"I Have Had My Vision": The Emergence of the Woman Artist, the Female Tradition, and the Androgynous Mind in *To the Lighthouse*

Anant Utchin
University of Massachusetts
E-mail: utchin.anant@gmail.com

Abstract

Working as an imbrication of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and *A Room of One's Own*, which were published roughly two years apart in 1927 and 1929 respectively, this essay argues that *To the Lighthouse* hints at and anticipates the major concepts that would later arise in *A Room of One's Own*, that is, the androgynous mind, the female artistic tradition, and the emergence of the woman artist. The tripartite structure of the novel, envisioned by Woolf herself with the figure 'H,' invites us to examine the transition from the old Victorianism into the new Modernism represented by Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe, who, despite their conflicting views, recognize their being part of the same female tradition. While the ending of the first section, "The Window," which is dominated by the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, points to the failing unity of the mind without balance or creation, the ending of the third and last section, "The Lighthouse," which is dominated by the relationship between Lily Briscoe and Augustus Carmichael, signals the achievement of the androgynous mind, enabling Lily to finally become the woman artist.

Keywords: Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, *A Room of One's Own*, the androgynous mind, the female tradition, the woman artist

The tripartite structure of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, which consists of the two longer sections – "The Window" and "The Lighthouse" – bridged by the shorter "Time Passes," represents a thematic significance that governs the whole novel. Instead of finding, as she first intended, "some two figures [who] will detach themselves from the party [Clarissa Dalloway's party] & go off independently into another volume," Woolf, with a "quick decisive stroke," found herself writing the words "To the lighthouse" on the top of a blank paper in her notebook (qtd. in Briggs 163). She accompanied it with a defining diagram resembling a letter "H," envisioning it as the "two blocks joined by a corridor." This diagram, indeed, captures the essence of *To the Lighthouse*. In a novel that is preoccupied with a journey to the lighthouse right from the first page to the very last, the H figure can signal a movement forward, a transition, a filtering through from one end to the other. Having an ambivalent relationship with Lily Briscoe, the one oscillating between admiration and disagreement, Mrs. Ramsay, who dominates "The Window," is obligated by the narrative to give way to Lily in "The Lighthouse." Mrs. Ramsay herself perishes

during the ten-year span of "Time Passes," which is loaded with the connotations of the social changes resulted from the Great War. Towards the end, we find Lily turning to her painting, still discontented with how "she could not achieve that razor edge of balance between two opposite forces; Mr. Ramsay and the picture; which was necessary" (193).

In the most productive years of her career from 1927-1929, during which she churned out a major work every year, Woolf would unequivocally endorse the concept of "the androgynous mind," inspired by Coleridge, in *A Room of One's Own*, aptly preceded by the publication of *Orlando*, in which the fusion of the sexes is achieved literally through the fantastic transformation of a man into a woman itself, not to mention the peak of her gender-effacing affair with another married woman, Vita Sackville-West. It is beyond doubt that, for Woolf, the possession of the androgynous mind is of utmost importance. She hints at the androgynous mind being "one of the token of the fully developed mind" (99) and a prerequisite for being an artist: "Some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the act of creation can be accomplished" (104). However, this paper argues that, amidst the transition from the old Victorianism into the new Modernism represented by Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe, *To the Lighthouse*, roughly two years before the publication of *A Room of One's Own*, hints at and anticipates the concepts of the androgynous mind, the female tradition, and the woman artist, who writes or creates any kind of art as one oblivious of her own sex.

To begin with, the notion of *To the Lighthouse* as representing the departure from the patriarchal Victorian and Edwardian values embodied in Mrs. Ramsay – the ones presiding over "The Window" itself, prior to the post-World War I reconceptualization of women's place in society – is prevalent among critics. For example, Randall Stevenson sees Mrs. Ramsay as akin to a conventional Victorian or Edwardian novelist (175). Not only is she most concerned with building a rapport among people or an enduring relationship that looks forward to a firm and secure future – "people must marry; people must have children" (60) – a satisfying, determinate conclusion rare in modernist novels, she also possesses a kind of "a novelist's omniscience and omnipotence" shown, for instance, in bringing about Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle's engagement, not needing to be told yet knowing that it has happened (Stevenson 175). The novel, in which Mrs. Ramsay's death is "pivotal and entirely necessary," is therefore "a transition between two sets of priorities, almost two literary periods" (177). Ana Pajero Vadillo views Mrs. Ramsay as embodying two specific sets of mid-Victorian middle-class family values. Firstly, Mrs. Ramsay's recurring representation as a queen resonates with John Ruskin's idea of "'queenly' domesticity" in the essay "Of Queen's Gardens," a significant part of Ruskin's 1865 book, *Sesame and Lilies*, about men and women's duties (124). Mrs. Ramsay's daughters, in admiration for the mother's severity and courtesy

against their mocking Charles Tansley, liken Mrs. Ramsay to "a Queen's raising from the mud to wash a beggar's dirty foot" (7). Amidst Mrs. Ramsay's visit to a poor woman's house, Charles Tansley witnesses her standing "quite motionless for a moment against a picture of Queen Victoria wearing the blue ribbon of the Garter" (14). Secondly, Vadillo sees Mrs. Ramsay's perfection in being a wife and a mother as the encapsulation of "the myth of woman as 'angel in the house'" originated in Coventry Patmore's highly popular poem of the same name first published in 1854, fittingly evoking the lines from the "Prelude" to Canto IX: "... down the gulf / Of his condoled necessities / She casts her best, she flings herself" (124-125). Indeed, in her devotion to her husband and all the people around her, Mrs. Ramsay does "fling herself" to the point of self-effacement. With the children growing up and people coming to her with their wants and needs constantly and naturally, "since she [is] a woman," Mrs. Ramsay often feels she is "nothing but a sponge sopped full of human emotions" (32). Amidst Mr. Ramsay's demand for sympathy and her assurance that he will never find himself without her, feeding him what he needs, there is for Mrs. Ramsay "scarcely a shell of herself left for her to know herself by" (38). In Mrs. Ramsay's daughters' "infidel ideas" of a life different from her – "a wilder life; not always taking care of some man or other" – casting doubt on what define essentially Victorian core values: "the Bank of England and the Indian Empire, ... ringed fingers and lace," the breaking away from the old into the new order is most resoundingly marked (7).

However, it can be inaccurate to assume that, because Mrs. Ramsay stands for the patriarchal Victorian values, being herself an imitation of the "angel in the house," she is nothing but submissive. It is true that Mrs. Ramsay strives to be placed below her husband. The narrative informs us more than once that there is nobody Mrs. Ramsay reverences more than she does her husband, feeling herself "not good enough to tie his shoe strings" (32). Mrs. Ramsay dislikes even a second of feeling "finer than her husband," firmly believing that "of the two he [is] infinitely the more important and what she gave the world, in comparison with what he gave, negligible" (39). Even then, Mrs. Ramsay's ability to give Mr. Ramsay what he needs points to her own power and leverage in the relationship. With her husband demanding her sympathy, attacking her with the egotistical needs – "the beak of brass, the arid scimitar of the male" (38) – to have his genius and importance in the world confirmed, Mrs. Ramsay is able to bestow on him the reassurance he needs in order to resume. Thus, "[f]illed with her words," Mr. Ramsay, reduced now under his wife's motherly protection, is "like a child who drops off satisfied," looking at her with "humble gratitude" (38). Ironically, that Mrs. Ramsay "[has] the whole of the other sex under her protection" enables men to achieve what she, in turn, admires them for – "for their chivalry and valour, for the fact that they negotiated treaties, ruled India, controlled finance" (6).

This subversive idea which reclaims women's creative power, arguing that they are, in fact, behind all the world's civilizations, will resurface in *A Room of One's Own*, in which "the earth would still be swamp and jungle" without the women's "magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (35). Even though Gabrielle McIntire sees Mrs. Ramsay's death – "Woolf's violent-yet-generative act of murdering the Angel in the House" – as a "necessary martyrdom," she also contends that Mrs. Ramsay is not utterly passive but "passive-aggressive" (88-89). At the end of "The Window," Mrs. Ramsay longs for the severity of her husband: "That was what she wanted – the asperity in his voice reproving her" (123). She is, indeed, both aggressive and passive in resisting Mr. Ramsay's demand for her verbal expression of love – "And she looked at him smiling. For she had triumphed again. She had not said it: yet he knew" – and, at the same time, yielding to her husband's desire to be right, though that means the deferment of reaching the lighthouse – "Yes, you were right. It's going to be wet tomorrow. You won't be able to go" (124).

In order to locate Mrs. Ramsay in the tradition of women's artistry, her power and leverage has to be considered alongside her ability to create and potential to become an artist. Woolf points out the women's tradition as one of her biggest concerns when she, in *A Room of One's Room*, hints at the lack of it – "or one so short and partial that it was of little help" – as a great difficulty facing female writers (76). Therefore, before Lily herself can put a finishing touch on her picture at the end of "The Lighthouse," she, too, has to trace the female tradition, looking back upon Mrs. Ramsay's creation. Lily, however, does not find herself disappointed as, years after Mrs. Ramsay's death, she reflects back upon how Mrs. Ramsay's presence, on a morning at the beach, was essential in bringing her and Charles Tansley together, despite their constant quarreling – "[Mrs. Ramsay] brought together this and that and then this, and so made out of that miserable silliness and spite ... something – this scene on the beach for example, this moment of friendship and liking" (160). The result is a kind of image imprinted in Lily's mind, "affecting one almost like a work of art."

Mrs. Ramsay's artistic potential, indeed, is presented most conspicuously during the dinner party, arguably another form of artistic effort and creation that, again, lasts in memory, as Lily later realizes – "Mrs. Ramsay bringing them together ... making of the moment something permanent (as in another sphere [her painting] Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent)" (161). We catch Mrs. Ramsay "keeping guard over the dish of fruit (without realising it)," contemplating the shapes and colors and the lights and shadows as an artist would: "[h]er eyes had been going in and out among the curves and shadows of the fruit, among the rich purples of the lowland grapes, then over the horny ridge of the shell, putting a yellow against a purple, a curved shape

against a round shape, without knowing why she did it" (108-9). Looking over the same dish of fruit, Mrs. Ramsay also finds herself fusing with the poet, Augustus Carmichael, who also has his eyes on the same object, and with whom Lily will go on to form the prospect of the androgynous mind at the end, just like what Mrs. Ramsay is doing now – "That was his way of looking, different from hers. But looking together united them" (97). That Woolf makes Mrs. Ramsay at the same time powerful and submissive, being gifted with the artistic potential but never really becoming an artist should reveal to us where she is in the tradition. After all, she is at a loss as to why she is contemplating the fruit plate, and the image she imprints in one's memory affects one only "*almost* like a work of art [emphasis added]." At worst, Mrs. Ramsay reminds us, more or less, of Shakespeare's sister. Constrained by the Elizabethan mores in the similar way that Mrs. Ramsay is by the Victorian customs, Judith Shakespeare, "as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world" as her brother, never publishes a play or acts in one throughout her life (47). At best, Mrs. Ramsay is akin to a female writer such as Charlotte Brontë, also discussed in *A Room of One's Own*, who, though still possessing the autonomy to create and write her novel, never does so by being free from the awareness or the repercussion of the lack of her own sex and the influence of the other sex.

In the novel whose author is very conscious of its structure, the fact that Woolf, in a tripartite novel, chooses to end, in parallel, the first section with Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay and the final section with Lily Briscoe standing side by side with Augustus Carmichael should invite us to take a close look at and compare both of the endings. With the emergence of the woman artist still thus thwarted, the end of "The Window," as opposed to the end of "The Lighthouse," therefore points to a still inchoate state of the androgynous mind. One can feel the presence of the unity of the mind but it is, at this point, still stunted and far from satisfying, being tampered with the ongoing imbalance between the sexes. It is true that Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay seem as though they could read each other's mind, always knowing what the other is thinking: "Their eyes met for a second; but they did not want to speak to each other. They had nothing to say, but something seemed, nevertheless, to go from him to her" (119). Mrs. Ramsay knows what makes her husband slap his thighs and knows when he seems to be saying, "don't say anything; just sit there." Mr. Ramsay is only beginning to move restlessly, "now that [his wife's] thoughts [take] a turn he [dislikes]" (123). Nevertheless, Mr. Ramsay's mind is mostly fixated, just as Mrs. Ramsay thinks, on himself. Mrs. Ramsay thinks her husband is reading Sir Walter Scott because he is compelled by the question of whether people will say about him what Tansley says about Scott – "that people don't read Scott anymore" (118). Later we catch Mr. Ramsay pondering, while reading *The Antiquary*, "if young men did not care for this, naturally they did not care for him either," and "trying to stifle his desire to complain to his wife that young men did not admire him"

(120-1). At the same time, Mrs. Ramsay serves for Mr. Ramsay, in a way, as one of the "looking-glasses ... reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (35 *Room*) – "And he wondered what she was reading, and exaggerated her ignorance, her simplicity, for he liked to think that she was not clever, not book-learned at all. He wondered if she understood what she was reading" (121 *Lighthouse*). Aptly, Mrs. Ramsay feels "his mind like a raised hand shadow her mind," signaling the unity of the mind without balance (123).

In addition, time and again, Mrs. Ramsay yields to her husband's statements thwarting her creation and preventing the journey forward to the lighthouse. She agrees to her husband when he says, "You won't finish that stocking tonight" (123), just like when she concludes "The Window" by corroborating that he is right about the impossibility of reaching the lighthouse. Moreover, there exists this stifling feeling arising from the one wishing for what the other refusing or unable to give. His wife silently begs him to say anything, "looking at him, as if for help," for "the shadow, the thing folding them in [is] beginning, she [feels], to close round her again" (122). Yet, Mr. Ramsay remains silent, "swinging the compass on his watch-chain to and fro," as if to signal the need first for "Time Passes," "thinking of Scott's novels and Balzac's novels," as if to emphasize the still incompetent female tradition – the time is not yet ripe for the full-fledged unity of the mind (123). Demanding, again, sympathy and reassurance – again, "the beak of brass, the arid scimitar of the male, which smote mercilessly" (38) – Mr. Ramsay wants his wife to say she loves him, which she cannot do. Nevertheless, as already pointed out, it means Mrs. Ramsay here is not entirely passive. She does what Lily is going to do later – reclaiming her power, refusing to quench Mr. Ramsay's demand for sympathy.

The presence of the triumphal androgynous mind is there – "... for though she had not said a word, he knew, of course he knew, that she loved him. ... she had triumphed again" (124). However, compared to the unity of the mind enabling Lily to put a finish touch on her picture, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay's is the ending without creation. Being merely the potential artist, Mrs. Ramsay cannot achieve the expression, the difficult artistic process that oppresses Lily – "It was in that moment's flight between the picture and her canvas that the demons set on her who often brought her to the verge of tears and made this passage from conception to work as dreadful as any down a dark passage for a child" (19). The whole scene can be summed up with the disarrangement inflicted upon Mrs. Ramsay's thought as she enters the room – "Of course, she said to herself, coming into the room, she had to come here to get something she wanted. ... though she did not know, could not think what it was that she wanted" (117) – "There is something I want – something I have come to get, and she fell deeper and deeper without knowing quite what it was, with her eyes closed" (118-119). Domineering is the sense of knowing and, at the same time, not knowing, of being there and yet not being quite there.

On the contrary, whereas Mrs. Ramsay embodies the Victorian and Edwardian values and reigns over "The Window," Lily Briscoe, who, now that the former has been killed, takes over "The Lighthouse," the section following the disruption of the Great War, represents the modern twenties and the cultural shift the post-World War I period entails. Reading the novel as "charting an emergent feminist subjectivity," Jane Goldman sees Lily as toppling Mrs. Ramsay and her attachment to the old order: an Angel in the House must be decimated "if women (writers) are to express what they 'think to be the truth about human relations, morality, sex'" (177-178). While Mrs. Ramsay is a perpetuator of the conservative mid-Victorian values, Vadillo views Lily as an antithesis of those values, a representative of the New Woman of the 1880s and 1890s, noting the modernity conveyed in her clothes and her resistance to Mrs. Ramsay's matchmaking (130-131). Remaining single, she is what was called "the modern spinster" or "the bachelor girl," an emancipated figure representing one of the available alternatives for unmarried modern women. The options also include a homosexual union, of which Lily's emotional attachment to Mrs. Ramsay is suggestive. After all, in response to what Mrs. Ramsay holds as truth – "people must marry; people must have children" (60) and "an unmarried woman has missed the best of life" (49) – Lily is defiantly thankful for not needing to marry and thus being saved from "that degradation" and "that dilution," having her art as the presumably superior substitute – instead, "[s]he would move the tree rather more to the middle" (102).

Nevertheless, in keeping with the concern about the woman artist and the female tradition, I argue that Lily heralds a new modern age in her style of painting. No longer subscribing to the Victorian realism – "she had made no attempt at likeness" – Lily's painting conveys meaning with a simple geometric shape, reminiscent of the early-twentieth-century cubism: even though "no one could tell it for a human shape," a purple triangular shape in her picture indicates Mrs. Ramsay reading to James (52). Furthermore, akin to a modernist text with its fragmentation and difficult imagery aimed to best capture the mind's fleeting impression, Lily's creation, breaking away from a Victorian novel's interpretive complacency, resists an easy or one-dimensional interpretation. Although the purple triangle leads William Bankes to conclude a universal theme of "[m]other and child – objects of universal veneration," Lily remarks that the picture is "not of them," Mrs. Ramsay and James, or, at least, not in William's hackneyed sense. The intention of finding ways to *make it new* and play with language is embedded in the fact that there are "other senses too in which one might reverence" the mother and child. However, one of Lily's constant concerns is significantly about balance and unity – "I shall put the tree further in the middle; then I shall avoid that awkward space" (84). She bears in mind the question of "how to connect this mass on the right hand with that on the left" without "the unity of the whole thing" being broken (53). Balance and unity is important to

Lily as she is aware that behind her lies a tradition of women, of which Mrs. Ramsay is a part – "For we think back through our mothers if we are women" (76 *Room*).

Her desire to break away from what came before her yet remaining part of the tradition is conveyed in her ambivalent, love-hate relationship with Mrs. Ramsay. On the one hand, we see Lily harbor disapproving opinions of Mrs. Ramsay, how Lily thinks she is, for example, "wilful" and "commanding" (49) – "There was something frightening about her. ... Always she got her own way in the end" – how "childlike" and "absurd" she is, talking about trivial matters, always being conscious of her beauty at the dinner party (101). With Mr. Ramsay bearing down on her toward the end, demanding sympathy, rendering her unable to see the colors and the lines, Lily finds herself exasperated with Mrs. Ramsay's legacy, which leads to this moment of her being crippled in her artistic expression – Mr. Ramsay "never gave; that man took. She [Lily], on the other hand would be forced to give. Mrs. Ramsay had given. Giving, giving, giving, she had died – and had left all this. Really, she was angry with Mrs. Ramsay" (149). Nevertheless, Lily realizes that, no matter how little, artistically, Mrs. Ramsay achieved in her time, under her circumstances, Lily's own work cannot exist outside the tradition, no matter how short or amorphous the tradition is. She later repeatedly cries for Mrs. Ramsay to return from death, emotional with tears running down her face – "'Mrs. Ramsay! Mrs. Ramsay!' she repeated. She owed it all to her" (161). Leaning her head on Mrs. Ramsay's knee when she is still alive, Lily wishes to become one with Mrs. Ramsay: "What device for becoming, like waters poured into one jar, inextricably the same, one with the object one adored? ... Could loving, as people called it, make her and Mrs. Ramsay one?" (51). The images Lily evokes – how "in the chambers of the mind and heart" of Mrs. Ramsay stand "tablets bearing sacred inscriptions, which if one could spell them out, would teach one everything" – point to the generations of women educating and influencing one another through the tradition, from Judith Shakespeare to Jane Austen to Charlotte Brontë and onto Mary Carmichael. Despite their disagreement on marriage, Mrs. Ramsay, too, recognizes the continuity in Lily: "There was in Lily a thread of something; a flare of something; something of her own which Mrs. Ramsay liked very much indeed, but no man would, she feared" (104).

In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf is grateful to "the toils of those obscure women in the past" and the Crimean and the European Wars for enabling those women to be at Newnham and Girton and thus to be in the audience of her lecture (108). In a similar way, thanks to the ten-year span in "Time Passes," during which erupts the Great War that resurfaced England's social and gender landscape, and thanks to a figure like Mrs. Ramsay, who, subtly creating in her assigned domestic sphere, serves as a foundation for Lily to build upon, the ending chapter of "The Lighthouse" and the novel altogether eventually has

within it the fully-developed androgynous mind, which, in turn, enables Lily's emergence as the woman artist. We witness both Lily and Carmichael sharing the same concern about the Ramsays' expedition and agreeing that they must have landed at the lighthouse. Foreshadowed by "a curious notion" that comes to Lily earlier that "he [does] after all hear the things she could not say" (179), both Lily and Carmichael achieve the absolute unity of the mind, no longer impaired by a sense of demand and irreciprocity, imbalance, inarticulateness, or disarrangement: "They had been thinking the same things and he had answered her without her asking him anything" (208). Seeing Carmichael standing "as if he were spreading his hands over all the weaknesses and suffering of mankind," Lily thinks he is contemplating, "tolerantly and compassionately, their final destiny." That Carmichael regards mankind, meaning men and women equally, with tolerance and compassion marks the leap from Mr. Ramsay exploiting Mrs. Ramsay as a looking-glass. That Carmichael transforms into a kind of Greek god – "looking like an old pagan god, shaggy, with weeds in his hair and the trident (it was only a French novel [an allusion to Mr. Ramsay "thinking of ... Balzac's novels"]) in his hand" – could refer back to a time when mankind were not so sex-conscious; when it was still acceptable for Zeus to take a salacious liking to Ganymede. After all, Woolf is of the opinion that "[n]o age can ever have been as stridently sex-conscious as [her] own" (99 *Room*).

As Woolf stipulates in *A Room of One's Own*, "[s]ome collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the act of creation can be accomplished" (104). Lily, after being aware that Carmichael's mind and hers have been united, no longer finds the expression, the "passage from conception to work" (19), impossible like Mrs. Ramsay – "There it was – her picture ... its attempt at something" (208). Finally managing to let go of the persistent and stifling notion that "women can't paint; women can't write," to make peace with the idea that her creation might be hung in oblivion or go to waste, Lily finds her own language – a woman's language – starting to create like Jane Austen or Emily Brontë, who "wrote as women write, not as men write," who "alone were deaf to that persistent voice, now grumbling, now patronising, now domineering ... that voice which cannot let women alone, but must be at them" (75 *Room*). Moreover, drawing the final line in the center to mark her painting as "done" and "finished," Lily signals the claiming of autonomy of her sex, the right to exist equally side by side, not being shadowed, nor blurred and blended into the other – the unity of the mind, the man-womanly or the androgynous mind itself (209). If Mrs. Ramsay is Judith Shakespeare at one end of Woolf's female tradition, Lily, then, is Mary Carmichael at the other end, for Carmichael (possibly an allusion to Lily's counterpart), too, tries to *make it new* – "[t]hen she had gone further and broken the sequence – the expected order" (91) – while at same time striving to "absorb the new into the old without disturbing the infinitely intricate and elaborate balance of the whole"

(85). With a groundbreaking sentence in her novel, "Chloe liked Olivia" (82), she, too, possesses the androgynous mind, writing "as a woman who has forgotten that she is a woman, so that her pages were full of that curios sexual quality which comes only when sex is unconscious of itself" (93).

With *To The Lighthouse* being Woolf's most autobiographical novel, some of Woolf's biographical details, which can be applied to the characters in novel, can prove illuminating. For example, strikingly beautiful, also having eight children and spending time helping the poor, having little education and opposing to the idea of formal education for women, Julia Stephen serves for her daughter as a model for Mrs. Ramsay (McIntire 88). Being a true woman of the Victorian era, living from 1846-1895, Woolf's diaries and letters also show that family and friends regarded her as, indeed, an angel in the house, which was supported by her endorsement of the 1889 petition "An Appeal Against Female Suffrage" (Vadillo 122, 124). The resemblance is striking to the extent that Vanessa Bell, Woolf's sister, wrote to Woolf upon her first reading of the novel, "it seemed to me in the first part of the book you have given a portrait of mother which is more like her to me than anything I could ever have conceived of possible" (qtd. in McIntire 88). Interestingly, Anne E. Fernald points out how "[u]nlike the Ramsays, whom we can connect directly to the Stephen family, Lily has no single biographical analogue" (14). Nevertheless, she can be most viewed in the light of Woolf's affair with another married woman, Vita Sackville-West, which was ongoing during the time Woolf wrote *To the Lighthouse.* Lily's desire to become one with Mrs. Ramsay and lamentation of wanting and not having after Mrs. Ramsay's death echo the nature of Woolf's own relationship with Vita. In this way, it is therefore all the more apt to associate Lily with the prospect of the androgynous mind, the type of mind governed by the sex-unconsciousness. It is true that Woolf intended no symbolic meaning for the lighthouse – "I meant nothing by The Lighthouse. One has to have a central line down the middle of the book to hold the design together" (qtd. in Briggs 181). Nevertheless, the fact that she wrote about Vita, in the letters from the years leading to the completion of the novel, as resembling "a lighthouse, fitful, sudden, remote" and, as the novel was nearly finished, as "very distant and beautiful and calm. A lighthouse in clean waters" (167), again, reveals that the destination Woolf may have had in mind could be nothing but the culmination of the sex-unconsciousness – the man-womanly mind free from the constraint of a heteronormativity. "If we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think," concludes Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*, "the dead poet who was Shakespeare's sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down" (113-114). In preserving her family members and her lover in the novel, Woolf makes them live on forever. In preserving Mrs. Ramsay in her painting, Lily continues weaving the tradition and makes Mrs. Ramsay, too, live on.

Works Cited

Briggs, J. (2005). *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life.* Orland: Harcourt.

Fernald, A. E. (2014). *To the Lighthouse* in the Context of Virginia Woolf's Diaries and Life. In A. Pease (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to To the Lighthouse* (pp. 6-18). Cambridge University Press.

McIntire, G. (2014). Feminism and Gender in *To the Lighthouse.* In A. Pease (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to To the Lighthouse* (pp. 80-91). Cambridge University Press.

Stevenson, R., & Goldman, J. (1996). 'But what? Elegy?': Modernist Reading and the Death of Mrs Ramsay. *The Yearbook of English Studies, 26,* 173-186.

Vadillo, A. P. (2014). Generational Difference in *To the Lighthouse*. In A. Pease (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to To the Lighthouse* (pp. 122-135). Cambridge University Press.

Woolf, V. (1989). *A Room of One's Own*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Woolf, V. (1981). *To the Lighthouse*. Boston: Harcourt.