

# Dialogic multivoicedness in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*

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**Abstract** Virginia Woolf constructs multi-voiced world with interdependent beings in her novels. Her fiction demonstrates her deep-seated preoccupation with pluralism in essence of human and non-human relationships. *To the Lighthouse* (1927) is a novel made out of dialogic confrontations between oppositional forces. This novel mainly shows Woolf's philosophy of life which is devoid of solipsistic and close-ended point of view and is replete with trans-situational values and dialogic intersections. The interconnected world in this novel is mirrored in the intertwined minds of the characters through stream of consciousness, multilateral depiction of confrontation between self and other, and various representation of time. The present paper aims to investigate variant aspects of interrelations between different forces in mentioned novel in the light of Mikhail Bakhtin's views on dialogism and polyvocality. This paper also argues that dialogic relations in *To the Lighthouse* are not limited to the human world and include non-human world as well.

**Keywords** Woolf · Bakhtin · Dialogism · To the Lighthouse

## Introduction

Undoubtedly, Virginia Woolf has changed the path of fiction forever. One of the most important reasons behind this everlasting and profound impact is her deep understanding and realization of necessity of new ideas and techniques in fiction due

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to her long and often challenging career as a critic. She recontextualized and transformed the notions of personage, language, plot and structure in a new light. In her perspective, identity was continuously in the process of taking shape and could not be accomplished by external descriptions. Elucidating the main characteristics of illustrative biography, Woolf asserts: "Since we live in an age when a thousand cameras are pointed, by newspapers, letters and diaries, at every character from every angle, he [the biographer] must be prepared to admit contradictory versions of the same face." (1986: 226) In this view, unilateral depiction of selfhood is in sharp contrast to plurality of the man's place in the world.

Through Woolf's works, the moments of being and emotions, inner life of man, and the pattern behind the mysterious curtain of existence connect man to other people and the outer world: "Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness." (Woolf 1925: 151) What Bakhtin says about the main characteristic of Dostoevsky's polyphonic novels can be observed in novels of Woolf:

A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event [...] the image of a character in Dostoevsky is not the usual objectified image of a hero in the traditional novel. (1984: 6)

From Virginia Woolf's point of view, the role of the novelist is to transmit the essence of consciousness by recording the "atoms as they fall upon the mind". Her preoccupation with the workings of the mind and her belief that writing is a counterpart of existence has opened her fictions to diverse and even contrasting philosophical interpretations. Being able to penetrate into the intricate network of characters' minds is a significant feature which cannot be traced in the works of her predecessors. As Woolf mentions, classical insistence of Georgian authors on "telling the truth" finally led to "an exhausted and chaotic condition." (2008: 53) What Woolf calls "truth" is in fact the classical finality which in Woolf's fiction replaces with untried relativism arises from unfinished and multifaceted relations between all phenomena. She shifts the neutral and external world of realistic novels to inter-mental novels; maybe because she sees herself "a porous vessel afloat on sensation; a sensitive plate exposed to invisible rays." (Woolf 1976: 133)

However, the significance of internal reflection does not mean the triviality of external world; in fact, what is very important here is the relation between outer actions and inner thoughts. Meg Jensen describes Woolf as the founder of the relationship "between internal and external, public and private experiences and identities." (2007: 115) Woolf sees the world as two interrelated, yet different zones, the conspicuous and the inconspicuous, which act as both subject and setting in her novels. She describes life in terms of how we relate to one another. It can be related to the modernistic view on authorial presence of the author. For modernist

authors writing no longer could reflect the soul of life, as did those who wrote plot-driven novels. It required less authorial interference and more from the internal conflicts of characters. It required the knowledge which contained the shifting identity not only in the narrative elements but in the essence of life. Regarding mutable essence of things in Woolf's works, Jean O. Love points out: "within [...] Woolf's novels, persons do not have fixed and consistent boundaries. Instead, their minds and consciousnesses and, at times, even themselves as entire beings are confluent with the external world and influence it in ways empirical thought holds to be impossible." (as cited in Brown 2009: 53, 54) This shows the fact that in the eyes of Woolf the depiction of characters' inside world is more important than the voice who narrates them. In this completely different reflection, Woolf finds that the novel is more than a medium for social and political reform: "the novel is a very remarkable machine for the creation of human character." (Woolf 2008: p. 32) That is why we participate in the characters' own thoughts and feelings, instead of being passive observers.

Woolf employs the internal struggles of her characters to give us a more lifelike picture not only of them but also of the other characters with whom they interact. Having mentioned "modern fiction," Virginia Woolf takes novelists H.G. Wells, Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy to task for being so concerned with the body that their characters have no spirit. According to Woolf, they are so concerned with the external actions of their characters and fail to realize that their characters have no life. Bakhtin asserts: "What is important to Dostoevsky is not how his hero appears in the world but first and foremost how the world appears to his hero, and how the hero appears to himself." (1984: 47) This statement is so close to Woolf's point of view concerning internal reflection of characters instead of external reflection, which she would consider a soulless depiction of events that affect them. In this view, characters are active and determinative agents in novels and are no longer passive mouthpieces of the author. Woolf finds that "all human relations have shifted—those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children." (Woolf 2008: 38) She has a way of developing her characters through variable and momentary identities out of multidimensional relationships. Madeline Moore held that identity for Woolf was "conscious result of maintaining a multiple perspective" in her life and writing. She relates this multi-dimensional identity to "dialogic and intertextual manner" of Woolf's fiction. (1999: 97)

Woolf believed in an ephemeral, uncertain and changing world in which intertwined relationships are more decisive than self-centered identities in experiencing life's moments. Perhaps that is why she defines life as "unknown and uncircumscribed spirit." (1925: 160) Indeed, it seems that in her novels, including *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf raises perpetual questions of absence and presence, speech and silence, time and space by means of the linguistic methods that enables readers to observe the nature of man's mind. In Woolf's view, world and its constitutive parts are interconnected and man's mind is an active ground for this interrelationship:

"That is the whole," I said. I was looking at a plant with a spread of leaves; and it seemed suddenly plain that the flower itself was part of the earth; that a ring

enclosed what was the flower; and that was the real flower; part earth; part flower. It was a thought I put away as being likely to be very useful to me later. (1976: 71)

The latent co-constitution of natural world in Woolf's perspective is parallel with her belief in multiplicity and the unfinishedness of human identity. Brian Phillips proposes that: "She saw for herself how objects can interfere and interact with thought, how things, not feelings, are thought's most common concern." (2003: 418) In this perspective, man like the other phenomena is one constitutive part of the polyvocal world. Perhaps that is why the omniscient narrator in its classic definition was replaced by internal narrator with focus on different internal realities devoid of any self-enclosed system. Woolf's use of innovative psychological and more intricate revealing structures such as stream of consciousness, free association and interior monologue provokes the open attitude of her novels. Bonnie Kime Scott finds the stream of consciousness in Woolf's works as a means which helps her to portray multiple structures that are interconnected in the minds of the characters. (2011: 328) Comparing Woolf with other significant writers of consciousness, Fernihough concludes that Woolf "[...] is the one who flits most readily and rapidly from one mind to another, often traversing three or four consciousnesses within the confines of a single page." (2007: 77) In Woolf's novels, new perceptions lead to discontinuity of personalities and revelation of the inner being of characters. In this way, characterization is based on trans-situational factors rather than self-inclusive aspects.

Woolf's innovative use of time is another important means for creating an open-sided world in which all phenomena's connections take place in an ongoing and fluent passage of time. Like the other constitutive parts of these novels time is multi-dimensional due to the fact that a single moment, experience or emotional state is narrated or seen through different perspectives. Immediate reflection of innermost feelings of characters with all their contradictions, conflicts, and tensions is another vantage point of Woolf's novels. As a successful literary critic Woolf knows very well that life is a fluent and transient process made of different moments and realities; so, novel whose main claim is the truthful reflection of life must depict the ever-changing and unfinished essence of life, as Leaska points out:

Because human experience is conceived as a continuous and fluid thing, we need to remember that the impressions do not progress in a logical sequence; rather they are ordered according to the emotional force of one experiencing consciousness in relation to another [...] in consequence, the reader always subject to the mind's vagaries, begins to see these "illuminations" as prominent beats in the rhythm of each individual's experience. From this rhythmic configuration of selected moments emerges the shape within which the persona comes to terms with the concrete world and, in dealing with it, comes to apprehend the quality of this experience. (1997: 142)

In this definition, every experience has organic relations to other experiences which finally lead to plural and multivoiced world in human mind. Thus the human mind continually shapes and reshapes every experience in relation with others.

Woolf's lyrical language helps this fluidity and at the same time creates more artistic way for reflection of interior tensions and multiple consciousnesses.

*To the Lighthouse* is an artistic narration of a middle-class family which has been impressed by different internal and external events. This novel in many ways is one of the important representatives of modernist trend in literature not only in structural innovations such as stream of consciousness but in its very innovative spirit. The family, along with their friends, constitutes a little society in which polyvocality and multiplicity can be seen due to behavioral contradictions and conflicts. The first section of the novel deals with conflicting human emotions that stem from complicated relationships. This section is a character-driven part with special focus on the characters' main concerns, fears, experiences and perceptions. The second part, *Time Passes*, is the shortest part which covers 10 years and includes the death of Mrs. Ramsey and two of her children. This part, unlike the first part, is not based on characters and their mental perceptions; instead, it focuses on time and its positive and negative outcomes. The last section, *The Lighthouse*, returns to main characters of the first part and deals with final reconciliation of them with their internal conflicts. The different situations related to this family provide the author with a very powerful vehicle by which she reflects her main preoccupations. In this novel, the actions mainly occur not in the outside world but in the thoughts and emotions of the characters as presented by the ongoing narrative. It is also full of unanswerable questions, gaps and moments left to the reader to discern and sort out in an ongoing and dramatic revealing process.

What draws the audience's attention more than anything is this novel's artistic network of human and non-human relations. This network indicates interdependency of all phenomena of the world. It seems that there is no independent story and all experiences just come to existence in relations to others whether visible or not. This reminds us Bakhtin's description of dialogic novels: "The interaction of several unmerged consciousnesses was replaced by an interrelationship of ideas, thoughts, and attitudes gravitating toward a single consciousness." (1984: 9) *To the Lighthouse* also is based on interrelated moments and epiphanies rather than determinant events. These moments as well as inevitable internal perceptions propel readers to contemplate on the meaning of life in more dramatic way. That is why the readers know deeply the thoughts and feelings of the characters rather than their appearances. The relationships between characters in this novel are interconnected and structural and their intersubjectivity is intensified by ongoing dialogic intersections. Brown precisely points out: "The reality depicted in *To the Lighthouse* seems to be composed of multiple interpenetrating consciousnesses interconnected with one another and loosely housed within fluid subjectivities and objectivities that interactively create, as well as observe, their environment." (2009: 54) The tensions and conflicts between the Ramsays not only do not separate them but get them more involved in their intricate and dependent relationships. The rather simple and central tension of the book, the trip to the lighthouse, is inciting factor for confrontation of contrasting voices which is mainly reflected through mind language.

## The orchestration of voices

*To the Lighthouse* in many ways is a combination of different voices which are in constant encounter with each other; Harvena Richter sees these combinations in human and non-human relations:

The reality of the world of persons and objects that the character perceives- and hence that reality which the reader is made to feel- is governed by the physical and mental/emotional make-up of the character. Virginia Woolf referred to this triangular interrelationship as “subject and object and the nature of reality.” This phrase [...] is meant to draw the reader’s attention to the novel’s different views of reality which result from the various ways in which the characters see themselves, the world, and their relation to it. (1970: 66)

As a result of such a depiction, the readers witness a world made of various thoughts, wills and imaginations. It seems that Woolf attempts to offer a multidimensional perspective of life as what has been experienced and perceived in real life. In fact, this novel in the terms of Bakhtin is a “great dialogue” which constitutes from many “microdialogue[s].” The different points of view in *To the Lighthouse* let the author make a world consisting of numerous perspectives of reality on the one hand and multi-layered consciousnesses on the other hand. Indeed, the author’s voice is just one among the others without any privilege or priority. The voice of the author is interwoven with other voices in a way that makes a clear distinction between them seems impossible. As Auerbach puts it, “The essential characteristic of the technique represented by Virginia Woolf is that we are given not merely one person whose consciousness [...] is rendered, but many persons, with frequent shift from one to another.” (2003: 536) In fact, the constant purposeful shifts blur the boundary between different expressing voices. Yaxiao Cui held that shifts in viewpoints in *To the Lighthouse* take place through “different consciousnesses in interaction” which stem from intersubjective form of the novel. In this way, the novel offers intertwined relationships between characters’ minds. (2016: 216)

In this reflection, every voice is part of an artistic and structural pattern, as Woolf says about her writing in *Moments of Being*: “From this I reach what I might call a philosophy; at any rate it is a constant idea of mine; that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we—I mean all human beings—are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are part of the work of art” (1976: 72) and this philosophy is one of the main bases of her novels including *To the Lighthouse*.

The polyvocality in Woolf’s fiction is not limited to characterization and characters’ states of mind, as Bennett asserts “there are two different kinds of meaning in her novels: the prose plane (interest in human character, relationships, events) and the symbolic plane (the whole novel is treated as a symbol, a slight and shadow of the lighthouse metaphorically symbolizes the joy and sorrow, bright and dark moments in human life and in relationships).” (1964: 103) “Symbolic plane”

actually refers to lyrical language of Woolf; it also refers to structural and linguistic equivalents for reflection of deep struggles of characters, mainly internal struggles.

The contradictory voices also can be heard through the mental reflection of one character. In one important passage of the first part which portrays Mr. Ramsay's internal conflicts we can see this kind of inner contrasting forces:

It was a disguise; it was the refuge of a man afraid to own his own feelings, who could not say, This is what I like—this is what I am; and rather pitiable and distasteful to William Bankes and Lily Briscoe, who wondered why such concealments should be necessary; why he needed always praise; why so brave a man in thought should be so timid in life; how strangely he was venerable and laughable at one and the same time. (Woolf 1992: 212)

Through this internal depiction we can hear the voices of William Bankes, Lily Briscoe, and self-repressed voice of Mr. Ramsay. All of these voices can be heard dialogically not because of the exact external descriptions of characters but through internal and intricate dialogues between author and characters. This is in fact artistic and multifunctional revelation of characters' personalities; by the help of confrontation of characters' internal voices Woolf is able to mirror their innermost beliefs as terse and impressive as possible. In Bakhtin's view, in dialogic novels the author comes into a dialogue with the character rather than talks about him/her: "By the very construction of the novel, the author speaks not about a character, but with him." (1984: 63) This dialogic encounter helps the author know and depict characters in an unmediated way and also helps him see the characters' contradictions and paradoxes in a deeper way. It also leads to construction of readers' dialogues with all of the voices in the novel.

## **Stream of consciousness**

At the first glance, it seems that stream of consciousness with its psychological roots is so individualistic and even solipsistic in its very nature. But in deeper examination one can trace the dialogical essence of fluent and interdependent process of thought and intersubjective nature of stream of consciousness. Discussing interactive essence of mind, Cui mentions Fernyhough's statement: "Adopting L. S. Vygotsky's view that our higher mental functioning develops out of social interactions, he argues that thinking is fundamentally social and dialogic. And it is precisely the social nature of our minds that makes certain forms of intermental thinking possible." (2016: 217) In this view, the interactive nature of mind makes its whole process and function conceivable. In Bennett's perspective with the help of the stream of consciousness, the writer describes the flow of each character's thoughts and emotions and merges them into a narrative that flows fluently from the image of one character's thought to another's without any boundaries. (1964: 103) Thus, characters' interconnected feelings and activities form the novel, and they all mold one another's experiences and appear from one another's perspectives. Stream of consciousness as one of the most important innovative techniques for more tangible reflection of mind has had its roots in modernism and its new attitude

to consciousness. In the discussion of the reason behind modernist new reflection of consciousness Herman points out:

Rather than being interpreted as signs of an inward turn or a probing of psychological depths segregated from the material world, modernist techniques for representing consciousness can be seen as an attempt to highlight how minds at once shape and are shaped by larger experiential environments [...] Modernist narratives, in other words, stage the moment-by-moment construction of worlds—as-experienced through an interplay between agent and environment. (2011: 249–50)

An important point that should be taken into consideration is the fact that besides diverse consciousnesses in dialogic modernist novels, each individual character has multiple consciousnesses in his/her psyche. The presence of different consciousnesses inside one person is one of the fundamental characteristics in *To the Lighthouse*:

[...]but for all that she thought, watching it with fascination, hypnotized, as if it were stroking with its silver fingers some sealed vessel in her brain whose bursting would flood her with delight, she had known happiness, exquisite happiness, intense happiness, and it silvered the rough waves a little more brightly, as daylight faded, and the blue went out of the sea and it rolled in waves of pure lemon which curved and swelled and broke upon the beach and the ecstasy burst in her eyes and waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and she felt, It is enough! It is enough! (1992: 227)

This part, by the help of an inner dialogue in an epiphanic moment, reveals the internal polarization in the mind of Mrs. Ramsay. Indeed, the author is able to break inescapable laxation, stagnation and tedious repetitions in narrative's atmosphere by manifesting the erratic reflection of things and their interrelations in the wandering mind of characters. The author through open and boundless psychological language mirrors the multidimensional mind of Mrs. Ramsay. Everything in Mrs. Ramsay's mind is related to the other; hence shifting from one consciousness to another is inevitable.

This also happens for the character of Lily and in this way the author provides us with different internal struggles in two different women, a traditional woman and a modern woman. The interdependent voices, despite their contradictions, should keep the connection with other sides to be able to make themselves heard. In fact, if somebody denies or ignores the other voices s/he cannot be heard. Sang finds Mrs. Ramsay as the central part in this circle of consciousnesses:

She [Mrs. Ramsay] is, to be sure, an enigma and such she basically remains, but she is, as it were, encircled by the content of all the various consciousness directed upon her (including her own), and there is an attempt to approach her from many sides as closely as human possibilities of perception and expression can succeed in doing. (2010: 177, 178)

Despite the fact that Mrs. Ramsay is an “enigma,” she is surrounded by other characters. This reflects a kind of “dialogic opposition” in Mrs. Ramsay. This



interilluminated opposition paves the way for negotiations not only with other characters but also with multiple internal voices. It seems that the attempts “to approach her” are because of Mrs. Ramsay’s compromised character that gives the other voices the opportunity to be heard.

Stream of consciousness also reveals the complex and polyvocal mind of man which naturally can make connection between things, even between seemingly irrelevant things:

What she had done with it, Mrs. Ramsay wondered, for Rose’s arrangement of the grapes and pears, of the horny pink-lined shell, of the bananas, made her think of a trophy fetched from the bottom of the sea, of Neptune’s banquet, of the bunch that hangs with vine leaves over the shoulder of Bacchus (in some picture), among the leopard skins and the torches lolloping red and gold [...] Thus brought up suddenly into the light it seemed possessed of great size and depth, was like a world in which one could take one’s staff and climb hills, she thought, and go down into valleys, and to her pleasure (for it brought them into sympathy momentarily) she saw that Augustus too feasted his eyes on the same plate of fruit, plunged in, broke off a bloom there, a tassel here, and returned, after feasting, to his hive. That was his way of looking, different from hers. But looking together united them. (Woolf 1992: 250)

Through this lyrical description of the fruits’ arrangement, Woolf reflects the deep connections which Mrs. Ramsay makes between the distant past and myths in her mind. This interconnection is a kind of dialogic connection which never ends due to its double-directed essence. This interconnection is not embodied through “valorized” or “absolute past” but “inconclusive present” in which “no matter how distant this object is from us in time, it is connected to our incomplete, present-day, continuing temporal transitions, it develops a relationship with our unpreparedness, with our present.” (Bakhtin 1981: 30) This reflection of time actually has a kind of simultaneity without any priority or superiority of one time over another. That is why Mrs. Ramsay’s internal dialogues are not based on time sequence but are based on mind’s associations in different situations.

## Self and other

Woolf as a successful modern author knows this fact that in order to create more lifelike as well as artistic reflection of life, the existence of “self” and “other” is not only significant but inevitable. The relation between “self” and “other” is based on opposition, in Bakhtin’s terms the “dialogized opposition,” which is reciprocal with some serious tensions, conflicts and consequences. From the very first pages of *To the Lighthouse* the confrontation of the opposing forces is depicted. In the first page of the book and in the main proposed conflict of the first part, going to the lighthouse, we are introduced to the inner voice of James and his feelings about his father: “Had there been an axe handy, a poker, or any weapon that would have gashed a hole in his father’s breast and killed him, there and then, James would have seized it.” (Woolf 1992:182) Then we hear the voice of Mr. Ramsay:

What he said was true. It was always true. He was incapable of untruth; never tampered with a fact; never altered a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure or convenience of any mortal being, least of all of his own children, who, sprung from his loins, should be aware from childhood that life is difficult; facts uncompromising; and the passage to that fabled land where our brightest hopes are extinguished, our frail barks founder in darkness (here Mr. Ramsay would straighten his back and narrow his little blue eyes upon the horizon), one that needs, above all, courage, truth, and the power to endure. (*Ibid*)

In this section, the author reveals the roots of confrontation of two opposite voices in a structural way. The deep conflict between father and son is mirrored not through the direct and interfering voice of the narrator but through internal tensions of these characters; in this way, we come into dialogues with the direct voices of the characters and consequently come into deeper relation with them. It should be noted that even such an intense and seemingly insurmountable conflict does not make a disconnection between characters as we hear through the voice of the narrator: "Strife, divisions, difference of opinion, prejudices twisted into the very fiber of being [...]" (1992: 185) After this section the author invites us to hear the voice of Mrs. Ramsay which shows her preoccupation to reflect the interwoven network of consciousnesses arise from encounter of self and other. In fact, in this novel the confrontation of self and other allows the author to depict a character in two ways: first from the inner voices of the character and second from the inner voices of the other characters.

Another noteworthy point in Woolf's fiction, especially in this novel, is the sexual identity which is reflected in a dialogical way. It means that sexuality and its main functions and characteristics find meaning through the interactive relation with the opposite sex. Part of this dialogic sexual identity is revealed through the relation between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. These two characters, despite their contrasts, are tightly interrelated and define themselves through their interconnected relationship. Even the fact that Mr. Ramsay is a realistic philosopher with minimum of emotional stimuli does not change this reciprocal relationship. The relation between Lily and Mr. Ramsay depicts the other side of this kind of dialogic confrontation due to the fact that Mr. Ramsay after the death of his compassionate wife seeks sympathy from the other women: "And then, and then—this was one of those moments when an enormous need urged him, without being conscious what it was, to approach any woman, to force them, he did not care how, his need was so great, to give him what he wanted: sympathy." (*Ibid*. 291) Mr. Ramsay needs a woman to regain his sexual identity. It seems that without the presence of this complementary "other" he cannot behave according to his expected sexual identity. On the other hand, even though Lily represses her deep anger of Mr. Ramsay, she does not have good feelings about her behavior toward him: "The sympathy she had not given him weighed her down. It made it difficult for her to paint." (*Ibid*. 306) This is related to Bakhtin's description of interrelated characters of Dostoevsky's works:

The hero's attitude toward himself is inseparably bound up with his attitude toward another, and with the attitude of another toward him. His consciousness of self is constantly perceived against the background of the other's

consciousness of him—"I for myself" against the background of "I for another." Thus the hero's words about himself are structured under the continuous influence of someone else's words about him (1984: 207)

So, what constructs the characters and the polyvocal world of this novel is an interwoven network of interrelations instead of monophonic reflection by the author. But it is important to consider that the interconnection between self and other in *To the lighthouse* does not mean that there is a passive interdependence of characters to each other. The interdependent relations between characters are dynamic, double-sided and full of contradictions. Some of the characters such as Lily and Mr. Ramsay stand against the external, fixed, and unchanging definitions of themselves. In fact, most of the internal tensions and conflicts in these characters are the results of such resistance against close-ended definitions.

### **Heteroglot world: dialogic encounter of animate and inanimate beings**

The objects in this novel serve as important devices to highlight the multiplicity in every aspect of life. The fluid interrelation between characters and objects in *To the Lighthouse* indicates this fact that human relationships are just a part of the whole interconnected world. Actually, the clear and distinctive boundary between human and non-human beings in this novel is increasingly blurred due to the fact that this boundary is not as important as all creatures' dynamic connection. Concerning the bilateral relationships in *To the Lighthouse* Brown says:

In the first section of the novel, "The Window," women and their binding power are affiliated with trees as objects that exemplify the interconnectedness of people and places, and a metaphorical conflict between individuality and collectivity occurs between knives and needles. Mrs. Ramsay acts as a catalyst for Lily Briscoe's obsession with moving a tree to the middle of her painting. (2009: 43)

Indeed, what makes Mrs. Ramsay "as a catalyst for Lily" is the multilateral relationship between Mrs. Ramsay and Lily as well as their common knowledge of profound linkage between human and non-human beings. Indeed, Mrs. Ramsay's connection with non-human phenomena is instinctual and sensational but Lily's connection with these existences is mainly artistic and conscious. These relations are so intertwined that one cannot imagine their end or dissociation of their parts. Mrs. Ramsay's deep connection with objects is revealed through an artistic passage:

[...] there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity; and pausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of the Lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three, which was her stroke, for watching them in this mood always at this hour one could not help attaching oneself to one thing especially of the things one saw; and this thing, the long steady stroke, was her stroke. Often she found herself sitting and looking, sitting and looking, with her work in her hands until she became the thing she looked at—that light, for example [...]

She looked up over her knitting and met the third stroke and it seemed to her like her own eyes meeting her own eyes [...] It was odd, she thought, how if one was alone, one leant to inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers; felt they expressed one; felt they became one; felt they knew one, in a sense were one; felt an irrational tenderness thus. (1992: 225)

In this paragraph, we can hear the voice of Mrs. Ramsay with the ongoing voices of other phenomena that serve to echo the very spirit of life. In this depiction every entity is in incessant flow of being and becoming without any privilege over another. From the author's viewpoint, every existence has a voice and this voice should be heard through inevitable interrelations with others. This interconnection is also revealed in another artistic reflection: "[...] the cliffs looked as if they were conscious of the ships, and the ships looked as if they were conscious of the cliffs, as if they signaled to each other some message of their own." (*Ibid.* 314) This interdependent and relational structure is intensified by the lyrical language of the novel. In this perspective, non-human agents are no longer the passive and voiceless phenomena which are under the command of human being; instead, they are important and determinant as much as the man is important in the ongoing flow of universe. In the third part of the novel Lily, who is so concerned with her old unfinished painting, tries to find the right place of the tree in the painting, in an epiphanic moment: "She had been looking at the table-cloth, and it had flashed upon her that she would move the tree to the middle, and need never marry anybody, and she had felt an enormous exultation." (*Ibid.* 310) A seemingly unimportant thing like table-cloth, due to its very relative essence, can make such deep and multidimensional association in the artistic mind of Lily. This shows the associated and multi-directed nature of the world.

"Light" repeatedly appears in the novel especially in the first part. It seems that "light" serves as connecting force not only between non-human agents but between characters and other inanimate beings. Perhaps that is why Mrs. Ramsay as a human connecting force has the most connection with light. Light is a linking phenomenon by which whatever is dark can get appearance and voice: "The lights of the town and of the harbor and of the boats seemed like a phantom net floating there to mark something which had sunk." (*Ibid.* 229) In this perspective, light is a tool to make multiplicity and polyvocality possible.

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