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Chaejin Julia Lee

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Gender Politics in Artistic Creation:
The Growth Narratives and Aesthetic Visions of Stephen Dedalus and Lily Briscoe

by

Chaejin Julia Lee

Dr. Erwin Rosinberg
Adviser

Department of English

Dr. Erwin Rosinberg
Adviser

Dr. Nathan Suhr-Sytsma
Committee Member

Dr. Tanine Allison
Committee Member

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Abstract

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The *künstlerroman* genre reflects gendered challenges facing male and female artists-to-be in their shared pursuit of aesthetic autonomy. The narratives of Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Lily Briscoe in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* offer a unique comparative study of the characters' negotiations with the normative gender constructs in their paths to claiming an artistic identity. The autobiographical dimension in these works reveals the rhetoric of autonomy as used to express the authors' distress toward the social environments from which the characters seek emancipation. The inevitably incomplete projects of autonomy extend the modernist *bildungsroman* tradition of stunted growth, open-ended closure, and a complicated notion of progress. I demonstrate how voyeurism and formalism, respectively employed by Stephen and Lily, shift from their initial roles as obstacles to facilitators of growth. The two aesthetic techniques ultimately allow the characters to advance past their initial purviews of gender and reimagine their gender identities. I propose that Stephen's queerness and Lily's androgyny grant them the agency to negotiate their visions of artistic identity in relation to the larger social world.

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Introduction

Omnipresent in *bildungsroman* narratives is the assertion that “you cannot do this, you are incapable of doing that—to protest against, to overcome” (Woolf, “A Room” 54). Virginia Woolf was writing specifically in regards to aspiring female artists, but the same assertion—in varying degrees of strength—manifests in social constraints that stall the development of a *bildungsroman* protagonist in the desired direction. The character, charged with the task of “protesting” and “overcoming” these challenges, actively problematizes the norms and institutions that limit their growth and commits to a continuous negotiation with them. These narratives are, according to Elizabeth Abel, “marked by clashes of unique human possibility with the restraints of social convention” (7). The protagonist’s central task is to negotiate their vision of growth with that of society; the plot tracks the process of attaining their aspirations and ultimately, maturity, through a resistance to opposing social forces. Irrespective of this negotiation’s outcome, the protagonist is transformed by the clashes experienced, though not necessarily in a progressive manner, along the way.

A glaring problem in this literary tradition, particularly in the earlier, “classical” stage, is its gendered history. The *bildungsroman* genre, one that is defined by the narrative of surmounting challenges that stem from one’s social surroundings, ironically marginalized the stories of errant females who strive to do the same from a place of greater social disadvantage than their male counterparts. Gregory Castle testifies to the efforts of the later, “modernist” stage to “undermine the preeminence of the male *Bildungsheld* and the subordinate, instrumental status of women in classical Bildungsromane” (192-193). The primary texts selected for this thesis, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) by James Joyce and *To the Lighthouse* (1927) by Virginia Woolf, are both

modernist novels that subvert the classic *bildungsroman* plot of a male protagonist's triumphant achievement of maturity.

The gendered history of the *bildungsroman* is further complicated within its sub-genre, the *künstlerroman*, which narrates the development of an artist. Here, the question of gender becomes especially salient given the history of skepticism toward women entering the artistic *professions*—women creating works of art not as a domestic hobby, but as a career, in public competition with men. Society consequently challenges aspiring male and female artists differently, presenting inherently gendered narratives of artistic growth. A major difference between the two types of *künstlerroman* narrative is the degree of difficulty imposed upon each gender by society. Abel argues that female artists are challenged at a more fundamental level than are male artists, writing, “while male protagonists struggle to find a hospitable context in which to realize their aspirations, female protagonists must frequently struggle to voice any aspirations whatsoever” (7). It is by questioning the fundamental legitimacy of their artistic and professional aspirations that female artist-protagonists begin their development project. The differential attitudes of early 20th-century Britain and Ireland toward male and female artists allow for a productive comparative study of Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait* and Lily Briscoe in *Lighthouse*. This particular pairing of the texts allows me to compare the gendered discourses surrounding male and female protagonists in the modern *künstlerroman* genre.

Stephen and Lily face unique sets of challenges produced by the frames of masculinity and femininity particular to their respective social environments. In their attempts to deflect the social constraints' influence upon their artistic identities and productions, the protagonists strive to achieve aesthetic autonomy. Andrew Goldstone defines this concept as “the specialized institutions in which modernist cultural production and reception proceed in a self-consciously distinctive manner, pursuing newly independent artistic goals not necessarily endorsed by the broader culture” (7). In

the context of formulating an artistic identity, a self-proclaimed “autonomous” artist would consciously separate their aesthetic philosophy and practice from the extra-aesthetic, societal influence.

Goldstone outlines four possible paths along which aesthetic autonomy has unfolded in literary history, three of which are relevant to the *kiinstlerroman* narratives of Stephen and Lily. I hold up the narratives and characters, rather than the novels and authors, to Goldstone’s lens of analysis. I claim that Joyce and Woolf employ the agenda of autonomy to highlight the social relations that Stephen and Lily attempt to sever, not that the novels are meant to be autonomous works of art. The first two possibilities that Goldstone outlines, the elevation of “aesthetic form over mimetic realism” and the separation of “the autonomous artistic work from the less independent artist who makes it,” unfold in Lily’s choice of formalism as her artistic technique and efforts to render her painting as a freestanding work of art (4). She is particularly concerned about the possibility that the aesthetic value of her painting might be influenced by the viewers’ knowledge of her female gender. The third path, a rejection of “any political or communal affiliation for artist and artistic practice alike,” is manifest in Stephen’s attempts to refuse the influence of Ireland’s nationalist agenda and vision of masculinity upon his claim to an artistic identity (4). Stephen’s path to claiming aesthetic autonomy from Ireland ultimately leads to “artistic expatriation,” or a departure in search of a more conducive social environment for autonomous writing (17).

A project of autonomy, by definition, must analyze the social relations between the individual and society in order to identify the problems therein and devise a plan for independence. Thus, I view the rhetoric of autonomy as the authors’ strategy of expressing their distress toward the social environments from which the characters seek emancipation. This mode of analysis is particularly relevant to *A Portrait* and *Lighthouse* because the two novels are widely understood as partially autobiographical. Despite the artist-characters’ efforts to distance themselves from their

given social surroundings, neither Stephen nor Lily fully achieves their respective visions of autonomy. The impossibility of full aesthetic autonomy, which is also reflected in the characters' incomplete projects, highlights "the artist's and the artwork's embeddedness in social life" (Goldstone 4). Their desire for autonomy and the achievements along the way, however, give credence to the necessity and value of partial autonomy. Thus, I extend Goldstone's claim that a pursuit of aesthetic autonomy, regardless of its actual outcome, is the means by which artists work out their relations with the social world.

The following chapters demonstrate the ways in which Stephen and Lily strive to achieve autonomy from the normative frameworks of masculinity and femininity that restrict their artistic visions. The first chapter discusses the characters' paths to claiming an artistic identity, and I compare the gendered difficulties they experience in their negotiations with their respective social environments. The second chapter examines the specific artistic techniques—voyeurism and formalism—adopted by Stephen and Lily, respectively. I chart the two techniques' processes of transformation from barriers to tools for development, which ultimately allows the characters to advance past their initial purviews of gender. In my discussion of *Lighthouse*, I also examine Woolf's incorporation of formalism into her feminist aesthetic. The third chapter evaluates the characters' artistic development through the lens of queerness and androgyny for Stephen and Lily, respectively. These modes of identification, which are less explicitly gendered than the previous normative frameworks, are useful for analyzing the last stages of the characters' incomplete development as presented in the novels. In the conclusion, I will analyze the novels' engagement with the idea of progress, the convention of completing growth, and the modes of closure that have shifted throughout the *bildungsroman* tradition. Through my comparative study of the two texts, I hope to identify the roles of traditional and non-normative gender constructs and demonstrate their significance in shaping modernist growth narratives.

As aspiring artists, Stephen and Lily utilize voyeurism and formalism as specific aesthetic techniques to propel their personal and artistic development. Their inevitably incomplete quests for autonomy lead to negotiations, rather than irreconcilable contentions, with the gender constructs. The characters' partial autonomy renders a fluid representation of the relationship between an artist and their society, leading them to reimagine their respective gender identities as part of their growth narratives.

Chapter 1. Gender Politics in *Künstlerroman*

Epiphanies—from “little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark” to “lightnings of intuition”—accentuate the *künstlerroman* narratives of Stephen and Lily (Woolf 165; Joyce 148). The flashes of understanding contribute to an affirmation of their artistic identities and progress, marking the points of breakthrough that draw them closer to aesthetic autonomy. As a writer and a painter, the two characters identify the social forces that hinder their development as artists and set about negotiating their visions of growth with the expectations of society. These barriers to artistic development consist of the frames of gender that dictate the characters’ roles, responsibilities, and limits. In their shared pursuit of artistic vocation, Stephen and Lily contend with distinct, gendered challenges.

While acknowledging the inherent inequality between the two characters’ experiences, I try to avoid oversimplifying the implications generated by the comparison of the two texts. That is, I attempt to address the unique sets of challenges incurred by the different gender expectations for each character, rather than arguing that one character’s experience was simply more difficult than the other’s on the basis of gender. In this chapter, I apply the lens of gender to each protagonist’s narrative and clarify its influence upon the respective character’s arc of development. In doing so, I identify the frames of masculinity and femininity as established by each character’s respective social milieu: for Stephen, the cultural and political tumult in the years leading up to the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, and for Lily, the early twentieth-century England witnessing a rise in the number of women entering the visual arts profession. By analyzing each character’s negotiation of their individuality with the normative gender expectations of their respective social environments, I examine how gender differentiates the two characters’ paths to claiming their artistic identities.

Stephen's narrative in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* unfolds across five chapters that chronologically relate the story of Stephen's life from childhood through adolescence. Throughout the novel, he grapples with the societal standards that define and enforce a version of "Irish masculinity," which consists of nationalist and religious expectations for an Irish Catholic male. Deciding that any bindings to society only limit his creativity and the freedom necessary to write, Stephen articulates his reasons for rejecting his ties to Ireland and commits to self-exile. Consequently, Stephen's particular claim to the title of an "artist" entails attempts to gain personal and aesthetic autonomy from religious and national duties.

Stephen's artistic growth depends upon his ability to formulate and express an "independent" vision as an artist. The political components of this independence, which concern the artist's relationship with society at large, continuously exert pressure upon Stephen to become a normalized part of society through fulfilling religious and national obligations. Stephen makes his break with the former after a time of deep religious devotion and asceticism, culminating in a scene in which the director of the school asks Stephen to consider joining the priesthood. While the vocation aligns with the preceding years of religiosity, Stephen quickly realizes that becoming a priest signifies permanence in "a grave and ordered and passionless life," to which he is instinctually opposed (Joyce 135). He awakens to "some instinct [...] stronger than education or piety, [which] quickened within him at every near approach to that life [as a priest], an instinct subtle and hostile, and armed him against acquiescence" (135). A major epiphany follows, in which he realizes that "his destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders," which contrasts starkly to the years he spent in the Church (136). The narrator continues: "He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world" (136). Stephen's "destiny," according to the narrator, is to actively learn on his own rather than passively accepting the established teachings. New open-ended possibilities follow Stephen's withdrawal from

the priesthood, which would have severely limited his freedom and permanently bound him to the religious order.

Stephen's reasons for avoiding an affiliation with the religious institution are further refined. At the time of abandoning the priesthood, Stephen realizes his intolerance for the permanence of the vocation and his need to live free of institutional dictates. During a conversation with Cranly, he cites his inability to withstand falsehood and his lack of religious faith itself as the reasons why he cannot return to the Church. He says: "I fear more than [the spiritual damnation] the chemical action which would be set up in my soul by a false homage to a symbol behind which are massed twenty centuries of authority and veneration" (Joyce 205). Stephen expresses his lack of faith in Catholicism and views its symbols—the bread and wine—as falsehoods with "a malevolent reality behind" them (205). He resists the idea of partaking in the longstanding tradition that, in his belief, rests on falsehood. Most importantly, the possibility of performing a practice in which he does not believe generates "fear," which signifies his innate need to be independent from the social forces with which he does not agree.

Stephen's rejection of authority extends to a renunciation of national responsibilities to Ireland. While acknowledging Ireland's influence upon his identity, Stephen refuses to fulfill any obligations as an Irishman. This rejection of national identity is especially significant given the novel's setting in the years surrounding the Irish independence activities, which foster a strong nationalist sentiment among Stephen's Catholic university peers in Dublin. Davin, for example, represents a type of young, educated Irishman who is enthusiastic about reviving the Irish tradition and language. In one instance, he tries to convince Stephen to prioritize his Irish identity, reminding him: "a man's country comes first. Ireland first, Stevie. You can be a poet or a mystic after" (Joyce 171). To this, Stephen responds coldly: "Do you know what Ireland is? [...] Ireland is the old sow that eats her farrow" (171). Comparing Ireland to an "old sow" that consumes her own offspring,

namely the Irish people, Stephen implies an eradication of the latter in a seemingly trusting and intimate relationship between a parent and a child, or a nation and its people. Stephen's metaphor warns Irish people against guilelessly striving to fulfill the country's expectations of nationalism, implying that an extreme commitment to the national identity has a potential to erase the citizens' individuality. Stephen believes that when national aspirations are prioritized at the expense of personal ones, the nationalist commitment becomes especially dangerous for an artist whose artistic independence is contingent upon his individuality.

Moreover, Stephen refuses to assume the burden of colonial Irish history. In response to Davin's recommendation that he attend Gaelic language classes, Stephen argues: "My ancestors threw off their language and took another [...] They allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them. Do you fancy I am going to pay in my own life and person debts they made? What for?" (Joyce 170) Stephen contends that he will not partake in the efforts to revive the original Irish language because he is not responsible for undoing the damage that his ancestors incurred by succumbing to British colonial rule. While recognizing his Irish upbringing, he also chooses to maintain a certain distance from the Irish Catholic culture in order to deflect its influence upon his artistic self-expression. He states: "This race and this country and this life produced me [...] I shall express myself as I am" (170). He furthers: "When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets" (171). Stephen perceives the common categories of identification—"nationality, language, religion"—as constraints that are particularly potent in Ireland. By insisting upon his independence from the Irish problem and the associated responsibilities stemming from Irish national identity, Stephen seeks to claim agency as a modern Irishman and artist. Cranly, however, questions the extent of Stephen's independence, pointing out: "It is a curious thing [...] how your mind is supersaturated with the religion in which you say you disbelieve" (202). The explicit negation of his

connection to these constraints renders Stephen's newly-formulated identity to be dependent upon them.

Stephen's continued investment in Ireland, and the constraints he claims to reject, is also evident elsewhere. Stephen's repudiation of Irish Catholic identity does not stem from his lack of concern with the country. Rather, it arises from the unhappiness with his fundamental ties to the constraining conditions of Ireland. Shortly before outlining his criticisms of religion and social institutions, he feels angry and discontent with the political authority figures of Ireland, who don't seem to be genuinely concerned with the country. He is disillusioned by "the sleek lives of the patricians of Ireland housed in calm," who "thought of army commissions and land agents [...] knew the names of certain French dishes and gave orders to jarvies in highpitched provincial voices which pierced through their skintight accents" (Joyce 200). Thinking from an elitist attitude of his own, Stephen criticizes the politicians who were once peasants from provincial towns and now concerned only with climbing the social ladder. Wondering "how could he hit their conscience," he feels "the thoughts and desires of the race to which he belonged" (200). The narrative articulates Stephen's continued belonging to the Irish "race," hinting that Stephen's "independence" either has not yet taken place or is impossible to achieve despite his claims of renunciation. Furthermore, Stephen's speculation of how he might engender change in the Irishpeople, whom he considers "ignoble," reveals that he still feels—though vaguely and rather presumptuously—responsible for contributing to a solution to what he subjectively perceives as the social problems in Ireland (200).

The vision of "Irish masculinity" materializes in the figure of a nameless priest, whom Stephen accuses of flirting with his love interest. Stephen imagines him as "her paramour, whose name and voice and features offended his baffled pride: a priested peasant" (Joyce 186). The priest appears to be a respectable Irishman; most distinctively, his religious vocation marks his devotion to the Catholic Church that Stephen lacks. Stephen, however, forcibly subverts this dignified and

conventional image by calling him a woman's "paramour," an accusation of secretive dissent against the Church that forbids a priest's sexual activity. Stephen, then, calls himself "a priest of the eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life" (186). Appropriating the priesthood and the religious language of Catholicism, he reimagines the vocation in aesthetic terms and assigns it to himself. Just as a Catholic priest recreates the body of Christ from bread, Stephen would transmute his experience into a work of art. The narrative language suggests that Stephen considers his version of the priesthood, though an unconventional one, as an admirable vocation. The act of pushing the priest out of the realm of social acceptance signifies remnants of Stephen's respect towards the existing social order. Further, his reclamation of the vocation, which he initially rejected, suggests that Stephen still relies on the Irish Catholic conventions for a framework from which to formulate his artistic identity.

The vestige of Stephen's investment in Catholicism appears more distinctly when he is presented with a choice between Catholicism and Protestantism. If his claim of disbelieving religion were true, he would logically repudiate both religions or perhaps support Protestantism, with which he is relatively unfamiliar compared to his knowledge of Catholicism. However, he expresses clear support for Catholicism when asked about the possibility of joining the Protestant church, claiming: "I said that I had lost the faith [...] but not that I had lost selfrespect. What kind of liberation would that be to forsake an absurdity which is logical and coherent and to embrace one which is illogical and incoherent?" (Joyce 205) Despite losing the spiritual faith and considering the Catholic religion "an absurdity," Stephen still characterizes Catholicism as "logical and coherent" compared to Protestantism that is "illogical and incoherent." In the context where the divide between the two branches of Christianity is particularly contentious, he firmly maintains his partisan support for the religion of his upbringing. Choosing Protestantism over Catholicism is, for Stephen, an act synonymous with losing self-respect. Stephen's defense of Catholicism and his appropriation of the

priesthood collectively signal his inability to completely exit the Irish Catholic framework and its accompanying constructs of religion, hierarchy, and linguistic tradition.

Stephen's pursuit of aesthetic autonomy culminates in his decision to seek exile from Ireland. Articulating his determination not to allow dominant social authorities to influence his art, he tells Cranly: "I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow to use—silence, exile, and cunning" (Joyce 208). Stephen's resolution reiterates his lack of conviction in his nation and religion, as well as his unwillingness to allow either to influence his self-expression. Specifically articulating his desire for freedom, he pronounces "silence, exile, and cunning" as the means by which he will pursue aesthetic autonomy. He promises Cranly, who warns him of loneliness as an exile, that he does not "fear to be alone [...] or to leave whatever I have to leave" (208). Stephen's vision of life abroad betrays, however, his expectations of company and acceptance that he has been unable to find in Ireland. Writing in one of the last journal entries that appear at the end of the novel, Stephen imagines roads and ships as telling him: "We are alone—come. And the voices say with them: We are your kinsmen" (213). He continues: "the air is thick with their company as they call to me, their kinsman, making ready to go, shaking the wings of their exultant and terrible youth" (213). The unsubstantiated promise of company and acceptance abroad is associated with youth by Stephen himself and, by extension, a degree of naïveté. The impending exile that marks the end of Stephen's *bildungsroman* does not, then, imply the completion of his growth and the beginning of adulthood. Stephen's insistence on exile functions instead as a sign of his adolescence.

If Stephen feels constrained by the normative standards of "Irish masculinity" on his path to become a writer, Lily Briscoe feels that the normative standards of femininity in early twentieth-century Britain might successfully block her from continuing to try at all to become a professional

painter. Charles Tansley's whispered axiom, "Women can't paint, women can't write...", haunts Lily throughout *To the Lighthouse*, as she strives to clarify and establish her identity as a female painter (Woolf, "Lighthouse" 51). His ominous statement thus stands at the thematic center of Lily's *künstlerroman*, in the midst of her attempts to reject the traditional standards of femininity and claim her artistic vocation. As Mr. Tansley directly questions Lily's creativity capacity, two other characters in the novel also pressure her into fulfilling their respective expectations of femininity, which threaten to erase Lily's independent vision of her own identity. Mrs. Ramsay, an important maternal figure to Lily, imposes the female ideology of marriage and family. Mr. Ramsay staunchly demands that Lily give him sympathy—an act that signifies a female sacrifice to fulfill a male need. Lily's successful negotiations with the three characters' impositions allow her to claim a place of relative artistic freedom within the gendered social framework that constrains her artistic capacity.

In "The Window," the novel's first chapter, Lily struggles between the conventional values of womanhood and the artistic prospects that she envisions for herself. Mrs. Ramsay, whom Lily deeply admires and loves, upholds the conventional end of the discourse regarding womanhood, as she "insist[s] that [Lily] must, Minta must, they all must marry," but "cared not a fig for her painting" (Woolf, "Lighthouse" 52-53). In response to Mrs. Ramsay's injunction, Lily thinks: "there could be no disputing this: an unmarried woman [...] has missed the best of life" (53). According to Mrs. Ramsay, marriage is not only a necessity and the norm for women, but also the peak of womanhood. With Mrs. Ramsay's opinion representing society's consensus that women must marry, a refusal to do so would exclude Lily from the normative framework of womanhood, leaving her without a stable identity that is approved by society. In Mrs. Ramsay's presence, Lily's commitment to painting "seemed so little, so virginal, against the other" (53). The "other" represents the traditional values of womanhood that follow marriage: the roles of a wife and a mother that Mrs.

Ramsay seems to fulfill perfectly. Against Mrs. Ramsay's enactment of femininity, Lily's vision appears to her as childish and untenable.

Lily's unstable view of femininity is further complicated by Mr. Tansley's prejudice against women's capacity to hold creative vocations. His dictum, "Women can't paint, women can't write," discredits Lily's ability to pursue an artistic career, threatening to confine Lily into a narrow sphere of domestic life that excludes women from the world of creative occupations (Woolf, "Lighthouse" 51). Conflicted between the conventional expectations from both Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Tansley and her own longing to be an artist, "she would urge her own exemption from" what she perceives to be "the universal law; plead for it; she liked to be alone; she liked to be herself; she was not made for that" (53). Her inclinations oppose the standards of femininity that are upheld by Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Tansley; she prefers solitude to the companionship of marriage, and she longs to pursue her passion for painting rather than molding herself to be compatible with her husband. The apparent universality of the other two characters' worldview suggests that Lily, with her desires to paint and remain in solitude, is a misfit in a society that idealizes marriage for women.

Lily's struggle against Mr. Tansley's disparaging remark about women writers and painters is especially significant given the explosion of the number of women entering artistic professions beginning in the latter half of the 19th century England. This Victorian phenomenon informs my reading of the relationships between Lily and the three characters—Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay and Charles Tansley—as well as Lily's own challenges as an artist struggling to establish her legitimacy. First, the number of Victorian women artists in the professional realm increased along with the public's awareness of their expanding presence; Mr. Tansley's view represents the traditionalist end of the spectrum of opinions regarding this phenomenon. The idea of women as professional artists appeared problematic to those like Mr. Tansley, as well as Mr. Ramsay, because it implied that these women were no longer confined to the private, domestic sphere, but were beginning to venture into

the public sphere that was previously dominated by men. Mr. Ramsay holds a domestic image of women, one in which they “keep house, and sit beside sleeping children indoors” (Woolf, “Lighthouse” 168). He also discredits women’s intellectual capacity, which would presumably lead to their success in creative vocations in the public sphere, by proclaiming that “the vagueness of their mind is hopeless” (171). Mr. Ramsay’s prejudice further belittles women into a species that exists solely to please men, as he excuses the putative vagueness of mind as a “part of their extraordinary charm” that he likes (171).

According to Antonia Losano, “women painters (like many other professional women) faced intense ideological disapproval because of their participation in the public realm” (33). In order to earn acceptance and recognition, especially in male-dominated domains, women had to demonstrate simultaneously the quality of their work and espouse their place in artistic professions. The opinions of Mr. Tansley and Mr. Ramsay relate to the particular ideology regarding women and art, one that is mired in contradictions: “on the one hand, women were considered ‘naturally’ artistic—sensitive and devoted to beauty—yet were simultaneously thought to be incapable of true artistic creativity or judgment” (2). Woolf unfolds this contradictory ideology across two female characters in the novel; Mrs. Ramsay serves as an emblem of the sensitive and the beautiful, seen by most characters as fitting perfectly into the domestic realm, while Lily struggles against the prevailing notion that she, because of her gender, is incapable of creating art. In addition, Lily’s perpetual concern about her painting’s reception—“And it would never be seen; never be hung even” (Woolf, “Lighthouse” 51)—relates to the larger concern shared by the women artists and writers of the Victorian era regarding the “ingrained ideology which insisted that cultural productions by women, no matter the media, were inherently barred from the realm of High Art” (Losano 4). During her painting process, Lily confronts the dual challenge of both completing the painting and facing the potentially frigid reception based on “the gendering of aesthetic value,” which would evaluate her painting with the

knowledge that its creator is a woman, lowering its aesthetic value by default (4). Once she successfully finishes the painting, however, Lily ceases to worry about its reception. She thereby proclaims herself as a legitimate artist, unmoored from society's bias towards female art.

In order to complete her painting, Lily must first defend herself from the male demands of female sacrifice. When Lily returns to the summerhouse with the surviving members of the Ramsay family in "The Lighthouse," the final section of the novel, she encounters a patriarchal challenge from Mr. Ramsay. The challenge tests her ability to confront and reconcile with society's impositions upon women to sacrifice themselves for men. When Mr. Ramsay demands Lily's sympathy in "The Lighthouse," Mrs. Ramsay is no longer present to persuade Lily to surrender herself to the male needs for attention, just as she did during a dinner party in "The Window." When Mr. Ramsay turns to Lily for sympathy and sacrifice, she imagines him as saying: "You shan't touch your canvas [...] till you've given me what I want of you" (Woolf, "Lighthouse" 154). The narrator implies that Lily's surrender to Mr. Ramsay would result in her inability to paint, since the act of submission would signify that she was unable to prioritize her painting over his desire. Lily almost yields, thinking: "she could imitate from recollection the glow, the rhapsody, the self-surrender, she had seen on so many women's faces (on Mrs. Ramsay's, for instance)" (154). Her submission to Mr. Ramsay would simply insert her into the longstanding tradition of the erasure of women's personal potential at the hands of domineering men. In this scene, Lily stands at the verge of following the beaten paths of so many women before her, including Mrs. Ramsay, at the cost of neglecting her own potential as an artist.

The following scene is one of prolonged, inexorable tension between Mr. Ramsay and Lily, one demanding and the other persisting, both enduring until one surrenders. Ultimately, Lily prevails, thinking throughout the impasse that her triumph would lead to her exclusion from the traditional framework of womanhood. Woolf writes: "there issued from him such a groan that any

other woman in the whole world would have done something [...] all except myself, thought Lily, girding at herself bitterly, who am not a woman, but a peevish, ill-tempered, dried-up old maid, presumably” (“Lighthouse” 155). Mr. Ramsay’s exertion of masculinity forces Lily to view herself not as a proper, respectable woman belonging to the majority, but rather as an insignificant “other” in the undesirable minority. Woolf continues: “A woman, she had provoked this horror; a woman, she should have known how to deal with it. It was immensely to her discredit, sexually, to stand there dumb” (156). Lily’s denial of Mr. Ramsay, deemed a “discredit” and a fault to her female sex, leads her to believe that she has failed her femininity by refusing to fulfill the standards that dictate what a woman must do in her service to a man. However, Lily’s rather painful rejection of the expectation for female submission leads her out of the normative gender framework, enabling her to concentrate on her inner self and achieve a breakthrough in the painting. She reaches a surprisingly amicable truce with Mr. Ramsay, in which she negotiates another point of connection with him by complimenting his boots instead of giving him sympathy. Following the conversation, she is finally enabled to fully concentrate on her painting. Woolf writes: “And as she lost consciousness of outer things [...] her mind kept throwing up from its depths, scenes, and names, and sayings, and memories and ideas, like a fountain spurting over that glaring, hideously difficult white space, while she modeled it with greens and blues” (163). Lily’s successful compromise with Mr. Ramsay liberates her from the confining social expectations that interfere with her work. As her outer consciousness fades, one that is characterized by the doubt towards her creative potential as a woman, her inner consciousness bursts into focus; Lily is consequently enabled to begin the painting that she had been unable to finish for the past ten years.

The progress towards completing her painting indicates Lily’s growing agency as both a woman and an artist. Woolf’s depiction of Lily’s creative process parallels that of fictional women artists in novels written by Victorian women writers, who, according to Losano, “emphasiz[ed] art as

a *social* process involving multiple ideological pressures” (8). Lily must respond to the cultural ideologies that oppose her attempt to enter the professional sphere of the arts in order to grow as an artist; the completion of her painting is contingent upon her success at negotiating her place with these existing ideological pressures. Woolf, in following this Victorian literary tradition, “represent[s] the difficult *process* of women’s artistic production and its aftermath, [which] enables women writers to engage not just with aesthetic concerns but with the social issues that inevitably arise out of these public scenarios” (Losano 9). Woolf also furthers that same tradition of women artists in fiction. Roberta White compares Woolf’s artist-character to the preceding women artist-characters in British fiction, writing that Lily as a character is much more concrete, her aesthetic goals better articulated, and achievements more solid than those of her predecessors. She credits Woolf with “captur[ing] a woman painter at moments of breakthrough [...] into serious exploration of the emotional and intellectual possibilities of her art” (White 107). Woolf brings to the forefront of the narrative Lily’s advancement towards her aesthetic goals and realization of her artistic capacity. Her growth as an artist renders the novel as a specific kind of *künstlerroman*, one of a female artist against the prevailing prejudice against women’s creative capacity, and advances the tradition of portraying women artists in fiction.

Reading *To the Lighthouse* as Lily’s *künstlerroman* enables the dual understanding of Lily’s personal relationships with the other characters and the questions about her painting that chronically plague her over the course of the novel. Throughout “The Window,” Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Tansley attempt to confine Lily to a traditional gender framework that directs her to commit to marriage and bars her from the creative public sphere. This reading of the relationships explains the chronology of the novel throughout its three chapters. “The Window” portrays Lily “[struggling] against the patriarchal injunction to marry and against the belief that ‘Women can’t paint, women can’t write...’” (Hussey xxxv). “Time Passes” covers a ten-year period during which she copes with Mrs. Ramsay’s

death. When she returns to the Ramsays' summerhouse in "The Lighthouse," Lily encounters the opportunity to solidify her legitimacy as a female artist in the absence of Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Tansley. The reading that the two characters' absence functions as an enabling factor in Lily's artistic growth may seem to take away from her personal agency, as though she could not have achieved the same growth had she remained in the presence of the two imposing characters. However, the necessity of the removal of Mr. Tansley and Mrs. Ramsay renders her growth to more closely reflect reality, where it could indeed be difficult for women to reject the normative gender framework under the direct influence of those who assert the conventional values. By removing Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Tansley in the chapter that witnesses Lily's culmination in her growth as an artist, Woolf acknowledges the complexities of the difficult reality where women strive to overcome the conventional expectations and claim independence.

Lily's painting, however, is not fully autonomous from Mrs. Ramsay's influence. With Mrs. Ramsay as its subject, the painting reflects the complex relationship between the two women. Mrs. Ramsay, while lacking understanding towards Lily's artistic aspiration, appreciates her independence and recognizes her spirit. She thinks: "There was in Lily a thread of something; a flare of something; something of her own which Mrs. Ramsay liked very much indeed" (Woolf, "Lighthouse" 106). Lily, in return, recognizes Mrs. Ramsay's failure to understand the individual "destinies" over which she "preside[s] with immutable calm," but seeks intimacy and unity with her (53). Lily, "sitting on the floor with her arms round Mrs. Ramsay's knees, close as she could get," wonders: "What device for becoming, like waters poured into one jar, inextricably the same, one with the object one adored?" (54) She furthers: "Could loving [...] make her and Mrs. Ramsay one? For it was not knowledge but unity that she desired [...] nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself" (54). The female friendship between Mrs. Ramsay and Lily, one she claims is incomprehensible to men, drives Lily's desire for a deeper relationship in the form of a spiritual

unity with Mrs. Ramsay. This question of unity with another human being is also articulated in terms of the painting. Pictorial unity, as demonstrated in the next chapter, preoccupies Lily just as interpersonal unity remains a central question in her relationship with Mrs. Ramsay.

On one hand, Lily's aesthetic autonomy is dependent upon her ability to resist Mrs. Ramsay's pressure for her to prioritize marriage over painting. On the other hand, the finished painting serves as a tribute to Mrs. Ramsay and a medium for Lily to express her grief over Mrs. Ramsay's death. In "The Lighthouse," Lily reflects upon Mrs. Ramsay's ability to "mak[e] of the moment something permanent," which parallels "Lily herself tr[ying] to make of the moment something permanent" through her painting (Woolf, "Lighthouse" 165). Her artistic process resembles what Mrs. Ramsay was able to do when she was alive, as she reflects: "In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and flowing [...] was struck into stability. Life stand still here, Mrs. Ramsay said" (165). Lily's project of identifying and expressing an essence of the everyday in the mode of painting is a tribute to Mrs. Ramsay's ability to do the same in her own way, as Lily concludes her thought by reflecting: "She owed it all to her" (165). Although Lily initially struggles with locating and articulating her grief—"For really, what did she feel, come back after all these years and Mrs. Ramsay dead? Nothing, nothing—nothing that she could express at all"—the dual process of painting and recollecting her memories of Mrs. Ramsay helps Lily to reconcile with her death (149). At last, the "old horror" of a painful feeling to "want and not to have" Mrs. Ramsay back in life is assuaged (181). The figure of Mrs. Ramsay, as it rests in Lily's memory, "too became part of ordinary experience [...] on a level with the chair, with the table" (205). Lily's grief over Mrs. Ramsay's death and the painting facilitate each other; the painting helps Lily to reconcile with Mrs. Ramsay's absence, while Mrs. Ramsay serves as the subject of Lily's completed painting.

Woolf positions Lily's struggle against Mr. Ramsay in "The Lighthouse" as the final challenge for her to overcome before claiming her legitimacy as an artist. Near the end of her

“growth” as chronicled in the novel, when she has successfully reconciled with Mr. Ramsay’s demand and returned to concentrate on her painting, Lily recounts the failure of the Rayleys’ marriage, which Mrs. Ramsay had carefully orchestrated ten years before. Realizing that Mrs. Ramsay was wrong about their marriage and that she does not have to submit to Mr. Ramsay the same way Mrs. Ramsay had, Lily feels that she has “triumphed over Mrs. Ramsay” (Woolf, “Lighthouse” 178). Lily’s realization of her victory over Mrs. Ramsay’s injunctions accompanies her solution to the formal issues in the painting: “it had flashed upon her mind that she would move the tree to the middle, and need never marry anybody [...] She had felt, now she could stand up to Mrs. Ramsay” (179). Lily’s triumph over Mrs. Ramsay also signals a triumph over Mr. Tansley, who has repeatedly told her that Lily could not be an artist.

Lily’s persistent anxiety regarding the reception of her painting reflects what Losano describes as “the gendering of aesthetic value” (4). By the end of the novel, when Lily has proved her artistic capacity by successfully transferring her vision onto the canvas, the anxiety about the painting’s reception disappears. The dissipation of her anxiety signifies that she has overcome her own doubts about the legitimacy of her position in the artistic profession. Throughout her interactions with Mrs. Ramsay, Mr. Tansley, and Mr. Ramsay, who all attempt to dictate what Lily’s femininity should be, Lily reconciles the societal ideal with her own vision of a female artistic identity. This reconciliation in turn allows her moments of almost complete freedom to grapple with, and eventually complete, her creative work as a legitimate artist.

Both Stephen Dedalus and Lily Briscoe have been understood as autobiographical representations of their authors. The lives of the characters and their authors share similar settings and challenges against social norms, the “real” versions of which are refashioned to varying degrees in the fiction. For example, Stephen’s narrative presumably unfolds during the years surrounding the

turn of the century: the time of Charles Stewart Parnell's death and the Irish independence movements, some of which Joyce also experienced while living in Ireland. The author and character develop similarly complex relationships with their native country and share a desire to leave Ireland; Joyce left for Paris soon after graduating from university and settled in various places throughout Europe, and Stephen's departure is strongly implied by the end of *A Portrait*. The autobiographical dimension in *To the Lighthouse* is slightly more obscure. By nature of her chosen medium of art, Lily is a more recognizable reflection of Woolf's sister and a painter, Vanessa Bell, than Woolf herself. The setting of the Ramsays' summer holidays, the Isle of Skye in Scotland, is selected to reflect Cornwall, where Woolf used to spend her holidays as a child with her family. The titular lighthouse in the novel reflects Godrevy Lighthouse, which was visible from the Stephens' summerhouse in Cornwall. Most importantly, the two character-author pairs similarly attempt to realize their respective artistic aspirations.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that the autobiographical dimensions in the two novels do not faithfully represent the "reality" experienced by the authors. Christine Froula understands Stephen as a "virtual sel[f] created and performed through writing—whose adventures belong first to the life of Joyce-the-artist and only secondarily (when at all) to Joyce's life as actually lived" ("Beyond Genesis" 2). Froula's treatment of the fictional character as primarily a reflection of the author's artistic identity can be extended to the interpretation of Lily as Woolf's self-projection. The significance of the "fictional self-projections" lies in the potential for what Froula calls an "analys[is] of the psychopolitical dynamics that mesh [the] artist-figures' desires with the social order that shapes them" (2-3). In other words, the self-portraits demonstrate the complex, and often conflicting, interaction between a desire for an artistic identity and the social forces that shape the desire.

In *A Portrait*, Stephen's desire for independence reveals the oppressive demands of societal constructs that curb his capacity for self-determination. The Catholic Church seeks to confine him to the permanent vocation of priesthood; the Irish nationalists urge him to prioritize his national identity over his artistic one. In *To the Lighthouse*, Lily's contentious desire to remain single reveals the pressure for her to settle into a life of obligations to family and sacrifice to the male. Her artistic aspiration contends with the prejudice that women are not capable of creating serious art. In both cases, society threatens to subsume the characters' identities within its dominant ideologies. Stephen and Lily resist the impending erasure of their individuality by continuously creating—one through writing and the other through painting. The act of creation conceptually opposes destruction, and an artistic vocation intrinsically embodies the creative act. Thus, the characters resolve the anxiety about their precarious relationship with society by pursuing an essentially creative vocation of an artist.

The construct of gender stands at the forefront of the *künstlerroman* challenges in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *To the Lighthouse*. The examination of the characters demonstrates the unique challenges surrounding the accepted frames of masculinity and femininity; however, Stephen's growth as a male writer is more privileged than Lily's development as a female painter. Woolf articulates the different natures of challenge faced by male and female artists in *A Room of One's Own*: "The indifference of the world which [...] men of genius have found so hard to bear was in her case not indifference but hostility. The world did not say to her as it said to them, Write if you choose; it makes no difference to me. The world said in a guffaw, Write? What's the good of your writing?" (52). Stephen's society does not question his right to pursue an artistic aspiration; it instead maintains an indifferent attitude towards his vision, asking him to prioritize the nation, the Church, and the male ideology over his artistic identity. By contrast, Lily's intrinsic capacity to create art is questioned; her developing artistic identity is always on the edge of being completely eradicated by

the preferred identities of a wife and a mother. The hostility stems from the “masculine complex [...] that deep-seated desire, not so much that *sbe* shall be inferior as that *be* shall be superior” and most explicitly demonstrated by Charles Tansley’s interactions with Lily (54). Indifference is Stephen’s burden to overcome as a male; hostility is Lily’s. Through their shared pursuit of artistic autonomy, the characters engage with gendered conflicts and negotiations with their social environment.

Chapter 2. From a Barrier to an Enabler: The Shifting Roles of Voyeurism and Formalism

Gender and aesthetics are closely intertwined in the growth narratives of Stephen Daedalus and Lily Briscoe. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen's perception of the female gender and his aesthetic philosophy evolve conjointly. Stephen's growing understanding of the two subjects takes place within a close feedback loop between the two, as a change in one manifests itself in a change in the other through the shifting role of Stephen's voyeurism. In *To the Lighthouse*, Lily uses formalist techniques in her painting in an effort to truthfully express her vision. Formalism, including both its philosophy and technique, is adopted by Woolf as a driving force of her feminist aesthetic in literature. Voyeurism and formalism, the two characters' respective mechanisms of artistic expression, initially operate as barriers to their artistic and personal maturity. Joyce and Woolf subsequently reshape the aesthetic problems into enabling forces for the characters as they attempt to achieve their emancipation from the restrictive frameworks of gender. In *A Portrait*, Stephen's voyeurism transforms from a desire-driven act of looking to a search for pure aesthetics. In *Lighthouse*, formalism is refashioned from its apparent incompatibility with literature and female art to a driving force of Woolf's feminist aesthetic.

Throughout the uncertainties of childhood to the affirmation of artistic identity, Stephen's desire-driven male gaze develops into an aesthetic voyeurism. This "development," though not a morally progressive one, demonstrates a changing balance between sexual desire and aesthetic appreciation of women that constitute his act of looking. The shift is most apparent in the comparison between Stephen's imaginary construction of Mercedes and his aestheticization of the "bird-girl." Further, Stephen's experiments with metaphors and made-up words serve as literary expressions of his developing aesthetic and increasing understanding of women, who finally begin to be understood not as objects of desire but as human beings with a complex inner life. While

Stephen's voyeurism functions as a manifestation of his problematic relationship with women, the act of looking also serves as the site where a shift in his perception of women begins to take place.

During adolescence, Stephen constructs a fantasy about his relationship with a literary character, Mercedes, from *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Stephen expects Mercedes, who is the imaginary object of his love, to serve as a gateway to adulthood. He describes their eventual union as the moment when "weakness and timidity and inexperience would fall from him" and "he would be transfigured" (Joyce 54). In other words, Mercedes is expected to serve as an instrument to his transformation from an inexperienced young boy to a grown man. Over time, however, Stephen's lack of actual interaction with women and his unremitting imagination of Mercedes lead to a disappointment over the distance between his vision and reality. The disappointment develops into "a cold and cruel and loveless lust," and Stephen eventually declares his childhood "dead or lost"; with it, the romantic fantasy he nurtured of women also largely disappears (80). His adolescent visions of Mercedes are replaced by unchecked sexual desire, which leads him to his first sexual relationship with a prostitute. Stephen's presumed loss of virginity, however, fails to transfigure him as he originally expected.

While Stephen's first sexual experience does not bring "transfiguration," epiphany and ecstasy do overtake Stephen when he encounters—and aestheticizes—an unknown girl on the beach. Stephen meets the girl following his rejection of the priesthood and realization of his "destiny" to be an artist, just when his mind is primed for a rigorous aesthetic exercise. Immediately after noticing the girl, Stephen begins an intense observation of the girl's body. Stephen's initial impression of the girl is "birdlike"—he imagines that "magic had changed [her] into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird" (Joyce 144). Then, the narrator describes Stephen singling out and aestheticizing each part of her body. Stephen's free indirect discourse begins with her "long slender bare legs [that] were delicate as a crane's and pure," piling on three adjectives to describe the legs

(144). He proceeds to her thighs, which are “fuller and soft-hued as ivory” and “bared almost to the hips” (144). He then describes her clothes: “the white fringes of her drawers were like featherings of soft white down,” while “her slate-blue skirts were kilted boldly about her waist and dovetailed behind her” (144). He contemplates her bosom “as a bird’s soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some dark-plumaged dove” (144). Finally, Stephen’s aestheticization ends in her girlish, fair hair and her face, which is “touched with the wonder of mortal beauty” (144).

Language is an important medium through which Stephen engages with his creative capacity. Stephen’s stream-of-consciousness demonstrates metaphors and made-up words that are products of his art-making, and his literary experiments accompany his aestheticization of women. By the time Stephen encounters the bird-girl, his facility with language has progressed significantly since childhood. At the beginning of the novel, young Stephen is portrayed as struggling with understanding metaphors; however, he eventually makes sense of the metaphors by associating them with an aestheticized body part of his friend, Eileen. In the scene, Stephen is unable to understand the meanings of the “tower of ivory” and the “house of gold,” which are popular metaphors for the Virgin Mary. When Stephen first hears these phrases, he tries to comprehend them in a literal sense, questioning: “How could a woman be a tower of ivory or a house of gold?” (Joyce 29) When he fails to fit the metaphors into a literal mode of comprehension, Stephen does the next best thing he can do to make sense of the descriptions; he associates the metaphors with the particular sensation he felt of his childhood friend’s hands. Joyce writes: “Eileen had long white hands [...] long and white and thin and cold and soft. That was ivory: a cold white thing. That was the meaning of *Tower of Ivory*” (29). When Stephen remembers how Eileen’s hands were cold and white, he comprehends the association between the Virgin Mary and the Tower of Ivory. Thus, Stephen’s association of the Virgin Mary, the Tower of Ivory, and Eileen’s hands conclude his first—though incomplete—contemplation of the nature of metaphoric language.

Once Stephen commits to the artistic vocation, he begins to “invent” his own vocabulary by compounding existing words. In the scene just before Stephen notices the bird-girl, his rhetoric is peppered with words that he makes up, such as “wildhearted,” “seaharvest,” “gayclad,” and “lightclad” (Joyce 144). He spontaneously begins to create the words he uses to describe his condition and environment; the words are listed breathlessly one after another as though he cannot contain the sudden burst of his creative energy. The made-up words continue as Stephen aestheticizes parts of the bird-girl’s body. For example, “softhued” describes the color of her thighs, while “darkplumaged” describes the breast of a dove to which the girl’s breast is compared. Sentences, rather than just words, begin to take on an artistic quality. The bird-girl’s bosom is described “as a bird’s soft and slight, slight and soft”; the sentence exhibits a rhythmic quality with chiasmus, where the words “soft” and “slight” are repeated in a reverse order (144). Stephen’s description of a moment of artistic epiphany similarly employs made-up words. When he realizes that he has discovered an aesthetic potential in the bird-girl and successfully “recreate[d] life out of life” (145), Stephen describes the state of his mind as: “a dusk of doubt and selfmistrust lit up at moments by the lightnings of intuition, but lightnings of so clear a splendor that in those moments the world perished about his feet as if it had been fireconsumed” (148). The words “selfmistrust” and “fireconsumed” are employed to describe the moment when Stephen apprehends his artistic capacity. Thus, language—in the form of metaphors and made-up words—serves as Stephen’s medium of expression and product of his artistic creation.

Compared to his relationship with Mercedes, Stephen’s short-lived interaction with the bird-girl is much less driven by sexual desire than it is driven by his pursuit of aesthetic beauty and artistic creation. Nevertheless, the voyeurism in Stephen’s interaction with the bird-girl functions on a gendered power dynamic, which is also heavily present in his imagination of Mercedes. Here, Laura Mulvey’s theories of gendered looking and visual pleasure in classic Hollywood cinema can serve as

useful tools for analyzing Stephen's "male gaze," which Mulvey classifies into two categories: *scopophilia* and *voyeurism*. In this thesis, I incorporate the elements from both categories into the term "voyeurism," which I use to signify the unilateral act of looking with the connotations of a gendered power dynamic and sexual pleasure.

Discussing the concept of a pleasure in looking, Mulvey argues that *scopophilia* is "split" between two gendered actors: the "active" male and the "passive" female. She writes: "The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*" (Mulvey 436). According to Mulvey, the male actively looks, casting the woman as a body onto which he projects his fantasy. The female serves the Male Gaze, her role understood as one of exhibition and always considered in relation to the male who wields a sexual power over her. The application of Mulvey's *scopophilia* to Stephen's interaction with the bird-girl evidently places their respective roles on the gendered power dynamic. Stephen's male gaze projects the image of a seabird onto her body; he not only considers her overall impression as bird-like, but also aligns her body parts to those of a bird. She serves the dual role of an object and a subject—of his gaze and aestheticization, respectively. Stephen's depiction of the girl's body also positions her image for an erotic impact, reducing her to a visual image that is meant to be looked at.

The gendered power dynamic in the voyeuristic interaction between Stephen and the bird-girl becomes more explicit when the narrator describes her reaction to the male gaze. While she meets Stephen's eyes and holds her own gaze, her returning look is also described as a "quiet sufferance of his gaze," albeit "without shame or wantonness" (Joyce 144). She is the first one to look away, and "a faint flame tremble[s] on her cheek" as she avoids Stephen's eyes (144). If the meeting of the eyes was an implicit test of power between the two characters, it is ultimately Stephen

who claims power over the girl, all the while committing a certain kind of violence with his gaze. By the end of the scene, Stephen's soul cries out "in an outburst of profane joy," which reaffirms the nature of his gaze as troublingly sexual given its operation on a skewed power dynamic (144).

It is worth considering how much of Stephen's aestheticization of the bird-girl is driven by desire operating on a gendered power dynamic. The language of Stephen's descriptive discourse does not explicitly express sexual desire; rather, it consists of metaphors and made-up words that seek to more accurately express her image. Explicit signals of sexual desire are presented after Stephen finishes his aesthetic discourse on the bird-girl's body, demonstrated through phrases like "a faint flame" and "profane joy" (Joyce 144). Thus, I argue that Stephen's voyeurism in this scene is more driven by a pursuit of aesthetics than sexual desire. It is important, however, to acknowledge that aesthetic looking and desire can coexist, along with an unequal distribution of power between the two genders. Linda Nochlin argues: "the crucial relation between looking and desire is vividly established by means of a realist strategy that foregrounds the role of voyeurism in artistic experience" (Nochlin qtd. in Froula, "Beyond Genesis" 5-6). Stephen's interaction with the bird-girl indicates that looking for the sake of an artistic experience does not necessarily exclude desire from the gaze. Both desire and a pursuit of aesthetics are present in Stephen's voyeurism, but the latter begins to claim a larger role in his motivation for looking. The scene operates as the critical turning point at which desire begins to give way to an artistic experience, though a skewed power dynamic continues to be present in his act of looking.

This interpretation is further supported when Stephen articulates his standards of aesthetics in a conversation with his friend, Lynch. In this particular aesthetic discourse, Stephen rejects the idea that fertility is men's standard of judging women's beauty. Instead, he prefers the aesthetic hypothesis that is seemingly more objectively grounded: one that does not judge a woman's value based on her reproductive capacity but is instead operative within universal standards of beauty.

Stephen argues: “though the same object may not seem beautiful to all people, all people who admire a beautiful object find in it certain relations which satisfy and coincide with the stages themselves of all esthetic apprehension” (Joyce 176). Stephen’s hypothesis strongly resembles the formalist theories of Roger Fry and Clive Bell, particularly the latter’s theory regarding Significant Form. Bell argues that “significant form,” an essential quality shared by all “beautiful” works of art, consists of “lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, [that] stir our aesthetic emotions” (8). Both Stephen and Bell also claim that an apprehension of universal beauty is subjective. Stephen argues: “These relations of the sensible, visible to you through one form and to me through another, must be [...] the necessary qualities of beauty” (Joyce 176). Bell furthers the subjectivity argument, claiming that “all systems of aesthetics” that seek to capture universal beauty “must be based on personal experience—that is to say, they must be subjective” (10). Stephen’s aesthetic theory and the formalist principles of Bell—and Fry—both render subjective artistic experience as a response to universal beauty.

Stephen’s perception and understanding of women also progress, though in a nuanced manner, along with the development of his aesthetics. In the last chapter, Stephen demonstrates a slightly different approach to understanding a girl who is characterized as his “beloved.” Stephen’s relationship with the girl is still voyeuristic; he watches her standing with her friends and recalls the last time he had seen her, both times presumably without her knowing. Soon, however, Stephen doubts his negative judgment of the girl based on a single incident, wondering: “And if he had judged her harshly? If her life were a simple rosary of hours, her life simple and strange as a bird’s life, gay in the morning, restless all day, tired at sundown? Her heart simple and willful as a bird’s heart?” (Joyce 182) By calling her life “strange,” the narrator reflects Stephen’s acknowledgment that he is incapable of fully understanding the complexities of her life. Further, his judgment is no longer based solely on her potential to fulfill him sexually. Stephen also attempts to imagine various aspects

of her life, ones that are not shown to him, and begins to wonder about her inner qualities. A sense of respect and marvel are present even in a moment of intense anger and jealousy, as he acknowledges that “his anger was also a form of homage” and that his “disdain [...] was not wholly sincere” (186).

A nuanced change in Stephen’s perception of women occurs when he understands that what he *sees* in her outward appearance is not all there is to the girl, and instead begins to imagine her soul, wondering whether some inaccessible spirit is hidden beyond his initial reach. This spirit, he concludes, is one shared by “the womanhood of her country, a batlike soul waking to the consciousness of itself in darkness and secrecy and loneliness” (Joyce 186). Stephen’s claim reflects both an increased understanding of Irish womanhood and a paternalistic attitude toward women. His identification of the girl’s soul with the state of Irish womanhood suggests a deeper understanding in his perception of women in his country, particularly at a time of pre-Independence political unrest and social instability. He also describes the Irish women as a previously forgotten race, forgotten both by the country and themselves, claiming that the women are only now becoming conscious of their Irish femininity. This particular argument is a bold and inherently uninformed one, as it reflects a male perspective claiming knowledge of the female psyche and assuming a superior insight on the Irish female psychosocial dynamics. Finally, Stephen feels “tender compassion” towards his beloved that “fill[s] his heart as he remembered her frail pallor and her eyes, humbled and saddened by the dark shame of womanhood” (187). Given Stephen’s nuanced attitude toward women, the rhetoric of “compassion,” “humbled,” and “shame” betrays a paternalistic judgment of his beloved.

Despite the progress, then, Stephen’s attitude toward women continues to operate on a skewed power dynamic. Along with paternalism, Stephen also harbors a degree of resentment toward women that subsequently shapes his perception of Irish womanhood. His stream-of-

consciousness reveals that Stephen retains the offense that “no woman’s eyes had wooed” him, though they wooed Davin (Joyce 200). Stephen’s bitterness from this particular offense subsequently affects his perception of the larger “problems” in Irish society. After expressing his disillusionment with the “patricians of Ireland,” he contemplates his contribution to solving the problem by way of “cast[ing] his shadow over the imaginations of [the Irish patricians’] daughters, before their squires begat upon them, that they might breed a race less ignoble than their own” (200). Stephen’s imagined project of solving the Irish problem is intertwined with his desire to “breed a race less ignoble” by attracting the Irishwomen who previously did not solicit him.

Following his attempt to understand womanhood, desire and imagination begin to operate differently in Stephen. In an intense moment of desire towards his beloved, Stephen calls the girl as “the temptress of his villanelle” (Joyce 188). Interpreted literally, she “tempts,” or elicits, his poetry; she serves as the inspirational trigger to his literary production. He imagines that “Her nakedness yielded to him, radiant, warm, odorous and lavishlimbed [...] and like a cloud of vapour or like waters circumfluent in space the liquid letters of speech, symbols of the element of mystery, flowed forth over his brain” (188). Stephen’s fantasy is a familiar one; he had, in the past, constructed similar romantic fantasies of Mercedes. This time, however, the imagined union between him and the girl operates as a creative trigger, and Stephen composes a poem as a result. Some of the poem’s verses—“*With languorous look and lavish limb?*” (188)—are reminiscent of the rhetoric that appears in the stream-of-conscious narrative just before the poem’s appearance.

Desire, imagination, and voyeurism persist in Stephen’s perception of the female. Throughout the narrative, however, Stephen acquires an increased understanding of how these three elements influence his relationship with women. For example, he consciously tries to disentangle his lustful imagination with any thought of his beloved, acknowledging that the images of his beloved that he conjures up are sometimes “secret and enflaming” (Joyce 196). He thinks: “That was not the

way to think of her. It was not even the way in which he thought of her,” but eventually doubts: “Could his mind then not trust itself?” (196) Stephen recognizes the complexity of his mind that may think and feel differently from his intention, acknowledging that his consciousness is only one representation of the mind’s multiple layers of activity. He also claims to feel “the sufferings of women, the weakness of their bodies and souls,” and commits to “shield[ing] them with a strong and resolute arm and bow his mind to them” (206). While Stephen’s commitment betrays a paternalistic attitude and operates on the same power dynamic as his Male Gaze did earlier in the novel, his new position signals a progress from his previous way of thinking. Finally, he understands and acknowledges the meaning of male voyeurism for women, describing Lynch’s Male Gaze as: “lynxeyed Lynch saw her as we passed” (211). The scene that Stephen recalls is another one of voyeurism, in which the girl did not see the men, but Lynch saw her with a look described as “lynxeyed.” The word suggests a predatory quality to Lynch’s gaze. Stephen’s recollection of the scene, as well as the application of the made-up word to describe it, suggests that he identifies male voyeurism with violence unfolding on an unequal power dynamic.

The act of looking, first presented as the Male Gaze, is initially a manifestation of Stephen’s problematic relationship with women. The vision of Mercedes, for example, is a product of his fantasy and a flat view of women as objects of his desire. A change in his perception of women and a new aesthetic practice appear in his aestheticization of an unknown girl on the beach. The girl, who is extensively compared to a seabird, still serves as an “object” to Stephen. She is, however, an object less of his sexual desire and more of his aestheticization. The Male Gaze is still operative in his interaction with the girl, but it is employed primarily to advance his aesthetic. The scene functions as a turning point in both his aesthetic and relationship with women, signaling the development of his aesthetic hypothesis that reflects Clive Bell’s theory regarding Significant Form. Stephen’s transformation into a purported ally of women is by no means perfect; his pledge to

protect women betrays a paternalist attitude towards the female sex. What was initially presented as a barrier to Stephen's progress, however, is refashioned as a tool to aid his developing perception of women. The voyeurism that is foregrounded in Stephen's aesthetic serves a dual role of an obstacle and enabler in his growth narrative as a male artist.

Formalism serves as a philosophical aid that facilitates the transformation of Stephen's voyeurism from that of sexual desire to one of artistic experience. Formalism is also Lily's technical style of choice in painting and a crucial component of Woolf's feminist aesthetic. While the theory was adopted as Stephen's new aesthetic without much trouble, it had to be expanded and refashioned to serve Woolf's feminist agenda in literature. My examination of formalism in Woolf's feminist aesthetic begins with a discussion of the Bloomsbury Group, which provided the cultural environment that facilitated Woolf's intellectual growth and exploration of feminism. I argue that formalism served initially as a barrier, then a tool, for Woolf in crafting her feminist aesthetic in literature. I end the discussion by analyzing her deployment of formalism through the character of Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse*, a novel that serves as the site where Woolf negotiates the compatibility of her feminist aesthetic and the formalist theory.

The Bloomsbury Group provided a space for a free-flowing exchange of intellectual and artistic ideas for its unusually mixed-gender members. While the mainstream British culture of the early 20th century still reserved intellectualism and serious art for men, the Bloomsbury Group accepted Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell as its members. During the Thursday evening salons, Virginia and Vanessa discussed and argued alongside their husbands, Leonard Woolf and Clive Bell, about subjects ranging from war and society to writing and art. Christine Froula quotes Virginia's experience upon entering the group: "Virginia, once accustomed to the long silences of 'these inanimate creatures,' found she had never 'listened so intently to each step and half-step in an argument. Never have I been at such pains to sharpen and launch my own little dart. And then what

joy it was when one's contribution was accepted' ” (Woolf qtd. in Froula, “Civilization” 20). In the Group, Virginia discovers that she is no longer confined to the “long silences” imposed upon the “inanimate” female sex. The newfound freedom of speech and acceptance led Woolf to cultivate and express her intellectual faculties in the company of men. Virginia's assimilation into the predominantly male society did not require her to adopt masculinity, however; instead, she celebrated her particular “female” experience in its differences from a generalized “male” experience. In discussing these gendered experiences, it is also important to acknowledge that they are crosscut by differences in a variety of other factors, such as class, race, and religion. Influenced by her particular background, Woolf upheld women's “education, ‘liberty of experience,’ and freedom to ‘differ from men’ fearlessly and openly (as she does in *Bloomsbury* and, owning a press, in public)” and believed that women's “cultural contributions will equal men's,” albeit in fundamentally different ways (Woolf qtd. in Froula, “Civilization” 25). The presence of Virginia and Vanessa consequently changed the dynamic of the Bloomsbury Group. The original male members of the Group found themselves in shock at “the boldness and skepticism of two young women,” namely Virginia and Vanessa (Woolf qtd. in Froula, “Civilization” 19-20). Having once been initiated into the Group by her brother, Thoby Stephen, Virginia continued to host the Bloomsbury Group's Thursday evening salons after his death in 1906.

Woolf's feminist contemplations and companionship with the Bloomsbury intellectuals were further catalyzed into a distinct feminist aesthetic in 1910. The year 1910 was significant to Woolf for two reasons: Roger Fry's groundbreaking “Manet and the Post-Impressionists” exhibition and the intensifying activity of the suffrage movements in England. The 1910 exhibition revealed—for the first time to the English public—the works of Cézanne, Van Gogh, and Gauguin: painters who boldly moved from a mimetic representation to an abstract expression of emotion in painting. According to Woolf, “the public in 1910 was thrown into paroxysms of rage and laughter,” but the

sensational pieces generated immense attention (“Roger Fry” 153). The exhibition also significantly influenced Woolf, leading her to claim in her 1923 essay “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown”: “in or about December, 1910, human character changed” (Woolf, “Mr. Bennett” 4). In the essay, Woolf extends the Post-Impressionist preference for increasingly abstract and expressive gestures over mimetic representation in painting to literature. She criticizes the “Edwardian” reliance on extraneous description for failing “to create characters that are real, true, and convincing” (12). She argues that novels must *express* character; expression, rather than description of only tenuously relevant details, “has the power to make you think not merely of [the character] itself, but of all sorts of things through its eyes” (11).

The year 1910 was also characterized by “suffrage battles [that] reverberate[d] in the leveling of social hierarchies” in gender, class, and creative authority in literature (Froula, “Civilization” 22). In “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” Woolf points to 1910 as the year when human relations changed—presumably referring to the suffrage movements that sought to destabilize the social hierarchy in the relations between “masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children” (Woolf, “Mr. Bennett” 5). She illustrates as an example “the horrible domestic tradition which made it seemly for a woman of genius to spend her time chasing beetles, scouring saucepans, instead of writing books,” a consequence of gender hierarchy that is later fictionalized in *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and critically explored in *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) (5). The destabilization of hierarchy in literature signifies a newfound access to a range of characters that were previously ignored or only represented in one-dimensional, stereotyped versions in the literary canon. Woolf suggests the possibility of the newly empowered, modern women of genius choosing to explore characters like Mrs. Brown and moving past a flattened representation of the “Georgian” convention to express them. This new mode of literature, which explores women whose narratives do not belong to the patriarchal literary tradition and seeks to express their essence, thus departs from the gendered

canon. The combination of the two movements—one towards an aesthetically revolutionary change in English modern art and another towards a destabilization of social hierarchies in England, including one of gender—inspired Woolf to adopt formalism as the driving force of her feminist aesthetic.

The Bloomsbury artistic philosophy offered an unconventional standard of art valuation that leveled the playing grounds for women artists in competition with their male counterparts. Fry conceptualized six “emotional elements of design,” formal qualities such as mass and color, as the core constituents of painting that are responsible for generating an affective reaction in the viewers. He argues that the purely formal elements—in other words, qualities that are intrinsic and exclusive to the painting itself—constitute the sole criteria of aesthetic judgment. Any relationships between the artwork and the external world, including the work’s mimetic representation of the everyday life, are discredited. Clive Bell explains in *Art*: “to appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions” (25). Woolf’s application of the Bloomsbury aesthetic, as summarized by Bell, to literature is presented in “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” where she argues that a novel should be “complete in itself” and “self-contained” (12). She criticizes the Edwardian writers for “never [being] interested in character in itself; or in the book in itself,” but rather “in something outside” (12). The “something outside” encompasses a host of external factors that, while having nothing to do with the art itself, influence the judgment of its aesthetic value. Antonia Losano’s concept of the “gendering of aesthetic value,” or the gender-biased notions that dictate the limits of female art, is included in the “something outside” that must have been of particular concern to Woolf. The Bloomsbury aesthetic thus rejects “imposing canons of taste” and ushers the viewers “into noncoercive dialogue” about universal aesthetic value, signaling to women artists that their art is to be judged irrespective of their gender and the associated standards of assessment (Froula, “Civilization” 14).

Critics have debated the extent to which Woolf embraced formalism as part of her feminist aesthetic, particularly in *To the Lighthouse*. Certain aspects of formalism initially seemed to contradict Woolf's use of literature to forward her feminist agenda, and Woolf also maintained an ambivalent attitude towards formalism. Christopher Reed argues that Woolf's interpretation and deployment of formalism changed over time, along with the evolution of the concept itself. According to Reed, the incorporation of formalism in Woolf's writing began "as early as 1919," when she began using "the formalist valorization of aesthetic purity [...] to transcend conventional critical hierarchies that would privilege the treatment of subjects deemed significant by the dominant (patriarchal) culture" (25). Woolf recognized early that the formalist philosophy, by dissociating artistic creation from the conventional "critical hierarchies" in art, offers potential for the previously marginalized subjects in literature to garner more attention than before. Integrated into her feminist aesthetic, formalism would present an opportunity for Woolf to subvert the pre-existing values of the dominant patriarchal culture in the arts. She writes: "When a woman comes to write a novel, she will find that she is perpetually wishing to alter the established values—to make serious what appears insignificant to man, and trivial what is to him important" (Woolf qtd. in Reed 26). The formalist "disruption of assumptions about the nature of aesthetic experience" supports her belief that "novelists should look for formal significance in the traditionally feminine realm of the everyday" (Reed 26). In *To the Lighthouse*, Lily's choice of subject in her painting reflects this belief; the purple triangle expresses "Mrs. Ramsay reading to James," the intimacy between a mother and her small child conveyed in strictly formalist terms (Woolf, "Lighthouse" 55). By extension, art under the Bloomsbury aesthetic framework became a "democratic" medium of expression that enabled art to be presented and evaluated for its own "intrinsic" merit without an attachment to its extra-aesthetic context. Formalism promoted a mode of aesthetic judgment that focused solely on the "innate" value of the art and expanded the range of subjects available to the artists. Formalism as subsumed within

Woolf's feminist aesthetic challenged the influence of patriarchal culture upon art and is meant to enable women artists to venture outside the male-oriented critical hierarchy in art. Women artists were consequently encouraged to choose traditionally marginalized subjects that serve the female interests with the assurance that their work would be evaluated according to its "intrinsic" value, according to the formalist principles.

Woolf did, however, encounter problems in her perception and employment of formalism as it relates to literature and her feminist aesthetic. First, the translation of formalism from its original context in the visual arts to literature initially opposed the formalist philosophy. The characteristic presence of representation and illusion in literature rendered the literary medium as a domain of impure art in the eyes of the formalists in visual arts. For example, Fry once claimed that literature was about "the association of things, not things in themselves," and that the literary "[was] wrapt in a cocoon of unreality" (Woolf, "Roger Fry" 164). Fry also explains in "An Essay in Aesthetics": "[Graphic arts] have, indeed, this great advantage over poetry, that they can appeal more directly and immediately to the emotional accompaniments of our bare physical existence" (35). In other words, Fry claims that the nature of visual arts is better suited for expression and evocation of emotion than literature.

The opposition between literature and visual art within the formalist framework soon disappeared, however, as the Bloomsbury aesthetic continued to evolve. For example, Fry began to explore the potential of formalist techniques in language by examining the presence of rhythm in words and the "rhythmic changes of states of mind due to the meanings of the words" (Fry qtd. in Reed 24). By contemplating rhythm in language, Fry introduces the potential that literature could benefit from integrating formalist principles into its realm. Woolf agrees, at least in part, with Fry's initial criticism of literature as an impure art. However, she blames the presence of such "impure associations" to the fact that "literature was suffering from a plethora of old clothes" (Woolf,

“Roger Fry” 172). She proposes instead that literature follow the way shown by the Post-Impressionists, writing: “Cézanne and Picasso had shown the way; writers should fling representation to the winds and follow suit” (172). Woolf’s argument for literature’s transition from representation to expression is outlined in “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” where she encourages the Georgian writers to focus on the nature of human character rather than resorting to extraneous details for a mere description of a character. The integration of formalism in literature was made possible by the expansion of the formalist aesthetic framework spearheaded by Fry, as well as Woolf’s attention to formalism as the solution to what she perceived as literature’s stagnant tradition of representation.

The second problem of formalism was the paradox of separation between art and life as it operated within Woolf’s feminist aesthetic. By proclaiming art for art’s sake, formalism dissociated art from its social context and emphasized a “pure” aesthetic experience separated from socially constructed standards of judgment. On one hand, this dissociation worked in favor of Woolf and other female artists; formalism freed art from a patriarchal hierarchy of critical values and enabled the entrance of female interests into the realm of art. On the other hand, the same dissociation removed the critical connection between a work of art and the female hands that created it. It was significant for Woolf to recognize the female representation in the arts, but formalism both enabled the feminine presence and actively disregarded it. Woolf, however, expands the definition of formalism to include the “extra-aesthetic elements,” insisting upon “the unity of aesthetic and social values” and renouncing “formalism’s attempt to isolate aesthetic experience, suggesting instead the analogous constructedness of art and life” (Reed 38). According to Reed, it was important for Woolf to acknowledge the influence of socially constructed femininity, including female history and status in society, upon the art created by a woman artist and representing female interests and experience. Woolf thus responded to the paradox raised by formalism’s application to the feminist agenda by

expanding the concept to acknowledge the critical relationship between a work of art and its female creator.

It is also important to recognize that the notion of form as “intrinsic,” “universal,” and “absolute” is an agenda particular to formalism. Then, the possibility of form itself as a fluid concept arises. Goldstone comments on the value of “putatively formal categories” to the twentieth-century “claims for the autonomy of the literary artwork,” writing: “the distinctive qualities of aesthetic form [were] supposed to lift the work away from its nonaesthetic purposes or determinations” (14). In response to this philosophy, he troubles the “notion of form as inherent in the perceptual or immediate features of the artwork,” arguing: “the definition of literary form, like other aesthetic conventions, develops in relation to social and historical contexts [...] different conceptions of literature or art promote different features of writing to ‘formal’ status” (14). Goldstone renders formal principles in art as fluid, defined and shaped relative to the larger social framework. Thus, form is incapable of achieving autonomy in art, for it is always dependent on context. Goldstone’s critical analysis of form supports Woolf’s own expansion of formalism as an artistic framework to embrace extra-aesthetic properties.

Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* embodies formalism and Woolf’s feminist aesthetic. She is a woman painter struggling to express her unique aesthetic, which exhibits formalist stylistic characteristics, against the dominant—and male-driven—standards of art. Fry’s rhetoric in his introduction to the second Post-Impressionist exhibition in 1912 bears a striking resemblance to Lily’s experience as an artist painting in a subversive and unconventional style. Fry acknowledges that the public might resent “an art in which [...] skill [of illusion] was completely subordinated to the direct expression of feeling”; Woolf portrays a similar apprehension in Mr. Banke’s skepticism towards Lily’s painting, which is more faithful to expressing a vision than to imitating reality (Fry qtd. in Woolf, “Roger Fry” 178). Mr. Banke is more familiar with the “pale, elegant,

semitransparent” style of Mr. Paunceforte, a fictional—and male—artist who spearheads the prevailing aesthetic during Lily’s time in England. Lily’s vision is distinct from Paunceforte’s style; her colors are more vibrant, shapes more solid, and the overall picture is abstracted with an emphasis on unity. She sees that “the jacmanna was bright violet; the wall staring white. She would not have considered it honest to tamper with the bright violet and the staring white, since she saw them like that” (Woolf, “Lighthouse” 22). Despite the difficulties in translating her vision to the canvas and feeling that the physical rendition of her vision is “infinitely bad,” Lily refuses to paint according to an aesthetic that is not her own (51). The practical difficulties in painting an immaterial vision are exacerbated by the skepticism of those around Lily towards her unconventional aesthetic. Lily’s ability to stay true to her original vision over the established standards of art parallels her pursuit of the artistic profession despite the traditional standards of femininity.

Lily’s formalist style is evident in her use of abstraction and emphasis on pictorial elements, such as lines and colors. For example, Lily reduces the jacmanna flowers and the wall into colors—“bright violet” and “staring white”—and the shape “beneath the colour” (Woolf, “Lighthouse” 22). The figure of Mrs. Ramsay reading to James is similarly reduced to “a shadow,” which Mr. Bankes questions (56). Lily attempts to explain her pursuit of abstract expression over mimetic representation: “but the picture was not of them [...] Or, not in his sense. There were other senses too in which one might reverence them. By a shadow here and a light there, for instance” (56). By abandoning likeness and employing light and shadow, Lily abstracts Mrs. Ramsay into a purple triangle that communicates her reverence. Thus, she attempts to express Mrs. Ramsay’s essence rather than simply describing her in a faithful representation of her outward appearance. The purple triangle is, then, Lily’s mode of preserving the integrity of Mrs. Ramsay’s character. Differentiating from Paunceforte’s “thinned and faded” colors and “etherealized” shapes, Lily also “s[ees] the colour burning on a framework of steel; the light of a butterfly’s wing lying upon the arches of a

cathedral” (51). The narrative language emphasizes an intensity of color and concreteness of shape, illustrating a delicate balance between the two contrasting forces of evanescent lightness and structural heaviness through the visual juxtaposition of a butterfly’s wing to a cathedral. The formal elements of Lily’s painting, through their suggestive power of expression, also hint at a larger presence. A color embodies the story and emotion associated with a particular memory; Woolf associates the act of “dipp[ing] into the blue paint” with “dipp[ing] too into the past there” (175). The blue paint opens a cascade of memories that are embodied in the color: ones of Mrs. Ramsay, William Bankes, and Minta walking together. The green paint prompts “her impressions of the Rayleys,” whose “lives appeared to her in a series of scenes” (176). Finally, the finished painting is described only in terms of colors and lines: “There it was—her picture. Yes, with all its greens and blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something” (211). Ultimately, “a line there, in the centre” completes Lily’s vision on the canvas (211).

Aside from a literary description of colors, lines, and shapes in Lily’s painting, Woolf’s writing also embodies one of Fry’s key formalist principles: rhythm. Rhythm accompanies—perhaps enables—one of Lily’s breakthrough moments in painting: “And so pausing and so flickering, she attained a dancing rhythmical movement, as if the pauses were one part of the rhythm and the strokes another, and all were related” (Woolf, “Lighthouse” 161). The narrative language that describes Lily’s rhythmic brushstrokes takes on a rhythmic quality of its own. For example, “And so pausing and so flickering” is a coupling of three-word phrases that are structured in the same way; the first two words of each phrase are the same, and the third word is a gerund for both. Woolf continues: “and so, lightly and swiftly pausing, striking, she scored her canvas with brown running nervous lines” (161). Here, the two gerunds “pausing” and “striking” are used one after another, separated by a comma, in a way that suggests a rhythmic rush of the two actions. The use of the three adjectives together—“brown running nervous”—conveys a similar quality of a dashing

rhythm. The narrative voice translates rhythm, a formalist element, from its initial visual context to literature.

The conflict between formalism and Woolf's feminist aesthetic was twofold. First, the formalist emphasis on expression in visual arts initially did not fit into literature's tradition of representation. Second, the formalist separation between art and life created a paradox in Woolf's feminist agenda, where the dissociation worked both in favor of and against the interests of female artists. Woolf articulated her solutions to the two problems in the 1924 essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" and the 1940 biography "Roger Fry," where she named formalism as the savior of stagnant and ineffective literature and exposed the "extra-aesthetic elements in even Fry's strictest formalist pronouncements" (Reed 38). *To the Lighthouse*, published in 1927 and standing in between the two works in Woolf's publication chronology, functions as the site on which Woolf works out a compatible and mutually advantageous arrangement of formalism and her feminist aesthetic. A comprehensive combination of Woolf's concerns regarding feminism, art, and formalism appears in the novel through Lily Briscoe, a female artist who adopts formalism in her painting. The novel as a whole also strives to express rather than describe, as Woolf accentuates specific moments and delivers stream-of-consciousness narratives. While her conclusions are not fully articulated in the novel, *To the Lighthouse* reflects Woolf's process of shaping formalism and her feminist aesthetic in relation to each other. An examination of the novel thus illuminates the evolution of formalism from a philosophy developed by male art critics to a tool used to assert Woolf's feminist aesthetic.

Voyeurism and formalism both serve as aesthetic tools that initially functioned as barriers to development and later became facilitators of growth for Stephen and Lily. Aesthetic practice is presented as a medium through which the characters negotiate their place in society and eventually claim their independence from the established gender frameworks. Stephen's act of looking shifts

from the desire-driven male gaze to aesthetic voyeurism, accompanying a change in his perception of women. I have mostly refrained from making an evaluative judgment of the two kinds of changes in Stephen's narrative; that is, I resist the interpretation that aesthetic voyeurism is necessarily "better" than the male gaze or that a paternalistic attitude toward women must imply a definite improvement from a sexual objectification of women. The nuanced changes, however, signal a growth befitting the *bildungsroman* and *künstlerroman* genres that stems from Stephen's attempts to increase his understanding of women and the partial success thereof. The formalist philosophy embraced by Stephen is, in *Lighthouse*, expanded and reshaped to advance Woolf's feminist aesthetic. The process of integration includes overcoming formalism's initial opposition to literature and its paradox regarding the separation of art and life. *Lighthouse* demonstrates this integration at work. Lily's embrace of formalism in her painting allows her to access the traditionally marginalized subjects in art and express them in a non-normative style; her choice of formalism parallels her determination to claim an artistic identity as a woman. The examination of the two *künstlerromane* demonstrate how aesthetic technique and philosophy may be appropriated to achieve growth within, and out of, a traditional gender framework.

Chapter 3. Queerness and Androgyny

“how ‘you’ and ‘I’ and ‘she’ pass and vanish; nothing stays; all changes; but not words, not paint” (Woolf, “Lighthouse” 182). Art maintains its permanence; identities fluctuate. Consistent with the formalist philosophy that emphasizes the “intrinsic” principles in art, Woolf’s vision renders art as the medium through which an artist can reconfigure their relationship with the gender construct and, ultimately, achieve relative personal and aesthetic autonomy. The process of reconciling the societal perceptions of gender with the individual visions of autonomy results in a departure from embodying normative gender identities for both Stephen and Lily. In *A Portrait*, I track the position of queerness as it becomes increasingly centralized in Stephen’s life. I begin my analysis with Stephen’s seemingly spontaneous and cursory contemplation of the word “queer” as a child, through his exposure to the social discourse surrounding queerness and homosexuality as an adolescent, ending with the designation of a non-normative sexuality to his aesthetic identity and the presence of queerness in his relationship with a close friend. I use the term “queer” to connote both gender and sexuality; Stephen’s reconfiguration of masculinity within the two identities contributes to his process of staking out a non-normative position as an artist. In *Lighthouse*, I examine Lily’s confrontations and, ultimately, reconciliation with the strongly masculine minds, as exhibited in Mr. Tansley and Mr. Ramsay, which culminate in her ability to paint without being hindered by a self-consciousness of her gender. I draw from Woolf’s theory of the “androgynous mind” to critique Stephen’s aesthetic engagement with women and analyze the final stage of Lily’s reconciliation with her gender as an artist. While I will be focusing more heavily on Lily’s steps towards the androgynous vision, a study of the two texts allows me to compare the different ways in which the *künstlerroman* narratives of Stephen and Lily culminate in a reimagination of their genders.

Stephen's contemplation of queerness begins in one of the first childhood moments presented in the novel. The stream-of-consciousness narrative reflects the wandering path of young Stephen's thoughts, and his mind repeatedly returns to the word "queer." The word first appears in the narrative when he is reflecting on the experience of wetting the bed. The narrator describes the sensory details as recalled by Stephen: "When you wet the bed first it is warm then it gets cold. His mother put on the oilsheet. That had the queer smell" (Joyce 5). Here, "queer" describes an olfactory impression. The word, by definition, does not describe the smell itself, but rather Stephen's experience of the smell and his inability to precisely articulate it. The word reappears a few pages later, when Stephen contemplates the word itself. Joyce writes: "Suck was a queer word. The fellow called Simon Moonan that name because Simon Moonan used to tie the prefect's false sleeves behind his back and the prefect used to let on to be angry. But the sound was ugly" (8). In this instance, the narrator offers more context to Stephen's encounter with the word. "Queer" is used, this time, to describe another word, "suck," which also occupies Stephen's mind. Again, "queer" serves as a placeholder used to compensate for Stephen's inability to precisely describe the subject. The word appears for the third and final time shortly after its second appearance, in the same train of thought regarding the word "suck." Remembering the word's associated sound in the context of a lavatory makes him feel "cold and then a little hot" and envision "the names printed on the cocks" (9). The sensory and visual experience accompanying his recollection is described as "a very queer thing" (9). In all three instances, the word "queer" reflects the inadequacy of Stephen's rhetoric to articulate his sensory experiences. The prevalence of the word, however, reflects some degree of intentionality on the narrator's part; it reflects the narrator's desire to present the word as preoccupying Stephen's thoughts, regardless of the fact that he only vaguely, at best, understands its indication of sexuality.

The rhetoric of sexuality continues from “queer” to “smuggling,” the latter of which Stephen encounters when he passively partakes in a discussion with his peers at school about a supposedly incriminating activity. One explanation for the students’ punishment is given first; they drank the altar wine in the school sacristy. Athy, a fellow student, then presents an alternative account of what happened: a group of older students were caught “smuggling.” The accused group includes Simon Moonan, who was previously associated with the words “suck” and “queer.” With Athy’s alternative explanation, which is only given in a single word “smuggling,” Stephen appears confused. He wonders: “What did that mean about the smuggling in the square? Why did the five fellows out of the higher line run away for that?” (Joyce 35) According to Tim Dean, the word defies an established definition, though it clearly connotes homosexuality. The uncommonness of the word suggests that the narrator intentionally shrouds its definition in ambiguity, reflecting Stephen’s own confusion about its meaning given the otherwise heteronormative context of the Catholic school and the Irish Catholic society at large. Stephen proceeds to recall his memory of Boyle, another schoolmate who is involved in the alleged activity, whom “some fellows called [...] Lady Boyle because he was always at his nails, paring them” (35). The recollection of Boyle’s nickname immediately following the discussion of “smuggling” implies Stephen’s awareness, which is intended to appear as vague, of not only the term’s connotation but also “the dominant paradigm of homosexuality” of the time, which understood male homosexuality as associated with effeminacy (Valente 13). Regardless of Stephen’s own understanding of the words he contemplates, such as “queer” and “smuggling,” the narrator persists in characterizing Stephen’s childhood and adolescence with a preoccupation with the words that indicate non-normative sexuality.

In the last chapter of the novel, Stephen assigns the same effeminate behavior used to characterize Boyle to his aesthetic identity. Joyce writes: “The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence,

indifferent, paring his fingernails” (Joyce 181). According to Stephen’s vision, the symbolic artist who represents his conception of the ideal aesthetic identity is impersonal and indifferent, only distinctly characterized by the act of paring his fingernails. The link between male effeminacy, recalling male homosexuality, and artistic disposition reflects the prevalent cultural perception of homosexuality in early twentieth-century Britain. By adopting the understanding of male homosexuality as closely associated with artistic sensibility, Joyce configures a vision of an artist who actively rejects a normalized, or heterosexual, masculinity. The symbolic artist’s sexuality, however, does not imply the sexuality of either Joyce or Stephen; rather, it represents “the impersonal aesthetic as such” (Dean 254). Joseph Valente elucidates Joyce-Stephen’s characterization of the aesthetic personality by arguing that Joycean sexuality “lives in a structural antagonism with the variable laws and limits that animate it [...] It lives ‘in excess’ of the normative frameworks on which it continues to depend” (Valente 216). In other words, Joycean sexuality derives its significance from its ability to counteract the norm, persisting upon a paradoxical framework of inhibition and growth. Stephen’s aesthetic, in part, gains agency from the act of transgressing the gender norm. His confrontation with the stakes of normative masculinity thus underscores Stephen’s movement toward selecting and embracing a non-normative sexuality to represent his developing aesthetic.

Apart from its defining influence upon Stephen’s aesthetic identity, queerness takes an increasingly distinct shape in the personal aspects of his life. Stephen’s friendship with Cranly reveals traces of queerness in their close manners of interaction with each other. Stephen’s intimacy with Cranly is especially significant given that all of Stephen’s interpersonal relationships have always been aloof at best. As a young boy, he is largely isolated and bullied among his peers at school. He does not develop particularly meaningful relationships with anyone during his time at the Church, choosing instead to be withdrawn and ascetic. As he grows older, Stephen’s relationship with his family also suffers; he becomes emotionally detached from his parents and siblings by the time he

enters university, avoiding his father and exhibiting an imperious attitude toward his mother and sisters. His relationships with women are almost always fleeting, most of which are briefly fostered in order to fulfill his sexual and aesthetic desires and quickly abandoned thereafter.

His relationship with Cranly, however, is undertaken with a tone of love that was previously unseen. The words used by the narrator to describe their interaction portray an intimate picture of their relationship. Engaged in a conversation together during a walk around Dublin, Cranly expresses a genuine concern towards Stephen's seemingly self-imposed status as an outsider and plans for leaving Ireland. During the conversation, "their minds, lately estranged, seemed suddenly to have been drawn closer, one to the other" (Joyce 201). This connection between the minds is a new phenomenon in Stephen's life, for he had never found anyone with whom he felt close in the manner described by the narrator. Even when Cranly tries to persuade him to return to the Church by invoking Catholic doctrines Stephen no longer believes, he responds with a vague "Ay," "somewhat bitterly, bright, agile, impassible and, above all, subtle" (202). None of the descriptors chosen by the narrator conveys a contentious or critical tone as might be expected from Stephen's attitude toward the Church and its doctrines. Instead, the narrator emphasizes the subtleness—and, perhaps, gentleness—of Stephen's response. The narrator also notes Stephen's observation of Cranly's physical attributes, remarking: "His face was handsome: and his body was strong and hard" (206). The narrator, by articulating Stephen's observation as such, reveals Stephen's possible physical attraction towards Cranly.

A tension for the sentiments suggested, but left unarticulated, subsequently emerges. The narrator describes Stephen's contemplation of the impending departure: "Away then: it is time to go. A voice spoke softly to Stephen's lonely heart, bidding him go and telling him that his friendship was coming to an end" (Joyce 206). Though he resolves to depart, Stephen feels especially lonely at the prospect of leaving Cranly's company. Further, Stephen acknowledges Cranly's ability to render

him vulnerable, saying to him: “I have confessed to you so many other things [...] You made me confess the fears that I have” (208) The acknowledgment comes as the narrator notes that Stephen was “thrilled by [Cranly’s] touch” on his arm (208). Responding shortly thereafter to Stephen’s commitment to self-exile, Cranly warns him: “And not to have any one person [...] who would be more than a friend, more even than the noblest and truest friend a man ever had” (209). Remarking that “his words seemed to have struck some deep chord in his own nature,” the narrator articulates Stephen’s question: “Had he spoken of himself, of himself as he was or wished to be?” (209) While alerting him to the loneliness that is sure to accompany the exile, Cranly seems to hint specifically at his own disappearance from Stephen’s life. In response, Stephen’s stream-of-consciousness wonders whether Cranly wishes to be the figure he warns Stephen of losing upon leaving, one who would be “more than a friend.” Stephen finally vocalizes his speculation, asking after a pause: “Of whom are you speaking?” (209) Joyce ends the scene on an ambiguous note, writing: “Cranly did not answer” (209). Cranly neither affirms nor denies the implied suggestion that he is the person he speaks of. Consequently, the queerness in their relationship does not manifest in any definitive form. The narrator’s implication of queerness, however, is sufficiently present to suggest its role even in the non-aesthetic parts of Stephen’s life.

If Stephen’s final aesthetic embodies a non-normative sexuality, Lily reaches a state of aesthetic androgyny as envisioned by Woolf in *A Room of One’s Own*. Critics consider the 1929 essay’s articulation of gender and sexuality as an extension from *Orlando* (1928), a fictional biography of an artist who undergoes multiple gender transformations. *A Room of One’s Own* presents Woolf’s theory regarding the “androgynous mind,” which I use as the framework to analyze Lily’s creative experience and artistic identity. I also refer to parts of Stephen’s narrative in order to exemplify Woolf’s critique of male artists.

Woolf's definition of gender is not clearly articulated in the essay. Esther Gonzalez offers an interpretation of Woolf's perception of gender as "shar[ing] a common theoretical ground" with Judith Butler's views (84). She writes: "Gender is described as a cultural process that has to be learned, and is not inherent to sex [...] As Butler argues, gender is a social practice [...] Gender is [...] a learned process inserted into a historically specific cultural context" (84). Gonzalez's interpretation is not entirely accurate given Woolf's occasionally self-contradictory views. In *A Room*, Woolf makes seemingly essentialist claims regarding the relation between gender and sex, while also arguing against the perception of the two genders as distinct entities. For example, she argues that "the nerves that feed the brain would seem to differ in men and women" and that the mind consists of both sexes, which assumes that there are two gender identities that are inherently distinct from each other and present in the mind at birth (Woolf, "A Room" 77). She also suggests: "to think [...] of one sex as distinct from the other is an effort" (95). The larger view of gender identity as malleable and dependent upon one's social environment, however, accurately reflects Woolf's overall argument in *A Room*. She emphasizes the idea of gender as shaped by experience, or the distinct histories of the sexes that forge the psychosocial dynamics between men and women. Lily recodes the female gender conventions in response to these external influences that threaten to impede her personal and artistic growth. Woolf's theory of the androgynous mind, then, is helpful for examining whether Lily embraces her female gender or moves towards gender neutrality as part of the recoding process.

A Room begins with Woolf's critique of women's paradoxical places in literature and society, which is exemplified in Stephen's differential treatment of women in his aesthetic imagination and reality. Characterizing the female as a "queer, composite being," Woolf writes: "Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant" ("A Room" 43). The statement is followed by examples of the puzzling contradiction in women's statuses across men's imagination

and the practical reality. Woolf explains that women are a pervasive topic of immense interest in the male-dominated literary tradition, but that they remain unseen and subjugated by the male in the existing social order. This phenomenon is reproduced in *A Portrait*, particularly in the early stages of Stephen's life. The bird-girl scene demonstrates Stephen's intense aesthetic interest towards the girl he sees on the beach. Using extravagant narrative language, Joyce writes: "Her image had passed into his soul for ever [...] Her eyes had called him and his soul had leaped at the call [...] A wild angel had appeared to him, the angel of mortal youth and beauty, an envoy from the fair courts of life, to throw open before him in an instant of ecstasy the gates of all the ways of error and glory" (145). Stephen's fascination with the girl is described in religious terms; her impression is supposedly eternal, far-reaching to his soul, and capable of sparking a moment of ecstasy. He is enthralled, however, strictly by the *image* of the girl as it fosters in his imagination, for he does not engage with her in reality. In fact, his interaction with women remains highly limited throughout the novel, while his imagination is always busy with producing idealistic visions of the female. It is then worth considering the kind of reality that Mercedes, a figure nurtured earlier in Stephen's imagination, would manifest. Her significance to Stephen stems from her place in his mind; it is unlikely that their imagined relationship would be a plausible one in reality. Most of his actual engagement with the opposite sex involves short-lived relationships with prostitutes; his mother and sisters, who remain at home while Stephen pursues a higher education at university, fade into the background of Stephen's consciousness, never emerging as a significant presence in his life.

Woolf's argument for more female participation in artistic, specifically literary, tradition critiques the assertive masculine voice that, according to Woolf, renders a work of art inaccessible and ineffective. She describes the experience of reading a book written by a strongly masculine writer as a creatively "arid" one, writing: "There seemed to be some obstacle, some impediment in [the writer's] mind which blocked the fountain of creative energy and shored it within narrow limits"

(Woolf, “A Room” 99). According to Woolf, the limitation of the writer’s artistic capacity is due to his assertive male voice, or what she calls “the dominance of the letter ‘T’” (99). She laments the fact that men “now writ[e] only with the male side of their brains,” “celebrat[ing] male virtues, enforce[ing] male values and describ[ing] the world of men” (100). The female virtues, values, and world are disregarded, and the totally masculine “emotion with which these books are permeated is to a woman incomprehensible” (100). To female readers, the inaccessibility of masculine literature renders the work “crude and immature” for “lack[ing] suggestive power” (101). Such writing results in its inability to effectively reach the audience’s mind; “however hard it hits the surface of the mind it cannot permeate within” (101).

In *Lighthouse*, Lily faces two separate challenges from the masculine “T” that impede her path to claiming her independence as a woman. According to Woolf’s belief that the assertive male voice results in arid creativity, overcoming the patriarchal obstacles also symbolizes Lily’s access to her creative energy. The first challenge comes from Mr. Tansley in “The Window,” to which Lily surrenders. In the dinner party scene, Mr. Tansley is described as desperately “want[ing] somebody to give him a chance of asserting himself” (Woolf, “Lighthouse” 93). While Lily recognizes “the young man’s desire to impress himself” and “his burning desire to break into the conversation,” she also remembers “how he sneered at women, ‘can’t paint, can’t write,’” and asks: “why should I help him to relieve himself?” (93). She understands that there exists “a code of behavior” that dictates: “it behooves the woman, whatever her own occupation may be, to go to the help of the young man opposite so that he may expose and relieve [...] his vanity, of his urgent desire to assert himself” (93). In other words, Lily recognizes the expectation for women to help men assert their dominance. For a moment, Lily envisions an alternative scenario in which neither women nor men are expected to uphold these socially constructed, gendered responsibilities. Lily finally surrenders her experiment—of “what happens if one is not nice to that young man there”—to the appeals for help

from Mrs. Ramsay, who silently beseeches Lily to help her carry out the female duty (94). In the end, Lily participates in the gender dynamic that supports male superiority over female autonomy; the chapter ends without Lily having finished her painting. The completion of her work comes ten years later when Lily has successfully overcome the second patriarchal challenge. Confronting Mr. Ramsay in the last chapter, she refuses to yield to his demand for sympathy; instead, she leads him into a harmless conversation about his boots, a subject to which both can contribute equally. Lily's compromise signifies her momentary liberation from the tradition of female submission to the male and, consequently, provides the independence required for her to complete her painting.

Woolf's critique of the dominant masculine voice in literature emerges in her larger enterprise of the androgynous mind. She envisions the mind to consist of both male and female "powers," where the balance between the sexes determines the gender of the individual. Regarding this balance, she writes: "The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating" (Woolf, "A Room" 97). The collaboration between the two sexes in the mind represents the "unity of the mind," which is, according to Woolf, especially crucial for an artist. She argues that only "when this fusion [of the sexes] takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties" (87). The word "fusion" suggests that the unity of the sexes yields a new entity that is distinct from a mere aggregate of the separate sexes. This idea of the unity leads to Woolf's conception of the androgynous mind, which is given a distinct gender identity that is neither male nor female. She prefers the androgynous mind to a "purely" female or male mind, arguing: "the androgynous mind is resonant and porous [...] it transmits emotion without impediment [...] it is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided" (97). Woolf's description is a stark contrast to the "purely" male mind, whose artistic creation is incomprehensible to women, impeded by some obstacle, and unable to penetrate the readers despite the loudness with which they hit the surface of the mind.

While advocating for androgyny, Woolf still manages to celebrate the differences between the male and female genders. She considers the creative powers of men and women as distinct from each other and relishes their uniqueness. Her perception of the genders as distinct entities leads her to advocate specifically for a preservation of women's creative power. She writes: "it would be a thousand pities if [a woman's creative power] were hindered or wasted, for it was won by centuries of the most drastic discipline, and there is nothing to take its place" (Woolf, "A Room" 86). This statement embraces gender as a learned identity by acknowledging the history of women as producing the creative power that is unique to their gender. She celebrates the difference between the genders as it manifests itself in the artistic creation, lifestyle, and appearance, writing: "It would be a thousand pities if women wrote like men, or lived like men, or looked like men, for if two sexes are quite inadequate, considering the vastness and variety of the world, how should we manage with one only?" (86) Arguing for education "to bring out and fortify the differences rather than the similarities" (86), she suggests "a conciliatory gesture that considers difference fertile and heterogeneous instead of oppositional and univalent" (Gonzalez 76).

Woolf's vision of androgyny as coexisting with gender differences is manifested in the illustration of Mary Carmichael, who is introduced as an artist who "wrote as a woman, but as a woman who has forgotten that she is a woman" (Woolf, "A Room" 91). Her female identity persists, along with the characteristics unique to her gender, but Mary has also achieved the androgynous mind. Woolf suggests that Mary, by "forgetting" her gender, is no longer encumbered by history—and the associated burdens—of womanhood. Mary's relationship with her gender is similar to Stephen's relationship with his national identity. He acknowledges the influence of his Irish upbringing but refuses to let his nationality dictate his artistic expression. He claims: "This race and this country and this life produced me [...] I shall express myself as I am" (Joyce 170). The artistic productions of Mary and Stephen are unmistakably influenced by their experiences,

specifically with Mary as a woman and Stephen as an Irishman. Both artists, however, strive to independently configure the ways in which their experiences define artistic expression.

The same can be said for Lily, whose experiences as a woman significantly influence her path to claiming her artistic identity. Mrs. Ramsay remains the subject of her painting throughout the ten years; the purple triangle is presented as the most effective expression of Lily's grief and love for Mrs. Ramsay. Lily's female friendship is, then, celebrated rather than ignored in her pursuit of genderless painting. By employing formalism in her painting, however, Lily also attempts to establish the work as independent from her gender identity. She resists "the gendering of aesthetic value," intending for her painting to be judged for its "intrinsic value" according to the formalist principles and desiring to remove the knowledge of her gender from the viewers' perception of the painting. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to determine whether this knowledge of the artist's gender informs the viewers' perception of the artwork in a positive or negative manner. On one hand, it is important to recognize a "female" perspective and expressive capacity behind a work of art; on the other hand, prejudice toward gender and art has the potential to limit a viewer's understanding of the artwork. Lily's concern regarding a gendered evaluation of art, in the context of the novel, is valid given the dominant prejudice against female artists. Lily's aesthetic vision, however, is less defined by her femininity and more characterized by its androgyny. She accesses her vision by "subduing all her impressions as a woman to something much more general," which leads her to concentrate on contemplating the compositional components of her painting (Woolf, "Lighthouse" 56). Ultimately, Lily's pursuit of genderless art succeeds in the final moments of painting. Woolf writes: "she lost consciousness of outer things, and her name and her personality and her appearance, and whether Mr. Carmichael was there or not" (163). Lily becomes unaware of all extra-aesthetic concerns, particularly the ones regarding her gender, simultaneously with achieving a breakthrough in her painting. Like Mary, she momentarily "forgets" her female gender.

Queerness and androgyny are the final manifestations of the two artist-characters' reimagination of their genders. Queerness, for Stephen, is in part a strategic act of rebellion against the heteronormative constructions of gender; the transgression of these normative conceptions grants him aesthetic agency, as demonstrated by the queer identity of his symbolic artist-figure. In another part, non-normative sexuality allows Stephen to resist the limits of heteronormative masculinity as formulated by the Irish Catholic society, from which he seeks exile. Androgyny, for Lily, is an aesthetic state in which she is enabled to achieve a breakthrough in painting. Reaching the androgynous vision necessitates, however, a recognition of the female expressive power. Lily's act of celebrating and honoring her relationship with Mrs. Ramsay in her painting, as well as the successful defense of her femininity against the overpowering masculinity of Mr. Tansley and Mr. Ramsay, are crucial steps in her progress towards aesthetic androgyny. Queerness and androgyny, as the final stages of the characters' aesthetics, grant greater freedom to Stephen and Lily by allowing them to recode their relationships with their respective visions of gender.

Conclusion

Stephen acknowledges in *A Portrait*: “I was not myself as I am now, as I had to become” (Joyce 202). Articulating his own growth, Stephen recognizes the transformations he undertook as an aspiring artist throughout the *künstlerroman* narrative. Lily’s affirmation of her growth is more indirectly stated through her artistic achievement; the ten-year-long process of completing the painting entails both personal and aesthetic developments that propel her growth narrative. Both characters’ pursuits of personal and aesthetic autonomy are only partially successful, but their relative autonomy offers important insights about their shifting relations with the social world and its norms, institutions, and gendered conditions for growth and achievement.

Joyce complicates the very notion of “progress” that is inherent to the classic *bildungsroman* genre by writing a development narrative that is continuously, although in varying ways, problematic. The co-evolution of Stephen’s relationship with women and aesthetics prompts a question of whether voyeurism fueled by a disembodied desire for aesthetics is actually superior to explicitly sexual voyeurism. Christine Froula argues that Joyce’s portrait of Stephen serves as a diagnosis of the male perspective on the shifting gender relations of his time. According to Froula, Joyce’s treatment of women, performed through Stephen, is a nuanced one that investigates, indulges, and critiques “men’s psychohistorical investment in gender hierarchy and the social and cultural scapegoating of women” (“Beyond Genesis” 28). Joyce “investigates” by portraying the changes in Stephen’s attitude toward women, whom he “desires” for sexual and aesthetic purposes. He “indulges” Stephen’s problematic view of gender relations by continuing to present women as objects and tools for Stephen’s aesthetic development. Joyce also “critiques”; Stephen’s portrait shows both faults and progress throughout his development. For example, Stephen fails to reap the reward he expected from his initial relationship with a prostitute, but his potential for developing a

meaningful relationship with women visibly increases as he begins to consider their inner life as part of a fuller regard to their personhood.

Woolf writes in *A Room of One's Own*: “The history of men’s opposition to women’s emancipation is more interesting perhaps than the story of that emancipation itself” (55). Joyce provides a slice of that history with his nuanced portrait of Stephen. A full examination of the character, including the investigative, indulgent, and critical layers of his construction, is crucial for understanding Joyce’s portrait of the male psyche that feeds the gender hierarchy from which Lily seeks her emancipation. Mr. Ramsay and Charles Tansley are Woolf’s versions of the opposing male relevant to Lily’s narrative as a female painter. Stephen’s portrait complements the relatively cursory ones of Mr. Ramsay and Tansley. Froula commends “the critical and transformative energies of Joyce’s engagement with individual and collective psychodynamics of gender” that produce a “powerful diagnostic effect” (“Beyond Genesis” 28). Stephen’s portrait can, then, serve as a diagnostic tool for a feminist critique. It examines the male psyche fostering in a cultural unconscious responding to skewed, yet shifting, gender dynamics.

Stephen’s paternalistic attitude toward women and his continued practice of gendered voyeurism trouble an evaluative judgment of his growth that operates on the traditional *bildungsroman* notion of “progress.” Stephen’s narrative “cast[s] doubt on the ideology of progress through the figure of stunted youth” (Esty 3). Stephen, the stunted adolescent, is left with signs of his immaturity and persisting problems that challenge the view of his entire narrative as a decidedly progressive one. He becomes what Esty describes as “a composite model of the queer figure who holds a position outside dominant discourses of progress” (23). The novel is a *bildungsroman* in its portrayal of transformations and a strictly temporal growth of the protagonist, but it resists the idea that his development always proceeds in a morally “upward direction” (24). Stephen’s narrative, then, subverts “the *bildungsroman* ideal of smooth progress toward a final, integrated state” by achieving

neither progress nor social integration (27). Instead, it problematizes “historical-progressive thinking” (33) or the perception of “linear time as the organizing principle of form, biography, and history” (36) that, in the *bildungsroman* tradition, must signal progress.

Lily’s *künstlerroman*, compared to Stephen’s growth narrative, is more explicitly “progressive” in the classic *bildungsroman* sense. Lily continuously struggles to validate her own artistic aspirations against the male ideology that disapproves of her activity as an artist, while simultaneously attempting to embrace her formalist aesthetic against the pressure to conform to the popular artistic style spearheaded by a male artist. She also faces the traditional “female” ideals of marriage and family promoted by Mrs. Ramsay, for whom she feels intense love. “The Window” portrays Lily’s engagement with her own doubts towards her artistic capacity in order to advocate for her autonomy. With her fears unresolved, Lily is unable to complete her painting. “The Lighthouse” witnesses her return to the Isle of Skye with the surviving members of the Ramsay family and Mr. Carmichael. At this point in the narrative, Lily learns to successfully negotiate her place as a female artist within the societal framework that continuously attempts to limit her artistic capacity. Her growth is also incomplete; the traces of Mrs. Ramsay remain, as she continues to be the subject of Lily’s painting. Mrs. Ramsay’s presence in Lily’s art, however, celebrates the intense love fostered in their female relationship. Lily’s artistic tribute to Mrs. Ramsay represents Lily’s negotiation of her vision with the social forces with which she maintains a complex relationship of both love and ideological tension.

An examination of the two novels’ endings reveals that *A Portrait* and *Lighthouse* both subvert the conventional mode of closure belonging to the classic *bildungsroman* tradition. Stephen’s narrative ends in a departure, suggesting the impending closure to his life in Ireland and simultaneously implying an opening array of possibilities abroad. In addition, Stephen conspicuously does not fulfill the classic *bildungsroman* task of growth; he becomes, instead, what Esty calls an “unseasonable

youth.” While his artistic aspiration is confirmed, and he commits to pursuing this aspiration, the end of Stephen’s narrative implies a longer path to becoming a writer rather than fully establishing him as an artist. In fact, Stephen’s departure suggests that he has only *begun* the search for an ideal social environment in which to write. Stephen’s incomplete personal-aesthetic growth is further demonstrated in the way voyeurism continues to function problematically. He reshapes the role of voyeurism from fulfilling his sexual desire to an aesthetic tool; while voyeurism initially blocks the progress in his relationship with women, it later serves as an aid to indirectly, but crucially, shape his growing insight into womanhood. By the end of the novel, however, Stephen demonstrates a paternalistic attitude toward women that suggests a want for more growth. His voyeurism still operates on a power dynamic that places women on the receiving end of Stephen’s unilateral and, intrusive, act of looking.

By contrast, the closure in Lily’s narrative is more apparent. While both Stephen and Lily demonstrate an artistic achievement by the end of their respective narratives—Stephen with his completed villanelle and Lily with her finished painting—Lily’s success establishes her artistic identity more definitively than Stephen’s does. Her completion of the painting signifies an end to the ten-year-long process of not only working out her formalist aesthetic, but also claiming an independence and legitimacy as a female artist. Formalism is reworked from its status as a barrier to an enabling tool by which Lily’s feminist aesthetic culminates in the androgynous mind, signified by her momentary loss of “outer consciousness” as she completes her painting. Despite the apparent “conclusion” to her growth, Lily’s narrative subverts “the traditional closural plots of the *bildungsroman*, particularly heterosexual coupling and marriage” (Esty 14). The possibilities for such closure are present, but Woolf offers them not as solutions but rather as challenges—temptations derived from social norms—to be overcome. Lily’s potential marriage plot with Mr. Bankes is persistently pursued by Mrs. Ramsay, who seemingly exemplifies the feminine ideal of marital and

familial lifestyle. By reshaping the traditional closure model as precisely the barrier to overcome in order to achieve growth, Woolf continues the pattern of resistance spearheaded by female authors before her who troubled the marriage plot of the *bildungsroman* tradition. In this regard, Woolf is hardly a revolutionary. Esty writes: “Woman-authored and woman-centered texts in the British canon often deviate from and disrupt the generic template [...] fueled by a [...] critique of patriarchal [...] norms of development” (23). Nevertheless, Lily may be considered an “unseasonable youth” according to the modernist *bildungsroman* tradition, since she never reaches, but rather resists, the closure of coupling and marriage.

Lily’s narrative, then, conceives an alternative closure that refuses to comply with the classic *bildungsroman* tradition, with its conclusion of personal and professional independence representing a culmination of Woolf’s feminist agenda. Stephen’s narrative, however, rejects a closure altogether. His departure signifies an opening of new possibilities, thus defying a conventional conclusion. His need to leave may also be interpreted as a sign of adolescence, a suggestion of a lack of maturity that limits Stephen’s ability to negotiate his place as an artist in his given environment and forces him to “escape” in search of a new social surrounding that does not present artistically inhibitive obstacles.

Further, there is a crucial limitation in Stephen’s efforts to avoid being bound by nationhood and historical specificity. Stephen’s narrative of rejection, in which he articulates his separation from Ireland, spells out his continued dependence on Ireland’s “national-historical time” (Bakhtin qtd. in Esty 25). Stephen’s decision to leave takes on an additional layer of meaning when it relates to the narrative’s role in the modernist *bildungsroman* genre. His desire for an “escape,” in conversation with his overarching struggle against the developing nationhood of Ireland as an independent entity from Britain, stems from his rejection of the impending stasis signaled by Ireland’s nation-building. Esty further explains “adulthood and nationhood” as “the twin symbolic termini for the endless and originless processes of self-formation and social transformation” that defined the *bildungsroman* genre

(26). The symbolic functions of adulthood and nationhood are parallel, with the latter “giv[ing] a finished form to modern societies in the same way that [the former] gives a finished form to the modern subject” (4). Thus, Stephen’s narrative is part of the modernist effort to reorient the *bildungsroman* tradition away from the paradoxical aim for stasis produced by nationhood and adulthood, and instead navigate it towards the continued dynamism that defines the genre.

By working out their negotiations with the expansive constructs of masculinity and femininity, Stephen and Lily recode the gender conventions and reimagine their identities in terms of both gender and sexuality. Stephen’s queerness and, more generally speaking, non-normative sexual identity grant him the freedom to reconfigure his masculine identity and a transgressive power to his aesthetic. Lily’s androgynous mind serves as a crucial medium between recognition of the female expressive power and the gendering of aesthetic value. The two characters’ respective pursuits of queerness and androgyny extend the modernist *bildungsroman* and *künstlerroman* traditions. The narratives address the significance of gender in artistic growth and exemplify the freedom to configure alternative gender identities that contribute to a productive negotiation with the existing gender constructs.

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