romantic ideal of androgyny. In *A Room of One's Own* Woolf discussed Coleridge's conception of an androgynous mind (Woolf 1994, 106). The Romantic notion of the androgyne perpetuated the traditional distinction between the rational male and the sensible female, which as Broude (ibid.) points out, offers a refinement of patriarchal domination rather than a dismantling of it. Woolf curiously presents these stereotypical conceptions of femininity and masculinity in the characters of Mr and Mrs Ramsay. Woolf does not overtly criticize the stereotypical roles of the self-sacrificing mother figure or the rational male figure, but lets the reader make his/her own interpretations. As I explained above, she believed that a good writer should not be too sex-conscious. It is possible to think that *In to the Lighthouse* Woolf consciously presents both the masculine and the feminine part of the brain and thus creates her androgynous vision of life following the Coleridgean idea of a great mind being androgynous, "man-womanly" or "woman-manly." Since Mrs Ramsay is largely a portrait of Woolf's own mother, as Transue points out (1986, 82), we may find in Lily's role a key to Woolf's feminism. Lily's

rebellion and (artistic) independence is possible only after Mrs Ramsay's death. Lily's liberation is symbolized in the successful completion of her painting, and Woolf's own liberation in the successful distancing of her mother's influence when after her death she was able to commit herself to her fiction and free herself from her mother's memory (ibid.).

Broude (1991, 151) suggests that especially Romantic and Impressionist landscape painting have been regarded as feminine. The landscapes of Monet, Boudin, Sisley and Pissarro were characterized as "feminine" by an American critic in 1886. This interpretation, according to Broude, is probably suggested by the tranquility of rural and suburban settings, domestic iconography, and their lack of interest in socially problematic subjects (ibid.). Such texts as *The Waves*, *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs Dalloway* in which Woolf attempts to catch the ephemeral nature of life and human consciousness resemble in their fleeting capriciousness the Impressionist painting. Woolf's "impressionism," even though it is linked to the subjectivity and emotional nature of Romanticism, Symbolism and Impressionism, is, however, a product of her own time and the Bergsonian influence which emphasized the importance of individual intuition. As William Troy (1970, 86-87) convincingly argues, Virginia Woolf was naturally attracted by a writing method that had its origins in psychology and metaphysics and which offered much to the speculative mind, especially when Woolf possessed a mind alert to the intellectual novelties of her own time.

Besides the subject matter, i.e. women's reality, Impressionism may be described feminine in its aesthetic. According to Delia Gaze (1997, 997), Berthe Morisot's work was thought "to stand for the purest and most essential embodiment of the Impressionist aesthetic" in the 1890s and in subsequent French accounts. For the French criticism Morisot represented the quintessential "feminine" painter who fulfilled the demands for the delicate, feminine sensibility that was thought to represent well the conception of Impressionism as a

“spontaneous,” “superficial” art of “sensation” (ibid.).<sup>41</sup> No doubt all these “feminine” characteristics which were used to describe Impressionism were understood by the critics as pejorative terms. In my analysis, they are not considered negative qualities but words describing an art that strived to question and rebel against the formal and rigid academic painting and the styles of Realism and Neoclassicism. Morisot’s painting *In the Dining Room* (1886), which depicts a young housewife in the dining room, is painted in a spontaneous, sketchy manner, which represents a somewhat less rigorous style of painting than is to be seen in the works of the leading male Impressionists Degas, Monet, Renoir, Pissarro or Manet. According to Denis Thomas (1975, 54-55) Morisot’s work shows the influence of Manet, but it is generally softer and looser in execution and lighter in palette. Thomas uses the expressions “womanliness” to describe the dominant characteristic of Morisot’s work (ibid. 55). Also Cassatt’s work Thomas characterizes by the attribute “feminine charm” (ibid. 77). The greater freedom in execution visible in Morisot’s work may be read as a sign of protest against the rigorous “objectivity” of earlier Realist or Neoclassical painting. In Morisot’s painting *Woman at her Toilet* (1875, ill. 1) there is a sense of motion resembling cinematic effects and making it “femininely” lively and modern.

The perception of the feminized character of the Impressionist landscape painting concerned most of all the techniques that the artists employed, not so much the subjects, and these techniques were objected by critics in clearly gendered terms (Broude 1991, 151). Berthe Morisot’s paintings were praised for the quickness and fluidity of her brushwork, but these features were regarded by the same critics as negative qualities in the work of her male

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<sup>41</sup> In nineteenth-century France women were widely thought to be physiologically less capable of rational thought and prone to emotionalism and superficiality. It was also believed that woman’s “natural” bent toward humility and obedience was biologically determined and this explained her lack of originality. (Broude 1991, 152.)

colleagues (ibid.). One French writer of the period who claimed that “the masculine esthetic is an esthetic of form” and “the feminine esthetic is an esthetic of movement” has made a point that suits well my feminist reading of Impressionism as a feminine art (see ibid. 151). Feminine aesthetic may indeed be seen as an aesthetic of movement, an aesthetic of liberation from the rigid rules of composition, perspective and meticulous brushwork, rules which insist on scientific “objectivity” and illusionism, instead of the subjectivity and expressiveness which are so characteristic of Impressionist and subsequent modern art. Thus the words that in the nineteenth-century and later French criticism have been used as pejorative expressions to undermine women artists and Impressionism can be turned round and used as positive features of the first movement of female modernism.

The Impressionist Mary Cassatt painted chiefly portraits of women and children in their daily occupations. Women are also shown at work: taking care of children (*The Bath*, 1892), doing handwork (*Lydia at a Tapestry Frame*, c. 1881 and *Lydia Crocheting in the Garden*, 1880). As Griselda Pollock (1988, 63) points out, intimacy and closeness are characteristic of Cassatt’s paintings. This effect is achieved by means of a photographic close-up technique which enables the viewer to have a very intimate relationship with the depicted figures. According to Pollock (ibid.), a common device used by Cassatt is a shallow pictorial space which the painted figure dominates. The use of close-up and the slice-of-life point of views refers to Cassatt’s familiarity with photographic techniques and practices, but also to her interests in depicting women and children from a close perspective in their daily activities. In other words, Cassatt wanted to illustrate women’s daily reality, while her male Impressionist colleagues depicted either beautiful landscapes (Monet, Pissarro, Sisley) or women who were the objects of their desire or admiration: prostitutes (Manet) and dancers (Degas). As Pollock points out (ibid.), in the depiction of children Cassatt has chosen a low

viewpoint from which the room is depicted, for instance in *Young Girl in a Blue Armchair* (1878) which makes it easy for the viewer to identify with the “perspective” of the child.

In *The Little Sisters* (1885, ill. 2) Cassatt again uses her close-up technique but this time from an adult’s point of view, as the little girls have been painted from a higher perspective so that the girls are looking up at the painter. The painter succeeds in capturing the same kind of spontaneity and contingency as a photographer, or Virginia Woolf in the “close ups” of her characters for instance in the traffic of London in *Mrs Dalloway*. Cassatt’s sketchy brushwork, which is an unusual technique in the majority of her paintings, underlines the ephemeral and vivid impression of her painting. Also Berthe Morisot uses consistently the slice-of-life perspective in her paintings, but in her work the human figure, which is regularly female, is not always so important for the composition as in Mary Cassatt’s pictures. Morisot often paints her figures as seen from a distance (*View of Paris from the Trocadero*, 1872) or places her figures near the edge of the painting (*The Harbour at Lorient*, 1869) thus giving more importance to landscapes or other views.

Morisot’s and Cassatt’s work concentrates on the depiction of bourgeois women’s lives in their homes and sometimes also in public places such as parks and the opera. Woolf depicts also the upper middle-class women who do not usually work outside their homes, although some of her minor female characters try to make their living outside the domestic sphere as well. One of these minor figures is Miss Kilman in *Mrs Dalloway* who, unlike the regular Woolfian figures, has to make her living by giving private lessons to rich people’s children. Also Lily Briscoe is trying to make a career as a painter but she either does not earn her living with her work. Woolf shows in these two novels how difficult it is for a woman to earn her living or make a career as an artist because of the hostile or prejudiced attitudes of the environment towards women’s work.

Like Virginia Woolf, Mary Cassatt was an activist of women's rights. Mary Cassatt's feminism shows in her subjects: the realistic depiction of women's everyday life, the household work and child-caring duties. More poignantly the feminist interest is manifested in the painting project of one of the central murals for the Woman's Building of the Columbian Exposition of 1893 which Cassatt was asked to paint. The theme of the paintings was "women's rise from slavery and ignorance in primitive times to their current state of education and accomplishment in modern times" (Gaze 1997, 369-371). Cassatt's mural was called *Modern Woman* (1893), and it portrayed women picking fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. On the sides were scenes showing young girls pursuing fame and women and the arts. (Ibid.) After the Women's Building was later pulled down, Cassatt's mural was lost, but some photographs were taken and crudely coloured prints made of her work (Nichols 2005, 1). According to art historian Nancy Matthews, when having interpreted the published reproductions of the murals and Cassatt's own words, the mural's meaning becomes clear, especially against the background of late-nineteenth-century women's issues. The central panel, *Young Women Plucking the Fruits of Knowledge or Science*, is probably connected to women's recently acquired access to college education. Matthews sees Cassatt's depiction of women passing the fruits of knowledge from one generation to the next as a direct assault on traditional religious interpretations of the story of Adam and Eve in the Book of Genesis. (Ibid. 4-5)

Janet Wolff argues (2003, 92) that modernism and modernity are gendered male. Most theorists of the modern have discussed mainly the public sphere of work, politics and city life. The key figures of modernity — the *flâneur*, the dandy, the stranger — were male (ibid.). The public sphere was in the nineteenth century and still in the first decades of the twentieth century predominantly a masculine domain, and as the experience of modernity occurred

mainly in the public sphere, it was primarily the area of men's experience (Wolff 1990, 34). The depiction of city life was essential in modernism and in the experience of "the modern." Charles Baudelaire writes in his essay "The Painter of Modern Life" about a modern figure who dwells in the city. He describes this type of modern artist as a man of the world, a man of the crowd<sup>42</sup> and a child, as a type whose central characteristic is curiosity. The modern artist, who he calls the *flâneur*, is free to stroll along the streets, to be in the crowd, to see the world without being watched. He is an indefatigable observer who enjoys himself immensely in the crowd, in the surge and movement of the city. The *flâneur* has the freedom of the *voyeur* who is at the centre of the world and yet remains unseen from the world. (Baudelaire 2001, 182-190) Walter Benjamin wrote about the Baudelairean *flâneur* "who goes botanizing on the asphalt" as follows:

The street becomes a dwelling place for the flâneur; he is as much at home among the façades of houses as a citizen is in his four walls. To him the shiny, enamelled signs of businesses are at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to a bourgeois in his salon. The walls are the desk against which he presses his notebooks; news-stands are his libraries and the terraces of cafés are the balconies from which he looks down on his household after his work is done. That life in all its variety and inexhaustible wealth of variations can thrive only among the grey cobblestones and against the grey background of despotism was the political secret on which the physiologies were based. (Benjamin 1973, 36)

In the modernist art and literature the themes that interested men, such as primitivism and masculine sexuality in the paintings by Picasso and Gauguin or in the novels of D. H.

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<sup>42</sup> With "man of the crowd" Baudelaire refers to Edgar Allan Poe's short story *Man of the Crowd* (see Baudelaire 2001, note 12, p. 293 by Antti Nylén).

Lawrence and James Joyce, have received most attention by modernist theorists. There was however another experience of modernity and another modernism, the hidden features of a “feminine sensibility,” which is expressed for example in Impressionism and women modernists’ work. Even though the expression and the technique of Impressionism make the work of male Impressionists “feminine” as well, in the paintings of women Impressionists there are in addition feminine subjects and feminine perspective, and in Cassatt’s work there is also the feminist point of view which make the female Impressionists’ work even more “feminine” than their male colleagues’ paintings. Her feminist perspectives offer an alternative definition of modernism for example to the Lawrencian narratives which preach the supremacy of the male and the subordination of the female.<sup>43</sup>

Woolf’s novels represent “the feminine modernism” in their poetic subjectivity and ambiguous symbolism and in their anchorage to the philosophical and psychological thinking of the epoch. Woolf is not, however, the only modernist writer whose work may be characterized as poetic feminine modernism, for also Djuna Barnes’s novel *Nightwood* has been compared to modern poetry by Joseph Frank (1963, 49), who thinks that it “combines the simple majesty of a medieval morality play with the verbal subtlety and refinement of a symbolist poem.” Virginia Woolf and Djuna Barnes came near to modern poetry also through their experimentation in spatial form as they abandoned the conventional time-sequence and story-telling practice and replaced them with the spatial intertwining of images and words.

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<sup>43</sup> See on D. H. Lawrence e.g. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 1953, 214-224.

## 10. Images of Self in the Works of Gwen John and Virginia Woolf

Self-reflexion and self-portrayal may be seen as a form of feminine modernism. In the paintings of Gwen John and the novels of Virginia Woolf self-image is a unifying theme that runs through their whole production. As many studies and autobiographical and biographical texts have demonstrated, in Woolf's novels her own history and family have an important role. According to Mary Taubman (1985, 11), the closely-woven interaction of self and subject is a unifying theme running through Gwen John's entire oeuvre from youth to maturity. Gwen John's subjects are taken largely from her own immediate surroundings. For the most part, especially in her earlier years, her subjects were her friends, her rooms, her cats, her own person and the people and places which she observed when she left and returned to her solitary lodgings. Later when she lived in the Paris suburb of Meudon, she employed a few paid models, which were not professional models of Paris but local women and girls. These portraits, as Taubman (*ibid.* 11-12) argues, are studies of a single architypal image. This image evokes so powerfully her own presence that it seems like a distillation of self.

Taubman (*ibid.*) has made the same observation as I did when studying her paintings that self-portrayal pervades her work no matter what the style or the medium is. The majority of her figures have the same sad, deep look in their eyes and the same passive resigned posture, which may be read as a feature of the painter's own personality reflected in the painting as if it were a mirror to her. In her early self-portraits, especially in the one from 1899-1900 John looks very self-assertive and resolute, and old for her age. It is possible to think that in her own self-portraits, when she is sitting as a model for her own paintings, when she is looking at herself — possibly in a mirror — she wants to depict her exterior image, the self-assured determinate artist, as if she did not want to disclose her deepest feelings and

insecurities to the public. In the portraits of other women and girls it is easier to show the inner self or inward thoughts and feelings indirectly through the figures of others. Similarly, Virginia Woolf's own personality may be seen reflected in disguise in her fictional figures. For example, her artistic self who is constantly struggling to accomplish her "vision" could be seen as mirrored in the figures of Lily Briscoe, Orlando, Mrs Ramsay, Bernard of *The Waves*, and Miss LaTrobe. Also in her recurring imagery, e.g. waves, moths, bells, lighthouse, she seems to express the personal memories and preoccupations which she has described in her autobiographical writings.

The majority of the female figures in John's paintings have the same serious or anguished expression on their faces, although in a few paintings of a nun titled *Mère Poussepin* (1913-21) she painted a smiling woman. Usually her women are in a sitting posture with their hands clasped as if they were praying. According to James Sullivan (2005, 4), religion had a central role in Gwen John's life, she was a practicing Catholic who received Holy Communion every day. Against this background we may interpret the seriousness of her figures as an expression of the artist's own religious feeling which she consciously or unconsciously transfers to her images. Gwen's personality, however, had contradictory features. On the one hand, she grew increasingly detached from the world. She herself wrote that aloneness was "nearer God, nearer reality." On the other hand, despite the fact that she was said to be reserved and secretive, she was also passionately violent, which caused her suffering. (Ibid. 3) This ambivalence of her personality shows in the sometimes anguished, sometimes sad expressions of her models. The women she painted cannot all have been so melancholy and worried as she depicts them, so that it is possible to think that the pictures reflect to some degree her own beliefs and personality.

The expression of anxiety or sadness in the eyes of the majority of her figures is not, however, visible in her early paintings depicting a model called Dorelia, such as *The Student* (1903-04), or *Dorelia in a Black Dress* (1903-4), which are painted in a naturalistic style. In these paintings there are not yet signs of Gwen John's self-expression or modernist language which she developed later. According to Mary Taubman (1985, 25), the Dorelian paintings owe technically to her friend Ambrose McEvoy who had imparted to her the results of his painstaking studies of the methods of old masters. In his notebooks he had made observations in the National Gallery and the Soane Museum on the works of Titian, Rubens, Rembrandt, Claude, Gainsborough and Hogarth. According to Taubman (ibid.), John's portraits of this period are painted in her own version of an "old master" technique. The paintings of this period show more variation in the sitter's expression, as if Gwen John had strived to be true to the character of her model and realistically depicted her moods. The desire to represent realistically the character of the model is in perfect harmony with her naturalistic style.

By the late 1910s, Gwen John's painting style had reached full maturity. John restricted herself to a very small number of subjects: a few still lifes, interiors, and landscapes, the remainder being all female portraits. The portraits are all vertically oriented, the figure either two-third or three-quarter-length. The figure, usually turned slightly to the left, sits before a plain backdrop or in an extremely simple interior, which is always the rue Terre Neuve studio. She uses also a very few sitters, almost all anonymous. (Langdale 1987, 85). Her painting becomes more simple and reduced, the style more abstract. All the details have disappeared from the background and the room has become a uniform abstract space. The tone of colour is the same in the figure and the background, which makes them melt together as if the whole picture was bathing in a haze or sunlight. The model's personality has become less important, she has become a type, an anonymous figure with the same expression on her face. Her

models have become instruments by means of which she is able to express her artistic self. As Langdale points out (1987, 89), “a model was of interest to Gwen John not as an individual but as ‘an affair of volumes’, a set of pictorial problems requiring solution.” Virginia Woolf’s production went through a parallel development, a development towards abstraction. Her early novels *The Voyage Out* (1915) and *Night and Day* (1919) are fairly traditional novels with a plot. In her subsequent modernist novels *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* she concentrates on the aesthetic and compositional aspects and discards the plot almost completely. In *The Waves* she reaches the peak in her development towards abstraction.

In John’s modernist works, it is no longer the figures and their facial expressions which provide the key to John’s personality. Her image of self is now expressed in the modernist language of her paintings. She expresses her interiority through colours and abstracted forms. In the paintings of this phase of her career it is possible to read similarities with various modernist artists. For example, Langdale (1987, 100) notes the strong parallelism between her pictures and those of Amedeo Modigliani’s of the late 1910s. Gwen John’s narrow-eyed, long-nosed, elliptical faces are very similar to Modigliani’s heads indebted to African masks. Also the light-absorbent matte surfaces, the placement and proportions of figure, the simple poses, even the positioning of hands resemble Modigliani’s work. Other possible connections mentioned by Langdale is for instance Paul Cézanne, for who John often expressed a fervent admiration. Langdale has found several similarities between John’s paintings and Cézanne’s late portraits. According to her, the artists share the detached attitude to their subjects and the figures of both are arranged in simple, severe frontal poses. Likewise, the brushwork is often reminiscent of Cézanne. (Ibid.)

An important difference however, I would suggest, between Gwen John's paintings and those of Modigliani and Cézanne is in the atmosphere of John's paintings that evokes a feeling of quietness or an inward feeling, which is akin to the atmosphere of Symbolist paintings. An almost religious peace and reticence may be sensed in her work. Her painting technique and light, soft colours (e.g. *The Convalescent*, c. 1923, ill. 3) resemble those of Odilon Redon's *Eve* (1904), in which the background and the figure fuse into a harmonious whole thereby creating a strange mysterious atmosphere. Also the monochromism of both artists' work accentuate the fusion of the figure and the surrounding space. In her notes John insists on the idea of "strangeness" which, according to Taubman (1985, 29), seems to link her with the Symbolist movement and their preoccupation with allusion and mystery. Taubman connects some of John's pictures with their figure-containing outline and undulating pattern to the painting of Puvis de Chavannes, whom she is known to have admired (ibid. 30)

Gwen John never attached herself to any school or movement even though in her written notes and letters she has praised the work of other artists (Taubman 1985, 30).<sup>44</sup> A distinctive feature of Gwen John's work is her tendency to repeat a composition again and again with very little change. The reasons for doing these variants is unknown, and, as Langdale suggests (1987, 41), there is an element of obsessiveness in this repetition. Obsessiveness may have been a feature of her character, as might be assumed on the basis of her passionate relationship to Rodin that had obsessive features, or simply a result of her lack of resources to pay for new models. Or maybe she had simply lost her interest in the

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<sup>44</sup> The names she admired range from Fra Filippo Lippi to James Ensor, from Rouault and Chagall to Piero di Cosimo. During the 1930's she became interested in Cubism and the theories of André Lhote, whose classes she attended in the summer and autumn of 1936. (Taubman 1985, 30)

subject-matter, since in her mature work, as Langdale points out (ibid.) it is merely a vehicle for her primary concern, the formal aspects of painting. The pictures done in series or sets was a characteristic especially of the last phase of her life as an artist, but as early as 1903-04 drawings of Dorelia are repeated in almost identical versions as if she wanted to explore and re-explore a compelling image (Taubman 1985, 27).<sup>45</sup> Virginia Woolf had the same kind of obsessiveness towards certain themes, for example time, death, and artistic creation, as well as her recurring metaphors and symbols, but unlike John, she always created new characters, stories and settings in her novels.

Gwen John was interested in exploring her own image. During her career she made a great number of self-portraits, both drawings and paintings. Perhaps the interest of women painters to depict themselves is partly a result of a solitary life. If you have to spend your life alone in your room and work at home perhaps the picture in the mirror becomes your only acquaintance and your only model for a painting. Gwen John spent a lot of time in her room which became very important to her, and she also painted herself in her room, *The Artist in Her Room in Paris* (1907-09), or she painted simply the room with some of her belongings such as a parasol and a cloak on the wickerchair, which appear in many of her pictures, for example in *A Corner of the Artist's Room in Paris (with flowers)* (1907-09) and *A Corner of the Artist's Room in Paris (with book)* (1907-09). Although she herself is absent in the picture, her things witness of her presence in the room.

Janet Wolff (2003, 104) has read Gwen John's paintings of rooms without figures as images which ask questions about who ought to be in the scene and what that person might be

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<sup>45</sup>The same kind of obsessive interest to explore the same subject may be found in the self-portraits of Helene Schjerfbeck. She made during her career a fine series of self-images, which were not, however, unlike John's pictures, exact repetitions but variations of the same subject-matter.

doing. Wolff connects John's painting *The Teapot* (1915-16) with the missing figure as an invitation to reflect on our assumption about gender in the context of the history of representations of the same kind of domestic scenes which John's picture of a room shows. She connects the painting with Victorian images of the domestic scene where the association of women and the serving of afternoon tea is taken for granted. In *A Corner of the Artist's Room in Paris (with flowers)* already the title reveals that the missing person is the artist herself. As Wolff (ibid.) suggests, the parasol and the cloak tells us that she has been out of her room on a walk or is about to go out. From the other version we may also assume that she often sits reading by the window in that wicker chair and that she leads a simple and perhaps lonely life, since the room is very ascetic. Wolff analyzes another version of John's painting *A Corner of the Artist's Room in Paris* (1907-10) which she relates to the discussion on the public and the private sphere. In her reading, "the interior is made to stand for the exterior, the artist's parasol and jacket referring to her recent excursion into the male domain, the window and blurred outline of a building indicating the city she has chosen as her home but in which she cannot feel at ease" (Wolff 1990, 59). Wolff pays attention to the fact that women's access to the public and their exclusion from it can be portrayed indirectly through allusions, as in Gwen John's painting.

Another aspect related to the theme of artist's room is the possibility of women to choose their studios, working spaces, models, and materials. The working conditions probably had an effect on the choice of women artists' subjects and sometimes even the quality of their painting. For example, as I mentioned earlier, Gwen John's limited subject-matters, the obsessive repetitions and the use of the same sitters may simply have been a result of her poverty and exclusion from the male-dominated art circles. But the choice of subjects may just as well been a result of her own personality and preferences, and

the versatility of subjects does not necessarily guarantee the quality of art. In *A Room of One's Own* Virginia Woolf claimed that “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (Woolf 1994, 6). In the essay Woolf pays attention to women’s seclusion from the surrounding world which has effects on their writing: “If Jane Austen suffered in any way from her circumstances it was in the narrowness of life that was imposed upon her” (ibid. 74). Woolf argues that a woman needs to be free of the child bearing and rearing duties and the domestic work, and to have peace and freedom of the mind to be able to concentrate, if she is going to write fiction. And she must earn enough to live by her work. Gwen John may be considered lucky to have possessed “a room of her own” to be able to create art. According to Langdale (1987, 28) Gwen John supported herself meagrely by posing as an artist’s model. She painted, occasionally exhibiting and selling her pictures. It was an independent and relatively solitary existence. But despite her humble surroundings, she loved her room and was even proud of it. It became an important place for her, her working room and a space where she liked to spend time in the evening reading a book by the window or watching out while eating. (Ibid.) Taubman (1985, 18) explains that she regarded her room as a refuge and a consolation, almost as an extension of herself.

In the context of Gwen John’s paintings and Virginia Woolf’s essay ‘a room’ may be conceived as a symbol of freedom and independence. In Woolf’s novel *Jacob’s Room* ‘a room’ has other connotations which are related to memory and the theme of absence and presence which Janet Wolff took up in connection with John’s paintings of her room, but my reading of absence and presence is not related to the gendering of the private and the public. As I have suggested earlier in chapter 7, *Jacob’s Room* is a metaphor of still life, *nature morte*, because Jacob himself is absent in the novel which is meant to be a description of his life. The narrator depicts the furniture and things in Jacob’s room, but the person living there

is always absent. The same way as with John's painting, we can infer certain aspects of the tenant from the objects in the room. Jacob's room is a student's room full of books. We learn from his books that he is interested in philosophy, history and literature and from the reproductions of paintings we learn that he likes art. And like Gwen John's artist's room, also Jacob's room has a wicker chair: "One fibre in the wicker armchair creaks, though no one sits there" (JR, 37). But somebody is present in the room, somebody visits Jacob's room and sees all these things there even though Jacob is absent. The visitor is the narrator of the novel, and since Woolf probably wrote the novel to explore the life of her death brother Thoby, it is possible to think — if we adopt an autobiographical reading of the novel — that it is Virginia Woolf herself who visits Jacob's/Thoby's room and all the other places where Jacob/Thoby frequented in quest for the mystery and secrets that Thoby left behind when he suddenly died of typhoid fever. As Pamela J. Transue (1986, 61) suggests, Woolf's sense of loss was so great and she was left with so many unanswered questions about her brother that *Jacob's Room* is in some sense an attempt to answer those questions. Therefore, it is possible to read Jacob's room and its objects as a metaphor of memory. In a sense the novel is a self-image of Woolf, her relationship with her brother and the memories of him.

In *Jacob's Room* Woolf's self-image is not reflecting her artistic self and aspirations in the same sense as in her more artistically mature novels. Like in Gwen John's earlier naturalistic self-portraits and portraits in which the features of her own face or personality are displayed in the countenance of the depicted model but not so much in the artistic language which she was still in search, in *Jacob's Room* only the memories of Woolf connected to her brother are depicted, not Woolf's self-image as an artist. In my autobiographical interpretation of *To the Lighthouse* Woolf draws the self-portrait of an artist and her discovery of artistic language and maturity. In the autobiographical reading the novel is a

portrait of Woolf's mother who is represented by Mrs Ramsay. Mrs Ramsay, who is the archetypal mother, full of love and empathy, can be seen as the representation of a feminine principle, and Mr Ramsay, the *alter ego* of Woolf's father, stands for the hard, rational and insensitive masculinity. If Lily Briscoe is understood as Woolf's self-image of an artist who is seeking her artistic "language" and breakthrough which she at the end of the novel accomplishes, we may think that Woolf is inclined to favour the feminine principle as more important for artistic creativity despite the fact that she believed in the androgynous ideal. Mrs Ramsay encourages and inspires by her own intuitive creativity and sensitivity the artistic development of Lily. The point which Woolf is making, as Pamela J. Transue (1986, 90) notes, is that in spite of their differences, Mrs Ramsay and Lily Briscoe have an essential element in common, their female consciousness. It is not difficult to agree with Transue when she sees a feminist objective to have been accomplished in the novel's essentially feminine view of the world. If we compare Lily's artistic experimentation in Post-Impressionist style to Woolf's modernist experimentation in *To the Lighthouse* we may say that Woolf's self-image as an artist and her growth into artistic maturity is portrayed in the novel. If we compare Woolf to Gwen John, we see a parallel development towards the expression of the artistic self in her work which comes through in her discovery of a unified modernist language and mystical silence that consistently characterize the paintings of her mature period.

If *To the Lighthouse* is more a representation of Woolf's artistic search and discovery of her own voice, *The Waves* is a representation of this new language, a language that differs markedly from the leading representatives of masculine modernism. It is a poetic and mythical language which is firmly anchored in Woolf's own personality and her femininity. As Transue (1986, 128) says, the masculine literary tradition has been vanguarded in *The*

*Waves*, since it was already a feminist act for Woolf to have developed a form in which her own vision of reality could prevail. The water imagery is Woolf's private imagery which is connected to her childhood and the times she spent at the seashore, and which haunted her through her life until her death when "symbolically" she even drowned herself in the waves. The water imagery of *The Waves* may be seen as an archetypal image which for Woolf is part of her own identity and femininity, but which also has connections to many mythologies and and to Hélène Cixous feminist philosophy where water is the feminine element *par excellence*:

But look, our seas are what we make of them, full of fish or not, opaque or transparent, red or black, high or smooth, narrow or bankless; and we are ourselves sea, sand, coral, seaweed, beaches, tides, swimmers, children, waves... More or less wavy sea, earth, sky — what matter repuff us? We know how to speak of them all. (Cixous 2001, 2052)

Because water is closely connected to Woolf's own childhood memories it is possible to think that water and the waves means to her the comforting security of the mother's womb the same way as it does in Cixous' mythological water imagery where woman is protected by the all-powerful Good Mother who shields the writing woman from danger (see Moi 1985, 117). And since the waves embraces everything in Woolf's novel from the structure of the novel to its rhythmic alternation of voices by the six protagonists and to its rhythmic sentence and interludes depicting the waves, *The Waves* in its archetypal lyricism may be seen as her version of the female writing, the famous "feminine sentence" which she discussed in *A Room of One's Own* (Woolf 1994, 83-4). For Woolf, while emphasizing textuality as difference, feminine modernism means also the discovery of writing as voice, presence and origin. Thus the discovery of her own feminine voice in *The Waves* is her most original

contribution to feminine modernism. Feminine modernism, a room of their own, could be found, as Randall Stevenson (1992, 42) suggests, in the private domain of the mind, for women writers, such as Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf, were especially inclined to develop new narrative forms in which the workings of consciousness are separated from the external reality and the object world. In *A Room of One's Own* Woolf writes about a particular form of exile or exclusion of women writers from a male-dominated culture and society:

Again if one is a woman one is often surprised by a sudden splitting off of consciousness, say in walking down Whitehall, when from being the natural inheritor of that civilization, she becomes, on the contrary, outside of it, alien and critical. (Woolf 1994, 105)

This sense of exclusion, as Stevenson (ibid. 187) explains, Woolf sees as having consequences for the language of women's writing. In her essay she remarks that, for a woman novelist,

It is useless to go to the great men writers for help, however much one may go to them for pleasure. [...] That is a man's sentence [...] It was a sentence unsuited for a woman's use. (Woolf 1994, 83-4)

If we now return to Gwen John, and take a look at her contribution to feminine modernism we may find a similar kind of inwardness and presence of the artist in her paintings as in Virginia Woolf's novels. In her paintings, whether they are portraits of others, self-portraits or interior views without human figures, there is always the presence of the artist to be sensed

in them, as if she were painting always the same picture in which her personality and inward feelings are expressed. John's strong presence and involvement in her painting has been witnessed by one of her models who almost lost her own identity when the artist made the sitter to look like her: "She takes my hair down & does it like her own. She wants to draw the shape of my head. She has me sit as she does & I feel the absorption of her personality as I sit" (Langdale 1987, 89).

The inwardness which is a common characteristic of John's and Woolf's feminine modernism is in John's art manifested in the mystical silent ambience that the uniform colour tones and softness of forms create. In Woolf's novels the inwardness is translated by the mystical immersion with nature that is akin to Romanticism and the architypal imagery related to femininity. The lyrical quality of both John's and Woolf's work gives them a special voice within modernism that is quite different from the canonical works of male modernism, for example those by D.H. Lawrence and Picasso who celebrated masculine primitivism and virility, or the male writers and artists whose focus was on the exterior world of war, adventure and technology.

## **11. Feminine Versions of Post-Impressionism in Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf**

Virginia Woolf was closely in touch with the art world. According to Sue Roe (2000, 166) the profound influence of French painting and its subjectivism on Vanessa Bell gradually filtered into Virginia Woolf's writing as well. Virginia Woolf wrote in her essay "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown" (1924) that "in and about December, 1910, human character changed" (Woolf 1966a, 320). With this sentence Virginia Woolf is probably referring to the famous

exhibition “Manet and the Post-Impressionists,” which Roger Fry organized in 1910 introducing Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art to England (Wolff 1990, 51; Torgovnick 1990, 85-6). Roger Fry’s ideas and theories about modern art were influential among the Bloomsbury group whose members also Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell and her husband Clive were. Fry collected his essays on modern art theory and African art in his major work *Vision and Design* (1920) which is considered of immense importance in the development of modern art. Fry was the most important art theorist in Britain and *Vision and Design* was the volume which made primitive objects in England high art and made them significant for an emerging modernist aesthetics. (Torgovnick 1990, 87)

In Virginia Woolf’s novels and Vanessa Bell’s paintings we can detect resemblances with Roger Fry’s formalistic principles of modern art. In his “An Essay on Aesthetics,” which Woolf was reading (Roe 2000, 168), Fry argued that “the graphic arts are the expression of the imaginative life rather than a copy of actual life” and exemplified his claim by referring to children who never draw from nature, but express mental images coming from their imagination (Fry 1961, 25-26). Among his most important formal principles in a work of art is the principle of unity, which according to him is “necessary for our restful contemplation of the work of art as a whole, since if it lacks unity we cannot contemplate it in its entirety.” In order to achieve this unity in a picture the artist needs to have a central line around which the attractions of the eye are balanced. (Ibid. 34). Virginia Woolf was interested in Fry’s ideas of unity and the central line, and it may have had an impact on her formal design of *To the Lighthouse*. She argued, while discussing the matter with Fry, that the only function of the lighthouse in the novel was to focus the eye about the central “line” of her novel: “I meant nothing by the Lighthouse. One has to have a central line down the middle of the book to hold the design together” (Bell 1972, 129).

Other ideas on her “formal designs” of the novels may have come from discussions with painters. For example, earlier when Woolf was writing *Mrs Dalloway* the French painter Jacques Raveret had suggested to her that she might achieve simultaneity, which is a natural element in painting, “by some graphic expedient such as placing the word in the middle of the page and surrounding it radially with associated ideas” (ibid. 106). Following this idea suggested by Raveret it is possible to read the surface design of *To the Lighthouse* in terms of a central line. The “Time Passes” section in the middle of the book may be considered to compose the central line around which the other chapters “The Window” and “The Lighthouse” are arranged. Temporal distance is important for the accomplishment of Lily’s artistic vision because it will be reached only through the artist’s growth during the hard times symbolically represented by the middle section of the novel. Thus the central line of *To the Lighthouse* is essential both for the artistic vision and the personal growth, not only Lily’s but also Mr Ramsay’s. The structural design of Woolf’s novel may thus be seen as an example of Clive Bell’s notion of “significant form,” a concept referring to formalism in art, but which in Woolf’s novel has also meaningful content.

In literature an equivalent to abstract art is hard to conceive, and even if Woolf experimented with the form of the novel she never departed from the interplay of form and meaning, not even in her most “abstract” work *The Waves*. Vanessa Bell made a few purely abstract paintings, which were in accord with Clive Bell’s assertion that “significant form,” as opposed to meaningful content, was the key ingredient in art. But after 1915 Vanessa Bell lost her interest in pure abstraction because subject matter was so important to her (Tate Collection 2004, 1). Nevertheless, she was always interested in abstracted shapes and figures and the emphasis of many of her paintings is on form and colour rather than on narrative and representational content. As an example of this kind of painting by Bell is *Studland Beach* (c.

1912, ill. 4). The painting shows a group of people in their leisure activities on a sunny beach, although the subject is not easy to understand by just looking at the painting without the help of the title. The painting is quite close to an abstraction, for the subject is reduced and simplified to its essential components. The effect and meaning of the picture is mediated by its composition and colours. The semiabstract figures and diagonal lines representing the beach line and the contrast of the blue of the sea and the whiteness of the sand communicate the atmosphere and the feeling of a sunny day spent on the beach which the artist has captured on her canvas.

In Bell's painting it is possible to see affinity with Matisse's paintings such as *La Joie de vivre* (1905-6) depicting leisure time in nature with the simplified forms of the figures inspired by primitive art. One major difference is Matisse's uninhibited postures and the naked bodies which are in deep contrast to Bell's clothed distant figures whose faces are hidden by huge hats. In Bell's painting the degree of abstraction is greater than in Matisse's picture and the connection to primitive art is less clear. This more sophisticated version of primitivism by Bell shows that she was more interested in depicting "real figures" on the beach than the naked "day dreams" of men artists.

Matisse's paintings of naked bodies and Picasso's painting *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907) of naked prostitutes are constructed fantasy pictures that have no connection to real life situations, whereas Vanessa Bell's paintings are based on reality and real incidents in her life. For example, *Studland Beach* is closely related to Bell's life for she used to spend holidays on Studland Beach in Dorset with her Bloomsbury group friends (Tate Collection 2004, 1). The painting is linked with her personal feelings and memories that she has recorded also in photographs of her relatives on the same beach. In a photograph depicting Virginia Woolf and Clive Bell sitting on the Studland Beach in 1910 (see Humm 2002, 103),

which was taken the same year when Bell painted her picture, the composition is construed with the same elements as the painting: in the background there are the beach huts and in the left corner in the foreground two figures sitting on the sand. In the photograph parallelism and symmetric relations are important compositional elements. The painting with its two-dimensional, simplified and abstracted figures and objects emphasizes form and colour rather than overt representational content, but despite its formalistic modernist interests, the personal experience and “sunny memories” which are the origin of the painting is communicated through its fresh colours of blue and white and the light reflected from the sand. Thus we may understand *Studland Beach* as an expression of personal experience of particular emotion which the artist translates by means of form, space, colour and perspective to the spectators.

Virginia Woolf’s novels also had their origin in her personal experience and memories. *To the Lighthouse* is written on the basis of Woolf’s childhood memories of her mother and father, and the same way as in Vanessa Bell’s *Studland Beach*, this autobiographical reality has been transformed into a modernist work of art that through its structural patterns, poetic language and symbolism conveys the meanings and feelings that were important to the writer, and on the basis of the story the reader composes his/her own meanings.

In *To the Lighthouse* Woolf shows that she was aware of the principles and innovations of modernist painting when she depicts Mr Bankes reflecting the problems related to representation and likeness in Lily’s painting. The simplified forms and bright colours which are central in Vanessa Bell’s and other Post-Impressionists’ paintings (cf. Matisse, Gauguin, van Gogh, Denis, Bonnard) are also Lily’s principal means of expression in her painting of Mrs Ramsay and James. The problems she has to solve are in deep contrast with those of

traditional representational art. Her aim is not to achieve verisimilitude, but to find the right colours, shapes and shadows which communicate her purposes:

Nothing could be cooler and quieter. 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? Why indeed? — except that if there, in that corner, it was bright, here, in this, she felt the need of darkness. Simple, obvious, commonplace, as it was, Mr Bankes was interested. Mother and child then — objects of universal veneration, and in this case the mother was famous for her beauty — might be reduced, he pondered, to a purple shadow without irreverence.

But the picture was not of them, she said. Or, not in his sense. There were other senses, too, in which one might reverence them. By a shadow here and a light there, for instance. Her tribute took that form, if, as she vaguely supposed, a picture must be a tribute. A mother and child might be reduced to a shadow without irreverence. A light here required a shadow there. (TL, 61-62)

Here Virginia Woolf is introducing new thinking and new conceptions about art to replace the prevailing ones concerning the representation of reality and the likeness of sitters that had for centuries been the principles of art. According to Post-Impressionist thinking, a purple triangle could represent human bodies, because the artist wanted to express in the painting other things than likeness. Like her protagonist, Woolf herself uses in her fiction modernist means to convey her meanings. In modernist novel new aesthetic principles came to replace the conventions of the Realist novel which Woolf questioned in her essays. In “Modern Fiction” (1966b, 106) she wrote:

[...] if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it.

Her experimentation in the form of the novel Woolf took farthest in *The Waves*, which, with the description of the characters' consciousness, tested the limits of the novel genre. The almost total absence of plot was replaced by the poetic structural design with the regularly placed descriptions of nature marking the passage of time. As in the Post-Impressionist paintings by Lily and Vanessa Bell, in the novel, detailed conventional representation of outer reality was not the concern of the novelist. Woolf's interest was focused rather on the relationship between space and time, which, as Sue Roe (2000, 183) argues, she explored by means of a manifold structure which brings the reader into an experiment in simultanism.

Virginia Woolf presented one version of simultanism in *Jacob's Room*, as Roe suggests (2000, 179), when she opened out contrasting glimpses, but as I have demonstrated in chapter 5, it was especially in her city novel *Mrs Dalloway* that she fully experimented with simultanist techniques, juxtaposition and multiple perspective. Like Woolf, the Post-Impressionists explored simultaneity, for example Picasso in showing different perspectives and dimensions in a single face. But even though Woolf used the modernist language of the Cubists and showed an interest in modern technology in *Mrs Dalloway* thereby resembling the Futurists, I argue that her main concern was not in pure formalism. She was equally interested in exploring the human psyche and the secrets of life and death by means of new methods of narration.

Although Woolf mastered and developed experimental techniques alongside with the leading male modernists, she, however, created her own feminine version of modernism and concentrated on issues that were important to her. For example, she did not show interest in the themes of sexuality and primitivism which fascinated male modernists such as D. H. Lawrence, Matisse, and Picasso. As Marianne Torgovnick (1990, 102) explains, modern artists typically valued primitive statues' allusions to conception, gestation, and birth, but often read these allusions to the reproductive cycle as displays of coarse sexuality, interpreting the generative as the pornographic. This pornographic interpretation of primitivism appears widely in male Surrealism and Expressionism. Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)*, which is an example of Expressionism rather than early Cubism, shows this pornographic interest through a depiction of prostitutes which it shared with many works by German Expressionists.

Like her sister Virginia, Vanessa Bell took no interest in primitivism as a theme. In her art primitivism may be discerned only in the drawing technique and simplicity of forms. As Cinzia Eich (2004, 3) argues, Bell's paintings show how modernism can be used to give dignity to the representation of women in art. As an example of the difference of representation of women in modernist art is Bell's painting *The Tub* (1917) that depicts the popular theme of bathers painted by many male modernists, including Cézanne, Degas and Matisse. In Bell's painting we can recognize Cézanne-like "false" perspectives as the tub is depicted from above as if the water was about to spill over the brim and the female figure is painted from the front. Bell's female figure is not depicted as an object of male desire as for example in many paintings by Matisse representing odalisques, but as a shy woman who is taking a bath. Bell's painting is depicting a real situation in a woman's life thus refusing an intruding masculinist gaze and giving place to more psychological interpretations of the

painting. In its realistic handling of the subject and also in the depiction of the tub from above and the tub's round shape, it resembles Degas' *Le Tub* (1885-86). Like Degas' painting, Bell's picture appears to be based on a real life situation, and in fact Vanessa Bell had taken photographs of her children with a tub in which the relations between figures and the tub are the same as in her painting (see Humm 2002, 108). Bell's brushwork and simplified figures resemble more Cézanne's modernist primitive language, but the realist attitude is more akin to Degas and Impressionism.

A special form of female modernism that Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell practiced was domestic photography. The photo albums of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell are revealing documents of their interests in modernist aesthetics and new forms of expression, even though they do not contain any professional photographs. In a recent study *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures: Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell, Photography and Cinema* (2002) Maggie Humm has investigated Woolf's and Bell's domestic photography in their photo albums and found in them visual connections to modernist aesthetics. Humm claims that the modernity in Woolf's albums is striking, owing much to Woolf's knowledge of modernism, Cézanne's painting, Eisenstein and the German cinema (Humm 2002, 61-61). From the photographs presented in Humm's book, however, Woolf's connections to modernist painting is hard to see, but in the sequential arrangement of the photos in the albums it is possible to detect the inspiration of montage technique in the alternation of the images or the slightly differing angles.

Vanessa Bell's modernism is easier to discover in the photographs shown by Humm than Woolf's photographic modernism. I already discussed Bell's use of repetitive patterns and parallelism in her *Studland Beach* painting and photograph. The same kind of parallelism of the figures' posture is to be seen in one of Bell's photographs of her sons Quentin and

Julian posing naked (see photo in Humm 2002, 127) and in a photograph taken of Virginia Woolf and Clive Bell sitting in identical positions (see photo *ibid.* 100). This interest in parallelism and other compositional elements could be read as Bell's version of 'significant form', as her interest in the formalism of Post-Impressionism.

A common theme, the motif of the window, may be found in Bell's photographs and paintings as well as in *To the Lighthouse*. In the novel's first chapter titled "The Window" Mrs Ramsay frequently sits by the window looking at the lighthouse. As Humm (2002, 107-8) points out, the leitmotif of the window frame is a constant device in Vanessa Bell's paintings, in her still lifes in front of a window which runs through her work and in her reworkings of the motif in her paintings of the 1920s and in *Charleston Garden* (1933). The window motif appears also in a photograph depicting Vanessa and her son Julian Bell sitting on her lap positioned within a window frame (*ibid.* 110). According to Humm (*ibid.* 107), the positioning and arrangement of Vanessa's clothes resemble the madonna iconography of Renaissance painting. Lena Sundin (2004, 51) has proposed that also in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* Mrs Ramsay is being visualized by Lily Briscoe as a Madonna through a window. Bell's interest towards the window motif may well have an autobiographical background, for Bell treasured the photograph of her mother, Julia Stephen, "leaning against a closed window, her face turned to the light" (Spalding 1983, 153). According to Frances Spalding, a window also plays an important role in her painting *The Conversation* (sometimes called *Three Women*), and as Spalding (*ibid.*) explains, "the view of the window was to become a popular motif during the twenties as it satisfied the modernist concern with the flatness of the picture plane, the window frame forcing up the external scene into a firmer relationship with the picture surface."

## CONCLUSION

Virginia Woolf used many of the devices which were central in visual modernism. Her work may be compared to Cubism owing to her intellectual interest in the techniques of simultaneism and perspective, and to Futurism because of her interest in the depiction of modern city life and technological innovations. Cubism and Futurism in art were masculine movements, developed mostly by men, and the Futurists denying women access to the Futurist group were openly hostile to them. Since Woolf was hardly fascinated by the Futurist ideas, it is possible to think that the allusions to modern machines which she makes in *Mrs Dalloway* have come indirectly to her work. For example, Marcel Proust used similar devices in his *A la recherche du temps perdu* with his enthralled visions of powered flight and the speed of the motor car (Stevenson 1992, 14). For, as Stevenson (*ibid.*) points out, many contemporary authors, particularly the modernists, viewed the new technologies and stresses of modern life more sceptically than the Futurists, especially after the First World War. And unlike Futurism which preached that “Time and Space died yesterday” with the words of Marinetti, modernism neither accepted nor welcomed the death of space and time (*ibid.*). Quite the reverse, as the example of Virginia Woolf in this study reveals, modernism kept these dimensions alive and reshaped them into different stylistic and structural solutions.

Woolf’s interest in “the moment,” which was central in many modernist works from Proust to Joyce, is one example of her interest in the questions of time. Besides being a central modernist concern in literature, “the moment” meant to Woolf something personal. One of her central themes in her production is the search for permanency and unity in chaotic

existence. In her work the moment is also connected to artistic vision which in its unexpectedness and randomness can be compared to the Impressionists' and photographers' visions.

Woolf was also interested in experimenting with the element of space thus joining other modernist writers (James Joyce, Djuna Barnes) in their attempts to "imitate" the visual arts. In her one-day novels Woolf used techniques of cinema such as flashback and montage, and created effects of simultaneity which may be thought to give her works pictorial dimensions. This spatial form is one manifestation of my attempt to see her as a visualizer and connect her to visual modernism. She created visual or pictorial effects also by means of metaphor, *ekphrasis* and description.

One of my central aims was to study the relationship between word and image in Virginia Woolf's novels. The study showed that in Woolf's texts it is possible to find equivalents for visual images, which may be called visualizations in verbal language, by means of different subterfuges such as description, metaphor and *ekphrasis*. In my study I have understood metaphor as a verbal image of a mental image, according to the definition by Mieke Bal, but I have additionally wanted to emphasize the ambiguity of metaphors, since modernist literature and art may be characterized by ambiguity, symbolism and suggestiveness. Metaphoric images in Woolf resemble visual images because they, too, are hard to analyze due to their inherent continuous nature. In general literary theories and literary studies on Virginia Woolf's fiction, the terms of metaphor and symbol are used more or less as synonyms, and thus also in my study there is overlapping in the use of these concepts, although I have tried to see different connotations in them, the metaphor being nearer to images and symbols nearer to verbal language.

In Woolf's novels the narrator depicts visual perceptions by means of colours, lights, shadows and their effects on nature or by describing things and furniture in a room. These visualizations are quick flashes in the consciousness of the characters which change into some other thoughts or associations. Description is a usual device in all kinds of novels, not just in modernist texts, but in Woolf's and other modernist novels these visualizations are in constant state of change, since they depict the incessant flux in a character's consciousness. Therefore, Woolf's descriptions of visual perceptions in the character's mind may be thought to approach cinematic effects of changing images or the fugitiveness of Impressionist paintings, as Impressionist painters were trying to capture the effects of change and movement of living experience.

I also set as my goal to discover analogies between Woolf's novels and the visual arts concerning modernism's central ideas and aesthetic devices. I have analyzed Woolf's novels for instance in terms of Impressionism's central ideas such as the depiction of momentary impressions, which try to imitate the contingency and objectivity of real life by means of sketchiness and imprecision. Photographic reality was the Impressionists' objective in their attempts to capture the fleeting moment. Their paintings may be understood, however, more as expressions of subjectivity than objective depictions of reality. In Woolf's novels as well there are always signs of subjectivity, even in the apparently objective descriptive interludes of *The Waves*.

Freud's investigations of dream and the unconscious influenced art and literature and modernism's urge to examine the mind more completely than in earlier fiction seems likely to have resulted from the study and interest in psychology and psychoanalysis at the beginning of the twentieth century. In many male modernists' work Freud's influence shows in the interest in sexuality, as for example in D. H. Lawrence's production, or in the male

Surrealists' and Expressionists' art and literature. In Woolf's work Freudian influences may be found in the stream-of-consciousness technique, even though it depicts more the conscious thoughts of the characters than their subconscious. In *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf depicted also hallucinations of a mentally ill person, and discusses the treatment of a shell-shocked person. But more than this interest in psychic treatment, Freud's possible influence on Woolf may be seen in her suggestive ambiguous symbolism and metaphorical imagery that are akin to Freudian dream symbolism. If Lawrence was more intrigued by sexuality, primitiveness, the Freudian Oidipus complex and themes related to masculine virility, Woolf's was rather more interested in the relationship between the masculine and the feminine principle. I have interpreted her to have chosen the feminine principle as more important, at least as far as creativity and inspiration are concerned, and maternal metaphors such as water in *The Waves* can be thought to underline this preference.

My third central aim was to discuss the work of some modernist women artists and compare their paintings to Woolf's modernism. I have connected Woolf to certain schools of modernism which I have interpreted in gendered terms. I have regendered Impressionism as feminine after it had been gendered as masculine by many critics of the twentieth century, though originally in the nineteenth century Impressionism was gendered as feminine. This gendering and regendering of art shows that art schools and styles are what you want them to be, that art like everything else may be used to serve different purposes. My aim in gendering Impressionism as feminine has served the purpose of finding common characteristics between female artists and Virginia Woolf in order to show that not all modernist art was masculine and that there is another way of analyzing modernism.

I have not intended to argue that all women are alike and all women's art share the same characteristics, for surely among women modernists there are many kinds of

modernisms as well. Instead, to discuss features of modernism that many important women artists had in common with Virginia Woolf is an attempt to show that there existed another modernism besides the one discussed in the official history of modernism written from male perspective. Some schools of modernism have been seen in my analysis being closer to the aims and personalities of Woolf and the women artists, expressing characteristics that were important to them such as emotion, inwardness and lyricism. These features may be associated to Impressionism, Symbolism and Surrealism, movements which were a continuation of the Romantic tradition in art and literature. All these movements stressed features related to subjectivity and ambiguity, and especially Impressionism and Surrealism have been strongly anchored on the concept of femininity. But unlike male Surrealists' conception of woman as the mystical "other," women artists and Virginia Woolf discussed femininity and its representations in ways that were connected to women's reality.

Many men artists and writers represented women in their art as an object of desire or even in pornographic terms. In women artists' work femininity and woman as the other is seen from a wholly different perspective. In Virginia Woolf's novels an important feature is her search of creativity and identity through her own history and family, especially the importance of her mother to her life and art shows in her work. In Gwen John's art her strong personality is filtered through her paintings and her self-image is visible not only in her self-portraits, but also in portraits and still-lives, and in the modernist language she uses. Even though women artists used similar techniques and methods in their work as male artists, the content and subject-matter were different. Many male artists and writers depicted their fantasies in pictures of prostitutes (Manet, Picasso, Matisse) and novels dealing with phallic sexuality, war and adventure (Joyce, Lawrence, Conrad) thus giving a more "superficial" look on life and concentrating on the outer world. Women, on the other hand, depicted

women's everyday life realistically (Cassatt, Morisot, John, Bell, Woolf) or their inner world (John, Bell and Woolf).

The innovations and new ideas of modernist art such as fragmented form and experimentation in perspective meant rebellion against the conventions of realistic and representational art. Modernist literature was in rebellion against the realistic novel and conventional poetry. As my study suggests, the artists and writers were trying to abolish the conventions and boundaries between different art forms, for example by bringing the visual arts closer to verbal art in their attempts to depict space in literature and time in painting and by using the cinematic techniques such as montage in literature, or by trying to imitate the contingency and momentariness of a photograph in the Impressionist painting or in the stream-of-consciousness novel. This mixing of different art forms was perhaps most conspicuous in the work of Marcel Duchamp, a pioneer of a new expressive form of the text-related art of the 1960s, or René Magritte who with Duchamp is the initiator of conceptual art.

In modernist poetry, on the other hand, Apollinaire with his poem-ideograms created visual images by means of words on a page. In combining the verbal and the visual the novelists were more "conservative" and their experimentation remained within the confines of verbal language. Instead, many of them made experiments within verbal language by remodeling and radicalizing the grammatical rules and renewing vocabulary. Virginia Woolf was also a renewer of the novel, especially with her experimental novel *The Waves*, in which she abandoned nearly all the conventions of the novel. Instead of a novel we could talk about an elegy or a drama or a combination of them. *The Waves* could be seen as Woolf's version of *écriture féminine*, because in its originality and lyricism it is unlike all the other works of modernism and it may be seen as giving an expression to Woolf's association of feminine

architypal imagery, creativity and writing. Woolf's feminine writing is made of impressions and colours which together constitute the texture of human life, and thus her reality is communicated emotionally rather than intellectually. The difference of Woolf's writing compared with the male modernist writing may be found in her almost complete lack of narrative interest which most leading modernist writers such as Conrad, Lawrence and Joyce did not abandon. It is as difficult to define feminine modernism as to define feminine writing , for as Hélène Cixous (2001, 2046) writes, "a feminine practice of writing [...] can never be theorized, enclosed, coded — which does not mean that it does not exist." Woolf wrote antinovels, and particularly *The Waves* in drawing attention to the artificiality of her created world could from today's perspective be regarded as a predecessor of the post-modernist novel, the same way as Duchamp and Magritte in their self-reflexiveness have been seen as predecessors of post-modernist art.

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