

Playing Roles (A Reading of Virginia Woolf's Novel *To the Lighthouse*)

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Reading Virginia Woolf's novel *To the Lighthouse* in the light of the generally known understanding of art as subjective reflection of objective reality, we might conclude that this novel interrogates not only the subjectivity of that reflection but the objectivity of reality as well.

A prevailing sense of seemingness stems especially from Lily Briscoe's doing a painting which metonymically corresponds to the narrating of the story (Grgas 1988). The closing sentence of the novel, »I have had my vision«, Lily's comment upon her just completed portrait of Mrs Ramsay, signals a strong sense of fictiousness, which echoes the Woolfian fiction with gender and masquerade. Readers feel almost encouraged to use postmodernist lenses while reading this modernist text. If the modernist text foregrounds uncertainty about our perception of the world (interrogation of subjectivity) and the postmodernist text foregrounds uncertainty about the »reality« status of the world (interrogation of objectivity), an epistemological notion has been suggested by this novel, namely that we construct the reality we inhabit. Language plays a crucial role in this cognitive process, reflecting a semiotic inerplay which emerges out of power-relations, revealing the ideology of gender.

Virginia Woolf's novel *To the Lighthouse* can be read in a plurality of ways. As a masterpiece it stimulates creative responses inviting its readers to constantly fresh interpretations.

The fictional world of Virginia Woolf is commonly regarded as engaging femininity and other gender issues. Following her well-known remark relating to the concept of the creative mind, which she refuses to be *either* male *or* female, what is examined in the article is the way in which Virginia Woolf's a-gendered evaluation of aesthetic phenomena reverberates throughout the novel.

If art (as *ordo artificiosus*) is said to be subjective reflection (as *ordo culturalis*) of objective reality (as *ordo naturalis*), it is then the border-setting role of the eye, corresponding to the lighthouse imagery in the novel, which seems to be of crucial relevance for our understanding of this three-fold interrelationship (*ordo artificiosus – ordo culturalis – ordo naturalis*). When applied to sex/gender issues, the same role of the eye, being a-gendered in the novel, provokes questions in so far as it is itself culturally determined (this is why the concept of natural beauty is rarely identical in different artistic styles). What the novel propounds is a notion relating to natural (sex) order and cultural (gender) disorder, while it is the artificial (fictional) order, metonymically depicted in the novel as Lily Briscoe's doing a painting, which functions in an epistemological/cognitive fashion and enables the reader a better understanding of the three-fold interrelationship. The triple structure of the novel relies on a similar arrangement of story parts.

The novel *To the Lighthouse* is written in three parts:

01. The Window

The first part of the novel is set on an island: it is in the Hebrides where the Ramsays are on holiday with their guests and eight children. A summer day is described, which centres on James's wish (he is six and is the youngest child of the Ramsays) to visit the lighthouse. But the lighthouse is located on a distant island and the weather seems to be rather unsettled 'to-morrow'. There are two basic groups of statements referring to the weather forecast:

- a) Mr Ramsay: »It won't be fine« (9).
- b) Mrs Ramsay: »if it's fine to-morrow« (9).
 - »But it may be fine-I expect it will be fine« (10).
 - »Perhaps it will be fine to-morrow' (19).
 - »and even if it isn't fine to-morrow« (29).
 - »If it were fine ... Everything seemed possible.« (97).

Mr Ramsay's statement sounds indisputable: his dealing with science and philosophy (i.e. causality) makes him feel qualified to predict the future. His statement is relativized by a series of Mrs Ramsay's statements, a-centring it by different types of conditional expressions. That the primary lesson of culture teaches that it is the male point of view which is expected to be perceived as the 'objective' point of view on all things in the Western habit of mind, is best seen in a short passage:

»She was trying to get these tiresome stockings finished to send to Sorley's little boy to-morrow, said Mrs Ramsay.

There wasn't the slightest possible chance that they could go to the Lighthouse to-morrow, Mr Ramsay snapped out irascibly.

How did he know? she asked. The wind often changed.

The extraordinary irrationality of her remark, the folly of women's minds enraged him. He had ridden through the valley of death, been shattered and shivered; and now she flew in the face of facts, made his children hope what was utterly out of the question, in effect, told lies.« (33-4).

As a philosopher, Mr Ramsay can be said to represent the authority figure of monumental history. In the context of the same cultural cliché women are not seen as authority figures. Consequently, they are expected to be cooperative and it is exactly this cooperation which undermines their own identities. That it is language which plays an important role in matters of identity is quite clear from the opening pages of the novel. James »had already his private code, his secret language« (9). To be sure he is still a child and has not yet been initiated into culture/society. This occurs at the end of the novel: he reaches the lighthouse/maturity, while Lily has come back to nature to complete her picture. Her achievement is unutterable, making the end of the novel oxymoronic: the painting can be semantically described as a *verbal silence*. It is *verbal* since the act of observing it coincides with the act of »reading«, or better to say, »translating« (especially when one has one's »private code« or »secret language«) what had been observed: the meaning of the painting is thus open to interpretation, just as reality is. It depends on both, our language and the 'object' of our perception. Lily's picture represents Mrs Ramsay's portrait, intensifying an idea of silence: it refers not only to the visual arts in general but to the *muted* (Showalter 1986:261) culture of women as well. The end of the novel is thus completely in accordance with what happens with words from the very beginning of the novel, reflecting a semiotic interplay which emerges out of power-relations:

I

a) (James is thinking about his father): »What he said was true. It was always true. He was incapable of untruth.« (10).

II

b) (Augustus Carmichael, a poet): »...sunk as he was in a grey-green somnolence which embraced them all, without need of words ...« (15).

c) (a conversation takes place between Mrs Ramsay and Charles Tansley): » ... his subject was now the influence of something upon somebody – they were walking on and Mrs Ramsay did not quite catch the meaning, only the words, here and there ... dissertation ... fellowship ... readership ... lectureship. She could not follow the ugly academic jargon.« (16-17).

d) (while Mr Ramsay is chanting some verses): »The words (she was looking at the window) sounded as if they were floating like flowers on water out there, cut off from them all, as if no one had said them, but they had come into existence of themselves.« (102).

It's not at all difficult to recognize the male code in example a), inarticulateness of poetic language/art in example b), and the female code in the last two examples which suggest an idea of the divorce between the word and its 'true' meaning. But

how is it possible to separate words from their meanings? This is what the novel is about: gendering and de-gendering language and power relations.

When Lily asks Andrew what his father's books are about, he replies: »Subject and object and the nature of reality.« (26). But how can we get to know what subject, object and reality are? Can a scientist answer such questions if, as a human being, he has his »private code«, his »secret language«? To be more precise, if it's possible for words to have their independent lives, as has been suggested by example d), is it possible to acknowledge let us say scientific language its own existence? What happens with 'subject' in that case? That's why it is art (Lily Briscoe's doing a painting) which is being contrasted to Mr Ramsay's »code« (his dealing with science and philosophy). When Lily completes her picture at the end of the novel, she makes a comment upon the final stroke of the brush: »I have had my vision.« (192). The most generally acknowledged definition of art says that it is a subjective reflection of objective reality. What is subjective reflection (»my vision«) and what is objective reality? Is objective reflection of reality possible? In the first part of the novel Lily tries to explain to Mr Banks that she is making an abstract picture: »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 ... Mother and child then – objects of universal veneration ... But the picture was not of them, she said. Or, not in his sense ... He took it scientifically ...« (52). If the picture is »not of them«, what is it of then? It is obviously of the subject, the object and reality, but not in Mr Ramsay's (scientific) terms. Does it mean that art and science 'do not speak the same language' or is it possible that, on the contrary, we can never reach the truth just because it is only male language which is »scientific«, i.e. »incapable of untruth«, in which case it comes out that both art *and* science are fictions? How can we ever know what reality is, if the language we use to get to know it, being itself masked by power relations, disguises both our (subjective) identity and our cognition of (objective) reality? It is our empirical experience, our perception of the world that we start out with in both science and art. No wonder then that we so often meet 'eyes' in this novel.

In the first part of the novel »eye« expressions and metaphors are used very frequently. As it has been generally acknowledged by anthropologists, linguists, philosophers and semanticists (like B. Lee Whorf, Zoltan Kovecses, G. Lakoff, Zdravko Radman and many others), metaphorical expressions are highly dependent on body (e.g. eye) relations. Such metaphors are basically container-structured, the metaphorical connotation revealing our cognitive processes (Radman 1995). »The container metaphor highlights the content with respect to its amount, density, centrality, and boundaries.« (Lakoff 1980:95). Regarding the »eye« expressions in this novel, it can be said that the spatial relations are attributed to both the »inward« and the »outward« direction/perspective, indicating thus that it is the eye (i.e. body, and not mind) which represents the border line between the inner/mental and the

outer space, me and the world, subject and object. Randomly selected examples reveal that verbs, propositions and adjectives used are all spatial when referring to the eye (in both figurative and literal expressions):

->his eyes blinked« (15)	to blink: to shut and open quickly
->raising her eyes« (29)	to raise
->fixing her short sighted eyes« (33)	to fix
->his eyes averted«(33)	to avert
->that filled her eyes with joy« (43)	to fill
->he slightly narrowed his clear blue eyes« (51)	to narrow
->her own eyes meeting her own eyes« (61)	to meet
->letting her eyes slide ... above the pool« (72)	to slide
->screwing up her Chinese eyes« (85)	to screw up/ a door
->even shut her eyes« (98)	to shut
->and her eyes were opening and shutting« (106)	to open
->and narrow his little blue eyes upon the horizon« (10)	upon
->as they sat at table beneath their mother's eyes« (12)	beneath
->as far as the eye could see« (17)	as far as
->with stars in her eyes« (18)	in
->and the jacmana beyond burnt into her eyes« (21)	into
->which made her in his eyes« (22)	in
->sections of potatoes rose before her eyes« (27)	before
->in her mind's eye« (55)	in
->looking into James's eyes« (59)	into
->she saw in his eyes' (59)	in
->with his yellow cat's eyes ajar« (15)	ajar: slightly open/of doors
->eyes of unparalleled depth« (50)	depth
->made his eyes feel full« (74)	full

No matter which direction is taken into account (inward, into the mental spaces, or outward, into the outer world of non-us), the eyes can be recognized as that part of the body which intensifies the fundamentally relevant premise that it is our body (and not mind) which indicates the border line between us and the world conceived not as the empty space of Euclidean geometry filled with material objects, but as a semantic space, which is to say that:

1. mental activities are reciprocative, i.e. dependent on the interaction with the extra- subjective reality;
2. mind is not an isolated entity;
3. our perception and cognition of the world does not rely upon the *universe* but *humiverse* (as has been suggested by Zdravko Radman and other authors), since mind is language-dependent;
4. if mind is in the body (a container metaphor ?), the body experience should be respected in dealing with these basically epistemological problems;
5. since there are at least two different body types, it comes out that there should be at least two different types of mind-set.

That is how we began this article but, as mentioned earlier, it is not bodily experience Virginia Woolf deals with in this novel: this is not a feminist novel, it treats instead 'masculine' vs. 'feminine' paradigms, which belong to gender, i.e. to

the body ideology. In this respect *To the Lighthouse* is an epistemological novel revealing that it is the politics of gender which influences our language and, consequently, our perception and cognition of the world. It is not body biology, as has been suggested by some feminist authors, which determines our being-in-the-world (universe); it is rather body ideology, as has been suggested by authors like M. Merleau-Ponty, which determines our culturally expected sex behavior as recognizably fe/male being-in-the-world (humiverse), in which way fe/males are reduced to masks playing their socially acceptable roles. Virginia Woolf 'writes body' in the Pontyan sense: her novel does not promote femaleness, it rather relativizes and de-centres a concept of denotation promoted by the dominant male code. It has been suggested thus by the Woolfian re-written world that the objective eye is not at all possible: that is why Mr Ramsay's indisputable statements are counterpointed not only by Mrs Ramsay's relativizing statements but, what is more significant, by Lily Briscoe's painting. Having finished her painting/ portrait of Mrs Ramsay, which is conditioned by the moment of her just completed experience, Lily does not make a comment on the experience (which makes possible her final act), but simply says: »I have had my vision.« Such a statement undermines the verisimilitude of the entire narrative, intensifying at the same time a universally acknowledged concept of art as an illusion. The last sentence of the novel confirms the idea that art is always (even if it's somebody's portrait) a fictionalization of the phenomena observed: as Lily says, my picture is »my vision«, i.e. it's not a result of any »objective« observation. This sense of seemingness, stemming from the reflective/interactive character of perception corresponds to Mr Ramsay's »scientific«, i.e. »objective« dealing with subject, object and the nature of reality as the agents of the (biological) reflection and (social) interaction of the observer and the observed. What emerges is the suggestion that it is not only art which is fictitious, but science and philosophy as well due to gender ideology which undergrids language, emerging out of power relations.

02. Time Passes

The second part of the novel is peopleless and dark reminding us that the first, 'window' part of the novel can be read as the »eye« metaphor. There is some action in the central part of the novel, but not mental activity, which makes this part of the novel eyeless as well. In fact, the eye imagery is 'naturalized' by its being temporalized. The section is thus opened by the eyes »shut« and is closed by the eyes 'opened wide':

» ... they would look, once, on the shut eyes and the loosely clasping fingers ...« (118).

» ... the sun lifted the curtains, broke the veil on their eyes, and Lily Briscoe stirring in her sleep clutched at her blankets as a faller clutches at the turf on the edge of a cliff. Her eyes opened wide. Here she was again, she thought, sitting bolt upright in bed. Awake.« (133).

Meanwhile it is only nature which is eye-attributed:

»The spring ... was laid out on fields wide-eyed and watchful and entirely careless of what was done or thought by the beholders.« (122–3).

» ... and the flowers standing there, looking before them, looking up, yet beholding nothing, eyeless, and thus terrible.« (125).

What these attributes reveal is nature's indifference which prevails in the »Time Passes« section: it is counterpointed by cultural relevance (people's eyes shut, as we are nearer to the opening pages of the chapter, and open, as we are nearer the end of the chapter). This already discussed universe-humiverse distinction is strengthened by two significant scenes in this 'dark' section of the novel:

a) »Not only was furniture confounded; there was scarcely anything left of body or mind by which one could say »This is he« or »This is she.« (117).

Sex difference seems irrelevant to an irrational, mind-free space (maybe a dreamlike fantasy world of imagination), dark, empty and eyeless, i.e. not able to reflect or be reflected and, consequently, interacted on. Does this not suggest that it is only the cultural space of *animal politicum* (*humiverse*) where the sex differences can be identified and transformed into gender roles?

b) »Once more, as she felt the tea warm in her, the telescope fitted itself to Mrs McNab's eyes, and in a ring of light she saw the old gentleman, lean as a rake ... on the lawn ...« (130).

Mrs McNab's eyes are telescoped to be able to perceive somebody's coming back to the empty house at last. Namely, as has been indicated, human eyes are shut (118) from the beginning of this section (117) and it is not before the end of the section that »people might be coming for the summer.« (129). Is it no surprise then that Mrs McNab's eyes need a »telescope« to be able to discern a human-like creature, leaving (symbolically) nature behind. The telescopic attribution, needless to say, appears in between the human eyes shut section (118), indicating exclusion from the world, and the eyes opened again section (133), indicating inclusion into the world again. This gloomy part of the novel ends with the arrival of Lily Briscoe and Mr Carmichael, Lily's eyes »opened wide« (133).

03. The Lighthouse

In the last section of the novel James, Cam and Mr Ramsay reach the lighthouse, which coincides with the parallel efforts of Lily Briscoe to finish her painting, a portrait of Mrs Ramsay (who had died in the previous chapter). These two synonymous actions reflect each other insofar as both stories, Lily's and James's

deal with self-discovery. Still a difference remains between these two stories, James being the only truly evolving protagonist of the novel, which is amplified by the motif of »patricide«, e.g. in passages like this one:

»And if he does, James thought, then I shall take a knife and strike him to the heart. He had always kept this old symbol of taking a knife and striking his father to the heart ...«.(170).

Lily's progress of self-knowledge is synonymous with and reflects James's final self-fulfilment. Her depiction of Mrs Ramsay concentrates on »the self-surrender she had seen on so many women's faces (on Mrs Ramsay's, for instance) ...«.(141). In this respect Mrs Ramsay's passivity, iconized literally and symbolically by Lily's painting, has been replaced by Lily's reflective role: she is not 'minorized' any more by 'can't paint' comments repeated constantly throughout the novel, but has become »mirrorized« in turn by her being allowed to be initiated into the culture realm. Lily resists inherited notions of the female body, but at the same time her true self is sacrificed by silencing her body needs. There was some talk of her marrying Mr Bankes once, but nothing had come of it. In comparison with Mrs Ramsay, Lily is not beautiful, with her 'little Chinese eyes', as readers are often reminded in the course of the novel. Instead of being beautiful, she has competent eyes and hands, a clear sign of her creative abilities, but with this particular emphasis on her eyes and hands, which outgrow her body, the text dissociates her from her actual femininity. Such a notion is amplified by her remark that »... any other woman in the whole world would have done something, said something – all except myself, thought Lily, girding at herself bitterly, who am not a woman ...«. (142). Namely, Lily is desexualized, by her body being silenced in order to be able to respond to culture's requests. To become a painter is traditionally considered to belong to the male activity realm in a culture which remains *eo ipso* male coded, since nothing has changed in culture by Lily's entering into it. On the contrary, this very act represents a self-denial (Gilbert & Gubar 1989: 276) demonstrating a male-oriented notion of self-discovery that 'to be' is 'to be initiated', i.e. accepted, if expectations have been fulfilled, into culture, reminding us of the spatial attributes which emerge out of the eye (as the body border-line) imagery. This is evidently the reason why self-discovering question 'who is one?' has been replaced by Lily's question »where is one?« (179). In such a culture, which is spatial in its essence (Melko 1985, Blair 1983), the identity dichotomy is fundamentally ideological, indicating that what is generally acknowledged as sex difference does not stem from the biological category of sex, but rather from the politics of gender as coded by culture. To this extent the novel *To the Lighthouse* deals with the semiotics of social relations (Poyton 1990, Larsen 1994, Lakoff 1980, Gilbert & Gubar 1989) focussing attention on the issue of gender roles and sexist discourse to indicate that the language we use to get to know both, ourselves and the world, represents a construction of (not only social) reality, which emerges out of power relations. As is suggested by Lily herself, «she heard

some voice saying she couldn't paint, saying she couldn't create, as if she were caught up in one of those habitual currents which after a certain time forms experience in the mind, so that one repeats words without being aware any longer who originally spoke them.« (148–149). Lily's role is to de-gender the concept of femininity and »the language that has lied about us« (Rich 1979:13), but her final act of finishing the painting does not indicate that the myth of female passivity has been broken: it has been replaced instead by one's freedom either to accept or to deny (by silencing) one's »true self«. In such a way nothing is really changed in a recognizably coded culture. Lily's body being silenced indicates that the female experience does not enter the domain of (male) culture, the culture of women remaining thus »muted« and, consequently, powerless.

Concerning the nature/culture dichotomy, originating from the Western habit of mind, it can be suggested here that it is not Mrs Ramsay who is a representative of the »nature« pole of the opposition, since she in no way opposes culture (she de-centres Mr Ramsay's statements by relativizing them) : the true opposition to Mr Ramsay's culture (of monumental history) is Lily Briscoe, a painter-to-be, whose self-denial is counterpointed by James's self-fulfilment revealing thus the uncertainties of identity (immanent to a civic novel), which the true nature of self-discovery is conditioned by. »To be«, it seems to be suggested, should connote »to be free to become« rather than »to be accepted«: it is in this respect that it is Lily (as an artist/creator) who is opposed to Mr Ramsay's code and not Mrs Ramsay, a nameless beauty among the Ramsays possessions. Lily's creative mind dissociates her from the procreation/reproduction body role, leading her to creative production as an expression of one's will to break free from culturally determined norms (Lily's decision to make an abstract painting contributing such an idea) which can in no way be attributed to Mrs Ramsay's role. If culture expects women to be weak, obedient, pleasing, caring, passive, etc. (which is a short description of Mrs Ramsay as a female representative of patriarchal culture), then we cannot help noticing that such 'qualities' can hardly be attributed to nature/wilderness to which the male code is expected to respond by the culture's invitation to be courageous, adventurous, active, brave, etc., since under such circumstances he would be deprived of the true opposition leading him to »victory«. To overpower somebody who is weak, passive and obedient doesn't seem a very difficult task. It should be noticed here that Lily is also courageous and brave enough to oppose both cultural stereotypes of the female identity and the aesthetic stereotypes referring to the visual arts. Who is then Mrs Ramsay and what is her role? Mrs Ramsay does not represent nature but a *middle nature* (Larsen 1993), being reduced to a garden spot, revealing thus the patriarchal standards of the female body which, in comparison to Lily's role in the novel, appear to be cultural cliches. The best known of these cliches says that woman finds her true self in maternity. Mrs Ramsay therefore never interrogates her identity in the

direction of self-discovery: her body is predestined to wait to be discovered by man whose role is to make the explored spaces his own fertile territory. Mrs Ramsay is a mother of eight children, her reproductive abilities making her a domestic ideal of femininity, by which role she is banned from any creative activity. Namely, the structures of patriarchy divide labour into men's production and women's reproduction (Friedman 1989:75), and render creation and procreation incompatible. Woman's body thus excludes her from any intellectual activity degrading her nature (as the potentiality of freedom) to a domesticated, by cultivation, piece of land, a territory which is to be viewed as essentially at the service of man. Unlike Lily Briscoe, Mrs Ramsay never truly opposes the concept of woman which debases her: moreover, she even encourages her men to feel dominant (e.g. on pp. 11, 15, 34), undermining in this manner even their true identities, which produces a completely fabulative character of social reality. Paradoxically enough then, Mrs Ramsay's role reflects the culture system, her true self remaining unknown and therefore open to interpretation (just like a piece of art, i.e. Lily's portrait of Mrs Ramsay). A new paradox arises from this: if fabulation is attributed to reality/life, is it to suggest that it is art which de-fabulizes life? What comes out from such a suggestion is a possibility that art has cognitive and not only aesthetic aspects (Radman 1995). To this extent, *To the Lighthouse* is not only just a piece of written art: it can be read as an aspect of re-thinking »the subject and object and the nature of reality« (26) as fabulated by the male code. In such a context, Lily's role is the most complex one and is crucial for our reading of this novel: it extends beyond the questions of identity and self-discovery insofar as it aims »at the truth of things« (138). Lily »felt cut off from other people, and able only to go on watching, asking, wondering ... How aimless it was, how chaotic, how unreal it was ...« (138), her observations being of epistemological rather than purely aesthetic relevance. The lighthouse imagery, closely connected with the eye-role underlines the notion that art is not only reflective/imitative but illuminative/cognitive as well, enabling our getting »at the truth of things«. The danger, of course, has now become evident, that Lily's role can be interpreted as a mere replacement of a male-oriented consciousness, representing a copy/replica of the centred self model. Such a possibility is eliminated by Lily's identifying herself with Mrs Ramsay, her painting (a portrait of Mrs Ramsay) reflecting the mirror aspect of a becoming self. This is the exact manner, stemming from the complementary Lily-Mrs Ramsay relation, that femininity is opposed to Mr Ramsay's culture based as it is upon stereotypes which Lily's painting is trying to undermine. The language that V. Woolf uses in this novel can be said to contribute greatly to the process of undermining stereotypes, which can be followed very clearly in the section crowned with Lily's completion of the painting, indicating the relevance of the (painter's) eye in creative-as-cognitive processes:

a) It seems naturally acceptable for men to display »powerful« emotions, especially anger (Poyton 1990: 86). Mr Ramsay thus »had stormed« (137), he »produced a terrible groan« (142), he also »burst out« (189) so that his children »could not endure another explosion of the passions that boiled in him« (189).

Of course, following the *quod licet Iovi, non licet bovi* logic, silence is attributed to the female characters only. Lily thus stood there »in complete silence« (143), Cam »was so silent« (156), »Mrs Ramsay sat silent. She was glad, Lily thought, to rest in silence ...« (159), Cam again is 'addressing herself silently to James' (189), etc.

b) What stems from this basic dichotomy is a series of stereotypes dividing male from female roles. Male characters are independent, rational, competent, active and have a strong intellectual bent. Mr Ramsay is thus not just simply seeing something, his gaze is 'mastering': »Suddenly Mr Ramsay raised his head as he passed and looked straight at her, with his distraught wild gaze which was yet so penetrating ...« (138). After Lily's short remark on his boots, Mr Ramsay develops a whole theory about making boots (144). James is »the lawgiver, with the tablets of eternal wisdom laid open on his knee ...« (157). As such he is alone able to oppose his father since »they alone knew each other. What then was this terror, this hatred?« (171). James describes his father as a despot and tyrant »making people do what they did not want to do, cutting off their right to speak« (170).

In comparison with the male characters in the last section of the novel, the female characters are passive, empty, clumsy, incompetent and easily brought into subjection. Thus Lily 'could only make a phrase resound to cover the blankness of her mind' (137) and is embarrassed by Mr Ramsay's presence: »Every time he approached ... ruin approached ... chaos approached ... He made it impossible for her to do anything ...« (139). Trying to bring back to her mind images of Mrs Ramsay, Lily unconsciously recalls moments of profound passivity referring to Mrs Ramsay. Namely, it is always Lily who is seeing in the course of the novel, while Mrs Ramsay is being seen: »One wanted fifty pairs of eyes to see with, she reflected. Fifty pairs of eyes were not enough to get round that one woman with, she thought.« (182). Female incompetence is especially stressed by 'can't paint/' 'can't create' echoes of the male dominating culture, referring to Lily's abilities, but the most relevant example to this extent is Cam's ignorance of the sides of the world: 'Didn't she know the points of the compass? he asked. Didn't she know the North from the South? Did she really think they lived right out there, by those trees. He wished she would try to be more accurate, he said: »Tell me – which is East, which is West?« he said, half laughing at her, half scolding her, for he could not understand the state of mind of anyone, not absolutely imbecile, who did not know the points of the compass. Yet she did not know.' (156). Of course, it is not only Cam's ignorance which can be read in the passage, but an indication as well of the self/body semiosis revealing that 'without a relationship between body and space there is no meaning

or social life.' (Larsen 1994: 78). In other words, this short passage deals with the bodily mapping of the space stemming from the centred self: unlike James's and Mr Ramsay's centring self, Cam is ignorant of the four sides of the world which can be read as an indication of the body relevance in the process of getting to know both, self and reality. Cam in fact lacks the centring body consciousness amplifying that way a notion that the self-discovering question »where am I?« is primarily of cultural relevance.

It is exactly culture's evaluation of identity which enables the mocking of sex differences, »real« identities being reduced to roles. There's a key sentence in the last section of the novel commenting openly on the novel's true story: »Poor devils, one thought, poor devils of both sexes, getting into such messes.« (149). Every character in the novel seems to play his role or at least pretends to act something appropriate to the situation, e.g. Lily »pretended to drink out her empty coffee cup« (138), although sometimes she »hated playing at painting« (141). Mr Ramsay is a great talent, »such a gift he had for gesture: he looked like a king in exile.« (140). Mr Ramsay 'was acting, she felt this great man was dramatizing himself.' (142). It's again Mr Ramsay who »had all the appearance of a leader making ready for an expedition.« (145). It is only Lily who is aware of the fabulative character of identity: »And this, Lily thought, taking the green paint on her brush, this making up scenes about them, is what we call »knowing« people, »thinking« of them, »being fond« of them! Not a word of it was true...« (161).

c) As has been noted, *To the Lighthouse* transforms body-space into body-sign: what Woolf's semantics of space reveals in this novel is one of the key metaphors (Radman 1995) for the human body, stemming (epistemologically) from the steam engine image. The body is thus imagined as a machine. »It was a miserable machine, an inefficient machine, she thought, the human apparatus for painting or for feeling; it was always broke down at the critical moment; heroically, one must force it on.« (178). A miserable machine is evidently a steam engine, since it is the water imagery which prevails in the relevant descriptions of 'self', depicted as a thinking vessel, filled with water:

- >her anger rising in her« (140)
- >her mind still rising and falling with the sea« (140)
- >the blood ... rushed to her face« (144)
- >into a pool of thought« (160)
- >into the waters of annihilation« (167)
- >pumping love« (181)
- >so full her mind was« (186)
- >to burst out« (189)
- >they could not endure another explosion of the passion that boiled in him« (189).

As has been also noted, the human machine is not without holes: it is eye imagery that allows Lily to speak about »... opened door in one's mind« (139), echoing yet another metaphor-visualization of human mind, and that is *camera obscura* (Radman 1995:172), i.e. a dark space (*Time Passes* section) dependent on light (*The*

Lighthouse section). The possibility itself to deal with such questions affirms a suggestion that it is through art and gender that this novel implies cognitive aspects of art as well. This notion is amplified by the lighthouse imagery, the lighthouse itself depicted as the »tower with a yellow eye that opened suddenly and softly in the evening« (172). It is light, i.e. illumination the human mind needs to be able to understand that nothing is simply one thing: »For nothing was simply one thing.« (172). Even reality is open to interpretation, since from our, human perspective, it is possible to make a difference between reality and appearance (Lily recalls Andrew's doubts «whether the table was a real table» on p. 146).

To deal with the reality/appearance distinction is also to deal with art and its referentiality. That is why Lily is doing her painting. If the novel is said to deal with fabrications of life, Lily's final act can be said to de-fabulize the novel by its re-introducing of a bi-polarity. It is not, of course, a replica of the binary opposition model, but rather a reminder of the complementarity life itself is being conditioned by. There's no doubt that Lily »drew a line there, in the centre« (192) with the greatest attention paid to the creation of a meaningful entity: having in mind the entirety of the story narrated, which Lily's painting is synonymous with, it seems reasonable to suggest that the line itself is not primarily of aesthetic value. A number of other connotations emerge, the most relevant one indicating that Lily's painting is not just a recreated image of Mrs Ramsay, but an allusion as well to the communicative and reciprocative character of an idea of entirety itself. To view the world as an *entirety* is to accept the double-faced mask of the concept, for nothing is »simply one thing« (172) as it has been suggested by the eye symbolism, prevalent in this novel. The eye is thus not just a metaphor for the »I« insofar as it is bound to the bordering role human eyes play in the process of getting to know both, self and the world. It was primarily this elementary quality of the eye imagery that gave birth to Lily's »vision«, reminding both Lily and the readers that dream and reality, self and the world, femaleness and maleness cannot be but seen as complementary (and not either-or) poles of an entirety of life. As Leach's anthropological investigations indicate (Leach 1966:131), it is exactly through the act of separation (Lily's line) that the beginning of becoming, i.e. the birth of the world, and time, is made possible. The time concept in this context is to be conceived as inseparable from the process of becoming self, which is counterpointed by getting to know the world (*humiverse*). Lily's doing of a painting is in this respect the writing of culture as well, the last words she utters at the end point of the chapter (»I have had my vision«) suggesting that no singular vision can exist. The line drawn can be said to replace a unified vision of the male coded culture (which appears to be a mere fabrication stemming from power relations), by a re-introduced separation which makes the beginning of becoming possible. In such a way Lily herself is de-centred: wishing to enter the culture realm (i.e. the domain of masculinity), she wants at the same time to identify herself with Mrs Ramsay. Her doing of a painting, a reminder of Mrs Ramsay, calls up thus some old topoi of the mirror as well:

01. a mirror image is culturally a gendered one, evoking the domain of femininity
02. as already noted, mirrorization of women is also a cultural (i.e. gendered) phenomenon
03. vanity, narcissism (culturally stereotyped attributes of artists: Lily is a painter)
04. a mirror indicates a replicative character of both life and art
05. reflectivity/referentiality of art (picture is a mirror metaphor).

Leaving aside a detailed analysis of the five topoi (which could be separately done on another occasion), let's draw our reading of Virginia Woolf's novel *To the Lighthouse* to a conclusion. What can be concluded is that art-making metonymically evokes our cognitive efforts to understand our being in the world to the extent that art is not only reflective, but illuminative as well. This is the reason that some theories of art have replaced the metaphor of the mirror by the metaphor of the lamp.

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IGRANJE ULOGA (JEDNO ČITANJE ROMANA KA SVJETIONIKU VIRGINIE WOOLF)

Čita li se roman *Ka svjetioniku* Virginie Woolf u svjetlu najopćenitije prihvaćena shvaćanja umjetnosti kao subjektivna odraza objektivne stvarnosti, moguće je zaključiti da ovaj roman propituje ne samo subjektivnost tog odraza, već i objektivnost stvarnosti.

Prevladavajućem osjećaju prividnosti posebice doprinosi čin slikanja Lily Briscoe, koji metonimizira pričanje priče (Grgas 1988) romana. Zaključna rečenica romana, »Bila je to moja vizija«, kojom Lily komentira upravo završen portret gđe Ramsay, znakovito naglašava osjećaj fiktivnosti, a koji odražava vulfijansko poigravanje spolom i maskaradom. Čitatelji se osjećaju gotovo podstaknutima da ovaj modernistički tekst i čitaju kroz postmodernističku prizmu. Ako naime modernistički tekst ukazuje na nesigurnosti koje proizlaze iz naše percepcije stvarnosti (propitivanje subjektivnosti), a postmodernistički tekst na nesigurnosti koje referiraju na objektivnost zbilje kao takve (propitivanje objektivnosti), onda se ovim romanom sugerira epistemološki stav da čovjek konstruira stvarnost kojoj su-pripada. Jezik igra ključnu ulogu u tom spoznajnom procesu, odražavajući semiotičku međuprožetost koja izrasta iz odnosa spola i pozicije moći, razotkrivajući ideologiziranje spolnosti.