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Autonomy, Self-Creation, and the Woman Artist Figure in Woolf, Lessing, and Atwood

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Autonomy, Self-Creation, and the Woman Artist Figure

Abstract

This thesis traces the self-creation and autonomy of the woman artist figure in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, and Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*. The first chapter conveys the progression of autonomy and self-creation in Western-European philosophy through contemporary thinkers such as Charles Taylor, Robert Pippin, Alexander Nehamas, and Richard Rorty. This narrative culminates in a rift between public and private, resulting from the push—especially by Nietzsche—toward a radical, unmediated independence. Taylor and Rorty envision different ways to resolve the public/private rift, yet neither philosopher distinguishes how this rift has affected women by enclosing them in the private, barring them from the public, and delimiting their autonomy. The second chapter focusses on each woman artist's resistance to socially scripted roles, accompanied by theories about resistance: Woolf with Rachel Blau DuPlessis on narrative resistance, Lessing with Julia Kristeva on dissidence, and Atwood with Stephen Hawking and Kristeva on space-time. The third chapter contrasts the narratives of chapters 1 and 2 and reveals how the woman artist avoids the problematic public/private rift by incorporating the ethics developed within the private into her art; she balances her creative goals with responsibility to others. Drawing on the work of women moral theorists, this thesis suggests that women's self-creation and autonomy result in an undervalued but nevertheless workable solution to the public/private rift.

Résumé

Cette thèse suit la trace de l'auto-création et de l'autonomie du personnage de la femme artiste dans *To the Lighthouse* de Virginia Woolf, *The Golden Notebook* de Doris Lessing, et *Cat's Eye* de Margaret Atwood. Le premier chapitre explique la progression de l'autonomie et de l'auto-création dans la philosophie occidentale, chez des penseurs contemporains tels que Charles Taylor, Robert Pippin, Alexander Nehamas, et Richard Rorty. Cette narration mène à une division entre la sphère privée—surtout par Nietzsche—vers une indépendence radicale et immédiate. Taylor et Rorty imaginent différentes façons de résoudre cette faille entre le privé et le public, mais ne discernent pas l'effet de cette division sur la femme qui, en fermée dans la sphère privée et exclue de la sphère publique, a vu son autonomie délimitée. Le deuzième chapitre porte sur la résistance de chacune des femmes aux rôles prescrits par la société, ainsi que sur les théories de la résistance: Woolf avec Rachel Blau DuPlessis sur la résistance narrative, Lessing avec Julia Kristeva sur la dissidence, et Atwood avec Stephen Hawking et Kristeva sur L'espace-temps. Le troisième chapitre met in contraste la narration des chapitres 1 et 2 et nous révèle que la femme artiste évite la division problématique entre le public et le privé en incorporant à son art une morale dévelopée au sein de la sphère privée; elle pose en équilibre ses buts créatifs et sa responsibilité envers les autres. Faisant appel à l'oeuvre des femmes théoristes de la moralité, cette thèse nous suggère que l'auto-création et l'autonomie des femmes produisent une solution sous-estimée mais néanmois biens réalisable à la faille entre le public et le privé.

To my mother

Contents

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List of Abbreviations

CE	Margaret Atwood, *Cat's Eye.*
CIS	Richard Rorty, *Contingency, irony, and solidarity.*
D	Julia Kristeva, "A New Type of Intellectual, the Dissident."
DV	Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice.*
GN	Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook.*
MM	Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity.*
P	Doris Lessing, *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside.*
SS	Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity.*
SSP	Diana T. Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice.*
TL	Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse.*
WT	Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time."

The fact, as I think we shall agree, is that women from the earliest times to the present day have brought forth the entire population of the universe. This occupation has taken much time and strength. It has also brought them into subjection to men, and incidentally—if that were to the point—bred in them some of the most lovable and admirable qualities of the race. . . . But it is not education only that is needed. It is that women should have liberty of experience; that they should differ from men without fear and express their difference openly . . . that all activity of the mind should be so encouraged that there will always be in existence a nucleus of women who think, invent, imagine, and create as freely as men do, and with as little fear of ridicule and condescension.

—Virginia Woolf, "The Intellectual Status of Women"[1]

It is the hardest thing in the world to maintain an individual dissident opinion, as a member of a group.

—Doris Lessing, *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*[2]

What remains is to break down the resistance to change.

—Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time"[3]

Introduction

Is personal autonomy necessary for artistic self-creation? At first glance, the answer to this question seems to be yes, and the terms *autonomy* and *self-creation* even seem synonymous. An affirmative answer is intrinsic to the philosophy behind modernism. But when the question is asked again of the woman artist at the beginning of the twentieth century the answer is suddenly not as clear. She was not autonomous in the legal sense, nor in any sense of the word, yet she still expressed herself and her life in her art. She created herself without autonomy. And interestingly, her artistic self-creation becomes her route to autonomy.

In this study, I discuss how the twentieth-century woman artist's resistance to socially scripted[1] gender roles has instigated her self-creation and her pursuit of autonomy. The epigraphs which I have chosen introduce the main themes I touch upon as I relate this story: resistance, dissidence, and the subordination not only of women's roles, but also of their valuable moral outlook. While busy bringing forth "the entire population of the universe," as Woolf phrases it, women of her time develop their distinctive brand of moral deliberation based on the high priority they place on relationships, and their sense of responsibility to others. Yet, these "admirable" qualities, Woolf points out, "have also brought them into subjection to men." Compelled to inhabit the private, domestic sphere, the skills and values women develop there are deemed of lesser value than the conventional method of moral deliberation operative in the public realm, which for so long did not recognize women's subjectivity. This has in no small way affected their sense of self for the worse. Woolf hopes that education and liberty of thought and expression will breathe confidence into

women so they are able to "invent, imagine, and create as freely as men do." This entails resisting all that delimits women's experiences and imaginations. Being a woman and an artist, I will argue, involves becoming a dissident who analyses, critiques, and invokes change to the social script by creating, self-creating, and relating the experience of this process to others. The creative work of the woman artist then bridges the gaps between herself and other women, and incidentally, between the public and the private, a longstanding problem in the tradition of Western thought.

What do I mean by public and private? Any incapsulation of such a contentious issue is bound to be facile, but a clarification of terms would be useful at this point. From my perspective, the public realm consists of political events, recorded historical events, and the social and legal institutions which create and implement laws. The private realm consists of individuals' intimate relationships, private goals, and life plans—which all occur, in Western democratic societies, apart from the public. It is the degree of this separation which became an issue in modernism and remains so today.

The term "modernism" I take to refer to the literary and artistic era which has foundations in philosophy. Modernists are sometimes seen as the inheritors of an ongoing modernity project, the beginning of which could probably be traced back to the origins of the word "modern". Accordingly, modernism supposedly fulfilled the promise of this modernity project: the unmediated independence of the individual. But other modernists saw themselves as divorced from the past—from history, tradition, and the existing legacy of modernity—and thought they were finally realizing an unprecedented and thoroughgoing independence.[2] Either way, modernists wanted to diminish the interference of the public in

private matters such as self-creation and artistic imagination, even, as Robert Pippin writes, "at the price of a very costly social refusal" and "of great loneliness and isolation. . ." (40). In this way, modernism introduced the clash between the goal of radical self-determination and the demands of living in the community.

In chapter 1, I trace the development of autonomy and self-creation as philosophical concepts, drawing from current perspectives of the self and modernism in Pippin's *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, Richard Rorty's *Contingency, irony, and solidarity*, and Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self*. This first narrative culminates in the rift between public and private which largely derives from the radical critical autonomy in Nietzsche's thought, and remains a controversial topic among philosophers today. Thinkers like Richard Rorty and Charles Taylor continue to debate the issues modernism raised, these being:

> how to understand genuine "independence" or autonomy, whether it involves a radicalization of the classical ideal of freedom through a moral law, political equality, a poetics of originality and creation, or a kind of thoroughgoing ironicism, a constantly tentative, qualified posing or discursive play. (Pippin 39)

Taylor aims for a solution along the lines of the former. He associates autonomy with the human impulse to create, the demands of originality, and the need for freedom. But he also stresses the equally important need for individuals to recognize that their moral horizons, their relationships with others, and with the community also shape one's sense of identity and therefore affect personal autonomy. Conversely, Rorty opts for the latter. He thinks things like "the classical ideal of freedom through a moral law" and the attempt to guarantee

equality belong in the public sphere of social institutions, and are incommensurable to the demands of private autonomy and self-creation. To Rorty, autonomous individuals create themselves through ironic redescriptions of their life. The rift, therefore, persists.

However, as I have already intimated, and as thinkers like Pippin, Rorty, and Taylor forget to mention, the stakes in the public/private rift were markedly different for female contemporaries of modernism. To women then, the public sphere would have been described as above, but with an added stipulation: that from which they were barred admittance. Women's lives occurred almost wholly in the private yet were not really private at all, but shared. The isolation often sought by modernists was simply not available to the woman artist, so she did not experience the rift in the way they did. Radical critical autonomy was not within her means. Her life was contained within the space of the home, but her time was largely occupied by caring for others. For her, artistic creativity also came "at the price of a very costly social refusal" as it often did for modernists, but differently from the way Pippin describes; a woman who wanted to be an artist was considered an anomaly instead of a Superman.

Although women artists did not participate in modernism, they nevertheless created, and the selves they shaped by redescribing their own experiences developed differently from the tradition which Rorty and Taylor participate in and write about. As Carol Gilligan has found, this reveals a different—*not deficient*—process of moral development. Her thesis seems quite logical: women translate the same moral apparatus they use at home to their lives outside it. They only seem morally deficient in comparison to the norm because the norm has always been male-defined and has not accounted for women's stories.

In chapter 2, I present three women artists' stories and examine how their artistic creativity reflects and is reflected by their self-creation. I look at Lily Briscoe in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Anna Wulf in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, and Elaine Risley in Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye* specifically, and explore how they each deal with the problems which interfere with this process within the context of each novel. At the risk of seeming disjointed, the separate immersions into the circumstances each woman faces permits a corresponding immersion in the broad range of problems and issues surrounding women's pursuit of autonomy. Such problems can only be brought to light from out of the particularities of each woman's story.

In the last chapter, I step back from the individual panels of this narrative triptych and look at the larger story they tell. There is a pattern which emerges: private (self-reflection/ creation/ suppression) to public (political activism, self-sacrifice) back to a balanced, predominantly private, autonomous figure. This pattern is different from the progression of chapter 1 as it is non-linear. The woman artist's development into autonomy reflects a process of widening her sphere without relinquishing her original concern for preserving emotional ties. At this point, I will reconsider my original question—is autonomy necessary for self-creation?—in light of how the woman artist has changed and developed since Woolf's time. I think that I will be able to conclude that her self-creation proves necessary for the achievement of her autonomy such that the two terms can finally be considered synonymous for the woman artist.

1

Architects of Thought

Autonomy and self-creation are concepts that are intrinsic to modernism, but they were not modernism's inventions. Current philosophical studies on modernism reveal a steadily increasing preoccupation with these two concepts since the Enlightenment in Western philosophy, yet their faint beginnings are noticeable as early as the first century in the writings of Saint Augustine.[1] I want to look at these recent accounts of the origins and influences of modernism from a philosophical perspective in order to delineate the theories and ideas of its architects, the philosophers.

By saying that philosophers were modernism's architects, I mean to suggest that they were the ones drafting new relationships of the self to the world and to society, sometimes incorporating past models, and sometimes making entirely new designs with the intent to break from the past. Philosophers certainly weren't the sole designers of modernism. Historians reveal other contributing influences such as the rapid pace of industrialization in late nineteenth-, early twentieth-century Europe;[2] and Charles Taylor often points to secularization as a crucial factor in the shift towards modern times.[3] I cannot investigate these sources as thoroughly as they deserve here, although I will periodically allude to them. However, philosophy itself is unique in that can show how thought changes from one epoch to the next, and this is visible in the writings of those who thought they could plan how human beings could live in the world.

While viewing the foundational concepts of modernism from the perspective of contemporary philosophy, I make no attempt to form an interpretation of the original sources

here because I am more interested in the effect these sources have had on Western thought. I will consider how thinkers today account for the tensions and paradoxes within modernism, and at what they think has contributed to these tensions. Charles Taylor, Richard Rorty, Robert Pippin, and Alexander Nehamas all have written books in which they explain modernism's development. They present four extremely well-researched, authoritative studies which explore the history of Western philosophy since Plato[4] in order to find the earliest traces of modernist concepts. But what they do not discuss is the contribution of feminist thought, or more specifically, women's writing, that was contemporaneous to modernism. This is no doubt partly due to the fact that modernists themselves didn't overtly recognize the work of their female contemporaries. But is women's continued exclusion from studies on modernism legitimate? I will discuss possible reasons for this continued exclusion later in this chapter, after it becomes clear that modernism can be seen as an extension of Western European-Christian thought[5] in which such a restriction is a tradition.

I enlist the help of contemporary philosophers' accounts of the origins of autonomy and self-creation in the first part of this chapter, following along with Taylor's *Sources of the Self*, but also interjecting now and then. First, I will try to establish where the idea of autonomy came from and how it led into self-creation in Western thought. I am separating these two terms despite their usual interchangeability because I think that the demand for autonomy came first in the Platonic-Christian tradition, and self-creation branched off from it. Only since Nietzsche have they been synonymous to each other and to other words such as self-determination, self-definition, independence, freedom, etcetera. In the last part of this chapter I will present the public/private rift which leads out of Nietzsche and which persists

in philosophical debates today.

Pippin, Rorty, and Taylor all accredit Kant as the first Western philosopher to focus on autonomy as something for rational agents to seek. But Taylor reaches back the furthest in history for autonomy's sources. He suggests that interiority is its root, which he finds is first evident in Plato's discussion of the unified self. This might seem a strange place to look, as Plato thought that the soul, or the unified self, reflected the unity of the cosmos, a view which contrasts sharply with modernism's conception of the fragmented self. But Plato's discussion of the unified self is nevertheless perhaps the earliest known ancestor of interiority in philosophy because it introduces the self as a philosophical concept. From Plato on, Taylor traces the gradual steps towards the "inward turn" (*SS* 177) which eventually severs the ties between the self and the cosmos.[6]

About seven centuries later, Augustine espouses a turn inward, although he thought that a life of inner contemplation would make possible a greater understanding of God; he turned inward in order to step upward.[7] Descartes made more of a complete turn towards the self, looking at the cognitive powers of the individual, and away from the ontic logos.

A closer look at the text of *Discourse on Method* illustrates how significant an ancestor to modernism Descartes is. He uses architecture metaphors, making an early link between autonomous cognition and rational self-creation. Descartes observes that "buildings conceived and completed by a single architect are usually more beautiful and better planned than those remodeled by several persons. . ." (Descartes 10). With this analogy in mind, he decides "to rebuild" his beliefs according to his own plan or method (Descartes 12). Even more modern is his insistence that he envisions no public or universal use for what he is

doing:

> Never has my intention been more than to try to reform my own ideas, and rebuild them on foundations that would be wholly mine. If my building has pleased me sufficiently to display a model of it to the public, it is not because I advise anyone to copy it. (Descartes 12-13)

Descartes's insistence on the private, individual use of his method, along with his self-construction metaphors, both foreshadow Nietzsche's and eventually modernism's emphasis on self-creation as well as the increasing split which ensues between public and private. Cartesian radical doubt initiates a radical turn to the self. One then re-establishes belief by relying only on one's clear and distinct perceptions. Consequently, radical doubt ushers in an unprecedented self-reflexivity and self-reliance such that despite Descartes's stated focus on individual autonomy, his method achieves an epochal autonomy or "radical break" from the past (Pippin 24). Any belief inherited up until the use of the method is a dream for the self and for Western thought (Pippin 24).

Locke carries the increased cognitive powers of the self into the seventeenth century. He writes about the "punctual self" who, through self-disengagement, obtains self-objectification: the practice of viewing one's actions as if from outside oneself, or society. Locke instructs that we can stop just living in the body or within our traditions, and by making "them objects for us, subject them to radical scrutiny and remaking" (*SS* 175).

Montaigne takes the inward turn in exactly the opposite direction from Locke and Descartes. He promotes an engagement with individual particularity; in other words, an immersion in subjectivity, originality, and difference, as opposed to distancing actions through

a disembodied viewpoint as in self-objectification.[8] Taylor identifies self-objectivity and subjectivity as the two divergent paths already apparent at the beginning of the eighteenth century, which emerge out of Augustinian interiority: "These are the ground, respectively, of two important facets of the nascent modern individualism, that of self-responsible independence, on one hand, and that of recognized particularity, on the other" (*SS* 185). Self-responsible independence—the idea that the self is wholly responsible for determining action through disengaged reason or self-objectivity—is established by Descartes and Locke, and carries on into the Enlightenment; whereas Montaigne's particularity, or subjectivity re-emerges in Romantic expressivism.

A decision must be made at this point; which pathway leads the self to the greatest autonomy: subjectivism or objectivism? Both seem liberating, but they present two different kinds of freedom. Disengaged reason guides the self to rationally determined moral action, buttressing laws with the notion that to follow them is to be truly free. It offers *freedom from* the confusing and disorienting passions. Conversely, engaged particularity promotes the exploration of the inner thoughts, feelings and desires of the individual, and demands the *freedom to* express them, without inhibition. In the 1990s, the polarization of these two outlooks on liberty seems naïve, as we now know that either in its extreme is debilitating to the individual as well as to society. But I am going to feign eighteenth-century innocence for a moment, and compare them side by side in order to determine which achieves maximal autonomy.

Disengagement occurs on two levels: the disengagement of the self from the cosmos, and of the self from the self, ie. self-objectification. On the first level, humans stop looking

for meaning in the cosmos, or in literal readings of the word of God. Consequently, mediation is discarded by Locke: "Disengagement from cosmic order meant that the human agent was no longer to be understood as an element in a larger, meaningful order. His paradigm purposes are to be discovered within. He is on his own" (*SS* 193). Whereas before it was thought that one could refer to this order to determine right from wrong action, disengagement places the onus on the self to answer such questions independently, without mediation. And this in turn necessitates the second level, self-disengagement or self-objectification, because the rational agent must objectify and scrutinize any aspects of the self such as beliefs and traditions that had gone unquestioned under the old order. From there, he or she can build up knowledge or beliefs again freely and independently.

At this point, it seems that self-disengagement provides the route to autonomy. But Kant complicates the issue of autonomy in his insistence upon linking it to morality. He contends that an action (or at least a maxim) must be universalizable in order to be moral: "True autonomy requires that I will only those actions . . . which can be consistently willed by all other rational agents" (Pippin 13). An action's universalizability makes it lawful, or moral. Furthermore, acting morally or according to laws is to enjoy freedom, "because acting morally is acting according to what we truly are, moral/rational agents. . . . And acting according to the demands of what I truly am, of my reason, is freedom" (*SS* 363). As such, moral action offers the "prospect of pure self-activity" (*SS* 364), because instead of looking to externally mediating moral sources such as religion,[9] the agent's decision to act morally is supposedly achieved autonomously. But the agent, or rational self, to whom the reflexive turn is made has been split; the objective disengaged from the subjective. It may well be true

that when acting morally this agent acts according to what s/he truly is, but this is in the objectified sense of what is innate or common to all humans, and not in the sense of the agent's own particularity. The particular individual still mediates thought through an objectified self in order to act in accordance to universal laws. Disengaged reason frees the self from the cosmos, but it does not do away with the need for mediation. The objectified self simply takes the place formerly occupied by the cosmos—albeit within the self—in order to fulfil this latent need. As such, moral action is still mediated in the Enlightenment, and even though this supposedly occurs within the self, it cannot be said that the subject decides upon this action autonomously. Disengagement provides a method for following universal laws instead of the tenets of the church.

It now seems that in order to maximize autonomy, an agent should reject mediation altogether. Rather than practising disengagement, perhaps one should engage fully in subjectivity, particularity, difference, and originality; not avoid, objectify, or mediate them. These are the ideals of Romanticism, and they emerged in reaction to those of the Enlightenment. Instead of seeking out the innate qualities present in all humans, and attempting to conform to a morality that these qualities define, the Romantics plumb deeper into the self in search of the individual's unique, inner nature. Expression of this inner self is the means of uncovering it. Self-expression is therefore closely associated to artistic creation, and "the artist becomes in some way the paradigm case of the human being, as agent of original self-definition" (*MM* 62). So what Taylor calls the "ethic of authenticity" (*MM* 25) has its beginnings in Romanticism, when self-expression replaces mediation, or art replaces religion. Living a good life is no longer an imitation of religious doctrine or cosmic unity, it

is to choose one's own mode of life as an authentic expression of individuality. Morality is found within the idiosyncrasies of the individual.

Romanticism's subjectivism and internalization of moral sources certainly increases personal autonomy and moves closer to the concept of self-creation, but nevertheless falls short of full achievement. Self-discovery and self-expression are part of the Romantics' main search for inner Meaning, or Truth, and supposedly facilitate self-wholeness which is deemed a moral good. Romantics are still looking for unity and Meaning, the only difference is that they decide to look inside the particular self, instead of defining what is universal, or common to all selves. And although self-expression is linked to the aesthetic, it remains connected to morality;[10] however, this congruency creates the potential for their eventual contrast (*MM* 65). The possibility is there for artists to simply create without any interest in vying for the good but for aesthetic purposes only. When this happens, artistic creation actually becomes self-creation, and any meaning or truth with regards to the self is created, not discovered.

Looking back over this brief survey, the self gradually progresses from interiority, to self-disengagement, to the rejection of mediation, to self-expression, to self-creation, and finally to the rejection of publicly enforced morality and the coexistence of autonomy and self-creation in modernism which, ironically, is also thought to usher in the end of philosophy. This theory seems somewhat logical, for if at this point people are autonomous and self-creating, what further need is there for philosophy? There is no longer a need to legislate between the self and nature, nor between the self and the cosmos, as humans are now self-legislating. There is no need to locate universal Meaning or Truth as these have been shown to be products of self-creation. And philosophy can no longer try to direct us to

moral action as this interferes with artistic creativity. Philosophy seems to give way to poetry, and the paradigmatic individual is no longer the rational, moral agent, but the independent artist. So philosophy seems to self-destruct at the onset of modernity; or does it? Modernism as an artistic movement brings about a whole new set of tensions for the individual which mainly revolve around how far these new powers of autonomy and self-creation should extend, and with what effect on selfhood and human solidarity. Nietzsche advocates the extreme realization of these powers, projecting an unprecedented, radical, critical autonomy, and thereby becomes, as Heidegger describes him, "the last metaphysician of the West" (qtd. in Pippin 123).

Parenthetically, I want to stress again here that I am dealing with contemporary interpretations of Nietzsche's works. Different thinkers' positions on Nietzsche seem to me a fairly accurate indicator of their positions on the public/private dilemma, which is the main feature of modernism I concentrate on in this study. The book by Nietzsche scholar Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, is like an obelisk in relation to which subsequent readings of Nietzsche stand. Philosophers either accept and extend Nehamas's premise that Nietzsche created his life like a work of art, and declare the incommensurability of private self-creation with the demands of public life; or they think Nehamas's interpretation indicates a direction Western thought is moving which may be dangerous to pursue to its extreme. The former view describes Richard Rorty's position, the latter, Charles Taylor's. Before elaborating on the differences between these two thinkers' outlooks, I will outline the contentious aspects of Nietzsche through Pippin (a quite neutral Nietzsche reader) and, of course, through Nehamas.

Pippin explains that Nietzsche throws everything known from the Platonic-Christian tradition in Western thought into doubt. This break from the past recalls that of Descartes, but Nietzsche's is more thoroughgoing. He calls for "no reliance on any foundation or origin or value without showing how and why we have taken it to be a foundation or origin" (Pippin 96), because such foundations or origins are merely contingent. And whereas Descartes inserted a method in order to work the self out of doubt, Nietzsche does nothing of the kind. Pippin observes that Nietzsche makes "an extremely elusive attempt to characterize and affirm that contingency . . . without reliance on a theory that would deny that (and our own) very contingency. . ." (104). Nietzsche submits that there is no truth, only the will to truth which we make for ourselves out of ourselves. To create oneself is one's own will to power, or simply, to be autonomous.

According to Nehamas, Nietzsche offers neither a method to follow, nor a model to emulate because he wants to end the tradition wherein part of society legislates "the values by which all are required to live," and then "masks its own will to power" (214). With this in mind, Nietzsche seeks to expose the immoral tendencies behind the enforcement of morality in religious and social institutions, and rejects the assignation of value from these sources external to the self. His ideal character is sometimes a philosopher, an artist, or is simply described as a free spirit who constantly resists "the ideal of today" (qtd. in Nehamas 217). Reading Nehamas, it seems that Nietzsche is his own ideal character, yet attempting to follow him as a model would amount to following his life, which opposes the main tenets of his philosophy: to determine and live one's own life autonomously, and to resist any pressures to conform. There is no way to imitate him and adhere to his beliefs at the same time; one can

be in agreement with him, but one also must think freely. Yet his refusal to specify any recommendations on how to achieve the good life or to add to the annals of moral philosophy actually becomes his contribution.

However, Nietzsche's repudiation of the perversions of moral philosophy does not convey an espousal of immorality. This is one of the most confusing and debated aspects of Nietzsche's thought. It is not clear that he rejects morality outright, but he does reject the way morality has been determined and enforced by the ruling elite, and wants to retrieve moral decision-making from those who have warped and manipulated it. To him, morality can be completely self-determined from thought to action. According to Nietzsche's conception of eternal recurrence, everything in the world recurs exactly the same way over and over again without exception. Looking at the world in this way facilitates a different internal checking mechanism from the Kantian formula described above wherein the rational agent mediates action objectively by pondering its universalizability. Alternatively, if I can determine presently that in the future I would act in exactly the same way I am thinking of acting now, and can answer questions like "would I do this again?" affirmatively, or "am I going to regret this?" negatively, then I can probably go through with the action. It can also function retroactively such that one's actions—and ultimately, the sum of those actions which amount to one's life—can be justified to oneself if "in accepting the present, one also accepts all that is past; for though perhaps one did not will something in the past, one would not now have it any other way" (Nehamas 162). Hence, the self authorizes moral action without mediation. For example, if I realize that if I perform an action now which I might regret later I would probably decide against doing it. Not only will it be too late to change it in the

future, but changing that one action would permanently alter my whole life (because everything recurs in exactly the same way without exception), which I probably wouldn't want to do. Actually making such a change is admittedly impossible, but even desiring that change indicates that I acted wrongly; that action does not mesh with the way I want to live my life.[11] Living my own life requires an ongoing process of accepting all that I have been, and knowing that I must be able to keep on accepting it. In this way I create and follow my own moral principles: "the people who 'want to become those they are' are precisely 'human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who *create themselves*'" (qtd. in Nehamas 174, italics Nietzsche's). Such people do not follow blindly the ideals of Platonic-Christian thought. They see externally formulated laws, ideals, or morals as tactics for maintaining the superiority of the ruling class.

An example of what Nietzsche considers a specious ideal is equality. Nehamas explicates this disagreeable view in order to convey the extremes Nietzsche's thought occasionally reaches. Nehamas reveals that Nietzsche believes no one with power truly subscribes to equality; the elite posits it as a societal goal for everyone else to seek while pursuing its own avarice. Believing in and seeking equality only prevents one from achieving nobility. Consequently, Nietzsche claims nobility and greatness are the actual ideals behind the mask of equality, and the ones that are really worth seeking:

> the concept of greatness entails being noble, wanting to be by oneself, being able to be different, standing alone and having to live independently, and philosophers will betray something of their own ideal when they posit: "they shall be greatest who can be loneliest, most concealed, most deviant, human

> beings beyond good and evil, masters of their virtues, they that are overrich in will. Precisely this shall be called greatness: being capable of being as manifold as whole, as ample as full." (qtd. in Nehamas 217)

Clearly, Nietzschean autonomy is autonomy-at-all-costs. To him, there is no such thing as equality; independence, difference, and greatness are the potential gains to be won. Even the potential accompaniments of isolation and loneliness are viewed positively since they are indicative of a complete break from the demands of community, conformity, and convention. The pursuit of anything supposedly innate to all humans or for the benefit of all humans he deems self-defeating and likely to foster the disdainful herd mentality.

In short, Nietzsche rejects anything done with the intent to adhere to the status quo form of morality, especially art. The epiphanic art of Romantic expressivism which was intended to align aesthetics with morality by reflecting the unity and wholeness of the natural world through the unity and wholeness of the work, while simultaneously expressing the artist's own perfectly assembled inner nature, seems artificial under a Nietzschean light. Art becomes the expression of the artist, not of anything innate to all selves such as the good within each self, but simply of the artist's own "manifold" set of lived experiences (Nehamas 217). Wholeness and completion are only possible if at the end of one's life, ideally spent in "deep immersion in writing" (Nehamas 167), one has described that life as fully and originally as possible, and has therefore created oneself. Proust's life exemplifies this, and so, Nehamas contends, does Nietzsche's (223). The few who are capable of being like him reject the absolutism of morality; they rise above the herd choosing to be "creators of their own values, true individuals" (Nehamas 225). They become "Supermen".

The turn to the self culminates in a total personal immersion which problematizes the individual's relationship to the community. As such, far from ending with Nietzsche, philosophy confronts and begins to deal with this problematic tension between public and private which the pursuit of autonomy creates. This tension characterizes modernism, and contemporary theorists continue to grapple with it. It is, in fact, the topic of Robert Pippin's *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem.*[12] Rorty and Taylor propose resolutions to the dilemma, and as I said earlier, these greatly depend upon how they read Nietzsche. Rorty seems to accept the Nehamasian reading and takes Nietzsche to be more poet than philosopher while condoning the separation of aesthetics from morality (narrative from theory, poetry from philosophy, private from public). Taylor, however, views this reading as carrying the morality/aesthetics separation to its extreme, which is perhaps necessary on some experimental, cognitive level, but dangerous and destructive if maintained. Taylor espouses a retrieval of moral sources such as Christianity and the Enlightenment countering Nietzsche's rejection of them as forms of mediation. If these contemporary thinkers can still represent opposite sides of the debate, then perhaps not much progress has been made since Nietzsche towards a solution, or perhaps they are both overlooking another perspective that has been there all along.[13]

Rorty's and Taylor's different readings of Nietzsche become apparent when they discuss the relationship between the private self and the community. Rorty considers irony Nietzsche's most significant contribution to Western thought, thinking it crucial to personal autonomy. Irony offers the self a way to refute the mediating principles, religion and metaphysics, without making the mistake of positing new ones. It allows one to debunk

authority without claiming authority (*CIS* 105), or as Pippin phrases it, irony provides "a way of saying without saying," (Pippin 115), of avoiding dogmatism. This is how Rorty wants to read Nietzsche, as redescribing others (predecessor philosophers) who have described him in his own words, thereby freeing himself of those past descriptions and creating himself. Rorty admires Nietzsche when he sounds most like Proust, who achieves "private autonomy and private perfection" from his own perspective (*CIS* 105). Rorty likes it when Nietzsche says things like: "One misunderstands great human beings if one views them from the miserable perspective of some public use. That one cannot put them to any use, that in itself may belong to greatness" (qtd. in Nehamas 228). Such statements clearly influence Rorty's own ideas: "We need to distinguish between redescription for private and for public purposes" (*CIS* 90). But Rorty acknowledges that Nietzsche ends up making broad claims which do indeed seem meant for "public use":

> Nietzsche the perspectivalist is interested in finding a perspective from which to look back on the perspectives he inherited, in order to see a beautiful pattern. That Nietzsche can be modeled, as Nehamas models him, on Proust; he can be seen as having created himself as the author of his books. But Nietzsche the theorist of the will to power—the Nietzsche who Heidegger attacked as "the last metaphysician"—is as interested as Heidegger himself was in getting beyond all perspectives. He wants sublimity, not just beauty. (*CIS* 106)

To Rorty, unfortunately Nietzsche ends up being more of a philosopher when he's trying to be more of a poet. But Rorty is willing to forgive his lapse into metaphysics for the sake of

his own argument. In fact, Rorty makes use of Nietzsche's and Heidegger's "failures" to show why it is necessary to stop making philosophical claims about what is true or relevant to everyone within one's own narrative:

> When Nietzsche and Heidegger stick to celebrating their personal canons, stick to the little things which meant most to them, they are as magnificent as Proust. They are figures whom the rest of us can use as examples and as material in our own attempts to create a new self by writing a bildungsroman about our old self. But as soon as either tries to put forward a view about modern society, or the destiny of Europe, or contemporary politics, he becomes at best vapid, and at worst sadistic. (*CIS* 120)

Rorty believes that philosophy and poetry operate with two different vocabularies, much like two different sets of tools which necessarily fulfil separate functions; one can neither be combined with nor replace the other. He thinks that the best way to achieve private autonomy and self-creation is to stop trying to mesh these individualistic goals with politics (*CIS* 120). And the best way to shirk the grip of morality, authority, or others' past descriptions of oneself is to recognize the contingency of the hold they have, and make new and ironic self-redescriptions.

Rorty seems to pick out what he deems to be Nietzsche at his best—a Nietzsche filtered through Nehamas—in order to help formulate his solution to the public/private dilemma. His liberal ironist embodies this solution: Nietzsche tempered with liberalism. Rorty envisions this person as "content to treat the demands of self-creation and of human solidarity as equally valid, yet forever incommensurable" (*CIS* xv). This individual wants to

reduce suffering, cruelty, and humiliation, and hence is "liberal"; but such desires are "ungroundable," contingent, without a "theoretical backup," hence this person is an ironist (*CIS* xv). The desire to reduce suffering, cruelty, and humiliation are important as they engender solidarity; different people share the same desires. And the best way to facilitate solidarity is through poetry, art, or characters in novels (*CIS* 192). According to Rorty, solidarity cannot be drafted in religious or philosophical treatises (*CIS* 192). The latter function best in helping to make our institutions more just and fair. Rorty's liberal ironist has given up the attempt to fuse private needs and goals with any public agenda, and thinks both sets of demands important; not opposed, but necessarily separate.

Rorty's solution for easing the tension between public and private is to stop looking for a solution. He accepts that philosophy leads to this stalemate, not to Truth, Unity, Meaning, God, or any transcendental destination. The only truth we have is what we make by redescribing our own contingent experiences in vocabularies that are relevant to us. We should resist the metaphysical urge to make something more of our own self-creation, which Nietzsche was susceptible to, even though he criticised it. Today, what might be considered neo-Nietzschean irony occupies an entire branch of philosophy which is concerned with analyzing and dismantling hierarchies of power through language: deconstruction.[14]

But irony has some ill side-effects which Rorty does not attempt to resolve, such as elitism. Instead of alleviating this liability, he makes it into an asset. Bearing an uncanny resemblance to Nietzsche's deflation of equality as an ideal, liberal ironism banks on the fact that "[m]ost nonintellectuals are still committed either to some form of religious faith or to some form of Enlightenment rationalism" (*CIS* xv). It seems that only intellectuals can be

liberal ironists (i.e. noble?), and everyone else is still naïvely hanging onto some form of mediation (i.e. herd mentality?). Are theologians and moral philosophers merely naïve nonintellectuals? Perhaps Rorty would apply his more innocuous term to such thinkers and call them "commonsensical nonmetaphysicians" (*CIS* 88). The viewpoints of such thinkers are essential to ironism because "[i]rony is, if not intrinsically resentful, at least reactive. Ironists have to have something to have doubts about, something from which to be alienated" (*CIS* 88). Commonsensical nonmetaphysicians represent what liberal ironists "have to" alienate themselves from. Therefore, only a few can be liberal ironists just as only a few can be Nietzschean Supermen. But Rorty is not just saying that some people won't be able to separate themselves from their concern for others and their engagement with society, or even that they won't want to separate themselves; he is saying that by necessity only a few—the liberal ironists—will be sufficiently autonomous to separate their private goals from public interference:

> Autonomy *is not something which all human beings have within them* and which society can release by ceasing to repress them. It is something which *certain particular human beings* hope to attain by self-creation and which *a few actually do*. The desire to be autonomous is not relevant to the liberal's desire to avoid cruelty and pain. . . . (my italics, *CIS* 65)

Some people enjoy autonomy and self-creation, and some do not. Rorty's book seems to sanction the fact that people like him will continue to invent new "tools," new "vocabularies," which simply amount to new justifications for the maintenance of this status quo. He doesn't work out the problem he inherits from Nietzsche—the tension between increased personal

autonomy and affiliation with a community—he merely redescribes it.[15]

Rorty also does not consider the possibility that Nietzsche's lapse into political discourse might indicate that such a lapse is inevitable, and the complete separation of an individual's concerns from public ones just might be impossible. Taylor espouses this view, as he believes that one's identity is a product of a direct exchange with others as well as with their larger historical and moral horizon. Furthermore, he believes that one's relationship to morality is embedded in one's identity: "to know who you are is to be oriented in moral space. . ." (*SS* 28). Earlier, I described Nietzsche's theory of eternal recurrence which seems to offer a way of self-determining moral action according to the context of an individual's life. To Taylor, such an endeavour would be self-deluding, and self-denying, for he believes that people express or articulate themselves with reference to an inescapable moral space, and other people in turn acknowledge the identity that is freely articulated or invented. Even if you want to be radically autonomous or isolated from others, others have to be there to give credence to that isolation; therefore, you are still in a relationship with them, one that is defined negatively, i.e. you are disaffiliated *from* society, you articulate your identity against society.

The fact that modern individuals still acquire identity through their relationships with others, with their past, and with moral sources is something that tends to be overlooked by thinkers like Rorty.[16] This is a result of modernism's obsession with subjectivism and independence, initiated by Nietzsche. However, Taylor treats Nietzsche as the extreme, the one who took independence to its limits, verging on disaffiliation from society, and complete atomism. Taylor thinks that such extreme independence, if achieved, would actually be self-

defeating: "A society of self-fulfillers, whose affiliations are more and more revocable cannot sustain the strong identification with the political community which public freedom needs" (*SS* 508). Taylor suggests that a re-evaluation of the moral sources still relevant to modern individuals, along with the identification of new ones, can prevent the struggle for autonomy and increased subjective powers from sliding into total meaninglessness, and even help to re-establish a sense of community.

Taylor observes that contemporary society values or demands certain things which directly or indirectly stem from longstanding moral sources. The demands he identifies are: universal benevolence, equality, freedom and self-rule, the affirmation of ordinary life, and avoidance of death and suffering (*SS* 495). Their main sources are religion, the Enlightenment, and Romantic expressivism (*SS* 495). It is unlikely that any of these sources in their original, unedited form, directly influence anyone's actions today, or that people act in cognizant accordance to them anymore. Questions of morality in modernity are no longer posed in universal terms; answers are now discerned by the individual.[17] But this personal dimension does not occlude the fact that there is still a moral dimension to contemporary culture which now operates on a level of particularity.[18] Taylor believes that most people have internalized traditional moral sources; they no longer identify their own principles or personal sets of beliefs with larger frameworks such as Christianity, or Marxism. But people do establish hybrid sorts of belief systems while living within communities in which the values of larger frameworks have become entrenched. An individual may have somehow learned what could be called Christian values, even though s/he hardly ever goes to church. Taylor's study identifies the ancestors of those orphaned values. His findings thereby

contradict Rorty's contention that liberals' concern for others, and their common desire to avoid pain and humiliation are "ungroundable". Instead of disposing of moral sources altogether and adopting the new tools of a Rortyan (actually Nietzschean à la Nehamas) "poeticized culture" (*CIS* 68), Taylor finds the roots of contemporary values in moral sources that have gradually been edited and augmented over time by society.

Critics of contemporary culture usually complain of a general loss of a sense of values.[19] Individualism has supposedly declined into atomism and relativism, and instrumental reason has incurred serious damage to the environment.[20] But Taylor thinks that these critics have failed to recognize the new moral ideal behind the goal of self-fulfilment, which he calls the ethic of authenticity, or the ideal of "being true to oneself" (*MM* 15-16). This new moral ideal has not been articulated because many people (especially intellectuals such as Rorty) are hostile to the idea of morality having any hold on people today. He thinks that this misinterpretation makes the retrieval of "lost" moral sources all the more important:

> Articulacy here has a moral point, not just in correcting what may be wrong views but also in making the force of an ideal that people are already living by more palpable, more vivid for them; and by making it more vivid, empowering them to live up to it in a fuller and more integral fashion. (*MM* 22)

Articulating this moral ideal of authenticity publicly, and in the realm of theory is something Rorty dreads. Yet Taylor sees a danger in leaving the task of engendering solidarity, and articulating the voice of the oppressed to art because he thinks that a strong commitment to aesthetic goals can lead to extreme subjectivism.[21] Taylor considers this the negative aspect

of modernism, made apparent when the celebration of "the potential freedom and power of the self" takes precedence over "the good" (*SS* 488). But he believes this slide to subjectivism is avoidable, and that contemporary culture is not necessarily doomed to relativism, atomism, or self-destruction. Preventing these threats requires a balance of the two sets of needs, these being: (1) the continued compulsion of humans towards creation and construction, along with the accompanying demands for originality, and need to break away from surroundings; (2) the undeniable need to recognize one's "horizons of significance" and to continue engaging in dialogue with other people.[22] These two sets of warring demands are already present, but their equal articulation is now important in order to increase our understanding of where human life has been and where it is going.

To sum up the Rorty/Taylor contrast I've been describing, Taylor calls for a balance between public and private engagement of the self, and Rorty wants to stop dealing with the two in conjunction. The discrepancy between these two thinkers shows that the modernity problem is something contemporary philosophy still grapples with. But neither of them consider another perspective with regards to this problem. Rorty and Taylor both neglect to acknowledge the feminist outlook on modernism's public/private dilemma, and they do not consider the distinct issues this problem raises for women. Both discuss the development of the self, evidently referring to male and female selves, but they don't mention difference, they don't mention feminism, hence they don't mention the development of women as selves in their discussions.

Rorty's views clash with feminism more than Taylor's. In fact, Taylor's thoughts on the modern predicament are actually often similar to some feminists'. But Rorty does not

concede to feminist views at all, and I contend that his liberal ironist could not be a woman even though he uses the feminine pronoun in reference to this construct throughout his book. He quite plainly places the liberal ironist at the end of a long line of Western philosophers (all male), and then identifies this person as a woman without accounting for how her participation is now suddenly possible in a tradition that excluded her for so long. Rorty obliterates this historical fact by calling his liberal ironist *she*, and this is dangerous because it is misleading. Also dangerous is the string of false assumptions that could be drawn from it: if the liberal ironist can be a woman, one might think that she could also be a feminist, and that feminism can coexist with liberal ironism. Yet contrary to liberal ironism, feminism does not simply shrug off women's oppression as contingent, nor male oppressors as fellow contingencies. Most feminists consider these facts to be longstanding realities, not essential because of biology, but essentialized by religious and socio-economic institutions.[23] Feminists cannot just accept the contingency of their oppression until they sufficiently dismantle it "by developing an *explanatory-diagnostic analysis* of women's oppression across history, cultures, and societies, and by articulating an *anticipatory-utopian critique* of the norms and values of our current society and culture, which projects new modes of togetherness and of relating to ourselves and to nature in the future" (Benhabib's italics 158). I will illustrate a few aspects of this process in the next two chapters. Until it is complete, anything impeding women privately is a political issue. Furthermore, many feminists hope that autonomy and self-creation can be enjoyed equally by all people—male, female, of any race, ethnicity, sexual orientation—not just by "certain particular human beings" (*CIS* 65). Perhaps this is utopian, but then so is Rorty's model as he openly admits in his

introduction.[24] Faced with the two utopias, I doubt that a woman would choose Rorty's. In short, women and/or feminists are unlikely candidates for liberal ironism.

Of course, in light of Taylor's viewpoint, one might wonder who such a candidate might be, or even if the liberal ironist could *be* at all. The retreat of the individual into private redescription can lead to isolation and a loss of a sense of identity established in relationships with others. Taylor sees value in recognizing identity through such relationships, which Carol Gilligan points out in her book *In a Different Voice* has long been devalued, considered feminine, and therefore inferior to male-identified independence (*DV* 69). Feminist accounts of moral development cohere with Taylor's study better than Rorty's, as does his solution to the public/private dilemma. But Taylor does not acknowledge feminist scholarship. He talks about ideas that have concerned feminists since the nineteenth century or before, but under a different name: universal benevolence.[25] He wants to retrieve forgotten moral sources to help understand where we've been, where we are, and where we can go, but many aspects of those sources might be better left behind because they have caused women's and marginalized groups' oppression.[26] Lastly, he affirms the value in individualism, and incorporates it within the newest moral source, authenticity, yet he overlooks the valuable moral sources feminists are retrieving. I will discuss these sources in chapter 3.

As men, Rorty and Taylor cannot be expected to devote themselves wholeheartedly to feminism, but their failure even to acknowledge its role in the making of the modern self renders their studies incomplete. Perhaps in lieu of infringing upon feminist territory they think it best to let feminists speak for themselves. But they do not account for this exclusion,

and go on to present their discussions of selfhood as if they apply to all along a continuum of history in which feminism seems not to have played a part. Yet feminism has been profoundly influential during the last two centuries in the development of female selves. Again, perhaps Rorty and Taylor do not want to dwell in the differences between the two genders, so they implement gender-neutral language to transcend them. But as Alice Jardine says in *Gynesis*, "[t]he crises experienced by the major Western narratives have not been gender-neutral" (24). Rorty and Taylor's books indicate that the contemporary philosophical outlook on this narrative still leaves out the development of women's selfhood. Their solutions to the problems which arise out of the struggle for autonomy and self-creation can therefore only be thought of in connection to the Western philosophical tradition which suppresses women, and from which they themselves spring.

The development of the autonomy and self-creation of the woman artist is continually subsumed under the development of the male artist, and this perpetuates two misconceptions regarding modernist art and literature: either women must have been following in the footsteps of men's artistic development, or they weren't creating at all. The latter is simply wrong, as evidenced by the paintings and literature of modernists' female contemporaries, but the idea that women's development follows along the same pathway that men forge seems to be what a lot of male theorists think. Following this assumption and looking back to the inception of modernism, one could assume that women artists, like their male contemporaries, also would have sought maximal autonomy, self-determination, and the ability to isolate themselves from the community in order to create. It is as if these women could imagine themselves in the role of the Nietzschean artist figure, engaged in the debate he initiated

between maintaining ties to the community and tradition, versus breaking away in order to test the limits of creativity unimpeded by conformism. In fact, the woman artist at the inauguration of modernism could not even fathom such freedoms. For her, a life of isolation or any degree of privacy was impossible to imagine as she was expected to remain in the private sphere of the home where her time was occupied by caring for others. But if the woman artist managed to create her art despite her lack of autonomy, is autonomy really necessary for self-creation? Are autonomy and self-creation *the* compulsory prerequisites for any artist's affiliation with modernism, such that the woman artist was not actually ready for it? Or could it be that her artistic creation actually provided the woman artist her own route to autonomy, wherein she resisted the socially scripted public and private roles that she was given by writing her own script? This last question is the main focus of this project which I will address with reference to the novels of Woolf, Lessing, and Atwood.

In this first chapter I have traced the development of autonomy and self-creation within Western philosophy from a contemporary viewpoint because I want the full resonance of these terms to carry through when I apply them to my description of the woman artist figure. The pursuit of autonomy and self-creation holds a meaning for the woman artist which is quite different from that of the male modernist, and it consequently sets her off on an entirely different narrative.

2

Self-Creating Women

2.1 Framing the Triptych

The three novels about women artists I examine here provide three glimpses of women's self-creation through artistic creation en route to greater autonomy. I'll look at each individually within the following three sections of this chapter, then at the three together in chapter 3. It is as if I am presenting a narrative triptych, focusing on and exploring each individual panel, then stepping back to see how they hang together in the cumulative story they tell.

The narrative I traced in chapter 1 snowed that self-creation came out of autonomy, and was the end result of the inward turn away from the mediation of God and the cosmos. In the narrative in this chapter, self-creation comes first; the woman artist creates her autonomy through her process of self-creation over the course of these novels. At the beginning of the narrative, during Lily Briscoe's time, women were—if at all—minimally autonomous, as literary and historical studies on the period indicate.[1] Nevertheless, Lily still created, and so was able to initiate the process of her own self-creation. Since this process of attaining autonomy is different from that of her male modernist contemporaries, the woman artist's self-creation brings her a very different autonomy.

One indication of this difference, as I think this narrative triptych shows, is that rather than following a linear progression, the story of the woman artist figure's autonomy expands over time. This can be seen as one of the reasons why her pursuit of autonomy avoids the public/private rift as delineated in the linear progression of Chapter 1. The problem with

linear thinkers is that they start out in one way and refuse to stop and ask others for directions. Eventually they find that they arrive, not at the destination initially expected, but at a dead-end—the rift—lost and isolated. The narrative told in this chapter avoids this result. *To the Lighthouse*, *The Golden Notebook*, and *Cat's Eye* chronicle the experiences of three women artists' resistance to linearity. Lily, Anna, and Elaine each create their own "signifying space"[2] out of this experience. Eventually what they create becomes a shared space, one that other women can relate to out of their individual life stories, and one that continues to proliferate. Instead of coming upon a rift, the woman artist arrives at various conceptual bridges between women, between public and private, between feminism and moral philosophy—bridges which may in turn lead to solidarity.

However, some feminists contend that any pursuit of autonomy is egocentric and inevitably leads individuals into isolation. Judith Butler contends that autonomy is always built upon the notion of an "I" that is opposed to an "other" (326). Since much of twentieth-century feminism has concentrated on deconstructing the hierarchy of such binary oppositions, it seems antithetical to these thinkers to make personal autonomy a feminist goal. These are often the feminists who think about forming an alliance with postmodernism. It is not possible to fully deliberate this controversial issue here as it is beyond scope of this project. However, I will briefly frame this triptych within this ongoing debate which surrounds it.

I find the hesitancy Susan Bordo expresses regarding the postmodernism/feminism alliance in her article "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticism" convincing. Postmodernism can be seen as continuous with modernism, and therefore continuous with the male-dominated traditions that back it up. It is quite widely accepted that modernism extends

out of this tradition; Alice Jardine describes its resultant "crises of legitimation" as "crises in the narratives invented by men" (24). As a reaction against egocentric modernist narratives, postmodernism supposedly attempts to level out the patriarchy; the other(s) is/are finally acknowledged and retrieved, the "I" decentred. And postmodern theory is largely where this decentring process takes place, like a de-tox centre for the ego-inebriated self. However, despite the apparently sincere resolve of contemporary philosophers to dismantle the patriarchal traditions they inherit, Bordo notices some lingering ghosts of the patriarchy: "I would argue, the philosopher's fantasy of transcendence has not yet been abandoned. The historical specifics of the modernist, Cartesian version have simply been replaced with a new postmodern configuration of detachment, a new imagination of disembodiment: a dream of being *everywhere*" (Bordo's italics 143). The concept of a fixed self or identity is replaced with various characterizations of textual play: *jouissance*, Donna Haraway's Cyborg,[3] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's Trickster, or Jardine's gynema. The latter is defined as follows:

> The object produced by this process [gynesis[4]] is neither a person nor a thing, but a horizon, that toward which the process is tending: a *gynema*. This *gynema* is a reading effect, a woman-in-effect that is never stable and has no identity. (Jardine 25)

Bordo questions the repercussions of replacing identity with these "limitless multiple embodiments" (Bordo 145). The appeal is that they offer a way of escaping the clutches of centrism, by refusing "to assume a shape for which they must take responsibility" (Bordo 144). As such, the Cyborg, the gynema, and the Trickster are all forms of postmodern cyphers: the play or a-musement of texts that lose the self in a graceful, orderless dance.

Significantly, such cyphers began to appear as soon as critiques of modernism—from the perspectives of race, class, and gender—began to invoke change, initially in the academy where voices other than white, upper-middle-class men became acknowledged. Bordo thinks the timing of their appearance is highly suspect:

> Most of our institutions have barely begun to absorb the message of modernist social criticism; surely, it is too soon to let them off the hook via postmodern heterogeneity and instability. This is not to say that the struggle for institutional transformation will be served by univocal, fixed conceptions of social identity and location. Rather, we need to reserve *practical* spaces for both generalist critique and nuance. (Bordo's italics 153)

Bordo recognizes the value in hanging on to identity in theoretical analyses, and even believes that "centrism" is unavoidable: "We always 'see' from points of view that are invested with our social, political, and personal interests, inescapably 'centric' in one way or another, even in the desire to do justice to heterogeneity" (140). By coming to terms with one's centrism as well as that of others, one can avoid its pitfalls of prejudice and root out discrimination rather than dance around it.

Furthermore, many contemporary male thinkers still are not sufficiently familiar with the history or goals of feminism—as Richard Rorty openly confesses[5]—to enter into an equitable alliance with feminism. In other words, we know their story but they still don't know ours. Yet studies such as Jardine's *Gynesis* continue to concentrate on male-written philosophical and fictional texts.[6] I do not mean to discredit the value of Jardine's important work by any means, but the examination of women's texts could bring to light viewpoints

that could contribute to feminism's future. Instead of concentrating on *configurations* of women in texts written by men, I propose to look at *women artist figures* in texts written by women. Self-creation and autonomy play an integral role in these novels, and contrary to the fears of postmodern feminists, the women artists' pursuit of them is neither egocentric nor oppressive. In fact, feminist moral theorists such as Diana T. Meyers show that rather than blocking out the Other, autonomy can be achieved while retaining strong connections with others as well as one's role in community:

> Properly understood, personal autonomy does not serve as a convenient excuse for untrammelled egoism or for superficial emotional ties. Rather, by placing interpersonal and social bonds on an egalitarian and reciprocal basis, it deepens these bonds while securing the dignity of the people involved along with their self-realization. (*SSP* xii-xiii)

Relinquishing autonomy and self-creation for the sake of the postmodern rubric would undoubtedly do violence (and seemingly already has) to the work of Carol Gilligan in psychology, and of Diana T. Meyers and Seyla Benhabib in moral philosophy. Bordo's essay suggests that such an alliance could be detrimental to feminism in the long run. In "Women's Time," Julia Kristeva offers a warning that is eerily relevant to this debate:

> Experience proves that too quickly even the protest or innovative initiatives on the part of women inhaled by power systems (when they do not submit to them right away) are soon credited to the system's account; and that the long-awaited democratization of institutions as a result of the entry of women most often comes down to fabricating a few "chiefs" among them. The difficulty

> presented by this logic of integrating the second sex into a value-system experienced as foreign and therefore counter-invested is how to avoid the centralization of power, how to detach women from it and how then to proceed, through their critical, differential and autonomous interventions, to render decision-making institutions more flexible. (WT 202)

All of the genuflecting postmodern-minded male theorists now seem to do before feminism will likely cease if feminism is inhaled by the modernist successor machine of postmodernism.

I think that a refamiliarization of feminist theory with the development of women artists over the twentieth century could play a part in the resolution of this ongoing feminism/postmodernism debate. While this controversy lingers in the background, the narrative triptych which follows examines the several bridges women's writing is constructing between women in theory and in literature, in lieu of becoming just another beam in postmodernism's (de)construction.

2.2 Lily Briscoe

Lily Briscoe is peculiar. She is not like other artist figures in modernist novels such as Stephan Dedalus; she's not the focus of the narrative, the main protagonist, she's not autonomous, but rather is a member of the group or communal protagonist that collectively performs the novel's action. Lily is also peculiar in that she is unlike the other female characters in *To the Lighthouse*; she paints, and she doesn't want to marry. Her sense of her difference from others affects her. It is her choice, but this choice alienates her. Lily's feelings of strandedness, her lack of self-confidence, and her sense of insignificance align her with the situations of other female artists at the beginning of the twentieth century; not because she shares particular experiences, but because of her peculiarity.

The way Lily is situated within the narrative space of *To the Lighthouse* serves to deflect attention away from her and to dissuade readings that might present her as the key to Woolf's meandering plot. Such readings would undermine Woolf's narrative strategy, purposively chosen, I will argue, to present Lily as the meek, ambivalent member of a group that any woman artist undoubtedly would have been early in this century. The novel can be thought of as a group portrait wherein Lily appears standing slightly off to the side and partly behind the others. But I want to enlarge her place in this picture, without exaggerating her role, in order to observe her among the other characters in the novel. In Lily's situation within the narrative, she is a reluctant model for the woman artist of her time, dealing with interruptions, feelings of insecurity, and other obstacles to artistic creativity in a socio-cultural environment unmistakably hostile to women's artistic pursuits, best summed up by Charles Tansley's statement, "women can't write, women can't paint" (*TL* 48). Her struggle against

these obstacles—both real and imagined—shapes her work, but the eventual completion of her painting proves that she overcomes them. I want to observe Lily's relationships with Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, the obstacles she encounters, and to contemplate the completion of her painting at the novel's close. She seems to shy away from the attention I give her and asks only to be able to paint. But I hope to show that both this request and her finished work are significant accomplishments even though "it would be hung in the attics" (*TL* 166), because Lily and her painting are important to the women artists who succeed her. For although Lily cannot be said to achieve full autonomy, she creates, and therefore, self-creates.

In *Writing beyond the Ending*, Rachel Blau DuPlessis observes that Woolf's use of the communal protagonist as a narrative strategy provides a way of deviating from the traditional romance or quest plots of nineteenth-century novels which typically focus on the events of a central character's life (163). DuPlessis identifies this as a strategy of Woolf's later novels, mainly *The Years* (1937) and *Between the Acts* (1941), but I think it is evident in *To the Lighthouse* (1927) as well. Here, as in her later novels, the story is relayed through various characters and even, in "Time Passes," through the personification of the intangible "airs". There is no one character that dominates this novel, nor is there any one plot.[1] It relates in detail the mundane events of two quite unspectacular days with ten years—during which World War I occurs—in between. I focus on Lily Briscoe and her painting, but she is no more important to the story than any of the other characters. In fact, compared to the action and dialogue centred on Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, Lily is quite minor, her painting barely noticed by the other characters. This is precisely why I want to talk about her.

I should clarify what I mean by my last statement: the fact that Lily paints in the

midst of others yet no one notices her work, that she barely speaks, that she chooses not to marry and is therefore peculiar, and that all of this shapes her work, in total makes her representative of women artists from her socio-cultural background early in this century. She is made to feel an outcast, an anamoly, within a community in which she nonetheless must participate. Woolf's depiction of a woman artist as part of a communal protagonist is not fictional invention, it is reality. She expands on this idea in her discussion of the woman writer in *A Room of One's Own*: "Her sensibility had been educated for centuries by the influences of the common sitting-room. People's feelings were impressed upon her; personal relations were always before her eyes" (64). Actually portraying the creative process of a woman in this way within a novel is innovative; it is at once an alternative to, and critique of, egocentric modernist novels characterized by "the letter 'I'"[2] and the society of which they are products. DuPlessis points out:

> The communal protagonist is a way of organizing the work so that neither the development of an individual against a backdrop of supporting characters nor the formation of a heterosexual couple is central to the novel. . . . the choral protagonist makes the group, not the individual, the central character. Not based on individual *Bildung* or romance, but rather on a collective *Bildung* and communal affect, the novel can suggest the structures of social change in the structures of narrative. The communal protagonist operates, then, as a critique both of the hierarchies and authoritarian practice of gender and of the narrative practice that selects and honors only major figures. (DuPlessis's italics 163)

Recognizing the portrayal of the communal protagonist as a narrative strategy affords a way

of valuing the creative opportunities available to women who really worked in this kind of social setting—the communally shared private realm—and of valuing the work that results. The woman artist at this time could not enjoy the privacy and isolation available to her male contemporaries. Yet her social situation provides different creative opportunities which in turn serve as a way of critiquing the "social script"[3] which was typically upheld in nineteenth-century novels. In Lily's case, the presence of the Ramsays and their other guests provides her the opportunity to work out an understanding of the people around her and the problems that arise between them which she draws out on her canvas. She creates not in spite of, but "out of community with people" (*TL* 148).[4]

Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay are Lily's main concern. Their relationship, and what they each represent to her as individuals preoccupies her. Lily deeply admires them both, yet they also represent obstacles to her painting, and interfere with her attempt to affirm her identity as an artist. Mrs. Ramsay is the greater source of frustration because although Lily respects and admires her, she cannot accept Mrs. Ramsay as a role-model if she hopes to be a painter. In fact, Mrs. Ramsay outwardly represents the very role that Lily is resisting: wife and mother.[5]

Mrs. Ramsay lives for and by this role. She attempts to organize the lives of everyone around her, decreeing who should marry whom, while maintaining a studious reverence to her husband even when she disagrees with him. As a pillar of the community, a dutiful wife, and doting mother, Mrs. Ramsay would fit well inside a romance plot as described by DuPlessis:

> As a narrative pattern, the romance plot muffles the main female character, represses quest, valorizes heterosexual as opposed to homosexual ties, incorporates individuals within couples as a sign of their personal and narrative

> success. The romance plot separates love and quest, values sexual asymmetry, including the division of labor by gender, is based on extremes of sexual difference, and evokes an aura around the couple itself. In short, the romance plot is a trope for the sex-gender system as a whole. (5)

Mrs. Ramsay seems to be trying to *create* the aura of the romance plot in the world around her; this is, in fact, the nature of her art. Lily, however, does not fit into Mrs. Ramsay's plot because she resists marriage and is trying to be a painter, a highly unconventional role for a woman. Lily's painting simultaneously represents her self-creation as an artist and her resistance to the romance plot, the model for Mrs. Ramsay's design. The two women's designs conflict throughout "The Window," while they both try to make the other the subject of their respective designs. Yet even though they are very different kinds of artists and pose obstacles to each others' designs, these women share a similar concern for relationships and have a common obstacle: men.

First, I will explicate how Lily and Mrs. Ramsay obstruct each others' creative designs. In "The Window," Lily's vision is continually thwarted due to her mixed feelings for Mrs. Ramsay. These range from love, admiration, and empathy for her as an artist, as well as a desire to please, to Lily's opposing need to resist and reject Mrs. Ramsay as a role-model in order to maintain her own nebulous identity. There are moments when Lily seems to desire intimacy with Mrs. Ramsay, and others when she clearly resents her control; for example, when Mrs. Ramsay seems to invoke the "universal law" that "they all must marry" (*TL* 50, 49). Lily desires exemption from this rule for "she liked to be alone; she liked to be herself; she was not made for that [marriage]," for she is a painter. Yet she also does not

want "to meet a serious stare from eyes of unparalleled depth, and confront Mrs Ramsay's simple certainty . . . that her dear Lily, her little Brisk, was a fool" (*TL* 50). Lily is frustrated because she cannot change her own views on marriage, nor does she want to, but she also does not want to disappoint Mrs. Ramsay. However, Mrs. Ramsay herself becomes a disappointment, for although Lily senses that there is much more to this woman beneath the polished veneer she artfully maintains, she remains unreachable. "Like a bee," Lily haunts the "murmurs and stirrings" she senses are sealed within the dome of Mrs. Ramsay (*TL* 51):

> Sitting on the floor with her arms round Mrs Ramsay's knees, close as she could get, smiling to think that Mrs Ramsay would never know the reason of that pressure, she imagined how in the chambers of the mind and heart of the woman who was, physically, touching her, were stood, like the treasures in the tombs of kings, tablets bearing sacred inscriptions, which if one could spell them out would teach one everything, but they would never be offered openly, never made public. . . . Could loving, as people called it, make her and Mrs Ramsay one? for it was not knowledge but unity that she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge. . . . (*TL* 50-51)

But Lily cannot get close enough to disclose Mrs. Ramsay's capacious knowledge because this woman admits no one into this depth, not even her husband. Thus, Mrs. Ramsay prevents Lily from attaining the complete vision of her that she needs to finish her painting. In Mrs. Ramsay's presence, Lily's design is continually overpowered. Similarly, the lesbian subtext in this passage hinting at Lily's desire for sexual unity must also be frustratingly

suppressed; for Mrs. Ramsay stands for heterosexuality, conventionality, and restraint.

Of course, Lily is right about Mrs. Ramsay: there is more to her than she outwardly reveals. This controlling and apparently *in control* matriarch has many worries and fears that she speaks nothing of, but which occupy her private, suppressed thoughts:

> 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 . . . 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. (*TL* 58)

Mrs. Ramsay expresses through gestures and glances, never in words, her feelings toward others. To continue with the parallel drawn above between Mrs. Ramsay and the romance plot, DuPlessis says that this narrative form "muffles" the female heroine; in *To the Lighthouse* Mrs. Ramsay muffles herself. Everyone's lives run smoothly because she skilfully takes care of the details. She makes an art out of impressions, appearances, and atmospheres, flirtatiously unveiling the people gathered around the dinner table, and veiling things that frighten her children in the dark.[6] Only when the house is quiet and the younger children are in bed does she manage to have some time alone with her private thoughts:

> For now she need not think about anybody. She could be herself, by herself. And that was what now she often felt the need of—to think; well not even to think. To be silent; to be alone. All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others.

(*TL* 60)

Only Lily senses the "unfathomable" depth of Mrs. Ramsay, for she also works with appearances and relationships. And only Lily can understand the source of Mrs. Ramsay's fatigue: "as if her own weariness had been partly pitying people, and the life in her, her resolve to live again, had been stirred by pity" (*TL* 80). Fittingly, Lily's understanding of Mrs. Ramsay manifests in her painting; she represents her with James in the shape of a purple triangle as if reflecting Mrs. Ramsay's own image of herself as a "wedge-shaped core of darkness."[7]

I have been stressing Lily's and Mrs. Ramsay's differences and showing how their designs conflict, but their artistic goals are actually quite similar: to fix moments and make them permanent.[8] Mrs. Ramsay's canvas is people's memories which she tries to shape by affecting them in the present, and Lily tries to capture people's essences forever in paint. Also, Mr. Ramsay is their common obstacle. He frustrates Mrs. Ramsay because he fails to see the impression he makes on his children's minds when he insists upon always telling the truth. In this way, he is a hopelessly linear thinker who adheres strictly to rational principles. But Mrs. Ramsay is carefully attentive to the need—or even the responsibility—in certain situations to evade the truth. She knows that "children never forget. For this reason, it was so important what one said, and what one did. . ." (*TL* 60). Thus, although the trip to the lighthouse seems rather insignificant to Mr. Ramsay, denying James of it will prove to have a lasting effect on the boy. From the opening scene Mrs. Ramsay attempts to avoid this end.[9]

Mrs. Ramsay's impulse to control extends to everyone around her. Her concern for others indeed includes the whole community, as she contemplates larger social issues such as

poverty "in the hope that thus she would cease to be a *private woman* . . . and become . . . an investigator elucidating the social problem" (my italics, *TL* 14). Apparently, even Mrs. Ramsay thinks about resisting the social script envisioning a potential public role, though, only on a suppressed level. Instead, Mrs. Ramsay dedicates herself to family and friends because her identity derives from her role as a homemaker.

Care is her art. But Mrs. Ramsay finds this role exhausting such that there is "scarcely a shell of herself left for her to know herself by; all was so lavished and spent. . ." (*TL* 39). As critic Gillian Beer observes, "women are shaped . . . into forms 'responsive to demand'."[10] Men like her husband and Charles Tansley are assured of their identities and their immortality by the books and ideas which will survive after them. But Mrs. Ramsay seems to know that her contribution to the world as a wife and mother is fleeting and "negligible" (*TL* 40) so she pours all of her energy into preserving the moment, fixing it into pleasant memories for others, and holding the future at bay.[11]

The association of Mrs Ramsay's care to artistic creativity is most apparent in the dinner scene: "And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her" (*TL* 79). She presides at the end of the table over the others, influencing and cuing conversations as if she were the conductor of an orchestra. Casting a meaningful glance at Lily, Mrs. Ramsay prompts her to fulfil her "duty" as a woman by uttering a few kind words toward Charles Tansley in his moment of need. This scene is emblematic of how these women's two forms of creativity conflict.[12] Mrs. Ramsay needs Lily to compliment Charles Tansley. But Lily has felt insulted by his constant refrain "women can't write, women can't paint" (*TL* 48). She wants to "cease to enlarge"[13] this man, but carrying through this

"experiment" would destroy Mrs. Ramsay's design, and greatly disappoint her (*TL* 86). Despite her desire to see Tansley suffer in humiliation, Lily renounces her experiment of defiant silence and is kind to him in order to appease Mrs. Ramsay. For Lily, like Mrs. Ramsay, is concerned with her responsibility to others, and with maintaining meaningful relationships.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Ramsay concentrates on her design, encouraging the "iron girders" of "masculine intelligence" to uphold the conversation back and forth across the table as she periodically enhances it. The momentary unity she has been composing finally arrives:

> Now all the candles were lit, and the faces on both sides of the table were brought nearer by the candle light, and composed, as they had not been in the twilight, into a party round a table, for the night was now shut off by panes of glass, which, far from giving any accurate view of the outside world, rippled it so strangely that here, inside the room, seemed to be order and dry land; there, outside, a reflection in which things wavered and vanished, watcrily. (*TL* 91)

Change and flux remain safely outside for now; the meal is a success, and Paul and Minta, from what Mrs. Ramsay can see, have become engaged according to plan. She sits back, taking in all that she has created, listening to the rise and fall of the voices and their rhythm. Mrs. Ramsay's control of this composition is in fact so tight that after leaving the room "it changed, it shaped itself differently; it had become, she knew, giving one last look at it over her shoulder, already the past" (*TL* 103). Consequently, it falls out of her control and immediately "a sort of disintegration set in" (*TL* 103). She pauses for a moment as if to evaluate whether or not she has created a lasting impression on the diners' memories, whether

or not the effect of her design will live on, and if she has succeeded as an artist. Sensing that she has, she feels satisfied:

> 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. . . . and she felt . . . that community of feeling with other people which emotion gives as if the walls of partition had become so thin that practically (the feeling was one of relief and happiness) it was all one stream . . . and Paul and Minta would carry it on when she was dead. (*TL* 105)

However, in "Time Passes" it is revealed that Paul and Minta's marriage is not successful. The heterosexual couple that Mrs. Ramsay helps to unite separates over time, and many other things that seemed to have been under her control in "The Window" similarly disintegrate. This is indicative of the fleeting effect of her art.

DuPlessis notes the significance of this failed marriage and also observes that Mrs. Ramsay's death is narrated halfway through the novel instead of at the end, as the romance plot would script it. DuPlessis suggests that the death and the failed marriage signify the death of the romance genre Mrs. Ramsay represents: "And by the death of Mrs. Ramsay at midbook, the affirmation of the romantic, polarized couple is put definitively in the past" (60). I see these events as a commentary on two additional levels. First, on a socio-historical level, the death signifies the end of an era. Woolf seems to indicate that after World War I, a private-dwelling woman like Mrs. Ramsay could no longer exist. The war penetrates the barrier of the home, taking women outside it to work and also altering the structure of whole families that reside inside with death. Second, on a formal level, the shift into fragmented

prose in "Time Passes" after the more conventional narrative form in "The Window" illustrates the sudden threat of decay and complete destruction the war years bring near. This formal shift into cubist prose also serves to dismiss the mimetic tradition of art and literature.[14] The following passage contains all of these layers—the one DuPlessis identifies, as well as the two I have just described. And it is also a kind of requiem to Mrs. Ramsay. I cite the entire paragraph in order to convey its full significance:

> Did Nature supplement what man advanced? Did she complete what he began? With equal complacence she saw his misery, condoned his meanness, and acquiesced in his torture. That dream, then, of sharing, completing, finding in solitude on the beach an answer, was but a reflection in a mirror, and the mirror itself was but the surface glassiness which forms in quiescence when the nobler powers sleep beneath? Impatient, despairing yet loth to go (for beauty offers her lures, has her consolations), to pace the beach was impossible; contemplation was unendurable; the mirror was broken. (*TL* 125)

This paragraph ruminates on the mythic association of Woman with Nature. Nature/Woman supposedly completes "what man advanced." She silently observes man's meanness while standing by complacently. She is his beach, where he goes for solace; she completes him; she reflects him. Yet the war has thrown all of this into question (hence the punctuation). Mrs. Ramsay attempts to be this Woman, a mirror, or "surface glassiness which forms in quiescence when the nobler powers sleep beneath." But in the last sentence Woolf indicates that such a role is no longer possible: "the mirror was broken." Significantly, this paragraph also recalls the one cited above wherein the momentary unity Mrs. Ramsay composes inside

is reflected in the window (and "The Window"), while "there, outside . . . things wavered and vanished, waterily" (*TL* 91). In "Time Passes" Woolf conveys that change has now invaded; nothing is the same after the war, nothing is what it once seemed in nature, society, relationships, or art.[15]

In "The Lighthouse," Lily and the others who survive the war return to the house, resurrected by Mrs. McNab and Mrs. Bast, to sort through the fragments of their memories and attempt to synthesize them into a kind of order. On the morning of the novel's final day, Lily awakens to remember the problem of her painting:

> The question was of some relation between those masses. She had borne it in her mind all these years. It seemed as if the solution had come to her: she knew now what she wanted to do. (*TL* 139)

Yet before she can solve the tension within the painting, she must clear away the obstacles posed by the tensions she feels within herself and in relation to others which continue to impinge upon her work. Mainly this involves finally coming to terms with Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, for "the relation between those masses" is that between the Ramsays, which seems imbalanced in "The Window":

> For what happened to her, especially staying with the Ramsays, was to be made to feel violently two opposite things at the same time; that's what you feel, was one; that's what I feel was the other, and then they fought together in her mind, as now. (*TL* 95)

The Ramsays' relationship is a marriage of opposites which Lily has trouble reconciling in her mind and on her canvas because of her own ambivalence towards each of them, and also

because of her resistance to marriage itself.[16] As Patricia Waugh succinctly puts it, Lily is "fighting for her identity" (102) while struggling with the influence of each of the Ramsays. At forty-four, she remains single, which seems to indicate a victory of her self-created identity over Mrs. Ramsay's plot of a marriage to William Bankes. But Lily still seems dissatisfied, afraid her life has been a waste, and that she is nothing but an "old maid," "playing at painting" (142, 141). Furthermore, she resents Mrs. Ramsay for leaving her to deal with her husband: "it was all Mrs Ramsay's fault. She was dead" (*TL* 141). Ironically, after successfully resisting Mrs. Ramsay's pressure to marry for years, Lily is now obligated to extend sympathy to her widower, to finally play the part of a wife.

This task unnerves Lily, as she has mixed feelings for Mr. Ramsay. She dislikes "his narrowness, his blindness" (*TL* 46), although she respects his mind. In "The Lighthouse," she becomes paralysed by Mr. Ramsay's presence "bearing down" on her so that she cannot paint (*TL* 139). He intrudes upon her while she works, demanding her attention, and in so doing he seems to intrude upon the life she has chosen: "You shan't touch your canvas, he seemed to say, bearing down on her, till you've given me what I want of you" (*TL* 141). The intimidation Lily feels invokes her feelings of self-doubt; she berates herself for being "not a woman, but a peevish, ill-tempered, dried-up old maid" (*TL* 142), translating her reluctance to respond to Mr. Ramsay immediately into her failure as a woman:

> 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. . . . His immense self-pity, his demand for sympathy poured and spread itself in pools at her feet, and all she did, miserable sinner that she was, was to

draw her skirts a little closer around her ankles, lest she should get wet. (*TL* 143)

She castigates herself for not knowing how to play a part she's never authentically desired, but one which, nonetheless, is still socially scripted for her, as is the consequent guilt she now feels. The very conventions she resists by being a woman artist now haunt her; she feels compelled to measure herself and her identity by them. Thus, Lily's artistic creation remains closely linked to her self-creation, and both continue to be linked to her relationship with each of the Ramsays.

But even Mr. Ramsay, the patriarch himself, is affected by convention and ingrained social expectations. DuPlessis observes, "Mr. Ramsay stands for male culture at its best and most vulnerable" (95). He seems somewhat stranded in his world without Mrs. Ramsay, now that women's roles are moving towards change, but Lily simply does not feel qualified at this point to help him beyond complimenting him on his boots.

The problem in Lily's painting will remain, as will her inner insecurities, until both Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay are at a sufficient spatial and temporal distance for her to concentrate on completing her work. Yet interruption is not Lily's only obstacle. As DuPlessis suggests, "Lily's painting can be completed only if she immerses herself in vulnerability, need, exposure, and grief, only through empathy—a set of feelings usually called womanly—and not through exclusive attention to aesthetics in a vacuum. . ." (97). The spatial distance of Mr. Ramsay and the temporal distance of Mrs. Ramsay, then, afford Lily the opportunity to examine her feelings for both and to fully understand them.

Finally, when Mr. Ramsay is off on the journey to the lighthouse, Lily faces with

determination "this formidable ancient enemy of hers": her painting, and by extension her identity as a woman artist (*TL* 148). Suddenly she feels vulnerable, however, because in artistic expression she exposes herself and becomes susceptible to others' criticism, as well as her own self-doubt:

> Always (it was in her nature, or in her sex, she did not know which) before she exchanged the fluidity of life for the concentration of painting she had a few moments of nakedness when she seemed like an unborn soul . . . exposed without protection to all the blasts of doubt. (*TL* 148)

Her doubt is compounded by the "voice saying she couldn't paint, saying she couldn't create" which seems to hypnotize her and make her believe she will fail. This voice is part of the "habitual currents" Lily has become used to hearing, "which after a certain time forms experience in the mind. . ." (*TL* 148). One of their sources is Charles Tansley who constantly belittles her, "making it his business to tell her women can't write, women can't paint, not so much that he believed it, as that for some odd reason he wished it?" (*TL* 181). But suddenly, Lily puts an end to these currents. When she hears the same voice again in her mind, she remembers that it is Tansley's. As if realizing his smallness she compares him to a red ant and promptly dismisses one cause of her sense of her work's insignificance.

At last, Lily realizes that she shares something with Mrs. Ramsay, and this realization causes her to sense the unity she has long desired. She recalls Mrs. Ramsay in the act of creating: "Mrs Ramsay bringing them together; Mrs Ramsay saying 'Life stand still here'; Mrs Ramsay making of the moment something permanent" (*TL* 151). And this is what they share, for Lily remembers "in another sphere [she] herself tried to make of the moment

something permanent" (*TL* 151). With this thought, the two women's designs no longer conflict, and Lily has her "revelation":

> In the midst of chaos there was shape; this external passing and flowing . . . was stuck into stability. Life stand still here, Mrs. Ramsay had said. "Mrs Ramsay! Mrs Ramsay!" she repeated. She owed this revelation to her. (*TL* 151)

Now that Lily has established a sense of unity with Mrs. Ramsay, she must resolve her feelings for Mr. Ramsay before she can complete her painting. Basically, it all comes down to Lily coming to terms with herself as a woman. If she fails to complete her painting to her satisfaction it seems this will be because she has failed as a woman to provide support to this man in need. So her painting's completion hinges upon fulfilling the wifely role she has always resisted because it seemed incompatible with her identity as a painter. Conversely, completing her painting will provide her the sense of accomplishment she needs to let go of her guilt over rejecting this role, and will provide her with proof that she has not wasted her life unproductively. But painting itself conflicts with socially scripted womanly roles. Such is the conflict Lily faces. She has been resisting conventional gender roles by trying to create herself into an artist, and it now seems impossible to her to be a painter and a woman at the same time. But suddenly combining the roles of woman and artist seems necessary in order to complete her painting. The tensions which preoccupy her all converge upon her canvas: between the Ramsays, between the two masses in her composition, and between being a woman and a painter.[17]

The synthesis of these disparate elements begins as Lily contemplates the subjects she

is painting. She thinks again of the Ramsays' marriage and their small disagreements, noticing for the first time not their differences, but what they share, how they complete each other, and how they help each other. Finally, just before adding her last brushstroke and solving her aesthetic problem, Lily feels a wave of sympathy for Mr. Ramsay, thereby appeasing the demand that had posed an obstacle to her that morning: "Whatever she had wanted to give him, when he left her that morning, she had given him at last" (*TL* 191). This synthesis is twofold: that between herself and each of the Ramsays individually, and that between the Ramsays together in her mind. These syntheses translate to her painting when she makes the final brushstroke that connects the two masses.

Lily's syntheses can be regarded in two different ways. In a negative light, it seems that a woman artist during Lily's time could not be free from the demands placed upon her as a woman, and that her creativity remains tied up in that. She may resist as Lily does, but ultimately society won't let go its gender-role enforcement, nor will men let go their demands for sympathy. Yet in a more positive light, Lily's completion of her artistic goal, after showing sympathy to Mr. Ramsay, could indicate that she's found a way of synthesizing these apparently conflicting roles; she now sees that she can be a woman who extends kindness to others, *and* she can paint.[18] The fact that she doesn't complete her painting until she achieves synthesis might indicate its necessity. In this way, her identity is affirmed at the end with what she has accomplished, i.e., her self-creation is affirmed by her artistic creation: "I have had my vision" (*TL* 192). Extending sympathy to Mr. Ramsay leads to self-affirmation rather than to a loss of identity.

Susan Stanford Friedman understands Lily as a hybrid of two kinds of creativity,

masculine and feminine:

> her creativity is like Mrs. Ramsay's in its eroticism, in its insistence on finding the harmonious relationship between objects in space. But her art is like Mr. Ramsay's in being tangible, in taking up its own space in the world outside the home, in existing in time, to be forgotten one day like Mr. Ramsay's book. (174)

It is unclear what Friedman means by Lily's "eroticism." Differing slightly with Friedman, I propose that Lily's creativity is like Mrs. Ramsay's due to their similar desire to fix the moments they share with people around them, and in their concern for relationships. Furthermore, Friedman, like other critics who argue that Lily represents the *balance* of the Ramsays' polarities, doesn't acknowledge that Lily's own thinking remains polarized (evident in the unconnected masses in her painting) until she can finally relate to her two role-models, and realize how much they share instead of dwelling on their differences. I agree that Lily arrives at a kind of balance, but I stress that it is a balance she learns through relating, not one she statically represents throughout the novel.

Determining what Woolf suggests by the completion of Lily's painting is problematic. Indeed, the message Woolf repeatedly seems to invoke in her works is for women to go ahead and write; political change, she seems to suggest, will come later.[19] In *To the Lighthouse* Lily decides although her painting "would be hung in the attics," the attempt is all that matters, "that it 'remained for ever'" (*TL* 166). But of course the attempt to create itself becomes a political issue, as Anna Wulf discovers. Woolf's invocation to women to create seems slightly naïve as it seems that after Lily achieves what she attempts the path is clear.

But things become a lot more complicated than that as *The Golden Notebook* will reveal.

Nevertheless, Lily's vision does mark an accomplishment. She does not succumb to discouraging obstacles such as Tansley's attitude, Mrs. Ramsay's "universal law," or her own feelings of inferiority. She has negotiated with the conventions she inherits and won her identity as a woman artist, and the proof is in the painting. Lily manages to create within a surrogate family setting—a private realm that offers no privacy—and though this is significant, and significantly different from male artists who were shunning the community in favour of isolation, it is just the beginning. Women artists after Lily gradually move away from the group and become politically active, sexually active, and mothers as well as artists. Lily's vision, found within a communal setting, is definitely notable, and it is also the first move towards autonomy; recognition will follow.

2.3 Anna Wulf

I began my discussion of Lily Briscoe by emphasizing her peculiarity. By mid-century it is no longer enough for the woman artist to remain the peculiar member of a group, satisfied merely with what her creative work attempts, without trying to change the social script that makes this such a difficult effort. Nonetheless, the portrayal of Lily as part of a communal protagonist in *To the Lighthouse* accurately depicts the circumstances that a woman artist of her time would face; she shares the narrative space with the Ramsay family in the way that most women shared their time then. But this portrayal does not offer concrete suggestions to alter the societal structures that keep women within this private realm. Woolf shows Lily stretching its limits by managing to finish her painting, thereby proving that her constrained role does not completely stifle her creativity, and that self-creation is still possible under such circumstances. But her realm of experience remains private. Only when women step into the public realm and become politically active can they instigate lasting change to their roles. Otherwise, the woman artist will always dwell in the private, and may as well go back into the attic, where Lily knows her painting is destined to hang, to resume the role of the madwoman. But when she reveals her work—the product of her own self-creation within these constraints—to the public, and claims her identity as an artist, as Anna Wulf does in *The Golden Notebook*, she no longer remains the peculiar member of a group. She becomes a dissident fighting for autonomy.

I borrow the term *dissident* from Julia Kristeva. In her article, "A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident," she delineates its four possible channels: politics, psychoanalysis, experimental writing, and simply being a woman. In *The Golden Notebook*,

Anna Wulf uses each of these four forms of dissidence in ways that correspond to the Kristevan model. In this discussion, I will compare Kristeva's and Lessing's thoughts on the dissident's role in society, and then I will use Kristeva's four categories as a framework to discuss Anna Wulf as an intellectual dissident. Together, Kristeva and Lessing suggest a productive way for the woman artist to resist and subvert the socio-symbolic contract[1] which keeps women from affirming their own identity.

First I should outline what Kristeva considers to be the function of the dissident. While maintaining an objective, "analytic position" (D 299) within society in order to critique the socio-symbolic contract, the dissident would:

> Give voice to each individual form of the unconscious, to every desire and need. Call into play the identity and/or the language of the individual and the group. Become the analyst of every kind of speech and institution considered socially impossible. Proclaim that we reveal the Impossible. (D 295)

Kristeva believes that the dissident should retain marginal status, yet still function within the fabric of society. S/he should not assume a position of overarching authority, but an objective, critical stance. A dissident is an intellectual, artist, or writer "in exile" (D 298).

When women adopt such positions in society, they activate changes to the very socio-symbolic contract that defines and confines them to narrow stereotypes and roles. Kristeva points out that the symbol *woman* (as opposed to a particular woman) has long been considered by thinkers such as Hegel to represent "the dark right of the nether world" (D 296) that must be dominated and mastered by men who control governments and determine ethics. Consequently, woman "never participates as such in the consensual law of politics and

society" (D 296). Never allowed to speak from or about her their own individual experience, women become subject to what they symbolize to men as *woman*; the projection of a fear of what is unknown, hence mysterious and unnameable. Thus, women's specific experiences as individuals remain unexpressed; they are reduced, defined, and explained under the male constructed symbol, *woman*. Particularity is erased by "the General" such that:

> A woman is trapped within the frontiers of her body and even of her species, and consequently always feels *exiled* both by the general clichés that make up a common consensus and by the very powers of generalization intrinsic to language. This female exile in relation to the General and to Meaning is such that a woman is always singular, to the point where she comes to represent the singularity of the singular—the fragmentation, the drive, the unnameable. (D 296)

What women symbolize in turn affects what society perceives them to be, and predetermines their roles. So if they begin to write about their own individual experiences they can start to dispel the myths upon which the socio-symbolic contract is based and help to subvert it. In this way, they can become dissidents, using their position of exile strategically to reformulate the contract by differentiating themselves apart from the General.

Kristeva makes clear that dissidents should not try to form new regimes wherein power is merely resituated in old hierarchical patterns. Seeking to avoid this, she envisions dissidents helping to change how power flows in an oppositional way from master to slave, from men to women, by steering clear of power games altogether. However, history reveals how ingrained this pattern is. When revolutionary movements are successful, their instigators

have a habit of becoming as authoritarian as the old. This is also true of originally subversive theories such as Marxism and Freudianism which become rigid, dogmatic, and lose their dissident edge when they assume authority within the socio-symbolic contract (D 294). The problem is that when the margin becomes centre, subversive movements lose their subversiveness, and dissidents lose their dissidence. But Kristeva maintains that this pattern can be altered if the marginal status of intellectual dissidents is maintained: "the future of Western society will greatly depend on a re-evaluation of the relationship of the masses to the individual or intellectual, and on our ability to break out of the dialectical trap between these oppositions and to recast the whole relationship" (D 293). She proposes quelling the impulse to turn to the avant-garde (subversive theory, or intellectual dissident) as the new order or version of the truth, because this centralization of power destroys the very relationship that coddles innovation.

Maintaining a dissident position entails critiquing instead of usurping the powers that be at the moment, or the current socio-symbolic contract, in order to reword it, make it more accountable, just, and fair. Kristeva thinks that this can work for Marxism:

> I am an exile from socialism and Marxist rationality, but far from seeing socialism as an impossible hypothesis for the West, as those from the Gulag think, I believe on the contrary that it is inevitable and consequently something that one can speak to. We must therefore attack the very premises of this rationality and this society, as well as the notion of a complete historical cycle, and dismantle them patiently and meticulously, starting with language and working right up to culture and institutions. This ruthless and irreverent

> dismantling of the workings of discourse, thought, and existence, is therefore the work of a dissident. Such dissidence requires ceaseless analysis, vigilance and will to subversion, and therefore necessarily enters into complicity with other dissident practices in the modern Western world. (D 299)

Whether or not her belief that Marxist rationality will end up playing the role that she foresees here is not my concern. What I consider important in this passage is her description of the dissident who "affirms dissolution and works through differences" (D 299), with a "will to subversion" (an ironic twist on Nietzsche's "will to power"). I think that Anna Wulf becomes this kind of dissident.

Doris Lessing's comments on dissidence in *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside* resemble Kristeva's:

> Everything that has ever happened to me has taught me to value the individual, the person who cultivates and preserves her or his own ways of thinking, who stands out against group thinking, group pressures. Or who conforming no more than is necessary to group pressures, quietly preserves individual thinking and development. (*P* 72)

Where Kristeva's target is Marxism, Lessing's is literature. She considers the function of writers in society crucial as they "enable us to see ourselves as others see us" (*P* 14), and she seems to write the character Anna Wulf into this role in *The Golden Notebook.*

Anna goes through the ups and downs of dissidence. For a period of her life she believes in the possibility of Marxist revolution, but eventually she comes to recognize the destructive pattern that evolves out of such political movements. Also, like Lily, she resists

traditional roles for women, refusing at all costs the life of the conventional housewife. But she ends up living out a stereotypical role anyway as "the other woman," by having affairs with married men who always go back to their wives. Supposedly a "free woman" (*GN* 4), she does not feel free, for she fears that she actually desires what she spends her life opposing; being a wife, loving one man. This fear, along with her disillusionment with politics, makes her wonder what her life has been for. A life of resistance seems to have brought her nothing, and she naturally questions her identity.

Kristeva accounts for such identity crises as the side-effect of dissidence: "The intellectual, who is the instrument of this discursive rationality, is the first to feel the effects of its break-up: his own identity is called into question, his dissidence becomes more radical" (D 295). In this way, dissidence seems to be self-destructive, because it necessarily involves giving up an old set of beliefs in order to affirm a new identity. Herein lies the paradox: self-creation involves self-destruction, but also enables one to affirm a new identity free from that which is rejected.

However, Kristeva warns against spending too much energy on protest, the self-destructive side of dissidence. This is precisely what denies Anna her sense of freedom, and contributes to her breakdown. Having spent much of her life in protest or in opposition to something, she cannot see beyond the old structures and roles she is resisting to a new way of life. Elsewhere, Lessing seems to criticize this tendency, and echoing Kristeva, she explains the need to get beyond protest in order to instigate change productively: "By using our freedoms, I do not mean just joining demonstrations, political parties, and so on and so forth, which is only part of the democratic process, but examining ideas, from whatever source they

come, to see how they may usefully contribute to our lives and to the societies we live in" (*P* 76). Letting go the object of critique in order to create new and useful alternatives is difficult but nevertheless imperative for complete subversion. Otherwise, dissidence is nothing but nihilism. By using an "analytic position in the face of conceptual, subjective, sexual and linguistic identity" (D 299) as dictated by the socio-symbolic contract, the dissident differentiates herself apart from it. If she is an artist, she then expresses herself in order "to bring about multiple sublations of the unnameable, the unrepresentable, the void" (D 300). Anna can be said to participate in this kind of project, but only after she stops thinking that her dissidence is fruitless and self-destructive, and thinks of it as a process of self-creation which leads her to autonomy.

I will now observe how Anna assumes each of the forms of dissidence Kristeva describes: political rebel, psychoanalyst (or rather, psychoanalized), experimental writer, and as a woman. Coincidentally, dividing a discussion about Anna in this manner corresponds to the way she compartmentalizes her life in her notebooks. These notebooks eventually collapse in on each other, just as her frustrated attempts at different forms of dissidence contribute to her breakdown which culminates in the "Golden Notebook". However, out of the chaos in this last notebook, she launches into recovery, finding a creative, productive outlet for her dissidence: her novel *Free Women.*

Before I discuss Anna's breakdown and recovery further, I want to observe her experiences as a political rebel. Anna's activities within the Communist Party in Africa and later on in London agree with Kristeva's description of this dissident type who "attacks political power. He transforms the dialectic of law-and-desire into a war waged between

Power and Resentment" (italics Kristeva's, D 295). Kristeva also explains—still in accord with Anna's experience—that "[h]is paranoia, however, means that he still remains within the limits of the old master-slave couple" (D 295). Similarly, as a political rebel, Anna's actions chain her to, and further entrench, the very force opposed, but in her case this force ends up being Communism itself.[2]

During her time in Central Africa, Anna is part of a communal protagonist, but it is different from the one in which Lily Briscoe participates. Anna's is "a group of exiles" (*GN* 68), seemingly thrown together out of the circumstances of World War II as well as their shared political beliefs. When Anna looks back on her experiences with this unlikely group in the black notebook, she realizes that the members didn't even like each other:

> I keep writing the word group. Which is a collection of people. Which one associates with a collective relationship—and it is true we met day after day for months, for hours every day. But looking back, looking back to really remember what happened, it is not at all like that. . . . As for me, I played the role of "the leader's girl friend"—a sort of cement, and ancient role indeed. (*GN* 81-82)

From her account, this group did little besides hold meetings and fight among themselves, which Anna eventually learns is symptomatic of Communism: "It is now obvious that inherent in the structure of a communist party or group is a self-dividing principle. Any communist party anywhere exists and perhaps even flourishes by this process of discarding individuals or groups" (*GN* 67). In retrospect, she realizes that her group's rapid demise could have been predicted: "Inside a year our group was split, equipped with sub-groups,

traitors, and a loyal hard core whose personnel, save for one or two men, kept changing" (*GN* 68). The enthusiasm they originally share for the communist cause of spreading happiness, "harmony, love, plenty and peace" (*P* 33) dissipates, and the group eventually dissolves. Even the sub-group at the Mashopi hotel breaks up after the members hurt and betray each other.

In *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside* Lessing considers this self-destructive pattern to be characteristic of revolutionary movements such as Christianity, which inevitably splinter into sects that begin to hate each other much more than any former, external enemy. Lessing suggests that acknowledging this pattern and noticing how it tends to recur throughout history will help to avoid it: "If we remain aware of this apparently inbuilt drive we may perhaps behave less mechanically" (*P* 26). Nevertheless, she goes on to point out, "it seems it is not enough to be aware of how things are likely to happen" (*P* 26). This is the case with Anna, for even after she witnesses the impossibility of the communist dream of wholeness in Central Africa, she joins the Party again in London.

Anna surprises herself when she thinks of returning to the Party. She claims to do so for two reasons: first, out of frustration with the literary scene in London which she finds "prissy, maiden-auntish," "class-bound," and blatantly commercial (*GN* 154); and second, after watching Molly's busy enthusiasm planning events, she wants to participate in the "atmosphere of friendliness, of people working for a common end" (*GN* 154). But Anna realizes these reasons are "not enough," and she admits that she also thinks the organization to be inherently dishonest, so she decides to remain outside as a "fellow traveller" (*GN* 154). Yet during her meeting with the party official, Comrade Bill, she goes ahead and joins. Her

desire for group affiliation seems to defeat her criticisms of the Party at this point, but even so, she remains ambivalent about her decision directly after she joins.

Why does she want affiliation with something she doesn't fully believe in? Anna's renewed involvement with Communism can only be explained by the split she feels within herself which causes her to seek wholeness. She turns to the Party because wholeness is central to the Communist myth which—indicative of her split—she ideally wishes she could believe the way she once did, even though she knows it is a lie: "there were always two personalities in me, the 'communist' and Anna, and Anna judged the communist all the time. And vice-versa" (*GN* 69). She joins again simply because she wants to attain the identity, Anna "the communist." Perhaps if Anna criticizes Anna the communist to death she will finally be whole again. For she ultimately needs to affirm herself, and the easiest way to do this is against something else. Joining the Communist Party actually strengthens her convictions against it when she finds, as she expects, that it is itself still split:

> somewhere at the back of my mind when I joined the Party was a need for wholeness, for an end to the split, divided, unsatisfactory way we all live. Yet joining the Party intensified the split—not the business of belonging to an organisation whose every tenet, on paper, anyway, contradicts the ideas of the society we live in; but something much deeper than that. (*GN* 161)

"The split" she feels becomes intensified because she finds that other people join for the same reason; the need for wholeness. All together they sustain the Communist myth of wholeness due to this common need, even though they don't believe in it authentically. The Communist Party sustains and is sustained by this split within its members, and eventually the hypocrisy

of this becomes untenable to Anna.

During a conversation with Mrs. Marks, her psychoanalyst, Anna confirms her disaffiliation from the Party even while she is still a member, and links this to her psychological state:

> "Why are you a communist?" "At least they believe in something." "Why do you say *they*, when you are a member of the Communist Party?" "If I could say *we*, really meaning it, I wouldn't be here, would I?" (italics Lessing's, *GN* 235)

Anna implies that she turns to psychoanalysis because she feels no affiliation with the Communist Party, and that this is contributing to her identity crisis. If she could believe in the Communist myth, she could attain identity out of belonging to a group. But she can't seem to quell her dissent. Even when Anna is a member of the Party she opposes it, and she is afraid of what her opposition will turn into. If she remains inside her dissidence is bound to expire:

> The Communist Party, like any other institution, continues to exist by a process of absorbing its critics into itself. It either absorbs them or destroys them. I think: I've always seen society, societies organised like this: a ruling section or government with other sections in opposition; the stronger section either ultimately being changed by the opposing section or being supplanted by it. But it's not like that at all: suddenly I see it differently. No, there's a group of hardened, fossilised men opposed by fresh young revolutionaries as John Butte once was, forming between them a whole, a balance. And then a group

> of fossilised hardened men like John Butte, opposed by a group of fresh and lively-minded and critical people. But the core of deadness, of dry thought, could not exist without lively shoots of fresh life, to be turned so fast, in their turn into dead sapless wood. In other words, I, "Comrade Anna" . . . keep Comrade Butte in existence, feed him, and in due course will become him. (*GN* 344)

The idea of losing her outsider status, or her dissidence, frightens her. These thoughts remind her of a recurring nightmare she has about an executioner who switches places with a sentenced man: "the two exchange a brotherly smile: the smile holds a terrible truth that I want to evade. Because it cancels all creative emotion" (*GN* 345). Her dream illustrates the problem of the margin becoming centre, which Kristeva warns destroys dissidence. Anna recognizes this pattern and knows that if she remains within the Party she will eventually switch places with the executioner and become, like Comrade Butte, part of the dead sapless wood of authority. This prospect scares her: "everything in me cries out against such a view of life" (*GN* 345). She does not want to forfeit her position of critique, and is beginning to realize that she must be an outsider in order to maintain it. Therefore, Anna the dissident can no longer be Anna the communist: "I'm leaving the Party. It's a stage of my life finished. And what next? I'm going out, willing it, into something new, and I've got to. I'm shedding a skin, or being born again" (*GN* 353).

But Anna does not yet recognize that being a dissident is a legitimate identity. Until she does, her need to assert herself in opposition to something continues. She turns to psychoanalysis in an attempt to resolve the split she feels between the sane, critical Anna and

the Anna who is verging on a breakdown or identity crisis. But just as she does not find wholeness in the Communist Party because she cannot believe its central myth, she does not find a cure in psychoanalysis because she cannot accept its system of myths and names. In this way, Anna becomes a dissident patient.

Kristeva writes that the psychoanalyst "transforms the dialectic of law-and-desire into a contest between *death and discourse*" (italics Kristeva's, D 295). The archetypal artist supposedly transcends death by achieving self-creation through discourse, language, writing, or any form of artistic creativity. Mrs. Marks's analysis of Anna can be seen as an application of this dichotomy, as she insists that Anna is suffering from writer's block.[3] She even coaxes Anna to confess that she is afraid of death in order to make the diagnosis fit. Anna describes herself:

> "Very Well: Anna Wulf is sitting in a chair in front of a soul-doctor. She is there because she cannot deeply feel about anything. She is frozen.". . . "Why is she frozen?" "She is afraid." "What of?" "Of death." She nodded, and I broke in across the game and said: "No, not of my death." (*GN* 234-35)

Mrs. Marks nods approvingly because Anna says what she wants to hear Fear of death would neatly explain Anna's block, according to the death versus discourse dichotomy. Only Anna isn't afraid of her own death, but rather, *feels* dead because her sources of meaning—art and Communism—have become bankrupt. There seems to be no reason for her to write as she sees only "death and destruction" (*GN* 235) everywhere: "I can't pick up a newspaper without what's in it seeming so overwhelmingly terrible that nothing I could write would seem to have any point at all" (*GN* 251).

The death versus discourse dichotomy does not seem to apply to Anna, yet it seems to be the basis of Mrs. Marks's analysis of her. She thinks that Anna will be cured if she simply starts to write again, for her block is supposedly a manifestation of her fear of death. But Anna insists that this is not her problem and that she is not suffering a block, she simply does not care to write: "Mrs Marks, you must believe me, I don't care if I never write another word." (*GN* 234). Mrs. Marks's analysis does not explain Anna, and in fact, according to the socio-symbolic system her Freudianism seems to be following, it even seems illogical. Kristeva points out, as I mention above, that women are associated with death (D 296). Thus, it does not make sense for a woman writer to fear what she symbolizes, or what she supposedly *is*. Kristeva writes: "it is women who are least afraid of death or the law, which is why the administer both" (D 296). Therefore, Mrs. Marks's analysis is undermined by the very socio-symbolic contract to which she is trying to adhere. Or at least, the death versus discourse dichotomy doesn't account for the case of an artist who is a woman.

Psychoanalysis fails to provide Anna an acceptable explanation for her "lack of feeling" (*GN* 234), and Lessing seems to push this point by associating both psychoanalysis and Mrs. Marks with dead art, thereby mocking the death versus discourse dichotomy.[4] Mrs. Marks's office is described as a "dedicated room," and like an art gallery, the walls are covered in prints of masterpieces (*GN* 236). Sitting there, Anna decides that none of this dead art holds any meaning for her, which implies that psychoanalysis holds no meaning for her either:

> The point is, that nothing in my life corresponds with anything in this room—my life has always been crude, unfinished, raw, tentative; and so have

> the lives of the people I have known well. It occurred to me, looking at this room, that the raw unfinished quality in my life was precisely what was valuable in it and I should hold fast to it. (*GN* 236-37)

Anna's resolution to "hold fast" to "the raw unfinished quality" in her life amounts to a commitment to dissidence. Consequently, she refuses the psychoanalytic approach which names illnesses according to archetypal myths, and explains away an individual's pain through a story: "rescuing the formless into form. Another bit of chaos rescued and 'named'" (*GN* 470). Out of resistance to Mrs Marks's attempts to pigeon-hole her identity with the labels artist, communist, and "real woman" (*GN* 237), she begins to welcome the elements of neurosis and chaos into her life:

> perhaps the word neurotic means the condition of being highly conscious and developed. The essence of neurosis is conflict. But the essence of living now, fully, not blocking off to what goes on, is conflict. . . . People stay sane by blocking off, by limiting themselves. (*GN* 469)

Instead of accepting a psychoanalytic cure, which entails matching her experience to a myth in order to objectify and explain it, Anna affirms herself through opposition to Mrs. Marks, just as she does in the Party, in order to define her individuality: "The next stage is, surely, that I leave the safety of myth and Anna Wulf walks forward alone" (*GN* 470). She refuses to be incorporated into a myth, be it one of psychoanalysis or political revolution.

But perhaps this is the cure Mrs. Marks intends to provide. Perhaps she could even be thought of as a dissident Kristevan psychoanalyst who functions in the manner Toril Moi explains:

> Kristeva nevertheless affirms that it is necessary first and foremost to help [patients] to overcome the pain that made them seek psychoanalytic help in the first place. The modern, unstable and empty subject, she argues, ought not to be fixed and stabilized, but to be turned into a *work in progress*. This means that psychoanalytic patients must be left, at the end of analysis, in a position which enables them to express themselves. (Moi's italics, 14)

Perhaps Mrs. Marks helps Anna find her identity after all; through resistance to her. She plays the part of Anna's opponent up to the point where Anna no longer needs her, and can imagine Mrs. Marks as "a kind of amiable witch" alone. Mrs. Marks tells Anna:

> "When you are on your own, and you are threatened, you must summon the good witch to your aid." "You," I said. "No, you, embodied in what you have made of me." So the thing is over, then. It was as if she had said: Now you are on your own. (*GN* 250)

And she does in fact go on to write, which is Mrs. Marks's idea of her cure. Or at least, the Anna Wulf that writes *Free Women* goes on to write, whereas the Anna Wulf at the end of *Free Women* does not, but instead becomes a marriage counsellor. So ultimately, Lessing herself cancels out the psychoanalytic writing cure by providing two resolutions for Anna.

Anna emerges from her experiences with the Party and psychoanalysis having rejected Marxism and Freudianism, both major influences upon the socio-symbolic contract in place at mid-century; but she still doesn't feel free. She now sees the value in affirming her "individual conscience" (*GN* 350) apart from a group, and not according to a myth or archetype: "I want to be able to separate in myself what is old and cyclic, the recurring

history, the myth, from what is new, what I feel or think that might be new. . ." (dots Lessing's, *GN* 473). But she questions whether she is capable of doing so. Experimenting with different kinds of writing in her notebooks enables her to create and try out different identities in stories she casts off from herself. The mini-novel about Ella, *The Shadow of the Third*, appearing in the yellow notebook exemplifies this. But Anna destroys much of this experimental writing, thereby rejecting these alternate selves.

According to Kristeva, however, experimental writing is an important practice of the dissident writer "who experiments with the limits of identity, producing texts where the law does not exist outside language" (D 295). Women are well suited to this project because they are "exiled", or not recognized as individuals, under the "General" and "Meaning", or by the institutions which invent language, create laws, and govern without women's consent (D 296). Kristeva believes that as dissidents women can activate change by affirming their experience from their positions of enforced singularity, naming themselves where they have been named, telling their own stories where they have been inaccurately explained by myths, bridging the gap between their singularity and Meaning, between the private realm and the public. But, as Anna reveals, this is a difficult project because the conventions she challenges are deeply ingrained, and she has internalized aspects of them. They continue to represent Meaning to her, even though this Meaning obliterates her particularity, such that she begins to fear that she is casting herself off into meaninglessness, chaos, and madness; and according to the very conventions she resists, she is. Eventually, however, Anna thinks of her resistance and opposition to laws and conventions as her own inner anarchic principle which destroys in order to create, whereupon she freely affirms her own identity.[5]

Before Anna reaches this point, however, she experiences an identity crisis that results in her breakdown. She seems to misinterpret her inability to find meaning in the Party, under psychoanalysis, in a relationship with a man, and in creative writing as indicative of something that she is lacking. So she begins to criticize herself by criticizing her writing, deciding it is too emotional, even though it comes out of authentic experiences and feelings. But she judges herself according to standards she cannot fulfil:

> I am incapable of writing the only kind of novel which interests me: a book powered with an intellectual or moral passion strong enough to create order, to create a new way of looking at life. It is because I am too diffused. I have decided never to write another novel. I have fifty "subjects" I could write about. . . . I suffer torments of dissatisfaction and incompletion because of my inability to enter those areas of life my way of living, education, sex, politics, class bar me from. (*GN* 61)

The kind of novel that Anna is "too diffused" to write is the modernist novel, characterized by the "I I I I I" that Virginia Woolf identifies, and which Anna later associates with Saul Green. Elsewhere, Anna abhors "the driving egotism of individual art" (*GN* 350). Here, however, she criticizes and blames herself for differences which prohibit her from creating precisely this kind of work, instead of using her differences to write a new kind of novel. But even if she did manage to write the sort of novel that "interests" her, she would undermine her own politics and end up reinforcing conventions she usually objects to and attempts to subvert.

One of her writing experiments exemplifies the frustration involved in subverting

convention by writing honestly about being a woman. She decides to record in the blue notebook all of the events of one day; from waking up with her lover Michael, to caring for her daughter Janet, to shopping for food, to coping with her period and the accompanying worry about odour. Such details which underlie her day are familiar to most women, yet menstruation is rarely talked about nor written about so honestly. Anna considers her period a nuisance, "an imposition from outside," which she resents (*GN* 341). It affects how she writes about her day: "the idea that I will have to write it down is changing the balance, destroying the truth; so I shut the thoughts of my period out of my mind; making, however, a mental note that as soon as I get to the office I must go to the washroom to make sure there is no smell" (*GN* 341). She wants to mask or block out this basic element of womanhood from her day and from what she writes because she thinks it destroys "the truth," or at least the version of it that she has in mind. In the end she decides to cross the record of this day out entirely: "No, it didn't come off. A failure as usual" (*GN* 368). This harsh self-criticism and attack on her own femininity gains greater significance in light of the fact that this is also the day that marks the end of her relationship with Michael. Deeming what she writes a "failure" may be a reaction to the blow to her self-esteem due to Michael's abandonment. Thus, a piece of women's writing is destroyed because, in keeping with socio-cultural convention, this woman thinks herself a failure when her relationship with a man ends.

As long as Anna gives credence to the societal conventions which measure women's success by their ability to get and keep a man, she will not be a "free woman". Similarly, as long as she continues to measure her writing by the yardstick of the artistic traditions which don't include her, she will not be able to create her own authentic art. She is frightened,

however, because she is heading into uncharted territory and can no longer fall back on the security of established roles. There is no name for what she is becoming, no word that describes her, and, still susceptible to the social script that names roles, she concludes that since none apply to her she must be "nothing":

> It occurs to me that what is happening is a breakdown of me, Anna, and this is how I am becoming aware of it. For words are form, and if I am at a pitch where shape, form, expression are nothing, then I am nothing, for it has become clear to me, reading the notebooks, that I remain Anna because of a certain kind of intelligence. This intelligence is dissolving and I am very frightened. (*GN* 476-77)

The social script decrees that a woman's life outside the roles of wife and mother is meaningless. And Anna periodically feels guilty for not conforming to it for the sake of giving Janet a normal childhood. Yet she knows that this guilt is simply "a habit of the nerves from the past" (*GN* 365), just as Lily identifies her moments of self-doubt as part of the "habitual currents" (*TL* 148) which erode her confidence. Anna even dreams that she is punished for resisting these roles: "I was astonished at how many of the female roles I have not played in life, have refused to play, or were not offered to me. Even in my sleep I knew I was being condemned to play them now because I had refused them in life" (*GN* 603-4). But this punishment is self-inflicted and it is actually a manifestation of the guilt that ties her to roles she spends her life resisting. This guilt is self-destructive yet she continues to feel it just as she continues to compare her writing to narrative conventions which she ideologically opposes. She has to finally let go of the nemeses she resists in order to assert her own

identity and obtain autonomy.

As a woman and a dissident writer, Anna can use her resistance to convention productively by directing it towards language. She can, as Kristeva envisions, help to change the "constitution and functioning" of language starting from:

> the very personal affect experienced when facing it as subject and as a woman. This leads to the active research, still rare, undoubtedly hesitant but always dissident, being carried out by women in the human sciences; particularly those attempts, in the wake of contemporary art, to break the code, to shatter language, to find a specific discourse closer to the body and emotions, to the unnameable repressed by the social contract. (WT 200)

As if echoing this, in the "Golden Notebook" Anna declares:

> instead of doing what I always do, making up stories about life, so as not to look at it straight, I should go back and look at scenes from my life. . . . it was not making past events harmless, by naming them, but *making sure they were still there.* Yet I know that having made sure they were still there, I would have to "name" them in a different way. . . . (Lessing's italics *GN* 616)

She can use language while exposing its limitations, exercise control over words, and attain the power of naming for herself, instead of being controlled or named.[6]

During her time with Saul, Anna explores chaos, permeates the boundaries between self and other, male and female, and flirts with madness in an "orderless dance" (*GN* 620). This experience becomes a process during which she seems to purge herself of old habits so that her creativity or "blade of grass" (*GN* 636) can sprout up through the fallout. She begins

to write about "scenes from her own life" in *Free Women*, discarding her former destructive self-critique for self-affirmation. She becomes a dissident woman writer communicating particular experience fully differentiated from the socio-symbolic representation of woman.

However, at the end of the novel *Free Women*, which coincides with the ending of *The Golden Notebook*, Anna Wulf decides to give up writing to become a marriage counsellor. Perhaps the Anna who writes *Free Women* decides to give up writing when this novel is finished. But, of course, this is to presume that the Anna in the novel is modeled after the Anna in the notebooks, which cannot, in fact, be fully substantiated. So it seems that Lessing provides two endings for the character(s) Anna Wulf, but offers no hints as to which is the real one.[7] Both endings are equally plausible, and perhaps this is what is most important; that Anna can choose either path: professional writer or professional nurturer. The two endings suggest two different ways for the intellectual dissident to be a productive part of society; two different ways of bridging the gap between singularity and ethics which can subvert the socio-symbolic contract or social script in place at this time.[8]

Anna progresses a long way from being a member of a communal protagonist in Central Africa, a situation comparable to Lily Briscoe's in *To the Lighthouse*. While Lily and the Ramsays inhabit the private realm, Anna's group is politically oriented, but these groups are alike in that they both stifle these women's individuality. On her own as a dissident, Anna affirms the singularity and individual conscience which can only develop apart from smothering group situations and conventional women's roles. Finally, as a writer and/or a marriage counsellor, she can communicate this experience to the public. Thus, Anna bridges the gap between public and private in a way that the contemporary philosophers I discussed

in chapter 1 may find enlightening. Lessing articulates this solution in the "Introduction" to *The Golden Notebook*:

> At last I understood that the way over, or through this dilemma, the unease at writing about "petty personal problems" was to recognise that nothing is personal, in the sense that it is uniquely one's own. Writing about oneself, one is writing about others, since your problems, pains, pleasures, emotions—and your extraordinary and remarkable ideas—can't be yours alone. The way to deal with the problem of "subjectivity" . . . is to see [it] as a microcosm and in this way to break through the personal, the subjective, making the personal general, as indeed life always does, transforming a private experience . . . into something much larger. (*GN* xiii)

The Golden Notebook itself could transform into "something much larger" if a productive relationship were to be cultivated between intellectual dissidents such as Anna and the existing socio-symbolic system. These individuals could analyse the structure of institutions and the laws they create from outside and help to make them more responsive, more just, to more people. This would not mean a mad dash for power nor, as in Anna's dream, switching places with the executioner; but rather, would help to change the way power flows through the hierarchy of oppositions Anna lists early on in *Free Women*: "Men. Women. Bound. Free. Good. Bad. Yes. No. Capitalism. Socialism. Sex. Love. . ." (*GN* 44). Dissident writers such as Anna can carry out the "ruthless and irreverent dismantling" (D 299) of this hierarchy individually, and using discourse, help to edit the existing social script.

2.4 Elaine Risley

Unlike Anna Wulf and Lily Briscoe, Elaine Risley disaffiliates herself from group situations very early in her life. As a child she exhibits remarkable autonomy and independence. In contrast to Lily Briscoe, Elaine has a university education, moves away from home when she decides to, gets married, has a child, and obtains a divorce, all of her own volition. This is not to say that she carries all of this off with complete ease. But by Elaine's time it is possible and socially acceptable for a woman to have a career as an artist and be sexually active at the same time. And it is therefore possible for a novel to depict a woman artist figure who is not necessarily part of a communal protagonist the way that Lily is. Elaine also does not need to attain her identity through group affiliation as Anna Wulf does at first, but eventually overcomes. In fact, in comparison to Lily and Anna, maintaining her dissidence is not particularly problematic for Elaine. Paradoxically, her problems lie in affiliation; she has difficulty communicating and establishing friendships with other women and consequently is reticent among feminists even though they endorse her work. Despite this resolute differentiation, Elaine's symbolization of her private experiences in her paintings speaks volumes to other women.

At the root of Elaine's dissidence is her conception of time, introduced in the first sentence of the novel: "Time is not a line but a dimension, like the dimensions of space" (*CE* 3). Her brother Stephen tells her this, and many of her paintings consist of elaborations on his ideas about space-time. At the beginning of *Cat's Eye*, Atwood attributes these same ideas to Stephen Hawking, who discusses the implications of space-time in *A Brief History of Time* within the realm of theoretical physics. I want to relate Atwood's and Hawking's ideas

regarding space-time to those of Julia Kristeva who explains how space-time is relevant to twentieth-century feminism in "Women's Time". Elaine creates an imaginary world out of, yet apart from, the real world of linear time. In this way, her paintings exemplify both Hawking's "imaginary time" (134) as well as the "signifying space" Kristeva projects for third-wave feminism (WT 209). And Elaine herself exemplifies the dissident woman artist Kristeva foresees creating this space-time from her position outside feminism, thereby indicating the dimensions feminism has yet to expand to achieve solidarity. Also, *Cat's Eye* revolves around a retrospective of Elaine's paintings just as Hawking's and Kristeva's works are both retrospectives of their subjects. A retrospective is a sign of accomplishment, a point of arrival, or a plateau which avails a view of the past before facing the future. In this discussion, I place Elaine Risley, Stephen Risley/Hawking,[1] and Julia Kristeva all on the same plateau due to their common interest in space-time in order to show that together, they suggest an intriguing socio-cultural map to the future.

The work of Stephen Hawking, a theoretical physicist, at first glance seems to have little to do with autonomy, self-creation, and the woman artist figure in twentieth-century novels by women. But scientists in this century have made discoveries about time that have called into question many previous assumptions about human existence, invariably defying disciplinary boundaries. Translating the notion of space-time from physical science to the social sciences calls for an unprecedented re-evaluation of Western history, religion, laws, philosophy, language—virtually everything based on the assumption that time is linear. This is an enormous task which obviously cannot come close to being accomplished here. However, by incorporating the work of Julia Kristeva, I can narrow the scope of a discussion

about space-time to the opportunities it opens for women artists such as Elaine Risley, and contemplate its function within feminism.

Kristeva defines linear time as the "time of history," "project, teleology, . . . departure, progression and arrival" (WT 192). Since linear history does not recognize women as subjects, but relegates them to their reproductive capacity, a description of "women's time," if it could be conceptualized at all, would be biologically determined, and as Kristeva suggests, linked to cycles and repetition (WT 191). It would also be linked to the "monumental time" (WT 191) of the symbolic order in language, myth, and religion, which all generate representations of woman as mother.[2] These representations are continually reinforced in art and literature, and therefore seem eternal. Women's time as cyclical and monumental seems incommensurable to the linear time of history and language,[3] such that women can even be said to exist *outside* time. I emphasize this spatial reference because women's *time* is perhaps more commonly described in terms of *space* or *place* due to women's reproductive function which places them outside politics, history, or the events of linear time, and inside the home, the private.[4] But when science reveals that time is indivisible from space, women suddenly gain inroads to subjectivity under an expanded conception of time: *space-time.*

Consequently, Kristeva suggests that a third wave in feminism which incorporates the notion of space-time could resolve the rift between first- and second-wave feminists. During feminism's first wave, suffragists and existential feminists attempted to insert women into the linear time of history and politics; whereas during the second wave, beginning in the 1960s, there seemed to be a desire to deny linear time altogether in favour of a woman-centred counter-society.[5] Both goals of insertion and denial do little to alter the dominance of linear

time, whereas feminism based on the notion of space-time potentially expands time and also offers a broader framework that would be responsive to women's diverse demands for socio-cultural change.

I will return to Kristeva's observations of feminism and relate them to Elaine's views later in this discussion. For the moment, I want to emphasize the significance of the scientific discovery of space-time to women artists. For Kristeva believes that through discourse and aesthetics, women can demystify their reproductive capacity which is both the biological basis of their exclusion from linear time, as well as the defining feature of the symbol woman in monumental time.[6]

However, Kristeva stresses the need to communicate women's experience in motherhood to such an extent that it seems the only experience involving women that the language of linear time fails to describe. Isn't another side-effect of women's exile from time into space the prohibition of their communication with each other beyond their socially scripted roles? Mrs. Ramsay and Lily communicate through touch and glances, not words; Anna and her friend Molly speak in wordless glances; and Elaine, as I will reveal, also has difficulty communicating with women through language. But when individual women "provide themselves with a *representation*," create themselves, manifest their own "symbolization" in works which depict their own specific experiences, they do not only correct their symbolic representation as mothers in monumental time (italics Kristeva's, WT 208). They communicate with other women from within their individual spaces of exile from linear time. Elaine unwittingly participates in this process when she embraces Stephen's ideas about space-time and combines them with the symbolization of her private experiences

in her paintings. She asserts no feminist political strategy, however, and claims to simply paint what she sees. But the combination of science with private symbolization in her paintings challenges linear time—the cornerstone of the socio-symbolic contract—nonetheless, and challenges the limits placed upon women's communication by this contract. Elaine's paintings bridge the gaps between herself and other women, communicating visually instead of verbally, by depicting the objects and symbols of her own world or space-time.

Before exploring the development and manifestation of this combination in Elaine's paintings, I should briefly outline the scientific concepts that influence her, without getting too embroiled in theoretical physics. In science, space-time replaced what Hawking calls "absolute time," or linear time: the notion of time "completely separate from and independent of space" (18). By observing light, scientists discovered that it travels at a finite speed. They then determined that nothing can move as fast or faster than the speed of light. Since light's speed is constant and unchanging, the time it takes to travel to different observers depends upon their distance from its source; the time they each measure is relative to their position in space. So time becomes personal (Hawking 33). It is not absolute, nor is it independent of space, but rather, time is relative to one's position in space.[7]

Relinquishing the idea of absolute time, or linear time, calls into question the origin of the universe. According to a linear view of time, the universe supposedly has a beginning effected by a "big bang," and potentially, an ending in a "big crunch" (Hawking 43). This theory could be considered continuous with the idea in monumental time that God created the universe and that it might end in an apocalypse. But if the universe exists in non-linear

space-time, perhaps there is no such thing as a beginning or an end of time; a notion that Stephen Risley ponders. Hawking explains that if time is measured using "imaginary numbers" rather than "real" ones, "imaginary time" can be calculated, wherein "the distinction between time and space disappears completely" (134). However, "imaginary time," he points out, is "merely a mathematical device (or trick) to calculate answers about real space-time" (Hawking 135). It posits the possibility, though, that time and space together may form a surface that is finite in size and without a boundary or edge (Hawking 136), like the Klein bottle Stephen shows Elaine in *Cat's Eye*. In other words, the notion that the universe has boundaries—a beginning and an end—is not necessarily accurate. Hawking suggests that perhaps

> the so-called imaginary time is really the real time, and that what we call real time is just a figment of our imaginations. In real time, the universe has a beginning and an end at singularities that form a boundary to space-time and at which the laws of science break down. But in imaginary time, there are no singularities or boundaries. So maybe what we call imaginary time is really more basic, and what we call real is just an idea that we invent to help us describe what we think the universe is like. (139)

Whether or not such a theory can be proven, it suggests that the imagination could play an important role in the search for answers about the universe.

Furthermore, imaginary time calls into question the concept of God and God's role in time. The Old Testament notion of eternity posits the belief that human beings participate in God's time (which Kristeva refers to as monumental time) and that life on earth emulates life

in Heaven. But the rise of secularism in the eighteenth century introduced the idea that human beings live according to secular time. According to this view, God effected Creation and this was the beginning of time, and from that point on, God's time, or monumental time became extrinsic from human life on earth.[8] Secular time can be seen to accord with the idea of absolute time that Hawking describes: time beginning at a finite point in the past and following a succession or line of events. This is the view Hawking provocatively challenges with the notion of imaginary time discussed above wherein time is a shape or surface without boundaries, or without a beginning or end.

Elaine also participates in this challenge to real time as linear or absolute. She gradually invents her own imaginary time beginning, like scientists, by observing light under her brother Stephen's influence. However, her brother (like Stephen Hawking) speaks the "universal language" of mathematics (*CE* 353), and lives quite oblivious to socio-cultural phenomena such as religion or gender divisive conventions which confuse Elaine. Stephen concentrates on formulating the theories that provide the factual basis for changing the conventional notion of time; whereas Elaine confronts the repercussions of such radical theories in a world that still adheres to linear time, is controlled predominantly by men, and relegates women to cyclical and monumental time.

Elaine first discovers the discrepancy between Stephen's views and those of society when she starts going to church with Grace Smeath. What she sees, reads in the Bible, or is told there contradicts what Stephen tells her about light and stars. Everywhere she looks, God and Christ are associated with light: in the stained-glass windows of the church, and in the slides of religious paintings. She also learns about the symbolic light of Christ in a song:

Jesus bids us shine

With a pure, clear light,

Like a little candle

Burning in the night. . . . (Italics Atwood's, *CE* 132)

She wants to believe in this light, for to believe is also to belong:

> I want to shine like a candle. I want to be good, to follow instructions, to do what Jesus bids. I want to believe you should love your neighbours as yourself and the Kingdom of God is within you. But all of this seems less and less possible. (*CE* 132)

She becomes intimidated by the "pure light" of Christianity for it seems impossible to emulate, such that when she looks at the stars now "they look watchful" (*CE* 106). Also, during the slide show, Grace casts watchful light at Elaine: "In the darkness, I can see a gleam of light, to the side. It's not a candle: it's the light reflected back off Grace's glasses . . . . She's watching me" (*CE* 132). All of this confuses Elaine because if God is supposed to be light, then light should be all good, but the watchful, judging light directed at her by Grace and Mrs. Smeath distracts her from believing in religion's "pure, clean light." Under such scrutiny it seems impossible to be pure and good.

However, the stars that Stephen watches from his bedroom window "are different from the ones in the Bible: they're wordless, they flame in an obliterating silence" (*CE* 110). He collects them, like marbles, and tells Elaine their names. Their light is not watchful, but remote and distant like the past which, Stephen tells her, is what they are: "we're just seeing the light they sent out years, hundreds of years, thousands of years ago" (*CE* 110). So

between the two versions of light she is given—Stephen's stars and the symbolic light of Christianity—she adopts Stephen's. She removes the symbolic dimension of light from the real light that she sees. Choosing to believe what she sees rather than what she is told about light in church amounts to Elaine's challenge to monumental time, or God's time.

Vision is also the basis of Elaine's resistance to the language and conventions of linear time that segregate the male realm of action, production, and history, from the female realm of reproduction, grooming, and homemaking. She receives her introduction to these separate realms at school where there are separate entrances and playgrounds for boys and girls. Also, her girlfriends Cordelia, Grace, and Carol, use an unfamiliar feminine vocabulary with words such as "pageboys," "hairdressers," "chintz," and "twin-set" (*CE* 51). These words are nothing like the secret code language Stephen and Elaine use to communicate. In fact, they do not facilitate communication between the girls at all, but are uttered boastfully to show off knowledge, like secret passwords to a world that denies Elaine admittance. She feels much more comfortable with boys, whom she considers her "secret allies" (*CE* 175). However, the social script requires her to speak and act like the other girls. The uncertainty with which she approaches this attempt makes her the object of ridicule among her girlfriends. But Elaine silently retaliates through her eyes. She imagines that she possesses the visual powers she attributes to her cat's eye marble that she carries in her pocket:

> [Cordelia] doesn't know what power this cat's eye has, to protect me. Sometimes when I have it with me I can see the way it sees. I can see people moving like bright animated dolls, their mouths opening and closing but no real words coming out. I can look at their shapes and sizes, their colors, without

feeling anything else about them. I am alive in my eyes only (*CE* 151).

It is as if this marble is a third or other eye that augments her vision. But it is also *other* in that it sees differently, "like the eyes of aliens from a distant planet" (*CE* 67),[9] or like the "other eye" of artists that Doris Lessing says "enable us to see ourselves as others see us" (*P* 14-15). Possessing this other eye enables Elaine to see Cordelia, Grace, and Carol the way she imagines it sees them, and also to block out their taunting voices, for the cat's eye sees but does not hear. When she reduces these girls to shapes and gestures they seem less threatening. Doing so, she also begins to adopt the imaginative vision of an artist.

As a child, Elaine's imaginative vision is, in fact, her only means of resisting Cordelia and the other girls because she cannot speak about their cruelties to anyone. Her silence is indicative of the barriers that reside within women's language which result from women's exile from linear time into private, insular space, not conducive to communication. Elaine cannot talk to her brother because, being male, she thinks he either would not understand, or would laugh at her "for being a sissy about a bunch of girls, for making a fuss about nothing" (*CE* 167). And communicating with her mother is difficult, for between them there "is a gulf, an abyss, that goes down and down. It's filled with wordlessness" (*CE* 98). Trapped in this silent isolation, Elaine naturally begins to look for methods of escape such as being sick and staying home from school, imagining that she is invisible, or willing herself to faint:

> There's a way out of places you want to leave, but can't. Fainting is like stepping sideways, out of your own body, out of time or into another time. When you wake up it's later. Time has gone on without you. (*CE* 183)

Dreaming is another form of escape from time, and one night she dreams that her cat's eye

actually enters her:

> I dream that my blue cat's eye is shining in the sky like the sun, or like the pictures of planets in our book on the solar system. But instead of being warm, it's cold. It starts to move nearer, but it doesn't get any bigger. It's falling down out of the sky, straight toward my head, brilliant and glassy. It hits me, passes right into me, but without hurting, except that it's cold. (*CE* 155)

This dream is significant because instead of becoming invisible or fainting, which both involve escaping the constraints of time and entering another space-time or different dimension, dreaming that her cat's eye is inside her is empowering.[10] It is as if she literally incorporates its visual powers along with what Stephen tells her about light and the solar system in order to strengthen her own imaginative vision. This dream foreshadows the aesthetic control she eventually exerts with this imaginative vision over the people and objects in the space-time of her paintings.

Moreover, when Cordelia, Grace, and Carol leave Elaine alone in the ravine, her imaginative vision actually saves her from freezing to death. Lying under the bridge, she envisions the Virgin Mary floating down through the air towards her from the bridge, helping her to get up and go home. She had been praying to the Virgin Mary instead of to God in Sunday school, but language, as always, had been an impediment: "I don't know what to say. I haven't learned the words for her" (*CE* 197). But after this vision Elaine's belief in her is confirmed: "I know who it is that I've seen. It's the Virgin Mary, there can be no doubt" (*CE* 204). From this point on, Cordelia and the other girls no longer affect Elaine: "It's as if

I can see right into them" (*CE* 208). And she deflects their cruel words: "I hardly hear them any more because I hardly listen" (*CE* 208). Now that she has achieved individuation through her imaginative vision, she only needs to express it to be a dissident woman artist.

Painting becomes Elaine's self-created imaginary realm for defying real time as it is presented to her through the language and conventions of linear time, as well as the symbolism of monumental time. In fact, the imaginary actually replaces the real for Elaine, which Hawking suggests could happen in science in the passage I quoted earlier. Elaine studies Art and Archaeology at the University of Toronto because it is "the only sanctioned pathway that leads anywhere close to art," and also because this decision satisfies her parents who don't consider painting a real or "serious" career which will afford her a living (*CE* 293). With this degree she could "always teach," which is considered more real, as are marriage and motherhood: "One of my mother's friends tells her that art is something you can always do at home, in your spare time" (*CE* 293). This friend adheres to the conception of women's time being occupied mainly by homemaking; any time left over could be filled by a hobby, such as art. But the realm of the imaginary and creative that Elaine explores in her Life Drawing class is central in her life, and more real to her than either of these paths that lead from Art and Archaeology. In her words, Life Drawing "is my lifeline, my real life" (*CE* 294).[11]

Elaine emphasizes this switch between the real and the imaginary further when she says that her classes at university represent "one life, my life of daytimes. My other, my real life, takes place at night" (*CE* 303). Interestingly, during the day at university she views representations of monumental time in the slide projections of Mediaeval and Renaissance

paintings wherein "Virgin Marys abound" (*CE* 302). In other words, she looks at the symbolic woman through light that is projected onto a screen. However, at night she observes and draws a real "live naked woman" herself (*CE* 287). Her life of drawing and painting seems more real to her because it *is* real; in Life Drawing she draws what is alive and real. The projected representations of the symbolic woman in Art and Archaeology, it seems to her, are not.

Even the technique Elaine chooses, egg tempera, defies the linear conventions of contemporary art that her first husband Jon studiously follows. She describes herself in relation to him: "I am off to the side somewhere, fiddling with egg tempera and flat surfaces, as if the twentieth century has never happened" (*CE* 366). But she realizes that "[t]here is freedom in this: because it doesn't matter what I do, I can do what I like" (*CE* 366). Significantly, egg tempera is also the "technique of monks" who, like Elaine, dwell outside language (*CE* 346). And thinking back to when she started painting she realizes: "A lot of my paintings then began in my confusion about words" (*CE* 286). So painting is both an escape from convention and a replacement for the language that alienates and confounds Elaine.[12]

Elaine's paintings defy monumental time by interweaving the symbolic with the ordinary. For example, in her painting *Our Lady of Perpetual Help* she depicts the Christian symbol of woman-as-mother, the Virgin Mary, among the objects that pertain to her world as a wife and mother. And she paints her with the head of a lioness because

> it seems to me more accurate about motherhood than the old bloodless milk-and-water Virgins of art history. My Virgin Mary is fierce, alert to danger,

> wild. . . . I paint the Virgin Mary descending to the earth, which is covered with snow and slush. She is wearing a winter coat over her blue robe, and has a purse slung over her shoulder. She's carrying two brown paper bags full of groceries. Several things have fallen from the bags: an egg, an onion, an apple. She looks tired. (*CE* 365)

But not only does Elaine debunk the traditional representation of the Virgin Mary as the eternal woman in this painting, she also summons her help. Elaine's symbolization of the Virgin Mary is actually relevant to her experience, unlike those of Christian iconography. For she paints *Our Lady of Perpetual Help* when she is feeling stifled within her first marriage and is looking for ways to escape, just as she sought as a child. Her vision of the Virgin Mary saved her then, and this painting seems to be a reconstruction of that initial vision, and another invocation for help.

Elaine continually turns to painting in this way to resolve problems she encounters in real life, just as scientists use imaginary time to resolve problems about real time. Imaginary time frees scientists from the constraints of real time. And again, the same is true in the imaginary time of Elaine's paintings. They are sites where she can freely express her imaginative vision; where she attains the boundless visual powers embodied by her cat's eye to reduce people to shapes on her canvas. She asserts aesthetic control over the subjects she paints, the people in her life such as Mrs. Smeath or Cordelia who have asserted control over her. Elaine paints Mrs. Smeath repeatedly:

> Mrs. Smeath sitting, standing, lying down with her holy rubber plant, flying, with Mr. Smeath stuck to her back, being screwed like a beetle; Mrs. Smeath

> in the dark-blue bloomers of Miss Lumley. . . . Mrs. Smeath unwrapped from white tissue paper, layer by layer. Mrs. Smeath bigger than life, bigger than she ever was. Blotting out God. (*CE* 426)

Elaine gives shape to the hate she feels as a child for this woman in the "imagined body" she paints (*CE* 427).

Malice and the desire to regain control may have been the original impetus behind the creation of these paintings, but at the retrospective she suddenly sees more in them: "these pictures are not only mockery, not only desecration. I put light into them too" (*CE* 427). This light reveals different things to her now that she is older, most noticeably in the eyes of Mrs Smeath. As a child she fears Mrs Smeath's scrutinizing "evil eye" (*CE* 194), but now when Elaine looks at her eyes she sees that "they are also defeated eyes, uncertain and melancholy, heavy with unloved duty. The eyes of someone for whom God was a sadistic old man; the eyes of a small town threadbare decency" (*CE* 427). These are the same eyes that she initially painted out of a desire for vengeance, but the light they give affects Elaine differently now that she is older, or rather, now that she occupies a different space-time.

In this way, her paintings are like stars. The light they shed is ancient and remote; they occur in the past. And different observers see them differently, or discern different meanings from them, relative to their positions in space-time. Elaine seems to realize this, as these paintings hold new meaning even for her now from when she painted them. And she accepts that they will go on to accumulate more meaning apart from her: "I can no longer control these paintings, or tell them what to mean. Whatever energy they have came out of me. I'm what's left over" (*CE* 431).

This realization holds significant implications for feminism in both this novel and society at large. For the two feminists, Jody and Charna, who include Elaine's paintings in art shows they organize do so because the works agree with a political agenda. Indeed, Elaine's entire career is a success because her works have been embraced by feminists. Yet there is a discrepancy between the story behind her works and the official feminist meaning ordained by Jody and Charna. Without becoming entrenched in a discussion about intentionality, it suffices to say that there is no absolute, univocal meaning for Elaine's works. There is the real story behind the paintings lived by Elaine which makes up the novel *Cat's Eye*; each chapter even bears the title of one of her paintings. But there are also Jody's and Charna's interpretations, which Elaine does not denounce. For example, Charna's commentary of the painting *Three Muses* reads: "Risley continues her disconcerting deconstruction of perceived gender and its relationship to perceived power, especially in respect to numinous imagery" (*CE* 428). Elaine does not disagree, but rather, dubiously takes Charna's perspective into consideration: "If I hold my breath and squint, I can see where she gets that: all Muses are supposed to be female, and one of these is not" (*CE* 428). Jody's interpretation of the Mrs. Smeath paintings more obviously conflicts with Elaine's view of them. Looking at the Mrs. Smeaths Jody declares: "It's woman as anticheesecake. . . . It's good to see the aging female body treated with compassion" (*CE* 368). Yet in reality, Elaine's rendition was hardly painted out of compassion; her representation is actually anti-Mrs. Smeath. Still, apart from their history, her paintings do seem to sustain Jody's and Charna's interpretations. But what is disconcerting about their commentaries is that they seem so definitive and patently feminist. The feminist principles they read into Elaine's

paintings seem to take precedence over the individual works, not to mention the artist herself. Anxious to endow feminist symbolizations of woman, Jody and Charna exemplify the potential danger of committing the same banal aestheticization of political ideals which Anna Wulf discovers is prone to political movements such as Marxism. Elaine's works can be considered feminist without her being a feminist, just as they could be considered misogynist without her being a misogynist. But this fact doesn't necessarily bode well for feminism; indeed, making the principles the priority and the artist secondary seems antithetical to feminist ideas such as particularity and self-creation. Elaine's experience seems to suggest that these are being superseded for the sake of what she produces for the feminist cause.

Julia Kristeva has similar complaints about second-wave feminism. Whereas first-wave feminists stressed the demand for women's equality with men and recognition under linear time, second-wave feminism paradoxically "situates itself outside linear time. . . . in the name of the irreducible difference" (WT 194-95). By emphasizing difference, Kristeva observes, this second wave ends up homogenizing Woman, and denying the specificity of individual women under a female "counter-society" which is susceptible to the same dogmatism and exclusionary practices as any religion (WT 202). Religions typically seek "to provide themselves with a *representation*," or symbolization (italics Kristeva's, WT 208). Hence the interest in Elaine's paintings, and hence the apparent expulsion of Elaine herself. Significantly, Elaine compares feminism to religion at a women's group showing:

> women of many kinds are in ferment here, they are boiling with the pressured energy of explosive forces confined in a small space, and with the fervor of all religious movements in their early, purist stages. It is not enough to give lip

> service and to believe in equal pay: there has to be a conversion, from the heart. Or so they imply. (*CE* 400)

Feminism, she discovers, has all of the elements of religion as introduced to her by the Smeath family. It passes judgement, fosters guilt, demands confession, and condemns the enemy: men. And in keeping with this early experience with religion, Elaine once again feels excluded: "I am on shaky ground, in this testifying against men, because I live with one. Women like me, with a husband, a child, have been referred to with some scorn" (*CE* 134). She also feels defensive and defiant in feminist gatherings, and thinks to herself: "I am not Woman, and I'm damned if I'll be shoved into it" (*CE* 401).

Two factors contribute to Elaine's disaffiliation from feminism: since childhood she has felt excluded from religion, and she has long mistrusted members of her own sex due to the torments of Cordelia. She has also always had difficulty communicating with other women in large part due to women's limited access to language, as I have already discussed. But Elaine acknowledges that she needs love and acceptance; and so, she realizes, did Cordelia. This suddenly becomes clear when she revisits the bridge under which she almost died as a result of Cordelia's games. Once again Elaine feels

> the same shame, the sick feeling in my body, the same knowledge of my own wrongness, awkwardness, weakness; the same wish to be loved; the same loneliness; the same fear. But these are not my emotions any more. They are Cordelia's; as they always were. (*CE* 443)

She now laments the friendship she will never share with Cordelia. And she envies the camaraderie she observes between feminists, as well as the friendship of the two elderly

women she sits beside on the plane on the way home to Vancouver.

Then, in spite of herself, Elaine finds that her paintings provide her the recognition and acceptance of other women. Admittedly, Charna's synopses seem to have more to do with feminism than Elaine does herself, but ultimately Charna accepts Elaine:

> Suddenly Charna reaches over to me, gives me a quick metallic hug. Maybe that warmth is genuine, maybe I should be ashamed of my dour, cynical thoughts. Maybe she really does like me, wish me well. I can almost believe it. (*CE* 433)

Elaine's paintings instigate this connection with another woman.

In this way, these paintings are like the "signifying space" that Kristeva describes in "Women's Time". Kristeva uses this expression to describe the third generation or moment she envisions for feminism which will combine the paradoxical preoccupations of the two antecedent generations of feminists—the first with time, the second with space—into a broader expanse: space-time. Space-time could divert the exclusionary tendencies within feminism and permit "the *parallel* existence of all three [generations] in the same historical time, or even that they be interwoven one with the other" (italics Kristeva's, WT 209). Kristeva indicates that this third generation would not necessarily be another epochal movement that chronologically follows the two earlier waves, nor would it be a monolith. But rather, as a "signifying space" it could be thought of as a "corporeal and desiring mental space" that expands and includes (WT 209). It is my contention that Elaine's paintings represent such a signifying space.

Just as stars shed light which observers measure relative to their particular space-time,

the signifying space of Elaine's paintings sheds meaning which is discerned by individual viewers in a similar way. All together on the night of the retrospective they form the shape of Elaine's life, the "series of liquid transparencies" which she looks into and sees her past within the same space-time of the gallery (*CE* 3). Also, the flashbacks to the past which tell the story of Elaine's life throughout *Cat's Eye* finally meet the present in the narrative space-time of this chapter, entitled "Unified Field Theory". All the time that both Elaine and Atwood have made up to this point occupies the same space-time, which is also imaginary time apart from real or linear time, which is also a signifying space that radiates meaning. In addition, the novel *Cat's Eye* itself forms a finite shape without boundaries, fulfilling Hawking's description of the universe in imaginary time. *Cat's Eye* is like the universe; it is expanding.

Stephen Hawking, Julia Kristeva, and Elaine Risley all have in common the radical notion of space-time which conveys enormous implications for human identity. And all three conduct retrospectives to reconsider the past in order to map out the future, which in each case involves the concept of unity. Hawking reviews the "partial theories" of physics in order to explain the properties that a potential "unified theory" of the universe must have (11-12). Kristeva's retrospective reviews the partial theories of first- and second-wave feminism and suggests the unification or interweaving of their goals in a third signifying space, beyond the limitations of linear and monumental time. And Elaine's retrospective exemplifies how such a signifying space radiates meaning to others, while simultaneously allowing Elaine to review her own life. Her autonomous, imaginative vision at first provides her a method of retreat from the world, and then she uses it to seek revenge. But in the end Elaine finds that she

communicates with other women, beyond the constraints of the language of linear time and the symbolizations of monumental time, through the symbols and representations of her own experience. Elaine remains a dissident woman artist throughout, yet in the final chapter, "Bridge," the property she needs and desires for the future becomes evident: female friendship, solidarity. Perhaps Elaine's desire is also the property needed for a unifying theory of feminism in a future space-time beyond the limitations of linearity.

3

Bridges

3.1 Where Is Here?

It would be fitting, after discussing Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*, to now examine a narrative that reveals what is on the other side of the bridge in the novel's final chapter. But which bridge? For there are three bridges at which Elaine arrives: the real bridge she revisits which is the scene of the pivotal moment when she almost dies as a child, but then uses her imaginative vision to survive and to achieve individuation; the temporal bridge which the retrospective provides, linking her past with her present; and the bridge of communication she creates between herself and other women in the signifying space of her paintings. It is the latter bridge between women which, for the purposes of this study, now would be fitting to illustrate in operation in a fourth novel. But at this point the narratives on the other side of this bridge exist only in the future. In this chapter I will consider where contemporary feminist theorists think we stand now in relation to potential narratives about female solidarity on the other side.

I began my discussion about the self-creation and autonomy of women artist figures by observing Lily's attempt to break away from her socially scripted role within the private realm as a member of a communal protagonist. Anna then escalates and transfers this defiant self-creation into the public realm, and as a dissident she challenges key aspects of the social script, or socio-symbolic contract: politics, psychoanalysis, language and literature, and sexual politics. Elaine also becomes a dissident who challenges Christian symbolism, language, artistic representations of women, and conventional gender roles, which are all

facets of her main challenge against the limitations of linear and monumental time, the very bases of the socio-symbolic contract. For both Anna and Elaine, disaffiliating themselves from group situations such as peer groups or political movements (Marxism, feminism) is an important part of their self-creation, their artistic development, and their autonomy. Yet ironically, Elaine ends up desiring connections with others again, and with other women in particular.

However, these new connections are different from those available to women during Lily Briscoe's time. Then, the unity that Lily desires with Mrs. Ramsay seems impossible to achieve: "it was not knowledge but unity that [Lily] desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge. . ." (*TL* 51). Since Lily, women *have* made connections not in "any language known to men"—that is, in any language *previously* known to men—but through experimental writing and painting. Their artistic creations, the products of their self-creation, actually become bridges to other women which relate experiences, thoughts, and feelings. As a result, despite Elaine's disaffiliation from women, she finds that her paintings speak to other women; and although what others read into these paintings often differs from the surrounding narrative which tells the story of Elaine's life, she acknowledges that her works do not apply only to her, nor can she continue to "control" them (*CE* 431). Other women relate to them out of the idiosyncratic experiences of their own lives. Moreover, Elaine now sees that direct communication between women, like that between the two women on the plane, is something that has been missing from her life and which she now desires. Thus, instead of remaining closed off from other women, in the end Elaine starts to notice the possibilities for women's

friendship; the unity that could only exist as a suppressed desire for Lily.

The narrative I have been constructing about the development of women artists into autonomy ends up at this bridge, which is a very different place from where I left off the account of autonomy I told in chapter 1. That narrative culminated in a rift between public and private which became most pronounced in modernism. It seemed that the autonomous artist figure had to be independent, isolated, and therefore had to transcend socialization, to rise above the community, the herd mentality. Achieving radical, critical autonomy was incommensurable with engaging in community, connecting with others. By necessity, only a few uniquely gifted people could exercise such autonomy, hence the elitism of autonomy-as-independence.

The modernist artist figure epitomizes this model of autonomy. Rachel Blau DuPlessis quotes a passage from a study by Maurice Beebe on the male artist hero which could function as a description of both the Nietzschean artist hero and the modernist artist figure:

> According to Beebe, the hero becomes an artist "only after he has sloughed off the domestic, social, and religious demands imposed upon him by his environment. Narrative development in the typical artist-novel requires that the hero test and reject the claims of love and life, of God, home and country, until nothing is left but his true self and his consecration as an artist." (qtd. in DuPlessis, 224)

To become an artist hero one must escape "domestic" demands and "the claims" of the "home." Consequently, Beebe's description applies only to male artist figures such as Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, because their female contemporaries such as Lily Briscoe were inextricably

tied to the home, and therefore could not possibly fit the above description. In short, women could not participate in modernism; they did not have the sufficient degree of autonomy to become the artist hero. Instead, as DuPlessis writes: "the figure of the female artist counters the modernist tradition of exile, alienation, and refusal of social roles—the *non serviam* of the classic artist hero, Stephen Dedalus. The woman writer creates the ethical role of the artist by making her imaginatively depict and try to change the life in which she is also immersed" (101). Woolf illustrates this resistance by depicting Lily painting despite her circumstances and instigating change from within her private, familial setting. As DuPlessis has shown, Woolf writes Lily's story beyond the conventional marriage/death endings for women characters. The fact that the novel ends with Lily obtaining the vision which enables the completion of her painting is emblematic of Lily's self-creation apart from the social script. In my narrative, Lily's self-creation sets off a ripple effect which continues to extend outwards in an ever-widening circumference as women artists create an ever-growing signifying space out of which they gradually achieve full autonomy.

Having explored the distinct development of each of the woman artist figures with respect to the three novels they inhabit, I will now amalgamate Lily, Anna, and Elaine into three facets of the same person: the woman artist figure. I do this in order to compare the narrative I have constructed in chapter 2 as a whole with the narrative in chapter 1. As such, when I refer to "the woman artist" I have in mind this amalgamated character, although I will also refer to the specific characters from time to time by their individual names.

Throughout the narrative I have been tracing, the woman artist manages to maintain her ethical role while gradually increasing her autonomy. She balances her relationships with

family and her lovers—albeit sometimes awkwardly—with her life as an artist, thereby bridging the gap between singularity and ethics, private and public, and fulfilling the role that Kristeva envisions for the dissident woman artist as delineated in chapter 2.3. DuPlessis's overview of Anna Wulf's fictional works in *The Golden Notebook* could be used to describe succinctly the fictional art of all three characters:

> The fictional art work . . . has a poetics of domestic values—nurturance, community building, inclusiveness, empathetic care. The poetics of the fictional art work begins with its ethics, not its aesthetics; it has its source in human ties and its end in human change. The work is described as having a clear ethical function and is not severed from the personal or social needs that are its source. . . . This saturation in buried, even taboo emotions, first resisted, then sought, and finally claimed, is the preferred process by which the fictional artist comes into her own. (DuPlessis 103)

I've already said that in these novels the woman artist bridges her ethical role with her singularity. Here, DuPlessis states that her ability to do so contributes to the development of her autonomy, or the "process by which" she "comes into her own."

How is it that the woman artist's work has an "ethical function" while the creation of it has also helped to establish her autonomy? By looking again at the self-creation and artistic creations of the woman artist in the three novels, in conjunction with studies done by women in moral theory, I will support this view of women's personal, artistic, and moral development in the following section of this chapter. I will compare the results against the work of contemporary male philosophers who are grappling with the legacy of modernism:

the public/private split. The problem of this continued split as I see it lies partly in an equation of autonomy with independence. A broader view of autonomy which includes consideration of one's responsibility to others—as presented by theorists like Carol Gilligan, Diana Meyers, and Seyla Benhabib—supplements this narrow model and shows how the pursuit of personal autonomy can coincide with connectedness with others, and with community. I refer to this view as autonomy-as-responsibility. I contend that the woman artist figure's process of self-creation is more compatible with this view than the autonomy-as-independence of modernism.

3.2 Autonomy-as-Independence & Autonomy-as-Responsibility

Here, I will reconsider what is involved in the version of self-creation and autonomy I narrated in chapter 1 in comparison to what is involved in the self-creation and autonomy of the woman artist figure explored in chapter 2. The first comes to an as yet unresolved rift between public and private, whereas the second has arrived at a bridge, or rather *bridges*, which traverse this gap. The work of feminist moral theorists leads to the bridges where I show the woman artist figure arriving in these novels, not only by resisting conventional gender divisivc roles in which men dominate the public realm and women dwell in the private, but by bridging the gap between singularity and ethics, still problematic to contemporary philosophers outside feminism. Also, the feminist theoretical work I discuss, as well as the artistic work of the women in the three novels, both bridge the gaps between women which have inhibited their solidarity even within feminism itself. These bridges constructed in both kinds of women's writing have in common the concept of autonomy-as-

responsibility.

I do not mean to imply that only women are capable of exercising this kind of autonomy. Many men have proven to be capable of it: Charles Taylor's thinking contains elements of autonomy-as-responsibility, and Michael Stocker, Thomas E. Hill, George Sher, and Jonathan E. Adler all deliberate notions related to this view of autonomy in essays contained in the volume *Women and Moral Theory*. Furthermore, I do not contend that autonomy-as-responsibility *originates* in women's theoretical and artistic work. But the way in which it is presented in such works has helped to affirm women's entrance *on their terms* into previously, almost exclusively male, public domains without giving up their connections with others or their predilection for care. They achieve this by combining their pursuit of autonomy with their concern for responsibility in relationships with others, effecting an outward-looking autonomy. By coincidence, or by consequence, autonomy-as-responsibility provides a workable solution to the private/public or singularity/ethics rift that persists in contemporary thought leading out of the Enlightenment-to-Nietzsche-to-Modernism tradition, still predominantly male-written and/or concentrating on literary and philosophical works written by men from a male point of view of the world. The conception of autonomy-as-independence persists in this tradition, and this I think can be seen as the source of the persistent public/private rift.

If autonomy-as-responsibility is associated predominantly with women it is because of the circumstances in which women have struggled for autonomy; they have been compelled—whether by societal pressures or their own desire—to maintain ties and to care for others. Similarly, if autonomy-as-independence has been associated predominantly with

men it is because this view of autonomy has been central in the philosophical works and portraits of the artist hero in literature which have received the most attention throughout history. Neither strain of autonomy is *essentially* linked to either sex. However, conventional gender roles enforced over time have contributed to the cleavage between autonomy-as-independence and autonomy-as-responsibility, as well as to the validation of the former above the latter.[1]

If autonomy-as-independence contributes to the problematic public/private rift in Western thought, why and how did it become so sought-after? Without going over the same ground I covered in chapter 1, the simplified story can be told as follows. The earliest sign of the modern ethic of independence starts with the inward turn; the gradual turn away from metaphysics and dependence on God or the cosmos for moral guidance and human identity.[2] Increasingly, the awareness and development of human beings' ability to reason reduced dependence upon such sources of mediation. As I discussed in chapter 1, this turn towards the self moved into two streams: self-objectivity and an engagement in subjectivity. These streams led into the Enlightenment and Romanticism respectively.

Kant's definition of moral autonomy was central to the Enlightenment and the formulation of social contract theories which carry on in the justice tradition today. This conception relies upon three main features: the rational self, the universalizability of abstract principles, and transcendence of socialization through impartiality. According to Kant, everyone has "the same benign true self—we are all rational agents" (Meyers, "Socialized Ind." 145). As such, rational agents are capable of determining moral action themselves by adhering to universalizable maxims or principles, i.e., principles that can reasonably be

followed by everyone in society. Since these principles are "freely and rationally elected . . . people do what they really want to do when they act on them" (Meyers, "Socialized Ind." 145). People decide upon such action themselves, without resorting to mediation. Moreover, with rationally chosen, abstract principles as a guide, "autonomous individuals transcend the limits of their respective socialization experiences since reason is not culture bound" (Meyers, "Socialized Ind." 145).

Independent of external forms of mediation, autonomous individuals need only use reason to determine moral action. The rationalizing capacity lifts the agent out of particularities and peculiarities of a situation, or any subjective factors that are pressing (desire, love, empathy), and allows the agent the clear-headedness needed to follow principles impartially. Impartiality is, of course, an integral part of justice systems today. But Thomas E. Hill suggests that when deciding moral problems impartially, "we are divided against ourselves" (136).[3] Moral questions are supposedly resolvable behind a veil of ignorance where the rational self dispassionately follows abstract principles, in order to secure the universalizability of such principles by regarding all agents faced with a similar moral question in the same way. But universalizing actions pares down the particularities of both the situation and the subjects involved in order to fit the mold of the general.[4] Seyla Benhabib contends that it was Kant's fundamental error, "to assume that I, as a pure rational agent reasoning for myself, could reach a conclusion that would be acceptable for all at all times and places" (167). Within the context of the novels I have been exploring, in *To the Lighthouse*, Mr. Ramsay exemplifies this unrelenting adherence to rational principles in his insistence upon always telling the truth despite others' occasional need for subtle

prevarication, as Mrs. Ramsay realizes the situation with James and the trip to the lighthouse calls for.

Nevertheless, Kant's moral autonomy was integral in the formulation of the social contract, the framework for the constitutions, governance, and judicial systems of Western societies. And the Kantian influence persists, evidenced in the work of John Rawls.[5] Thus, the ethic of independence inherent in Kant's thought continues wherein, in theory, rational agents refer to rationally determined, abstract, universal principles (or laws), independent of subjective socio-historical context.

However, there is a subjective strain which developed out of the inward turn in which engagement in particularity, difference, and originality were sought. This strain evolved into Romanticism. Instead of being linked strongly with moral rationalism, autonomy came to be seen as a product of self-expression; hence the flourishing reverence of the artist. For art was considered the best vehicle for the original expression of one's inner nature, and uncovering this true, inner self supposedly provided one wholeness. The work of art was at once thought to be an expression of inner wholeness, and a mirror of the wholeness in Nature.

Just as the Enlightenment's disengaged reason still rests upon a form of self-mediation through objectivity or impartiality, Romanticism's search for inner wholeness as a reflection of Nature's wholeness also is still a kind of mediation, and a kind of morality; the beautiful whole is good. Indeed, Nietzsche held that both the Enlightenment and Romanticism were very much a continuation of Platonic-Christian traditions.[6] Western philosophy, aesthetics, and self-creation were still linked to metaphysics and religion in his eyes, and thus to a herd mentality that stifles creative originality. The *Übermensch*, however, is self-created; he

describes himself in his own terms. Autonomy, therefore, is self-creation and self-creation, autonomy.

Robert Pippin explains that Nietzsche thought the independence that existed in modernity was a misnomer and "actually represented a deep fear of genuine independence" (81). Nietzsche's radical critical autonomy, or "noble" independence (Pippin 93), is even more pronouncedly transcendent of socialization than moral autonomy; to him, the will of the individual potentially transcends all. Thus, autonomy-as-independence arrives at the problematic relationship between the individual and the community, the public/private rift. Isn't modernism as a literary movement then a kind of attempt to realize Nietzschean ideas? The artist hero of the male modernist novel, as described in the citation from Beebe's study above, seems very much the transcendental free spirit; that which the woman artist could not ever be.

Before pursuing this last thought, I want to distil this first narrative into an even denser concentrate in order to draw a parallel to the contemporary philosophical scene. Kantian moral autonomy, which informs the justice tradition, provides a guide for public life based on the ethic of independence. Nietzsche's radical, critical autonomy arose out of disdain for this guide and out of exaltation of the privately self-created artist hero; he thought that *he* was finally envisioning autonomy-as-independence. Hence, differing degrees of autonomy-as-independence are at the root of the public/private dilemma which contemporary philosophers inherit. I have already mentioned the Kantian influence in Rawls's thought, continuing the link of autonomy-as-independence with justice and morality; and in chapter 1, I showed that Richard Rorty's work is somewhat continuous with Nietzsche's promotion of

the privately dwelling artist who creates ironic redescriptions of his own life, is independent to the point of isolation, and backs away from discussing the public good. However, Rorty pushes further down the path that Nietzsche cut by overtly condoning a separate public sphere and vocabulary for discussing moral questions, such as how to avoid pain, humiliation, and cruelty. Nietzsche does not observe this split to Rorty's satisfaction.[7] Rorty believes that social institutions concerned with such public tasks should operate distanced from private self-creation. In short, Rorty accepts the rift.

Also, as I argued in chapter 1, a subtle pseudo-Nietzschean elitism is alive in Rorty when he states that autonomy "is something which certain particular human beings hope to attain by self-creation and which a few actually do" (*CIS* 65). Not everyone can attain autonomy; those individuals who do create themselves by redescribing their lives with their own private vocabulary into a "beautiful pattern" (*CIS* 106). Autonomy is having the last word. Under this schema, the woman artist figure would rarely achieve autonomy because for her, attaining it does not entail winning the race for the last word while others lose. She creates herself and gradually achieves autonomy while maintaining respect for others' self-creations, others' designs.

To show the difference between Rorty's view that autonomy is the independent articulation of one's beautiful pattern and the view of autonomy-as-responsibility, I will focus on the dinner party scene in *To the Lighthouse*. Lily's experience at the Ramsays' house reveals that sometimes others' beautiful patterns conflict with one's own. Earlier, I compared Mrs. Ramsay to a conductor who orchestrates everyone's lives around her. She could also be described as attempting to fit others into her beautiful pattern in which everyone, including

Lily, is to marry. Meanwhile, Lily is trying to design her own life, and to achieve her artistic vision amidst the pressures she feels to conform to Mrs. Ramsay's design, which represents the very social script she is resisting.

The two women's beautiful patterns clash when Mrs. Ramsay's design requires that Lily show kindness towards Charles Tansley. However, in continuation with Lily's quiet resistance to conventional womanly roles, she wants to push her "experiment" further at this moment and remain silent instead of complimenting (or complementing) Tansley, whom she strongly dislikes (*TL* 85-86). But in this episode, Lily gives in to Mrs. Ramsay's design out of respect for—as well as a desire to please—her hostess. Their relationship seems more important than her experiment at this moment, and more important than her dislike of Tansley, so she briefly undermines her own beautiful pattern and plays her part in Mrs. Ramsay's. Yet she does not destroy her own design by doing so:

> Then her eye caught the salt cellar, which she had placed there to remind her, and she remembered that next morning she would move the tree further towards the middle, and her spirits rose so high at the thought of painting to-morrow that she laughed out loud at what Mr. Tansley was saying. Let him talk all night if he liked it. (*TL* 87)

And a little later, Lily's resistance to marriage is closely connected to the preservation of her design in this significant passage:

> For at any rate, she said to herself, catching sight of the salt cellar on the pattern, she need not marry, thank Heaven: she need not undergo that degradation. She was saved from that dilution. She would move the tree

rather more to the middle. (*TI.* 95)

Clearly, her artistic creation and her self-creation are linked closely together; both are in turn linked to her resistance of social convention, and all of this is embodied in her thoughts of her painting which remains undisturbed.

Both Lily's and Mrs. Ramsay's designs are important to their respective identities. Under Rorty's view, they must battle against each other to complete their own designs and to affirm these identities. But a different perspective suggests that this is not necessarily what happens in *To the Lighthouse.* From this angle, Lily affirms her sense of responsibility to her relationship with Mrs. Ramsay; she doesn't want to humiliate this woman for whom she cares over something trivial. This decision can be considered just as autonomous, just as self-affirming—if not more—as the alternative of persisting with her experiment and affirming her own design because of the importance of this relationship. The fact that just after Lily acquiesces to Mrs. Ramsay's design she envisions how she will solve the problem in her painting indicates that she does not cancel out her own design. Yet Rorty doesn't make room for this perspective in which responsibility to others can occasionally outweigh the importance of getting across one's own beautiful design. He doesn't make room for the ethical dimension involved in self-redescription or self-creation, nor, by extension, the ethical dimension involved in autonomy.

In Rorty's scheme of things, Lily relinquishes her design and, therefore, her autonomy in this incident. Her desire to prevent Mrs. Ramsay's pain and humiliation, and avoid cruelty is misplaced; such a desire falls squarely under the public domain and is unsuitable with regards to her private self-creation and autonomy: "The desire to be autonomous is not

relevant to the liberal's desire to avoid cruelty and pain" (*CIS* 65). Questions about morality and ethics have no place in individuals' private vocabularies.

However, recent work in moral theory questions this narrow conception of autonomy. These studies acknowledge the ethic of responsibility in relationships, and ratify the attendance to the needs of others. In fact, Charles Taylor considers what Rorty deems strictly public questions to be crucial in private settings and just as important as modernity's ethic of independence, which he redescribes as the "ethic of authenticity" (*MM* 21). Taylor doesn't see the demands of this ethic as rival to morality; rather, he identifies it as a moral source that operates in conjunction with other long-standing moral sources whose tenets are still present, but have metamorphosed over time. Taylor confirms that authenticity is a relevant new ethic (Rorty would agree as long as it retains a strong self-creative bent), which coexists with older sets of ethics inherited from moral sources such as Judeo-Christianity, Enlightenment naturalism, or Platonism (Rorty would not agree). Taylor acknowledges the importance of self-creation and gives credence to the modern demand for independence, yet he tempers these demands with the equally compelling need for individuals to recognize their "horizons of significance."[8] These horizons consist of the inescapable moral frameworks behind peoples' beliefs, as well as their connectedness with others.

Thus, the public/private rift continues even between the philosophers who try to resolve it. Taylor, a moral philosopher, envisions a balance between the two sides which he sees at present as warring sets of ethics; and Rorty, a pragmatist, tells of the incommensurability of the two vocabularies. Such is the narrative of autonomy-as-independence. But how have women dealt with the rift?

A facile response to this question could state that since women were not autonomous or independent during the height of modernism, they did not experience this rift. Indeed, the doors to the public were closed to women like Lily Briscoe. But as the episode in *To the Lighthouse* described above reveals, their enclosure within the private, domestic realm does not remove them from situations which require moral deliberation. Some people would likely argue that the resolution of moral problems achieved in this private realm have no bearing on public life. But, as I have argued, Taylor gives credence to responsibility and relatedness to others in philosophical and political discussions. He identifies these values with the ethic of benevolence which he traces back to its philosophical and religious sources. But another way of looking at benevolence is as the ethic of care; and retracing its historical sources leads to the home, and to intimate relationships between friends, and between lovers. Taylor's retrieval of moral sources would be more complete if he acknowledged these sources which many contemporary feminists are retrieving, sources that can be seen in the women's narratives I have been exploring.[9]

In her study *In a Different Voice*, Carol Gilligan identifies the genre of moral response typically associated with women which has become known as the "care perspective."[10] This perspective differs from the justice tradition's rational, impartial observance of abstract principles. However, Gilligan's work has been criticized for seeming to define a monolithic moral outlook of women and obscuring differences in class, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation that also affect an individual's voice, identity, relationships, and response to moral dilemmas.[11] Gilligan's critics point out legitimate shortcomings. But I think the important aspect of her study, which need not be eclipsed by its faults, is the (re)validation of alternate

forms of moral deliberation which operate on the basis of care and responsibility, not on rights and rules alone. And the sources of these moral responses can indeed be found in the private realm traditionally associated with women's experiences. Gilligan identifies *a voice* which both modernism and traditional moral reasoning occlude, but this doesn't necessarily occlude other *voices*, rather it can be seen as an invocation for others to sing out.[12]

Gilligan compares the way women describe themselves with the models of moral development that predominate in psychology, and observes a marked discrepancy:

> When one begins with the study of women and derives developmental constructs from their lives, the outline of a moral conception different from that described by Freud, [Jean] Piaget, or [Lawrence] Kohlberg begins to emerge and informs a different description of development. In this conception, the moral problem arises from conflicting responsibilities rather than from competing rights and requires for its resolution a mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative rather than formal and abstract. This conception of morality as concerned with the activity of care centers moral development around the understanding of responsibility and relationships, just as the conception of morality as fairness ties moral development to the understanding of rights and rules. (*DV* 19)

In widely respected studies which precede Gilligan's, women (when identified as such at all[13]) are compared to traditional views of moral autonomy and are usually deemed deficient, and incapable of autonomy; their "morality of responsibility appears inconclusive and diffuse, given its insistent contextual relativism" (*DV* 22). Thus, as illustrated in Lily's case, not only

does the enforcement of gender roles confine women to the domestic sphere and limit their legal and economic autonomy, but measured against the standards of moral autonomy, their moral responses do not even register. Women are limited to the roles of care and nurturance, but then are told that care and nurturance are deficient forms of moral response; they are defined by their relationships with men, and then labelled as dependent and incapable of autonomy. Yet when the care perspective is validated, it is the "morality of rights and noninterference" that seems unsatisfactory and, in fact, repels women due to "its potential justification of indifference and unconcern" (*DV* 22).

Gilligan's study has sparked feminist moral theorists such as Diana Meyers and Seyla Benhabib to continue this comparison between care and the traditional conception of moral autonomy. Their work suggests the traditional conception itself seems deficient and fails to consider care and responsibility as legitimate indications of autonomy. Benhabib declares: "The contextuality, narrativity, and the specificity of women's moral judgment is not a sign of weakness or deficiency, but a manifestation of a vision of moral maturity that views the self as a being immersed in a network of relationships with others" (156). What has hitherto been deemed women's moral weakness can now be seen as their strength.

Diana Meyers picks up on Gilligan's suggestion that the care perspective provides "an alternative conception of maturity" (*DV* 22):

> The care perspective allows for the possibility that human relations can involve deep and special emotional bonds that have a moral significance but that, nonetheless, cannot be universalized. . . . Subjects who think in terms of the care perspective make moral progress, not by stepping outside their social

> context in order to generate ever more sophisticated systems of rules, but rather by expanding the scope of the injunctions to give care and to maintain connections. ("Socialized Ind." 142)

Under Meyers's view, autonomous people balance the creation and pursuit of their "life plan" ("beautiful pattern" in Rorty's vocabulary) with their responsibility to others (*SSP* 51-52). Accordingly, the rigid pursuit of a life plan is not the definitive characteristic of an autonomous person, nor is the adherence to abstract, universal principles. Rather, an autonomous person has acquired the skills to balance the demands of living in a community with his or her emotional ties, and personal goals. Meyers refers to this as one's "autonomy competency" which is developed through education and socialization (*SSP* 135). She points out that, of course, socialization is not the same for both sexes, and that early in women's lives, autonomy is often discouraged: "In the case of girls, we have seen that traditional feminine socialization funnels them into a dependent mindset which curtails their control over their lives" (*SSP* 207). Meyers states that socialization geared to role preparation limits autonomy (*SSP* 248). Ideally, if socialization fostered autonomy competency equally for all people, everyone would have the opportunity of determining and pursuing their own self-created life plans rather than merely adapting into conventional roles.[14]

Meyers's view coheres with the way I have narrated the development of the woman artist figure's autonomy over the course of the three novels I have been exploring. Perhaps the most compatible aspect of her work with my study is her view that autonomy is not all-or-nothing; people can achieve varying levels of autonomy, and "there can be pockets of autonomy—particular actions—and threads of autonomy—in a person's life" (*SSP* 162).[15]

Accordingly, at the beginning of my narrative, the woman artist figure can be described as "minimally autonomous":

> minimally autonomous people possess at least some disposition to consult their selves and at least some ability to act on their own beliefs, desires, and so forth; but they lack some of the other skills from the repertory of autonomy skills; the autonomy skills they possess are poorly developed and poorly coordinated; and they possess few independent competencies that could promote the exercise of available autonomy skills. (*SSP* 205-06)

Early in my narrative, the woman artist lacks autonomy skills—self-definition, self-direction, self-governance, self-knowledge and an ability to balance these with responsibility in relationships—due to the strict gender role enforcement of the social script which gears her towards dependence, and due to her own lack of self-confidence. I said above that Lily's decision to go along with Mrs. Ramsay's design at the dinner party could be considered an autonomous one; Lily's relationship with Mrs. Ramsay is important to her, and due to her sense of responsibility to it, she momentarily sets aside her own design. But on the whole, Lily's autonomy is quite minimal. She does not have a "globally autonomous" life plan, nor is she "in control of the overall direction" of her life (*SSP* 206). She has a tendency to be swayed by the opinions and influence of others, to the extent that she feels pulled in the two opposing directions represented by Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay; their presence obstructs her vision. By contrast, as a child, Elaine Risley overcomes such external pressures by developing a strongly individuated imaginative vision. Elaine's vision provides her a sense of control over those who have tried to control her. But Lily does not have the same level of autonomy

competency Elaine enjoys. She receives no positive reinforcement from others in her chosen life plan as an artist, and seems to have no non-conformist role models like those Elaine has in her mother, Mr. Banerji, and Mrs. Finestein. Lily's low level of self-respect manifests in her moments of self-doubt, when she thinks of herself as an "old maid," "playing at painting," characteristic of her minimal autonomy.[16]

Not only does Lily lack a strong life plan and the requisite skills to balance the timid plan she *does* have with her responsibility to others, but on top of this, and even though she quite consistently resists socially scripted roles for women, socialization has a pernicious hold on Lily. Inside her flow "habitual currents" that wear down her belief in herself, and make her judge herself. Meyers comments on this phenomenon: "The most poignant evil of socialization that produces minimally autonomous individuals is that it helps to secure its victims' collaborations with the injustices they may suffer" (*SSP* 253). Socialization continues to be a problem for Anna, causing her to thwart the independence she achieves by comparing herself to conventions which decree that she must get a man, that her writing is too diffuse, and that she is a poor mother to Janet. She somehow feels guilty for refusing the female roles that would channel her towards minimal autonomy. Sex equality may be becoming legally instituted by Anna's time, enabling women's increased autonomy, but socialization still undermines her autonomy psychically:

> Having internalized norms of feminine or masculine behavior in such a way that their identity becomes linked to observing these constraints, women and men cannot spurn their respective gender roles without calling into question their own respectability, if not *their very sanity*. . . . the problem is not an

> inability to imagine living otherwise. Rather, it is the impossibility of detaching alternative ways of life from their stigmatizing connotations of contemptible failure or sordid perversity and thus the impossibility of perceiving the alternatives as viable ones.[17] (my italics, *SSP* 252)

Anna definitely questions her sanity. The identity crisis she suffers is related to her attempt to break away from her role within a group. The portion of the novel in which Anna is involved in the Communist Party in Central Africa is similar to Lily's situation within the communal protagonist in *To the Lighthouse*; the narrative space is shared, Anna plays out familiar roles, and she gains identity through group affiliation. Even during her involvement with the Party in London when she constantly criticizes it, she is playing a role and gaining her identity out of negative group affiliation. Her criticism of the Party, her resistance from within, keeps her tied to it. The same is true for Lily; her silent resistance from within the group keeps her tied to it. She continues to compare herself to the others who assume the roles she rejects, and to judge herself according to their standards.

Lily does manage to create "out of community with people" (*TL* 148), and now, in light of this discussion about minimal autonomy this seems quite an accomplishment. After showing Mr. Ramsay sympathy, she completes her painting, and thus proves to herself that she can fulfil a feminine role and be an artist at same time. Furthermore, the achievement of her vision arrives after she extends sympathy, thereby exhibiting the balance between pursuing her life plan (design/beautiful pattern) and maintaining her responsibility to the needs of others. Thus, her painting is a breakthrough in that it proves self-creation, artistic creation, and responsibility can coincide. But Lily's autonomy is still limited because her

self-creation remains suppressed in the end when she resigns herself to the fact that her painting is destined to hang in the attic. Lily proves that resistance to the social script is possible, but she does not direct her self-creation towards lasting social change; she remains in the private.

Anna, however, finds a creative, productive outlet for her resistance: dissidence. Experimental writing enables her to experiment with her identity, to try out different identities, apart from those available to her as part of a communal protagonist.[18] At first, Anna thinks the writing in her notebooks comes out of her identity crisis. In this way, the notebooks are a last-ditch attempt at form, at keeping her self, which she feels is in fragments, together. But again her apparent insanity can be seen as the result of gender role enforcement; she is rejecting conventional roles, therefore she must be insane. In the end, she manages to gain a sense of identity and autonomy by looking back at her life spent in resistance and writing about it, thereby affirming that resistance. Her novel *Free Women* can be seen as an affirmation of her dissidence, and its ending with Anna as a marriage counsellor, an affirmation of her nurturance.

Anna emerges from what feels like her own self-destruction to find a creative, productive outlet for her dissidence: writing and/or marriage counselling, i.e., she affirms both facets of her identity (as an artist and/or nurturer, through independence and/or relatedness with others), and hence her autonomy-as-responsibility. Here, redescription is a private act but with a social and political point; contrary to Rorty's wish to keep acts of private redescription strictly divided from the public, political realm, her work exhibits the "ethical function" DuPlessis attributes to the fictional art of women in the passage quoted

earlier. Anna's work also participates in the challenge Kristeva hopes women's writing will pose to the "constitution and functioning" of the socio-symbolic contract that once confined and defined women, by defiantly redefining herself.

But does personal autonomy always have to accompany dissidence and invoke social change? Intuition tells me not necessarily. I suspect it depends upon the socio-historical circumstances, and the level of significance of the individual's actions who is trying to affirm her autonomy. However, there is little point in accomplishing a personal goal, and then going back to life as before, unchanged. As Meyers states, autonomous people see their goals through, and continue to exercise reasonable "control of the overall direction of their lives" (*SSP* 206). If one's social horizon is already conducive to autonomy, and does not really obstruct the achievement of goals, dissidence and social change would seem unnecessary. But as Meyers and MacKinnon suggest in their books, this is not yet the case for women who are vying for equality and autonomy, nor is it the case for the woman artist in my narrative. So dissidence is still necessary by Elaine's time; the pursuit of her life plan as an artist still amounts to a resistance to the social script, and the successful creation of her art continues to serve as a forum for social critique.

In fact, Elaine's dissidence disturbs the socio-symbolic contract at its very foundation: linear and monumental time. Her challenge to time begins in her attempt to escape the language and conventions of linear time, and the symbolism of monumental time. She retreats into her eyes, and transforms through her gaze anyone that attempts to control her in a kind of imaginary space-time wherein she is in control. Thus, she establishes what matures into the aesthetic control of her imaginative vision at a young age, whereas Lily struggles

with her vision throughout *To the Lighthouse.* Lily has difficulty blocking out interruptions, and achieving an objective distance from the subjects she paints. But Elaine's problem is not distancing herself from people; it is, conversely, connecting with them, with other women in particular. Ironically, she finds that the signifying space she creates out of her retreat into her eyes ends up making the connections with other women she finds so hard to make through language. Elaine's paintings are bridges to other women; they communicate her personal experiences in her own private symbolism. In this way, Elaine discloses the "murmurs and stirrings" (*TL* 51), that Lily longs to draw out of Mrs. Ramsay, in the signifying space of her paintings which other women then relate to out of their own experiences, their own unique narratives.

Out of a challenge to linearity comes solidarity. This is true in the narrative I trace of the woman artist figure, and in feminist moral theory as well. Both kinds of women's writing challenge the linearity of rational, Mr. Ramsayesque thinking. Feminist moral theorists critique the justice perspective's impartial adherence to rights and rules, and propose to supplement Kantian moral autonomy with the ethic of care and responsibility to others. This is not to discard the justice perspective altogether, nor do Julia Kristeva and Elaine Risley discard linear time altogether; but rather, they propose to expand it with the idea of space-time. Linear time perpetuates women's omission from history, language, politics, and all things public, keeping her as the perpetual other, outside time. But space-time legitimizes women's presence in these arenas, along with her moral mind-set.

Conclusion

I have covered a lot of ground in this study. But I realize that I cover only a very small portion of an ever-expanding narrative space. Reconsidering the question I pose at the beginning—is personal autonomy necessary for artistic self-creation?—it now seems, rather, that the terms should be stated in reverse: the woman artist figure's self-creation has been necessary for her to affirm her autonomy. From minimal autonomy, through self-creation and dissidence, the woman artist figure gradually achieves greater autonomy-as-responsibility. In addition, the works she creates are successful while they also fulfil an ethical function; they communicate previously muted individual experiences to others, thereby opening the door for change to the socio-symbolic contract that initially represses her. The creative process itself helps the woman artist develop autonomy because she directly seizes the means of changing this contract's representations of *Woman*, language, linearity, and she literally carves out her own space in time.

The narrative in which I relate this development unfolds differently from the linear progression of the autonomy-as-independence narrative which culminates in the public/private rift. The woman artist's narrative is not linear, although it might seem to be when told from the perspective of one accomplishment leading into the next, and the next, as her autonomy increases. But looking at it differently affords a more rounded view. For actually, the woman artist's autonomy develops through a constant expansion of her horizons of experience. This process begins when she achieves self-creation while still residing within the private, communal setting. Then the frame widens into the public sphere as she ventures outside the home. And finally it opens out to the universe when Elaine contemplates her

place within it, and within time. It is like Anna's "game":

> First I created the room I sat in, object by object, "naming" everything, bed, chair, curtains, till it was whole in my mind, then move out of the room, creating the house, then out of the house, slowly creating the street, then rise into the air, looking down on London . . . but holding at the same time the room and the house and the street in my mind, and then England, the shape of England in Britain, then the little group of islands lying against the continent, then slowly, slowly, I would create the world . . . until the point was reached where I moved out into space, and watched the world, a sunlit ball in the sky, turning and rolling beneath me. (*GN* 548)

The woman artist slowly moves outwards, creating, naming, and leaving the signifying space of her works behind her for others to share. The area of this narrative continues to expand over time. It's hard to say where exactly she is right now in the game, only that it continues.

Notes

Epigraph

1. Virginia Woolf, "The Intellectual Status of Women," *New Statesman* 9 Oct. 1920, "Appendix III," *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 3, ed. A.O. Bell (London: Hogarth Press, 1978) 341-342.

2. Doris Lessing, *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside* (Concord, ON: House of Anansi Press, 1986) 50.

3. Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi, trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) 201.

Introduction

1. I borrow this term from Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Writing beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) 2.

2. Pippin contrasts two kinds of philosophers in *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem: On the Dissatisfactions of European High Culture* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991): proponents of "inheritance" who believe in the historical continuum of thought, and that "modernity was as much inherited as created" (22); and proponents of a "radical break" theory, exemplified by Descartes whose radical doubt represents "an extreme rejection of everything accepted on trust, authority, tradition, common sense; a suspension of our inclination to accept, and to begin reflection from, the immediate 'looks' of things" (24). Nietzsche (via Nehamas), Taylor, and Rorty all construct sets of oppositions similar to this, although Pippin seems the most willing to identify which philosophers he thinks are inheritance theorists, and which are radical breakers. However, I want to keep this discussion mainly to tracing personal autonomy rather than historical autonomy, and when I use the word "autonomy" it is of the person, unless otherwise specified.

1. Architects of Thought

1. Charles Taylor's claim, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) 121.

2. Two examples: *A History of Private Life*, vol. 5, eds. Antoine Prost and Gérard Vincent, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1991); Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987).

3. See especially "Rationalized Christianity," *Sources of the Self*, 234-247.

4. Taylor's *Sources of The Self* is the most detailed of the four. *The Malaise of Modernity* (Concord, ON: House of Anansi Press, 1991) also traces the origins of modernity and is more cursory given its shorter length, although still helpful.

5. Pippin holds this view. See "Modernity as a Historical Category," *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, 16-22.

6. "Without the unified self which we see articulated in Plato's theory, the modern notion of interiority could never have developed." Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 120.

7. Taylor elaborates on this, and on the similarity of Augustine's logic to Descartes's in *Sources of the Self*, 140-141.

8. "The contrast with Descartes is striking, just because Montaigne is at the point of origin of another kind of modern individualism, that of self-discovery, which differs from the Cartesian both in aim and method. Its aim is to identify the individual in his or her unrepeatable difference, where Cartesianism gives us a science of the subject in its general essence. . . ." Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 181-82.

9. Ironically, the trend away from mediation was even co-opted by religion, evident in the development of "rationalized Christianity". Furthermore, the observance of spirituality adjusted with the Reformation, when the notions of the "sacred" and of mediation were replaced by the affirmation of laylife, or the "profane". Taylor believes that this evinced "the fusion of the ethic of ordinary life and the philosophy of disengaged freedom and rationality," best exemplified in Locke's rationalized Christianity which "incorporates modern disengagement and procedural rationality in itself." Even the "sense of self-responsible autonomy" was "integrated into religious belief. . . . God relates to humans as rational beings." See "'God Loveth Adverbs,'" and "Rationalized Christianity," *Sources of the Self*, 211-247.

10. The connection between aesthetic wholeness and morality is made by Taylor in *The Malaise of Modernity*, 64-65.

11. In chapter 3 I discuss the role that formulating a life plan plays in feminist conceptions of autonomy. The feminist version differs from Nietzsche's by incorporating the importance of one's connectedness with others in autonomous action.

12. The "problem" as Pippin sees it is two-sided. (1) How to achieve and legitimate modernity, by: (a) a radical break from the past and from any links to the past maintained through traditions; (b) accepting all that is inherited from the past as leading up to modernity which supposedly finally achieves what former eras projected it to be, but never fulfilled. See Pippin, 22-25. (2) The second part of the problem stems from the realization of modernity in modernism and the repercussions this imposed upon personal autonomy. How far to pursue autonomy and at what costs became an issue: "so many come to be so dissatisfied because modernity seemed to promise what it finally could not deliver—an

individually and collectively self-determining life—or because they lost faith that they knew what that would mean, or because some came to believe that it was not such a wise thing to have promised in the first place." See Pippin, "Introduction: The Modernity Problem," *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, 1-15.

13. I am, of course, thinking of feminism here. I will elaborate upon this point in chapter 3.

14. Taylor makes this point in "Epiphanies of Modernism," *Sources of the Self*, 487-488. I refer to deconstruction to exemplify one way in which irony has evolved since Nietzsche, but I do not mean to include Rorty in it. On the contrary, Rorty doesn't want to get caught up refuting inherited traditions or beliefs because such refutations must be phrased, to an extent, in the terms of the old vocabulary. He prefers to make a complete break from the old system (or "language game") by using the new vocabulary in order to avoid the necessity of showing how old systems deconstruct themselves. He borrows the Wittgensteinian analogy which likens the use of a new vocabulary to the use of new tools. See "The Contingency of Language," in *Contingency, irony, and solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 11-13.

15. Nancy Fraser has also observed the elitism of Rorty's ironism: "Even in a postmetaphysical culture, ironism cannot be the generalized attitude of the entire social collectivity. It can only be the attitude of one stratum of society, a literary intelligentsia or cultural elite. Moreover, there is no denying that ironism can be cruel. It delights in redescribing others instead of taking them in their own terms. . . . To make matters worse, the ironist cannot claim that, in redescribing others, he is uncovering their true selves and interests, thereby empowering them and setting them free. Only the metaphysically minded politician can promise that." See "Solidarity or Singularity?: Richard Rorty Between Romanticism and Technocracy," *Consequences of Theory: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1987-88*, eds. Jonathan Arac and Barbara Johnson, New Ser. 14 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991) 46.

16. Feminist moral theorist are interested in this issue presently, and I will discuss the concept of identity through relationships with reference to the works of Carol Gilligan, Seyla Benhabib, and Diana T. Meyers. To them, self-identification through relationships has not only been overlooked but also undervalued, or characterized as a *feminine* way of thinking, antithetical to the concept of independence which consequently has masculine connotations, and is considered the best way of thinking. Gilligan's study *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982) validates relational thinking as an alternate form of self-identification; not better or worse, but different from what has traditionally been valued.

17. Charles Taylor, "The Malaise of Modernity," prod. David Cayley, *Massey Lectures*, exec. prod. Bernie Lucht, *Ideas*, CBC, Montréal, 19 Nov. 1991.

18. Ibid.

19. Such as Alan Bloom, Christopher Lasch, Daniel Bell, and Gilles Lipovetsky, all of whom Taylor names in *The Malaise of Modernity*, 14-15.

20. See "Three Malaises," and "The Inarticulate Debate," *The Malaise of Modernity*, 1-23.

21. When "the aesthetic becomes initiated into life—as a set of life-goals—it becomes different from and rival to morality." Charles Taylor, "The Malaise of Modernity," prod. David Cayley, *Massey Lectures*, exec. prod. Bernie Lucht, *Ideas*, CBC, Montréal, 21 Nov. 1991.

22. Ibid.

23. This supports Seyla Benhabib's statement: "for feminist theory, the gender-sex system is not a contingent but an essential way in which social reality is organized, symbolically divided, and experienced." See "The Generalized and the Concrete Other: The Kohlberg-Gilligan Controversy and Moral Theory," *Women and Moral Theory*, eds. Eva Feder Kittay and Diana T. Meyers (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1987) 158.

24. "One of my aims in this book is to suggest the possibility of a liberal utopia. . . ." Rorty, "Introduction," *Contingency, irony, and solidarity*, xv.

25. Concern for the rights of those oppressed because of race, class, as well as gender has characterized feminism since its first wave at the end of the nineteenth century. In fact, many have suggested that as a result of women's involvement in the abolitionist movement that they began to fight for their own rights. Kate Millett writes: "In the United States it was the cause of eradicating slavery which provided the impetus for the emancipation of women." See *Sexual Politics* (1969; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990) 80. This phenomenon repeats itself with surprising similarity in the 1960s as Robin Morgan's *The Demon Lover* shows (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1989). Women's involvement in the black civil rights movement was followed by the second wave of the women's movement, a renewed effort to improve women's own rights. Taylor quotes W.E.B. DuBois as saying that the 19th century was "the first century of human sympathy" (*SS* 576n6), but both the 19th and 20th centuries could also be called the age of feminism. Those who are concerned with the rights of oppressed people and fight to improve them—or more succinctly, those who put "universal benevolence" into practice—are often feminists.

26. For example, the endorsement of family values currently on the slate of right-wing political parties in the United States and Canada. A very narrow, unrealistic, and repressive idea of the family unit is being promoted which does not cohere with "alternate" lifestyles. In Taylor's study, family values are a part of the affirmation of ordinary life he proposes to retrieve (*SS* 211). I do not mean to imply that Taylor espouses the views of these political parties. I only wish to suggest the potential harm which could ensue from retrieving certain moral sources.

2.1 Framing the Triptych

1. Space does not permit me to fully contextualize the three women artists within their socio-historical settings, yet perhaps Woolf, Lessing, and Atwood do this adequately within the novels themselves. At any rate here is a list of studies that do the job of socio-historical contextualizing: Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (1952; New York: Vintage Books, 1989); Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986); Marilyn J. Boxer & Jean H. Quataert, eds., *Connecting Spheres: Women in the Western World, 1500 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Sandra M. Gilbert & Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, vols. 1 and 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Gayle Greene, *Changing the Story: Feminist Fiction and the Tradition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Bonnie G. Smith, *Changing Lives: Women in European History Since 1700* (Toronto and Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Co., 1989). This list is, of course, by no means exhaustive.

2. Julia Kristeva's term from "Women's Time," *The Kristeva Reader*, 209. I use and explicate this term further in chapter 2.4.

3. See Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s," *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1990) 190-233.

4. "the putting into discourse of 'woman'. . . ." See Alice Jardine, *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity* (1985; Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1989) 25.

5. I am referring to Rorty's statement in his article, "Feminism and Pragmatism," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 30 (1991): 231-258: "I am too ignorant about the history of feminism—about how long and how continuous the feminist tradition has been—to speculate about when things began to change" (258n34). This self-effacing statement in which Rorty excuses himself from familiarity with feminist history is made in an endnote. In the essay proper, he goes on to forecast feminism's future. His main suggestions are that feminists should read Dewey, adopt a pragmatist outlook, and form a "separate club": "if you want to work out a story about who you are—put together a moral identity—which decreases the importance of your relationships to one set of people and increases the importance of your relationships to another set, the physical absence of the first set of people may be just what you need" (247). But, as Julia Kristeva instructs in "Women's Time," instead of invoking change to the language, laws, and institutions that delimit and exclude women (feminist goals, though perhaps not Rortyan), separatism exacerbates the cleavage between the sexes when it starts to formulate a "counter-power": "the very logic of counter-power and of counter-society necessarily generates, by its very structure, its essence as a simulacrum of the combated society or of power." Far from decreasing "the importance of one set of people," as Rorty envisions separatism could do for feminism, the counter-society would be inextricably tied to that very set. See Kristeva's "Women's Time," *The Kristeva Reader*, 202-203. I touch upon the issue of feminism as a counter-power again in chapters 2.3 and 2.4.

Cf. Nancy Fraser, "From Irony to Prophecy to Politics: A Response to Richard Rorty," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 30 (1991): 259-266.

6. Jardine observes: "the majority of male critics (in all of their incarnations) seem not to have read (or taken seriously) what feminist criticism has produced. They continue either to ignore gender or else to incorporate it into an untransformed reading system, with an ironic wink of the eye, a guilty humanistic benevolence, or a bold stroke of 'male feminism'" (53). She then tells of the hazardous labyrinth feminists face when deciding what texts to read—women's or men's?—and which audience to address—male academicians or civilian women?—to achieve the most effect. She does notice that "just at the historical moment when feminist criticism has found a clear and increasingly acceptable voice, it must confront and is confronted by a group of writers who, again, are thinking and writing in strange new ways" (61), but does not consider (as Bordo does) that the "strange new ways" of postmodernism could be a way of evading the responsibilities which accompany really listening to feminism's voice(s). She ponders the absence of women writers from men's and women's theoretical works (Derrida, Deleuze, Lacan, Irigaray, Kristeva, and Cixous), then proceeds to concentrate on the "gynema" or "woman-in-effect" in these works, yet all of this is carried out against a feminist background. Again, none of this detracts from the relevance of Jardine's analysis. I only want to stress the equal importance of women's texts in which women *are* present. See "Feminist Tracks," *Gynesis*, 50-64.

2.2 Lily Briscoe

1. J. Hillis Miller uses the term "collective consciousness" to describe the narrator in *To the Lighthouse* in which, he says, "all the characters participate without knowing it." See "Mr. Carmichael and Lily Briscoe: The Rhythm of Creativity in *To the Lighthouse*," *Modernism Reconsidered*, eds. Robert Kiely and John Hildebidle (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1983) 167-189. Miller's term is useful for discussing the interaction of all the characters within the novel as a whole, whereas DuPlessis's term, "communal protagonist," is more useful for my purpose of observing Lily within this "collective consciousness." See *Writing beyond the Ending*, 162-177.

2. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf ironically critiques the "new novel by Mr A" in which the letter "I" predominates: "Back one always hailed to the letter 'I'. One began to be tired of 'I'. Not but what this 'I' was a most respectable 'I'; honest and logical; as hard as a nut, and polished for centuries by good teaching and good feeding. I respect and admire that 'I' from the bottom of my heart. But . . . the worst of it is that in the shadow of the letter 'I' all is shapeless as mist. Is that a tree? No, it is a woman." See *A Room of One's Own* (1929; London: Grafton, 1977) 95. In *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs. Ramsay notes Charles Tansley's attempt to assert himself by the "I - I - I" which fills his speech: "He was thinking of himself and the impression he was making, as she could tell by the sound of his voice, and his emphasis and his uneasiness" (*TL* 98). These two instances are perhaps indicative of how Woolf regards her modernist contemporaries—that other stream of consciousness writer in

particular: James Joyce. Doris Lessing's protagonist, Anna Wulf, also critiques "I" novels in *The Golden Notebook*, as I will discuss in chapter 2.3.

3. DuPlessis's definition of the "social script" is useful in my study, and demands complete citation here: "Any social convention is like a 'script,' which suggests sequences of action and response, the meaning we give these, and ways of organizing experience by choices, emphases, priorities. The term offers to social analysis what 'ideology' offers to cultural analysis. . . . Scripts are also integrated; a whole 'social script' is an interlocking group of cognitive and emotional structures. . . . So too literature as a human institution is, baldly, organized by many ideological scripts" (2).

Duplessis claims women writers resist and alter the social script by "writing beyond the ending": "Writing beyond the ending means the transgressive invention of narrative strategies, strategies that express critical dissent from dominant narrative. These tactics, among them reparenting, woman-to-woman and brother-to-sister bonds, and forms of the communal protagonist, take issue with the mainstays of the social and ideological organization of gender, as these appear in fiction" (5). These are "tactics" which I think Woolf, Lessing, and Atwood all use. See "Endings and Contradictions," *Writing beyond the Ending*, 1-19.

4. Mark Hussey discusses the shaping of identity through relationships in Woolf's novels: "It is in relationships with others that the possibilities and limitations of human being are realized, and it is against the background of others that individual identity stands out. . . . All Woolf's work is concerned with knowledge, or the impossibility of knowledge; in relationships, knowledge can only be gained from communication, and it is this aspect of relating to others that is featured most prominently . . . but is also deeply unsatisfactory." See *The Singing of the Real World: The Philosophy of Virginia Woolf's Fiction* (Columbus: Ohio State Univ Press, 1986) 45.

5. Patricia Waugh suggests that Mrs. Ramsay is the embodiment of Woolf's critique of the traditional, feminine, wifely role of women: "Mrs. Ramsay is surely not, however, the focus of a simple affirmation of vision, but the focus for Woolf's very ambivalent feelings towards the socially constructed 'femininity' which she represents." See *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern* (London: Routledge, 1989) 101.

6. DuPlessis provides a similar description of Mrs. Ramsay's artistic medium: "Mrs. Ramsay creates a woman's culture in the anthropological sense, working in the media of food and relationships, especially new couples; her works are subject to time, change, and decay and are always studiedly unmonumental—a dinner, a casual letter, an atmosphere." See *Writing beyond the Ending*, 95.

7. The triangular shape Lily chooses to represent Mrs. Ramsay and her son can also be read as a parody of Renaissance depictions of mother and child, such that Woolf strikes another satirical blow at traditions of art.

8. Thomas G. Matro notices a connection between the two themes of human relations and aesthetic relations in Woolf's novel, themes which are attributable to Lily's and Mrs. Ramsay's creativity. He makes a good argument for the inadequacies of readings concerned with only the aesthetic aspects of the novel, stating that Mrs. Ramsay's concerns with organizing relationships are reflected in Lily's painting: "Though Lily believes Mrs. Ramsay could make 'of the moment something permanent' and hopes that her own painting might likewise capture life, what Mrs. Ramsay's creation and Lily's painting finally 'capture' is the experience, the common process of thought as the two women worry over questions about instability and permanence, chaos and shape, knowledge of another or ignorance, and love or hate. In other words, something to the right and something to the left. . . ." See "Only Relations: Vision and Achievement in *To the Lighthouse*," *Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America* 99 (1984): 219.

9. Mr. Ramsay's concern for the truth, for doing what is right, and Mrs. Ramsay's concern for feelings and her willingness to gloss over the truth in certain circumstances each represent the two modes of moral deliberation I will discuss in chapter 3: the justice perspective and the care perspective. These are typically—though not *necessarily*—enacted by men and women respectively.

10. See Gillian Beer, "Beyond Determinism: George Eliot and Virginia Woolf," *Women Writing About Women Writing*, ed. Mary Jacobus (London: Croom Helm, 1979) 85, 80-99.

11. Woolf has more to say about the invisibility of women's work in *A Room of One's Own*, 38-40. In *To the Lighthouse* Mrs. Ramsay's creative work—like the work of Mrs. McNab and Mrs. Bast later in "Time Passes" which is fittingly compared to "some rusty laborious birth" (130)—goes unnoticed and unrecorded.

12. I discuss the conflict between Lily's and Mrs. Ramsay's designs in this scene further in chapter 3.2.

13. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 36.

14. The similarities between *To the Lighthouse* and cubism are most striking in "Time Passes". Picasso awakens every facet of the canvas, leaving no negative space just as Woolf materializes the empty house with the airs. Cubists, like Woolf, resisted artistic conventions: the characteristic angular, multi-faceted images of cubism are the result of an attempt to reach beyond preconceived limits of space and time in painting by collapsing several moments and viewpoints into one, in direct contradiction to the one-point perspective of mimetic art. See John Golding, *Cubism: A History and an Analysis 1907-1914* (Boston: John Golding, 1968). Woolf was aware of these developments in painting, as Nancy Bazin Topping notes in *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Self* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1973), "Virginia Woolf was one of the young writers who wanted to 'do in words' what the Post-Impressionists had 'done in paint'." She is also believed to have seen cubist works before *To the Lighthouse* was published at Roger Fry's art exhibitions noted by Edward Bishop, *A Virginia Woolf Chronology* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1989) to have occurred in 1917, 1920, 1921. And her sister Vanessa was a painter.

15. A note on war. Roger Poole suggests that the onslaught of World War II may have driven Woolf to commit suicide, as the thought of being killed by a bomb terrified her: "She could not face being blown to bits. The water was her friend, and had been her friend ever since she was a child in Cornwall. The water could be trusted. The water was peace." See: *The Unknown Virginia Woolf* (London: Humanities Press International, Inc., 1990) 279. Lynne Hanley also believes that war, not madness, was the impetus to Woolf's suicide: "Woolf killed herself, we say, because she was mad, or about to be mad, or about to be forced to take the cure for her madness, omitting from our account the fact that she also chose death over living through the war. . . ." See Lynne Hanley, *Writing War: Fiction, Gender, and Memory* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991) 49. Hanley also cites a *New York Times Book Review* article which "reveals that Virginia and Leonard Woolf kept a can of petrol in the garage 'for the purpose of committing suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning' if Hitler won the war or invaded England" (63).

16. Many critics have noted the series of oppositions represented by Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. Susan Stanford Friedman reorganizes these into what she sees as the "contrasting creativities" in *To the Lighthouse*, "narrative and lyric": "Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay constitute a marriage of opposites—epistemologically, ontologically, ethically, creatively, and historically. They reproduce the underlying binary system of patriarchy: masculine-feminine, public-private; objective-subjective; rational-intuitional; creative-procreative; egocentric-relational (etc.). As a feminist deconstructive text, *To the Lighthouse* presents these traditionally defined polarities in order to re-define and re-value the opposition which ordinarily privileges the masculine pole. Additionally, Woolf deconstructs this binary opposition in relationship to the gender inflections of narrative and lyric discourse. See "Lyric Subversion of Narrative in Women's Writing: Virginia Woolf and the Tyranny of Plot," *Reading Narrative: Form, Ethics, Ideology*, ed. James Phelan (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989) 172.

17. A note on the issue of androgyny. Some critics see Lily as epistemologically androgynous, which they consider Woolf's solution to the imbalance between masculine and feminine forms of knowledge. Nancy Bazin Topping supports this view in *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision.* Others downplay the issue of androgyny in Woolf's writing (such as Roger Poole in *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, and Gayatri C. Spivak in "Unmaking and Making in *To the Lighthouse*," *Women and Language in Literature and Society*, eds. Sally McConnell-Ginet, Ruth Borker, and Nelly Furman [New York: Praeger, 1980] 320-24). But I think it can be argued that Lily actually comes out more on the "feminine" side of thinking, not as an androgynous thinker. She finds her answers in sympathy and relatedness to others, which are distinctly feminine impulses to action. I will discuss relatedness further with reference to Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* in chapter three. Of course, there are some who think Lily is caught in a pre-Oedipal phase which the completion of her painting (brought on by her identification with the father-figure, Mr. Ramsay), lifts her out of. But I prefer to look at the socio-cultural factors of Lily's development as an artist, because I think that her psychosexual development has been overly emphasized, and has occluded readings that observe other facets of Woolf's novel outside and around the rich but reductive psychoanalytic readings. Nevertheless, for Freudian readings of *To the Lighthouse*, see Mary

Jacobus, "'The Third Stroke': Reading Woolf with Freud," *Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism*, ed. Susan Sheridan (London: Verso, 1988) 93-110; Patricia Waugh, "Woolf and the Pre-oedipal: A rereading of *To the Lighthouse*," *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern*, 108-115.

18. Patricia Meyer Spacks considers both Lily's and Mrs. Ramsay's designs successful, and the two together "suggest a powerful justification for the feminine habit of taking care of others. It is a way of thinking that, avoiding the social and moral issues implicit in women's self-subordination, recognizes the effective power of apparent humility, suggests that the repressions implicit in self-sacrifice may provide rich sources of energy and fulfillment, and that the choice of 'family' or 'career,' when social conditions make such choice possible for women, may be a choice between different versions of identical experience." See "Taking Care," *The Female Imagination* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975) 111-112. Spacks promotes the care perspective usually attributed to women here in much the same way that Carol Gilligan does in *In A Different Voice*, suggesting that women's capacity to care can be valuable to the world both inside and outside the home, and is even a fundamental aspect of women's artistic creation.

19. This attitude ties in with the materialist concerns she conveys in *A Room of One's Own* where the choice between money and the vote becomes literal. Learning that she is the inheritor of her aunt's trust at the same time that women won the right to vote, the narrator declares: "Of the two—the vote and the money—the money, I own, seemed infinitely the more important" (37).

2.3 Anna Wulf

1. Kristeva uses this term in "Women's Time," *The Kristeva Reader*, 199. It is somewhat similar to Rachel Blau DuPlessis's term, "social script" which I have been using. Kristeva uses "socio-symbolic contract" to discuss women's relationship or "contract" with the symbolic (or language) as well as with society (or law) at the same time. She considers this contract to be the infrastructure beneath the myths and beliefs which form the basis for determining women's roles in society. After the gains won by suffragists and existential feminists it remains, Kristeva believes, women's biggest obstacle to achieving complete freedom and self-determination: "the struggle is no longer concerned with the quest for equality but, rather, with difference and specificity. It is precisely at this point that the new generation encounters what might be called the *symbolic* question. Sexual difference—which is at once biological, physiological and relative to reproduction—is translated by and translates a difference in the relationship of subjects to the symbolic contract which *is* the social contract: a difference, then, in the relationship to power, language and meaning" (Kristeva's italics, WT 196). In short, the socio-symbolic contract as it stands continues to define women by, as well as limit them to, their reproductive capacity. And this role is entrenched in language.

2. Lessing's cynicism with regards to Communism and Marxism can be detected here. She says in the "Introduction" to *The Golden Notebook* that Marxism is finished as a force, "but it was dominant, and in a novel of the sort I was trying to do, had to be central" (xi). However, Kristeva still seems to have hopes for Marxism. Yet they both come to similar conclusions regarding political activism. They decide, after having spent periods of time within political movements—Kristeva in China, and Lessing in Central Africa—that they could work more productively and with greater effect on their own, outside such group movements, as dissidents. See Toril Moi, "Introduction," *The Kristeva Reader*, 1-22; Lessing, *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside.*

3. A clarification of psychoanalytic methods seems to be needed here. The death versus discourse dichotomy that Kristeva discusses stems from Freud, yet Mrs. Marks often seems to invoke Jungian archetypes. Nowhere, however, is it blatantly clear that she is either a Jungian or a Freudian, and I don't think it is necessary to firmly decide which she is. Psychoanalysis on the whole seems to me to be at issue.

4. Also, the name Mrs. Marks seems to be a pun on Marx such that Lessing associates psychoanalysis with Marxism which is criticized throughout the novel.

5. Rachel Blau DuPlessis thinks that the "joy-in-spite" or "joy-in-destruction" dwarf that Anna dreams about personifies this anarchic principle. This "gnome," she writes, "is the critical sensibility animating the work of piercing normal politics, society, sexuality, and narrative. This joy in destruction is the muse of critique." See *Writing beyond the Ending*, 102.

6. Kristeva emphasizes the importance of women writing about their bodily experiences—pregnancy and maternity in particular—in order to alleviate the rivalry between creativity and maternity. Instead of identifying women's creativity with maternity alone, I think Lessing demonstrates in *The Golden Notebook* that living the life of a free woman outside of traditional roles and/or madness, amounts to living as a dissident. In this novel, artistic creativity is not a replacement for being a mother, as it is in *To the Lighthouse.* Lessing ends *The Golden Notebook* with Anna assuming both roles—artist and nurturer—in a professional capacity.

7. Molly Hite makes a similar point, but extends it in a different way: "The two Annas remain both distinct and intertwined, working out dual conclusions that emerge as equally unsatisfactory, and this development suggests that resolution to the problem identified as disintegration, fragmentation, or incoherence may not be precisely what is called for; that 'gaps' and 'splits' in the text, as in the personality, indicate ways of being more than one thing or person within the same work. Such a tentative realizing of multiple possibilities may be more effective in indicating the extent of the hitherto unknown or unrepresented than any form of imposing coherence. *The Golden Notebook*, like the 'cracked' or 'split' personality, is structured to accommodate the future in a different shape." Hite's essay sifts through the criticism on the novel, and shows how Lessing's work continually eludes the latest critical school. See "(En)gendering Metafiction: Doris Lessing's Rehearsals for *The Golden*

Notebook," *Modern Fiction Studies* 34 (1988): 486.

8. Also, by withholding a clear and definite ending, Lessing resists the linear time of conventional narrative. In fact, she provides neither a clear ending nor a clear beginning. The first sentence of the novel *The Golden Notebook* is also the first sentence of Anna's novel, *Free Women*, which Saul Green writes and gives to Anna in "The Golden Notebook". So the reader of *The Golden Notebook* comes back to the beginning of both Anna's and Lessing's novels at the end of Anna's last notebook. Lessing's novel and *Free Women* appear to form a complete circle, but this is not the case. For the ending of *Free Women*, which occurs at the end of *The Golden Notebook*, is different from the ending of "The Golden Notebook", which contains the beginning of both *Free Women* and *The Golden Notebook*. So *The Golden Notebook* seems circular, but it's a circle with neither a clear beginning nor end. I will discuss this kind of defiance of linear time further in my discussion of *Cat's Eye*.

2.4 Elaine Risley

1. Atwood does not indicate whether or not Elaine keeps her maiden name when she marries, but I assume here that she does; therefore, I refer to her brother with the same last name for the sake of simplicity throughout this discussion.

2. I outlined how Kristeva explains that the symbol *woman* denies women subjectivity and particularity under the socio-symbolic contract in my preceding discussion of *The Golden Notebook*.

3. "It might also be added that this linear time is that of language considered as the enunciation of sentences (noun + verb; topic-comment; beginning-ending). . . ." See "Women's Time," *The Kristeva Reader*, 192.

4. Kristeva observes: "when evoking the name and destiny of women, one thinks more of the *space* generating and forming the human species than of *time*, becoming or history" (italics Kristeva's). See "Women's Time," 190.

5. See "Women's Time," 202.

6. See "Women's Time," 208, 210.

7. For example, the light from the sun would take longer to reach a person standing on Pluto than a person standing on Mercury because Mercury is closer to the sun than Pluto. Hawking's explanation is based on Einstein's special theory of relativity as well as his general theory of relativity. See Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (New York: Bantam, 1988), 20-34.

8. My source for these ideas about secular time is a lecture given by Charles Taylor, "Secularity and Secularism," McGill University Faculty of Religious Studies, Sproule Lectures

on Ethics and Public Responsibility: Modernity, Faith, and Morality, Montreal, 5 March 1992.

9. Elaine's fascination with different or alien perspectives causes her intrigue with Mr. Banerji, Mrs. Finestein, and her teacher Miss Stuart, who each escape or are in exile from foreign countries. Eventually she "rewards" them by painting them in *Three Muses* (*CE* 429). Interestingly, her first lover, Josef, also emigrated from another country.

10. Barbara Hill Rigney discusses the concept of escape in relation to another novel by Atwood, *Lady Oracle*. See "The 'Escape Artist': *Lady Oracle*," *Margaret Atwood*, Women Writers Ser. 1 (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1987) 62-81.

11. In this way she is much like Anna Wulf. Elaine prefers creating her own art to studying the history of art at university; Anna considers the prints of masterpieces in Mrs. Marks's office dead art which holds no real meaning for her, and she decides that the "raw unfinished quality" in her own life is of more value to her. See *The Golden Notebook*, 236-37.

12. Barbara Hill Rigney discusses another Atwood protagonist who experiences difficulty communicating in language. Rigney writes: "The very language for her, becomes useless and finally undesirable: 'Language divides us into fragments'" (qtd. in Rigney, 105). Rigney explains that the protagonist "thinks that she must find a language of her own" (106), which is what I see Elaine Risley doing in *Cat's Eye*. See "'After the Failure of Logic': Descent and Return in *Surfacing*," *Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel: Studies in Brontë, Woolf, Lessing, and Atwood* (Madison WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978) 92-115.

3.2 Autonomy-as-Independence & Autonomy-as-Responsibility

1. Here I accept the distinction between *sex* and *gender* difference along the same lines as Catharine MacKinnon. Sex difference refers to biological, anatomical difference. Gender difference refers to the different social roles ascribed to each sex. This is, admittedly, an over-simplification, for gender often has to do with sex and sexuality. It is by no means simple to separate questions concerning sex from questions concerning with gender. MacKinnon incapsulates the subtleties between the two better than me: "the molding, direction, and expression of sexuality organizes society into two sexes: women and men. This division underlies the totality of social relations. Sexuality is the social process through which social relations of gender are created, organized, expressed, and directed, creating the social beings we know as women and men, as their relations create society. . . . Heterosexuality is [sexuality's] social structure, desire its internal dynamic, gender and family its congealed forms, sex roles its qualities generalized to social persona, reproduction a consequence, and control its issue." In "The Problem of Marxism and Feminism," *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State* (1989; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991) 3-4. Cf. Judith Butler, "Gender Trouble, Feminist Theory, and Psychoanalytic Discourse," *Feminism/Postmodernism*, 324-340.

2. The shortened progression I give here is influenced by my reading of Taylor's *Sources of the Self*, more fully delineated in chapter 1.

3. This coheres with my claim in chapter 1 that the rational self supplements the mediating function from the former religious or cosmic orders instead of getting rid of mediation altogether, as, presumably, was the goal.

4. Psychoanalysis does the same thing, as I showed in my discussion of *The Golden Notebook* with the help of Kristeva.

5. Seyla Benhabib highlights the connection between Rawls's work and Kant's moral autonomy in "The Generalized and the Concrete Other: The Kohlberg-Gilligan Controversy and Moral Theory," *Women and Moral Theory*, 139-177.

6. Nietzsche repeats this refrain often, but one place it can be found is in *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (1966; New York: Vintage Books, 1989) 104, 115-116.

7. I touched upon this in chapter 1. Rorty thinks that Nietzsche had a tendency to lapse into metaphysics, and was not always the thoroughgoing ironist Rorty reveres. This is where Rorty becomes confusing, if not self-contradictory. He thinks that when a philosopher attempts "to put forward a view about modern society, or the destiny of Europe, or contemporary politics, he becomes at best vapid, and at worst sadistic," and potentially "cruel." Rorty seems to me to be saying that it is not good for philosophers to talk about the public good. Yet by saying so, isn't he doing just this? On such occasions, although Rorty is trying to diverge from Nietzsche, he most strikingly follows in Nietzsche's footsteps inheriting the legacy of the attempt at being the last metaphysician. See *Contingency, irony, and solidarity*, 119-120.

8. Charles Taylor, "The Malaise of Modernity," prod. David Cayley, *Massey Lectures*, exec. prod. Bernie Lucht, *Ideas*, CBC, Montréal, 19 Nov., 1991.

9. Also, the care option circumnavigates the problem women may have with retrieving certain moral sources that contributed to their historical oppression. I suspect that Taylor would say their oppression came out of perversions of such moral sources, and is not inherent in them. Nevertheless, it is difficult to overcome aversion to certain practices, for example: the daily prayers of Jewish Orthodox men who thank God for not making them women; or for that matter, the blame of women for the Fall in Judeo-Christianity on the whole. To an extent, asking women to retrieve some moral sources is akin to asking a Jewish person to extract wisdoms from *Mein Kampf*.

10. Gilligan uses this term in "Moral Orientation and Moral Development," *Women and Moral Theory*, 20.

11. See: Nancy Fraser and Linda J. Nicholson, "Social Criticism without Philosophy: An Encounter between Feminism and Postmodernism," *Feminism/Postmodernism*, 19-38; Judith Stacey, "On Resistance, Ambivalence and Feminist Theory: A Response to Carol Gilligan," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 29 (1990): 537-546.

12. In fact, in the "Introduction" to her study, Gilligan states: "The different voice I describe is characterized not by gender but theme. Its association with women is an empirical observation, and it is primarily through women's voices that I trace its development. But this association is not absolute, and the contrasts between male and female voices are presented here to highlight a distinction between two modes of thought and to focus a problem of interpretation rather than to represent a generalization about either sex." See *In a Different Voice*, 2.

13. "While in Piaget's account (1932) of the moral judgment of the child, girls are an aside, a curiosity to whom he devotes four brief entries in an index that omits 'boys' altogether because 'the child' is assumed to be male, in the research from which Kohlberg derives his theory, females simply do not exist. Kohlberg's (1958, 1981) six stages that describe the development of moral judgment from childhood to adulthood are based empirically on a study of eighty-four boys whose development Kohlberg has followed for a period of over twenty years. Although Kohlberg claims universality for his stage sequence, those groups not included in his original sample rarely reach his higher stages. . . . Prominent among those who thus appear to be deficient in moral development when measured by Kohlberg's scale are women. . . ." See Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 18.

14. See Meyers's discussion of equal opportunity and autonomy in the chapter "Justice and Autonomy," *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) 253-262. Cf. Catharine MacKinnon's powerful discussion about inequality, sex equality laws, gender difference, and gender neutrality in "Sex Equality: On Difference and Dominance," *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State*, 215-234.

15. I do, however, find Meyers's insistence upon the terms "true" and "authentic self" problematic at times. She speaks of the "true," "inner," or "authentic self" as "the touchstone" of personal autonomy, alluding to it as something concrete, but then says that "it is by no means evident what the authentic self is or whether people can locate and understand their authentic selves" (*SSP* 19). Yet, "[t]o achieve personal autonomy, one must know what one is like . . . one must express one's personality in action" (*SSP* 20), making the connection to self-creation through expression; then "[i]ntrospection may find a thoroughly conditioned self" (*SSP* 20), as if the self is a creature of socialization. A little later, Meyers links the authentic self to autonomy competency (*SSP* 53); the ability to mesh the pursuit of the life plan one is creating with one's emotional ties to others. In this way, she introduces the dynamism of the true self: "The true self is not merely a creation of a person's life plan, but neither is it a static core that life plans merely articulate. A reciprocal and dynamic relation holds between the true self and life plans" (*SSP* 53). Here, the true self, like the life plan, is something that is constantly undergoing a process of creation. I agree with the concept of a self-in-creation, self-in-relation, but the word "true" is loaded with problematic connotations of Romantic

expressivism's goal to uncover one's inner nature, or true self. See *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*. Perhaps her "true" and "authentic" self could be linked to Charles Taylor's use of the term "authenticity," but Taylor's use connotes the full spectrum of self-fulfilment, individualism, self-determination, while also being "true" to oneself. He more carefully maintains that one's unique inner voice sounds in constant exchange with others, and with one's moral horizon: "Being true to myself means being true to my own originality, and that is something only I can articulate and discover. In articulating it, I am also defining myself. I am realizing a potentiality that is properly my own." See "The Sources of Authenticity," *The Malaise of Modernity*, 29. I suspect that Meyers means something close to this, although it is unclear. However, I still find Meyers's study of autonomy useful.

16. See Meyers's chapter "Self-Respect and Autonomy," in *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 210-246. Also, I discuss the consequences of Lily's self-doubt in greater detail in chapter 2.2.

17. Meyers makes the crucial point that men also are gripped by gender role enforcement. The increased uncertainty of Mr. Ramsay by the end of *To the Lighthouse*, after the death of his wife, comes to mind.

18. This recalls how Lily thinks of refusing the feminine role as Tansley's complement during the dinner party as an "experiment": one she must, however, renounce. See my discussion of this scene above, and *To the Lighthouse*, 86.

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