

**46. Anchoring the Past in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*****Oğuzhan KALKAN<sup>1</sup>****APA:** Kalkan, O. (2023). Anchoring the Past in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (Ö12), 570-579. DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.1331552.**Abstract**

As a modernist writer, Virginia Woolf was influenced by Marcel Proust in terms of structuring her writing around the concept of time and memories. Unlike Proust, who questions the validity and fluidity of past remembrances and tries to make a confession by writing his memories, Woolf tries to find a balance between the past and present through the use of memories. In her article *A Sketch of the Past*, she mentions that writing about the past helped her face and settle accounts with it. She calls small remembrances of the past when she could realize herself as “moments of being” and they help her anchor and stabilize her past with the present. In her writing, places like a clock tower or a lighthouse turn into sites of memory where she could see the looming presence of the past over the present and navigate around it to form the present. As sites of memory, these colossal structures let her navigate through the nebulous presence of time where exterior events lose their hegemony and help her to understand herself her location in space and time. *To the Lighthouse* is an important source for understanding Woolf's concept of memory. In this novel, she fuses the past and the present; the objects and people in order to find a harmonious balance of life. This paper aims to investigate the impact of sites of memory and the relationship of the past and the present on the formation of identities of individuals in *To the Lighthouse*.

**Keywords:** Memory, sites of memory, *To the Lighthouse*, Virginia Woolf**Virginia Woolf'un *Deniz Feneri* adlı eserinde Geçmiş Sabitlemek****Öz**

Modernist bir yazar olarak Virginia Woolf, yazılarını zaman ve bellek kavramı etrafında yapılandırmak açısından Marcel Proust'tan etkilenmiştir. Geçmiş anların geçerliliğini ve akışkanlığını sorgulayan ve anılarını yazarak bir itirafta bulunmaya çalışan Proust'un aksine Woolf, anıları kullanarak geçmiş ile bugün arasında bir denge kurmaya çalışır. *A Sketch of the Past* adlı makalesinde, geçmiş hakkında yazmanın geçmişle yüzleşmesine ve hesaplaşmasına yardımcı olduğundan bahsetmektedir. “Varolma anları” olarak adlandırdığı geçmişe ait küçük hatıraları geçmişini şimdiki zamana demirlemesine ve dengelemesine yardımcı olmaktadır. Yazılarında, bir saat kulesi ya da bir deniz feneri gibi yerler, geçmişin şimdi üzerinde beliren varlığını görebileceği ve şimdikiyi oluşturmak için onun etrafında gezinebileceği hafıza mekanlarına dönüşmektedir. Hafıza mekânları olarak, bu devasa yapılar, dış olayların hegemonyasını kaybettiği zamansız mekânda gezinmesini; zaman ve mekânda kendisini konumlandırmasını mümkün kılmaktadır. *Deniz Feneri*, Woolf'un hafıza kavramını anlamak için önemli bir kaynaktır. Bu romanda Woolf ahenkli bir yaşam dengesi bulmak için geçmişle bugünü; nesnelere ve insanları kaynaştırmaktadır. Bu makale, *Deniz*

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*Feneri* romanında bellek mekânlarının ve geçmiş-şimdi ilişkisinin bireylerin kimlik oluşumu üzerindeki etkisini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Bellek, hafıza mekânları, Virginia Woolf, *Deniz Feneri*

## Introduction

Writing about the past is a regenerative process. By looking backward, a writer can evaluate their position and take a stance for the present and future. In other words, it is an alignment process that brings pieces from the past and present together. In *Orlando: A Biography*, Woolf likens memory to a “seamstress” who “run[s] her needle in and out, up and down, hither and thither” (2008, p.78). Woolf accepts memory and time as nonlinear and fluid. *A Sketch of the Past* is a valuable source for understanding Woolf’s perception of time and memory. In this article, she argues that time is not a linear concept; the distinction between the present and past is not a clear one. They are rendered into each other but this does not happen casually. Some external cues which are part of the original event in the past trigger the fusion of moments both in the past and present. She describes her conception of memory with a holiday memory in St. Ives which also provides the setting for *To the Lighthouse*:

That is, I suppose, that my memory supplies what I had forgotten, so that it seems as if it were happening independently, though I am really making it happen. In certain favourable moods, memories – what one has forgotten – come to top. Now if this is so, is it not possible – I often wonder – that things we have felt with great intensity have an existence independent of our minds; are in fact still in existence? ... I see it – the past – as an avenue lying behind; a long ribbon of scenes, emotions. There at the end of the avenue still are the garden and the nursery. (Woolf, 1985, p. 67)

Woolf considers memories are independent from individuals. Although they have great intensity, they float in the mind unnoticed and come to the surface when they find the opportunity. She explains this situation as

A scene always comes to the top; arranged; representative. This confirms me in my instinctive notion – it is irrational; it will not stand argument – that we are sealed vessels afloat upon what is convenient to call reality; at some moments, without a reason, without an effort, the sealing matter cracks; in floods reality; that is a scene—for they would not survive entire so many ruinous years unless they were made of something permanent; that is a proof of their “reality”. (1985, p.142)

Woolf argues that memories survive uncorrupted for a long time and when they find a way to come to the surface, they look as if they are real. Erich Auerbach, in his critical study *Mimesis* calls Woolf as the representative of “modern realism” or a new kind of mimesis in which “exterior events have actually lost their hegemony; they serve to release and interpret inner events, whereas before her time ... inner movements preponderantly function to prepare and motivate significant exterior happenings.” (2003, p. 538).

In her writing, Woolf makes a distinction between the times when she feels elevated and alive, and ordinary times when life offers nothing to her. She calls the first group as “moments of being” when she feels the intense, transformative effects of life that stand against the mundane flow of life. The other times when life is occupied by ordinary daily chores such as washing and cooking, they are named as “moments of non-being” (Woolf, 1985, p.70). From this definition, it may sound that ecstatic moments are labelled as “moments of being”. However, the moments which influence her deeply, either happy or sad, are moments of being. For example, a fight with his brother or the death of a friend is also a moment of being. They are the moments hidden under “the cotton wool of daily life” (Woolf, 1985, p.72). Such moments are stored in the memory unnoticed and wait for their turn to come to the surface. When “the

sealing matter cracks”, they take over the control and the individual starts to feel alive. This cracking is the initiator for the flood of “moments of being”. They may be either triggered by some kind of chemical factors or come out to the surface without no reason.

T.S. Eliot's perception of memory may be useful to understand the triggering factors of memory in Woolf. Eliot uses the term “objective correlative” for memory images which allow the individual to anchor to the past and revive it. He explains this concept in the conclusion part of *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*:

Why, for all of us, out of all we have heard, seen, felt, in a lifetime, do certain images recur, charged with emotion, rather than others? The song of one bird, the leap of one fish, at a particular place and time, the scent of one flower, an old woman on a German mountain path, six ruffians seen through an open window playing cards at night at a small French railway junction, where there was a watermill: such memories may have symbolic value, but of what we cannot tell, for they come to represent the depths of feeling into which we cannot peer. (1933, p.141)

Eliot uses objective correlatives to reanimate the past. They are a set of external objects or events which are useful for evoking the same feelings in the reader. Despite these chemical senses which bring back the past to the present, memory is both a disillusionment and a source of new possibilities for Eliot. As a representative of modernist poetry, Eliot depicts this disillusionment of the present arising from the burden of the past, especially in “The Waste Land”. In her work, Woolf also touches on the same binary nature of memory. She makes a distinction between moments of being when she really feels herself alive through the memories of the past and moments of non-being when she could not acquire a heightened sense of herself. Woolf needs a certain amount of time to comprehend moments of being: “It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole; this wholeness means that it has lost the power to hurt me; it gives me, perhaps because by doing so I take away the pain, a great delight to put the severed parts together” (Woolf, 1985, p.72). She needs to put these important events into words to face and process them. After putting them into words, she can grasp the core of life.

Woolf's submission to her memories also reminds Wordsworth's rendition to memories when he returns to the same place five years later in his poem “Tintern Abbey”. The happiness of the reunion with the past takes over the stress of the present. However, unlike Woolf, Wordsworth's understanding of memory is different. He needs serenity to return to the past. A moment of tranquillity directs his artistic talents to evoke a “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (Wordsworth, 1994, p.449). Nature provides a safe haven for romantic poets. There is a mutual transaction between the poet and nature. Romantic poets direct their feelings to nature and in turn, when the time comes, nature gives their matured memories back.

Rousseau's perception of memory is also useful for understanding Woolf's perception of memory. In his *Confessions*, Rousseau shares his memories starting from his early childhood. He uses the writing process of his memories as a mediator for confessing his deeds. In the introduction part, he notes:

Let the last trump sound when it will, I shall come forward with this work in my hand, to present myself before my Sovereign Judge, and proclaim aloud: ‘Here is what I have done, and if by chance I have used some immaterial embellishment it has been only to fill a void due to a defect of memory. I may have taken for fact what was no more than probability, but I have never put down as true what I knew to be false. I have displayed myself as I was, as vile and despicable when my behaviour was such, as good, generous, and noble when I was so. I have bared my secret soul as Thou thyself hast seen it, Eternal Being!’ (1979, p.54)

Rousseau claims that he will be objective and present everything about himself as he could. He uses his written work as a tool for the absolution and rehabilitation process. However, for Woolf, memory is not a tool for asking for repentance. Her understanding of time is different. It has an important role in shaping the individual's identity. The past has a power to shape the present of individuals. From Woolf's perspective, memory has a fluid and non-linear nature. It is not a shed where you dump the past. It has a fragmented nature and the individual has to align different time zones into one and sometimes reshape it.

Woolf's understanding of memory shows thematic similarities with Proust. In *Remembrance of Things Past*, he explores the formation of identity through memories. He argues that the past influences the perception of the present with its non-linear formation. He asserts that "Memory becomes a symbol for the active, creative, regulative functions of the self. And this creative aspect of memory (in art) discloses a unified, coherent structure of the self, which cannot be otherwise recovered in experience" (Meyerhoff, 1974, p.44). Woolf's characters share and apply this perspective in their ordinary lives to shape their identities.

In her work, Woolf tries to find a balance between the past and present. As Malcolm Bradbury notes, the roots of Woolf's style go back to Walter Pater. He comments that, in Woolf's literary output "reality was not an objective given, but was subjectively perceived through consciousness" (1994, p.182). For Woolf, this consciousness of reality raised the problem of finding order in a chaotic world. Bradbury notices that in Woolf, "consciousness is flowing, poetic, feminine, above all painter-like and aesthetic . . . In her novels, consciousness flows, not only backward and forward in time, and spatially, from this place to that, but among and above the characters, who often share a strange intuitive relation to some common symbol: the lighthouse, the waves" (1994, p.185). These objects symbolize different things for different characters while they are navigating through the complexities of life, feelings and memories. However, their visibility or looming presence allows the characters to locate and anchor themselves in time and space.

### **The Characters' Perspectives about the Lighthouse**

As a novel, *To the Lighthouse* carries all the traits discussed above to understand Woolf's perception of memory. The lighthouse in the novel acts as the heart of the novel. From a technical perspective, Woolf, like a painter, needed an object of focus with some meaning and the lighthouse provided the necessary scene in this novel. However, it is not an ordinary object or a tourist attraction that can be visited easily. People should put some effort to reach it. It has a sublime position like a temple. Throughout the novel, the importance and visibility of the lighthouse change. The characters try to adjust to this shift in its position both mentally and physically.

The first chapter is entitled The Window. Most of the action takes place in Ramsays' summer house. Through the window, the characters are able to see the beach, maybe some other natural elements and the lighthouse in the distance. Without the window's existence, the characters may not be able to see anything. All they could see will be a solid stone wall. The window acts as a frame of the landscape while the lighthouse occupies the central place. Technically, it proves to be the centre of the novel like the clock tower in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Furthermore, it is also not a lighthouse for characters; it is a Lighthouse with the capital L.

Apart from Virginia Woolf's literary and artistic worries, the lighthouse denotes different things for characters. It reflects the transcendence, self-reflection, artistic creation and limitation of characters. However, for a character like Charles Tansley, it means nothing because he cannot really see the lighthouse or the life as others do. His focus is on his thesis and through it, his prospective future. Although he studies social sciences, he cannot perceive life multi-dimensionally. Unlike other characters who disclose their personalities, he is more on the material side of life. He is happy to pronounce his poverty. By doing so, he is trying to take revenge from the society. It seems that he has reached his goal as the time passed because, in the third chapter, he does not join the remaining characters. His absence in the expedition to the lighthouse is not noticed by the other characters but Lily finds it ironic when she remembers seeing him "preaching brotherly love" (Woolf, 2002, p.145) despite his material concerns.

As for James, the lighthouse is an object which reigns his dreams. It is important for him to make discoveries in order to understand the world. He needs to reach the lighthouse to grasp its nature but he is hindered from his goal by the masculine figures around him. From a psychoanalytical perspective, the lighthouse stands for the relationship between the mother and the son. The only obstacle in this Oedipean relationship seems to be the father. For this reason, he feels frustrated and grows a grudge against his father and Mr. Tansley.

As the dominant power of the family, Mrs. Ramsay is the only person who really sees and feels the lighthouse in the novel. When she sees the sea and lighthouse, she exclaims:

"Oh, how beautiful!" For the great plateful of blue water was before her; the hoary Lighthouse, distant, austere, in the midst; and on the right, as far as the eye could see, fading and falling, in soft low pleats, the green sand dunes with the wild flowing grasses on them, which always seemed to be running away into some moon country, uninhabited of men (Woolf, 2002, p.9)

Mrs. Ramsay personifies herself with the lighthouse. Its power to illuminate its surrounding and its solitude in the vast open sea symbolizes Mrs. Ramsay herself. When the beams of the lighthouse enter the house, Mrs. Ramsay feels as if meeting her duplicated persona:

it seemed to her like her own eyes meeting her own eyes, searching as she alone could search into her mind and her heart, purifying out of existence that lie, any lie. She praised herself in praising the light, without vanity, for she was stern, she was searching, she was beautiful like that light. It was odd, she thought, how if one was alone, one leant to inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers; felt they expressed one; felt they became one; felt they knew one, in a sense were one; felt an irrational tenderness thus (she looked at that long steady light) as for oneself (Woolf, 2002, p.46)

She feels like coming eye to eye with herself on a mirror. This personal encounter has a healing effect on her. She acquires an elevated position in life with the rays of light entering the house. The other people around her are also aware of her extraordinary attraction. Mr. Tansley notices her light and beauty "with stars in her eyes and veils in her hair, with cyclamen and wild violets" when they turn from the village helping some poor family (Woolf, 2002, p.10). Like the lighthouse, she is the one who guides her family and the people around her. Her duty as a mother, wife, friend, counsellor, etc. is very demanding but she illuminates and directs people around her as the beacon of the family.

Mrs. Ramsay also has a perspective of life that penetrates beneath the surface like the beams of light coming from the lighthouse. She enjoys the precious moments in life and attempts to preserve them as they are in her memory. After the successful dinner with their guests, she knows that such a moment will not be lived again and for this reason, tries to paint a visual picture of it in her memory:

With her foot on the threshold she waited a moment longer in a scene which was vanishing even as she looked, and then, as she moved and took Minta's arm and left the room, it changed, it shaped itself differently; it became, she knew, giving last look at it over her shoulder, already the past (Woolf, 2002, p.80).

The line between the present and the past is very fragile. As she sets her foot outside the room, she knows that this precious moment will change and start to decay. However, it will continue to survive in her guests' memories:

They would, she thought, going on again, however long they lived, come back to this night; this moon; this wind; this house: and to her too. It flattered her, where she was most susceptible to flattery, to think how, wound about in their hearts, however long they lived, she would be woven; and this, and this, and this, she thought, going upstairs, laughing, but affectionately, at the sofa on the landing (her mother's) at the rocking-chair (her father's); at the map of Hebrides. All that would be revived again in the lives of Paul and Minta (Woolf, 2002, p.82)

She knows that she will have a central place in the memories of other characters like the lighthouse which acts as a polestar for the people living in the region. In her success, her perception of life plays a crucial role:

Only she thought life—and a little strip of time presented itself to her eyes—her fifty years. There it was before her—life. Life, she thought—but she did not finish her thought. She took a look at life, for she had a clear sense of it there, something real, something private, which she shared neither with her children nor with her husband. A sort of transaction went on between them, in which she was on one side, and life was on another, and she was always trying to get the better of it, as it was of her; and sometimes they parleyed (when she sat alone); there were, she remembered, great reconciliation scenes; but for the most part, oddly enough, she must admit that she felt this thing that she called life terrible, hostile, and quick to pounce on you if you gave it a chance (Woolf, 2002, p.43)

It is a personal transaction between the individual and life. The brief vision of life that Mrs. Ramsay grasps is sometimes filled with sorrow. The tragic events in life like the death of dear ones make it unbearable. However, she knows that she should stay prepared as in the tale she tells James before going to bed.

Mr. Ramsay does not carry his wife's traits or share her vision of life although he is a philosopher. His short-tempered rude manners towards his family members make him an unbearable person. Behind such manners, he feels insecure about his latest work and needs his wife's sympathy to comfort him:

It was sympathy he wanted, to be assured of his genius, first of all, and then to be taken within the circle of life, warmed and soothed, to have his senses restored to him, his barrenness made fertile, and all the rooms of the house made full of life - the drawing-room; behind the drawing-room the kitchen; above the kitchen the bedrooms; and beyond them the nurseries; they must be furnished, they must be filled with life (2002, p. 27).

Since he cannot locate himself in his universe, he feels insecure. For this reason, he cannot really comprehend the symbolism of the lighthouse.

Another person who cannot locate the lighthouse in her life is Lily. She has a positive attitude towards life. In her painting, she feels that she has to fight to reflect the things as she sees:

[I]t was when she took her brush in hand that the whole thing changed. It was in that moment's flight between the picture and her canvas that the demons set on her who often brought her to the verge of tears and made this passage from conception to work as dreadful as any down a dark passage for a child. Such she often felt herself - struggling against terrific odds to maintain her courage; to say: 'But this is what I see; this is what I see (2002, p.14).

She has realist perspective of art but she has problems in positioning herself in life. For this reason, she is not satisfied with her artistic output. Standing as the reflection of Woolf herself, the journey to the lighthouse seems to be a frightening experience but as an artist, she has to go through such experiences if she wants her pictures not to “be hung in the servants’ bedrooms . . . rolled up and stuffed under a sofa” (Woolf, 2002, p.133). She needs time to mature both personally and artistically.

### The Flow of Time

The first part of the novel attempts to construct the personalities of the characters. The second part of the novel portrays the fluidity and transience of time and memories. In this part, the gloomy atmosphere of the house acquires a personality of an aging person who cannot stand against the harsh effects of time. In the gothic atmosphere of the house, the objects left in the house try to sustain the remaining pieces of life:

So with the lamps all put out, the moon sunk, and a thin rain drumming on the roof a downpouring of immense darkness began. Nothing, it seemed, could survive the flood, the profusion of darkness which, creeping in at keyholes and crevices, stole round window blinds, came into bedrooms, swallowed up here a jug and basin, there a bowl of red and yellow dahlias, there the sharp edges and firm bulk of a chest of drawers. Not only was furniture confounded; there was scarcely anything left of body or mind by which one could say, “This is he” or “This is she.” Sometimes a hand was raised as if to clutch something or ward off something, or somebody groaned, or somebody laughed aloud as if sharing a joke with nothingness. (Woolf, 2002, p. 93)

However, time demolishes and erases everything without the presence of individuals who make it a living thing.

Unlike the lengthy first part of the novel which only reflects a summer day in the lives of Ramsays and their guest, the second part of the novel summarizes around 10 years in a few pages. The tone and flow of the novel change in this part. Like the unused house with its closed curtains fighting against the destruction of time, memories are neglected and left to oblivion. While Mrs. Ramsay is dominant in the first part of the novel in terms of seizing and enjoying the moment, the concept of time acquires the reins in the second part of the novel and acts as a dominant, destructive and fast-moving character. The objects in the house also acquire personalities:

What people had shed and left—a pair of shoes, a shooting cap, some faded skirts and coats in wardrobes—those alone kept the human shape and in the emptiness indicated how once they were filled and animated; how once hands were busy with hooks and buttons; how once the looking-glass had held a face; had held a world hollowed out in which a figure turned, a hand flashed, the door opened, in came children rushing and tumbling; and went out again (Woolf, 2002, p. 96)

Without souls who touches and uses them, the objects start to decay like the memories which are left in voidness. Despite the destructive nature of time, the lighthouse stays intact with its colossal entity and sends in its strokes:

When darkness fell, the stroke of the Lighthouse, which had laid itself with such authority upon the carpet in the darkness, tracing its pattern, came now in the softer light of spring mixed with moonlight gliding gently as if it laid its caress and lingered stealthily and looked and came lovingly again (Woolf, 2002, p. 99)

The lighthouse aims to preserve the memories with its caressing light however it is difficult to stand still against the powers of “the thistle and the swallow, the rat and the straw” (Woolf, 2002, p.103). Nothing unused can be “rescued from the pool of Time that was fast closing over them” (Woolf, 2002, p.103).

## Reaching the Goal and Consolation

The third part of the novel, *The Lighthouse*, is not a commemoration of the lost ones. The remaining characters with a few exceptions turn to the summer house and continue their lives from the same point they left ten years ago. They still have the same worries and problems but it is difficult to navigate without the existence of Mrs. Ramsay.

In this part, Mr. Ramsay forces his children to go to the lighthouse because the journey is a vehicle for his yearning for his wife and her comforting. Although it has been years after her death, he still needs the sympathy he has always asked for from his wife. He looks for some sympathy from the people around however they are busy with their own problems. After being rejected by Lily, he thinks "Why,..., should she look at the sea when I am here? She hoped it would be calm enough for them to land at the Lighthouse, she said. The Lighthouse! The Lighthouse! What's that got to do with it?" (Woolf, 2002, p.112). With this failure to achieve what he needed, he sets on the delayed journey with his two children. But they are not willing to go because the lighthouse does not carry any meaning for them anymore. The journey turns into a forced mission with no goals.

For Lily, too, going to the lighthouse turns into a frightening "extraordinary unreality" (Woolf, 2002, p.110) in the absence of Mrs. Ramsay. She cannot accept such a thing to happen. She attempts to refashion Mrs. Ramsay from memory because she believes that Mrs. Ramsay has a talent to set things in order and seize the moment:

Mrs Ramsay saying 'Life stand still here'; Mrs Ramsay making of the moment something permanent (as in another sphere Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent) - this was of the nature of revelation. In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and flowing (she looked at the clouds going and the leaves shaking) was struck into stability. Life stand still here, Mrs Ramsay said. 'Mrs Ramsay! Mrs Ramsay!' she repeated. She owed this revelation to her (Woolf, 2002, p.120-21)

Lily thinks that she needs such powers as Mrs. Ramsay's to seize the time and to complete her painting. As an artist, she attempts to capture the moment. However, in the absence of Mrs. Ramsay, it is impossible to create an object of art that freezes and captures the soul of time.

The remaining Ramsay children, Cam and James, gradually realize the scheme and structure of time. As a young girl, Cam acquires her mother's skill to understand the relationship between the past and present:

She was thinking how all those paths and the lawn, thick and knotted with the lives they had lived there, were gone; were rubbed out; were past; were unreal, and now this was real: the boat and the sail with its patch; Macalister with this earrings; the noise of the waves - all this was real (Woolf, 2002, p.124)

She tries to solve the connection between the past and the present. Likewise, James also has an aptitude for understanding the importance of time:

He began to search among the infinite series of impressions which time had laid down, leaf upon leaf, fold upon fold softly, incessantly upon his brain; among scents, sounds; voices, harsh, hollow, sweet; and lights passing, and brooms tapping; and the wash and hush of the sea (Woolf, 2002, p.126)

Unlike his sister, James appeals the past with his senses. He has a photographic memory of that specific day when he was turned down about going to the lighthouse and how his mother tried to soothe him. He compares the lighthouse of his childhood and the present lighthouse:

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

No, the other was also the Lighthouse. For nothing was simply one thing. The other Lighthouse was true too. It was sometimes hardly to be seen across the bay. In the evening one looked up and saw the eye opening and shutting and the light seemed to reach them in that airy sunny garden where they sat. (Woolf, 2002, p.138)

He observes two different lighthouses at two different points in time. The fairytale like building of his childhood turns into a high stone tower with black and white bars. He makes adjustments between these two images and aligns the real lighthouse with the image of it in his mind. Similarly, Lily feels inclined to think about a specific image of Mrs. Ramsay in her mind:

'D'you remember, Mr Carmichael?' she was inclined to ask him as she passed him, thinking again of Mrs Ramsay on the beach; the cask bobbing up and down; and the pages flying. Why, after all these years, had that survived, ringed round, lit up, visible to the last detail, with all before it blank and all after it blank, for miles and miles? (Woolf, 2002, p.127)

These sensory images are important tools for triggering a return to a specific moment in the past. In Lily's case, she uses these images of the past to tunnel "her way into her picture, into the past" (Woolf, 2002, p.129) which would seem impossible to finish without the reflected authoritarian figure of Mrs. Ramsay. With her last strokes on the canvas, the family lands on the island of the lighthouse. Thus, the novel and her painting complete each other, and finally Lily declares: "I have had my vision" (Woolf, 2002, p.154).

In the last part of the novel, the characters point to the elusiveness of memory. The change of conditions influences how a thing is perceived at a specific place and time and the later reception of the same phenomenon at another time or space. They make modifications between the two images to adjust to their present positions. Forgetting also has a role in shaping their reconstructions. In the novel, the sea stands as a monster that eats memories in its vastness and ordinariness. With its charming depth and vastness, it has the potential to suck and swallow anything thrown at it such as "The Ramsays"; the children's; and all sorts of waifs and strays of things besides. A washer-woman with her basket; a rook, a red-hot poker; the purples and grey-greens of flowers: some common feeling which held the whole together" (Woolf, 2002, p.141).

## Conclusion

Memory is a part of identity that helps the individual to locate themselves in space and time. The evaluation of memories is useful for structuring the future. As a modernist writer, Virginia Woolf faces difficulties in her personal and artistic life. She attempts to find an emotional balance by adjusting different time zones into one. Writing about her past and memories help her to overcome her problems. She uses her personal memories and family members to structure the skeleton of *To the Lighthouse*. Similarly, her characters attempt to blend their memories and experiences to build up their present. Memories are reproduced and reshaped in order to adjust to new emerging presents. By this way, individuals hold onto life and a sense of identity is maintained. However, against the mass of

accumulating memories, the individual needs some objects to locate or anchor themselves in space and time. Woolf uses dominating objects in her novels to stabilize the vortex of time. These objects stand for different things in different novels but by using such objects, Woolf creates a stable sense of space and time. Rather than acting as sites of memory, they help the characters to stabilize themselves against the flow and switch of time. Furthermore, they gain their own identity in relation to the people and other objects around them. On their own, objects are meaningless. They gain meaning when they become a part of life. In the same manner, life gains meaning with them. This argument is valid not only for objects but also for the other members of the community. Individuals depend on other individuals to form their memories and identities. Memories have a social aspect that helps the individual to integrate and survive in a community. Woolf is aware of the collective aspect of memories. She allocates people from different segments of society around a shared memory. These characters have critical parts in communal memory. Without one of them, Woolf's universe would look like a puzzle with a missing piece. In other words, they help to integrate and stabilise the time and memory in the novel. Finally, it can be said that Woolf has a complex understanding of time and memory. In her novels, she inspects their elusive nature in relation to individuals and communities. With such a perspective, it is a difficult task to create a stable and conceivable past. However, Woolf resorts to the memories of individuals and objects to stabilise and create her perception of a multi-dimensional universe. Thus, in her novel *To the Lighthouse*, the objects, especially the lighthouse, have a symbolic meaning. Like the individuals, they have an identity and play an active role in the formation of memory which is a product of the fusion between the past and the present.

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