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**Woolf's Philosophy of Literary Subjectivity:
Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Jean-Paul Sartre's Existentialist Theory**

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Sartre's theory of existentialism is used as a lens to interpret Woolf's approach to literature as the philosophy of "literary subjectivity." The notion of subjectivity is explored within theoretical existentialism and then applied to Woolf's life and her moment of awakening to subjectivity. To the Lighthouse is examined theoretically and textually to demonstrate Woolf's philosophy of literary subjectivity.

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
<u>Section One: Introduction to Woolf and Subjectivity</u>	
1.1 The Moment: Awakening to Subjectivity.....	3
1.2 The Character Shift of 1910: The Factors Instigating the Exploration of Subjectivity.....	5
<u>Section Two: Theoretical Subjectivity</u>	
2.1 Understanding Subjectivity: Sartrean Freedom and Truth.....	15
2.2 Sartre and Woolf.....	18
<u>Section Three: Investigating Woolf's Exploration of Subjectivity</u>	
3.1 Woolf's Literary Philosophy of Subjectivity: Sartrean Elements of Subjectivity in <i>To the Lighthouse</i>	23
3.2 Stylistic Subjectivity: Indirect Interior Monologue.....	24
3.3 Subjective Literary Elements: The Perception and Portrayal of Time.....	32
3.4 Subjectivity in Character Development: Existential Faith.....	37
3.4.1. Anguish.....	39
3.4.2. Bad Faith: "Individual Reception," Marriage, and Legacy.....	40
3.4.3. Good Faith: Individual Perception, Vision, and Light.....	52
<u>Section Four: Subjectivity of the Writer and Reader</u>	
4.1 Freedom of Text as a Means to Subjectivity: The Hegemonic Relationship of the Writer and the Reader.....	59
4.2 The Balance of Power Between the Writer and the Reader: Freedom and Limitations.....	67
Conclusion.....	72
Works Cited.....	73

Introduction

The quantity of academic research that has been conducted on Virginia Woolf and her work is staggering. She has been labelled as a modern icon and a key feminist author, and, over the years, has successfully ventured all the way from highbrow academics to popular culture, appearing in movies, theatre and as references in popular literature such as *The Hours* by Michael Cunningham. In fact, it is rare to meet someone who has not interacted with her work directly or indirectly and this makes studying Woolf unique because, typically, there is already a relationship occurring the reader and Woolf. What seems to be missing in the literature is a uniting philosophy that explains *why*.

We are taught about Woolf but too often there is no concept of why Woolf was writing and why she was writing so radically for her time. Why did Woolf interpret the genre and art form of the novel the way she did? Did her audience matter? Furthermore, what do her novels reveal about her choices? This thesis proposes that Woolf was not too sure herself, and, as a result, we turn to another philosopher to borrow words that allow us to understand, without altering, Woolf's "attempt at something" (TL 391). Jean-Paul Sartre's theory of existentialism acts as a translator for Woolf and her work; "translator" in the sense that Sartre lends us words that clarify Woolf's philosophy, not in the sense that Woolf is altered, filtered, or compromised in any way. What appears from the "blur" of Woolf's theories, as represented in her essays, and her novels, as represented here by *To the Lighthouse*, is a philosophy on the "subjectivity of literature." First, Woolf's awakening to the notion and application of subjectivity will be explored, along with what subjectivity actually is. Next, why Woolf began exploring subjectivity will lead us through the motivating factors of 1910 such as the Dreadnought Hoax and the post-impressionist art exhibit curated by Roger Fry. In Section Two, the theoretical aspects of "subjectivity", the idea of the self in an ontological sense, will be examined in an existentialist frame and the relationship between Sartre and Woolf will be legitimized. Section Three is

a full analysis of subjectivity in *To the Lighthouse* and textually demonstrates Woolf's philosophy of literary subjectivity. Finally, Section Four considers subjectivity in the relationship between the writer, the reader, and the text and also considers the medium of language in which they communicate.

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Section One: Introduction to Woolf and Subjectivity

1.1

The Moment: Awakening to Subjectivity

The moment came “on or about December 1910” (Woolf “Character”, 421). Hereabouts, Virginia Woolf claimed, there was a shift in human character. The change was in pace, individualism, and community, which, as Woolf argued, called for a change in literature. Woolf’s date marks her watershed between what is now the modern and pre-modern world in terms of literary eras and the change is pronounced by several significant events both public and private. As Woolf clearly states in her essay “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown”, “all human relations have shifted...And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics and literature (321). In retrospect, we can identify the change more clearly as a change in subjectivity.

As a concept, subjectivity offers three basic lines of interpretation: grammatical, intellectual, and ideological. Grammatical subjectivity simply refers to the grammatical subject, signalled by the agency of pronouns or nouns, in a sentence. Intellectual subjectivity refers to knowledge and its subjective interpretation. Consider, for example, facts are considered to be pieces of information without subjective interpretation because they are inherently true. On the other hand, when faced with information one will view it and interpret it in a subjective manner because understanding is created based on personal interests, insight, and feelings. Lastly, ideological subjectivity, the most complex, refers to the systems of discourse that “tell” a subject what to be, how to be, and who to be; for example, both men and women have prescribed gender roles.

Although each form is different, all three are linked because each one is a contributing factor to one's overall subjectivity. Grammatical subjectivity is the first form encountered as a child learns to verbalize their demands and understanding (Belsey 60). Intellectual subjectivity is encountered next as

a person learns to understand knowledge and interpret understanding at an individual level (Belsey 61).

Ideological subjectivity, who one is discursively, is “encountered” last; encountered in the sense that its influence is recognized last but it is present since birth. As Catherine Belsey states:

Ideology is both a real and an imaginary relation to the world—real in that it is the way in which people really live their relationship to the social relations which govern their conditions of existence, but imaginary in that it discourages a full understanding of these conditions of existence and the ways in which people are socially constituted within them. It is not, therefore, to be thought of as a system of ideas in people's heads, not as the expression at a higher level of real material relationships, but as the necessary condition of action within the social formation.
(57)

Ideological subjectivity relies on institutions of discourse to influence the individual subject and, as Belsey points out, the discourse that operates ideology is both imaginary and real. Each form of subjectivity naturally influences the other because all function in conjunction with one another to make up an individual's subjectivity and all three develop by the choices of the individual; but it can be suggested that ideological subjectivity is the most influential, especially considering its embedded social status. However, each form of subjectivity works in harmony, and all are necessary, to determine an individual's perception of “truth.”

Belsey and Sartre have similar approaches to subjectivity as they both connect “unconsciousness” with what is “unquestioned” (Belsey 5). While the two are foundationally linked in their exploration of subjectivity, Belsey focuses on the manifestations of subjectivity while Sartre follows subjectivity in an ontological fashion. More specifically, Sartre explores subjectivity based on the difference between “being,” in terms of creation, and “being” in terms of consciousness. Subjectivity, including Belsey's interpretations, pertains to consciousness of being. Although one must exist physically in order to have consciousness, simply existing does not signify consciousness; as Belsey points out, a person initiates their subjectivity as they learn to speak. Sartre continues to explain that consciousness is asserted through choosing, or a “being's” conscious decision to commit an act; therefore, “subjectivity” is the presence of consciousness and its active choice to commit an act.

Intellectual, grammatical, and ideological subjectivity, as Belsey points out, are all factors that the consciousness considers when choosing to commit an act. The foundational link between Belsey and Sartre is the questioning consciousness, but while Belsey concerns herself with the actions of a subjective consciousness, Sartre concerns himself with the thought of a subjective consciousness.

Woolf's character shift of 1910 lay in awakening to the idea of subjectivity, or more specifically an awakening to her consciousness of being. Not only was 1910 significant in terms of politics and social change, but 1910 was significant personally for Woolf as she began to explore subjectivity in relations to the three categories of subjective manifestations and in terms of the ontological debate. Her exploration of subjectivity is an effort to determine truth as she questions and rejects absolute truth as preached by the institution of Victorian social society. As Woolf learns, subjectivity is a double edged sword because its constant demand for freedom is a taxing responsibility that cannot be escaped, but it is the odd hybridity of freedom and limitation that subjectivity presents are the very symptoms that alert Woolf to the change in human character.

1.2

The Character Shift of 1910: The Factors Instigating the Exploration of Subjectivity

"The moment" for Woolf began on February 7, 1910. Three members of the Bloomsbury Group, Woolf, her brother Adrian, and Duncan Grant, along with friends Guy Ridley, Anthony Buxton, and Horace de Vere Cole, all planned and executed the Dreadnought Hoax (Kennard 150). The hoax started with a forged official letter that claimed Abyssinian Royals were coming to visit England. In the letter was a request to tour the HMS Dreadnought, the pride of the British Royal Navy, which was granted (Kennard 150). The group showed up for the tour in full costume and make-up; Woolf was dressed as a male Abyssinian, complete with browned skin, beard, and moustache (Hermione Lee qtd.

in Seshagiri 64). One member, Adrian Stephen, acted as a translator and he, along with the rest of the group, used a mix of foreign languages, including Latin, to concoct a realistic dialect (Seshagiri 64). Moreover, they sneakily got away with potentially revealing moments including a moustache malfunction and refusing food based on bogus religious dietary constraints (Seshagiri 64). The tour was completely successful and the pranksters were not caught until Cole himself alerted the media (Kennard 150). The story ran in the newspaper and made a mockery of the British Navy.

The analysis of Woolf's role in the hoax is complex: not only was she cross-dressed racially, sexually, and culturally, but in her attempt to dismantle an institution of absolute truth she ironically, unknowingly, promoted the stereotypes of foreign cultures. How Abyssinians look, act, talk, and dress to the knowledge of the hoaxers was none other than another a stereotype. Urmila Seshagiri notes, "the success of the caper also came from the participants' willingness to appear in blackface, to cobble together a 'dialect' by substituting one African language for another, and to pretend allegiance to vague Islamic dietary practices" (64). As Seshagiri concludes, the "very imperial violence the hoax intended to deride" is an "ironic" juxtaposition to the hoaxers' antimilitary attitudes (64). Woolf and her party may have acted out in an attempt to take down the military institution but they perpetuated the very attitude toward non-white subjects that the military itself propagates.

The hoax is the first major instance where Woolf explicitly explores subjectivity. In her Victorian world where absolute truths function as societal laws of expectations, the Dreadnought Hoax was an outward manifestation of subjectivity. "Outward" because Woolf physically challenges the absolute truths of the military and by extent the monarch, gender roles, Victorian ideals of decency and decorum, and non-white cultural attitudes. Her actions demonstrate conscious subjective thought and action that involves subjectivity, especially on an ideological level as she challenges Victorian social law. Overall, the hoax is a personal success for Woolf because she subjectively chose to act instead of being acted upon.

The racial stereotypes of foreign cultures that obviously played a key role in the Dreadnought Hoax are shaped by the colonial projects of Britain and were transmitted to the British public, in part, through public art. Seven months after the Bloomsbury participation in the Dreadnought Hoax, another one of their members, Roger Fry, shocked the British public as the curator of the exhibition, “Manet and the Post-Impressionists” that showcased paintings from artists such as van Gogh, Matisse, and Cézanne (Kennard 150). England was unexposed to post-impressionism and exhibition goers were shocked not only with the radical style but with the subject matter also. Although there was a history of black human subjects in art in Britain at the time, the subject matter, that included naked “non-white subjects,” was outrageous to the viewing public (Seshagiri 65). The inclusion of primitive cultures in high art forms, Seshagiri claims, challenged the “English art world's assumptions about aesthetic civility” which was a reflection of Victorian ideals (65). Just like the Dreadnought Hoax, putting “savage” lifestyle at the centre of culture and consequence forced the British public into cultural self-scrutiny.

Woolf's reaction to the art exhibition inspired her second hoax of 1910, which took place at the Post-Impressionist Ball (Seshagiri 65). Woolf and her sister Vanessa attended the ball dressed up like the “savages” that were pictured in many of the paintings. Their costumes included flowers, beads, and clothes that revealed their bare arms and legs (Seshagiri 65). The Stephen sisters shocked the ball not only with their behaviour but clearly with their costumes as well. Just like the shocking subject matter of the art in Fry's exhibition, the Ball hoax challenged Victorian ideals, specifically modesty and social behaviour, that Woolf grew up with and society still expected. Seshagiri notes, just “like the Dreadnought Hoax, Woolf's challenge to English social norms at the Post-Impressionist Ball reveals an early interest in reordering the boundaries of Englishness” (65). Costume, in both hoaxes, allowed Woolf to act outside of Victorian expectation and, in essence, express ideological and intellectual subjectivity. Although at this stage, Woolf was acting on expectations of what a “savage” was, she was

nonetheless acting on her own accord to determine a truth about cultural behaviour; as a result, Woolf was awakening to the idea of a subjective consciousness, a questioning instead of accepting being.

Subjectivity was not just a concern for Woolf but for British women in general of 1910 because the women's suffrage movement was underway. Woolf was no stranger to the feminist movement and is still generally considered a key feminist author. It is no secret that Woolf detested that women were denied many male privileges, especially access to university, and the issue of inequality became an obvious recurring theme in her writing. In her essay "Character in Fiction" Woolf uses the example of "one's cook" to demonstrate the change in character around 1910:

The Victorian cook lived like a leviathan in the lower depths, formidable, silent, obscure, inscrutable; the Georgian cook is a creature of sunshine and fresh air; in and out of the drawing room, now to borrow the Daily Herald, now to ask advice about a hat.
(422).

The movement into a more subjective state as a woman was not a new idea in terms of consciousness but the explicit manifestation of grammatical, intellectual and ideological subjectivity in the public sphere was a new idea in society and in literature. In Woolf's short story "A Society", Clorinda states:

We have gone on all these ages supposing that men were equally industrious, and that their works were of equal merit. While we have borne the children, they, we supposed, have borne the books and the pictures. We have populated the world. They have civilized it. But now that we can read, what prevents us from judging the results? Before we bring another child into the world we must swear that we will find out what the world is like.
(13)

Woolf mirrors Clorinda's voice as she too is "judging the results"; consider, for example, her participation in the two hoaxes as physical outbursts of this curiosity. Clorinda calls for subjectivity when she observes that, until now, women have accepted what they have been told about the world without question instead of finding out first hand. Taking a subjective claim on consciousness meant no longer simply accepting what society demanded; having a subjective consciousness meant questioning ideology and determining truth on an individual basis. Women's suffrage acted to claim

grammatical subjectivity and this radical movement opened the ontological pathway for women to question their conscious being.

King Edward's death is another major symbolic factor in Woolf's 1910 shift. First, consider that Edward ascended the throne at sixty years of age after his mother, Queen Victoria, died. As Edwin Kenney Jr. states, along with King Edward's age and upbringing under Victoria, his reign was not a huge shift in the monarchy or for Britain in the sense that he was intrinsically associated with his mother and her reign (49). His death was therefore the symbolic death of the last remaining link to the great Victorian era and marked Britain's entry into a state of uncertainty. Secondly, the unresolved political situation in parliament during 1910 made the impact of King Edward's death greater and more significant historically. Edward died in the midst of a political standoff between the Liberals and the Conservatives regarding the People's Budget. The People's Budget of 1909 was a giant step towards socialism as it would enact a redistribution of wealth in England through the imposition of new tax laws that would contribute to social welfare programs. A standoff between the Liberals and the Conservatives ensued because the House of Lords vetoed the People's Budget (Kenney 50). The House of Lords, being the upper echelon of parliament with membership appointed by the monarch and the church, is where the tax laws would hit the hardest (Kenney 50). Although the Lords eventually accepted the act when it was modified, the standoff catalyzed two general elections in 1910, the first with a proposal to lessen the power of the House of Lords. Finally, when the Parliament Act 1911 was passed there was a redistribution of power in parliament (Kenney 50). The lessened power of the House of Lords and move towards a more socialist state was the second blow to the status of the monarch since Edward's death. A new government marked the beginning of a new modern attitude in Britain that relegated the monarch from its pedestal of assumed power and increasingly looked to a more democratic agenda to serve the people's interests. The move from monarchy towards democracy highlights a general change in British character and the movement towards subjectivity. The British

people wanted to decide for them self instead of being objects of the government.

1910 was not just historically significant; the year was personally significant for Woolf. The year saw Woolf emerge from the “leviathan depths” (Woolf, “Character” 422), dramatically on two occasions, but also saw Woolf sink down into mental illness. Woolf’s mental status, that perhaps colours the critical analysis of her work too richly, is however an element that cannot be disregarded in any exploration of her work. It is common knowledge that Woolf suffered numerous breakdowns, frequented mental hospitals, and eventually committed suicide. Woolf’s biographer, Quentin Bell, claims “he [did] not know which specific cause [was] responsible for Virginia’s breakdown of 1910” (Kenney 56-7), but the Dreadnought Hoax and her work on *Melymbrosia* were two obvious causes of “acute nervous tension” (Kenney 56-57). Kenney further suggests her fragile state was also due to Woolf’s personal problems, including her childhood and family relations, her relationships with Violet Dickinson and Madge Vaughn, her suffragist work and even her “curious trying out of woman’s vocation of teaching” (57). Coupled with her “lack of encouraging, definite achievement” in her writing Kenney concludes her breakdown was most likely the combination of several events “both inner and outer, which built up and broke her down” (57).

The issue of subjectivity can be used to summarize Kenney’s conclusions. Each point that Kenney names are issues directly related to the moral dilemma of being, subjective self-consciousness versus objective self-consciousness. To clarify, Woolf struggles with who she is, who she is supposed to be, and who she wants to be and has a lack of commitment to each state because she is questioning her conscious being. As Kenney notes, her “lack of encouraging, definite achievement” leaves her identity as a writer unconvincing to society and therefore to herself, yet, she continues to “be a writer” (57). Woolf sees herself as a writer, but to accept this she must question what a writer is according to societal ideology and reject it to choose her own truth. Woolf’s mind perhaps never settles as she continues to have breakdowns throughout her life; yet, 1910 seems to mark a key moment in her effort

to embrace subjectivity as she activates her consciousness and begins to question and make her own choices.

1910 teaches Woolf that being subjective is denouncing absolute truths. Absolute truths are none other than predetermined choices and if an individual chooses a predetermined choice they are not acting freely; instead, when an individual chooses absolute truth they are being acted upon and treated as an object. Accepting absolute truth is akin to Belsey's notion of ideology and the unquestioning consciousness. The lessons of 1910 lead Woolf to write her own truths and encourage others to do so and it is in her essay "Character in Fiction", first published in 1924, that Woolf proclaims the human character change of 1910 for the first time. In "Character in Fiction" Woolf begins to write about subjectivity by exploring the relationship between the writer and the character. She claims the writer should not "cease to be interested in character when they have learnt enough about it for practical purposes" ("Character in Fiction" 422). "Practical purposes" fulfill the conventional needs of a character in fiction, but Woolf is not satisfied with this absolute truth because she claims the writer should "feel that there is something permanently interesting in character itself" ("Character in Fiction" 422); Woolf is interested in the subjective character only. A writer must question being and have a subjective consciousness, one that questions and chooses literary truth for it self, and allow their characters to have the same subjective state of being. In a subsequent essay, "Modern Novels", Woolf states that literature as it was known was "materialist" (32) and that this ethic of writing is disappointing. She calls for true "realist" literature, literature that reflects the subjectivity of life, and not the idealist version of objectified Victorian life. In essence, Woolf denies the acceptance of the unquestioned "truths" of literature in favour of subjectively derived truths determined by the author.

More specifically, Woolf questions the "proper stuff of fiction" ("Modern Novels" 36) which includes plot structure and genre expectations. "The proper stuff of fiction", Woolf proclaims, "does not exist" because it is "little other than custom would have us believe"..."everything is the proper stuff

of fiction” (“Modern Novels” 33, 36). As Woolf explains:

The writer seems constrained, not by his own free will but by some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant who has him in thrall, to provide a plot, to provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy, love interest, and an air of probability embalming the whole so impeccable that if all his figures were to come to life they would find themselves dressed down to the last button of their coats in the fashion of the hour. The tyrant is obeyed; the novel is done to a turn. But sometimes, more and more often as time goes by, we suspect a momentary doubt, a spasm of rebellion, as the pages fill themselves in the customary way. Is life like this? Must novels be like this?
 (“Modern Fiction” par. 4)

To answer her question, no, novels must not be like this. As with Victorian gender roles, Victorian literary expectations are specific and Woolf criticizes the controlling nature of these formalities. To remedy the constraints, Woolf proposes that literature become more subjective, be open to question and interpretation, so it is more reflective of real life. The author should be able to choose what the novel is fully without regard to what it is supposed to be.

Woolf does take control of her novels and she begins to develop the style of stream of consciousness. At the time, the stream of consciousness style was radical. Readers would have been shocked and unprepared to tackle Woolf's text. As Elizabeth Monroe states, “her art is purely experimental, using neither traditional subject matter nor traditional form” (217). Stream of consciousness frees Woolf to question and begin to choose for herself as an author; or, in her own words, “the ordinary mind on an ordinary day” (“Modern Fiction” par. 5). Stream of consciousness is the catalyst that leads to new subject matter and new character formulations and brings about what is now “classic Woolfian traits.” For example, the canon of Woolfian criticism continuously notes the simultaneous representations of many consciousnesses as in *The Waves*, her use of time in a flexible and non-chronological fashion as in *To the Lighthouse*, and the importance of the everyday occurrence as in *Mrs Dalloway*. Her actions to rebel against the “proper stuff of fiction” (“Modern Novels” 36) was no doubt successful; according to Monroe, Woolf's “grace and fluidity and psychological subtlety will give permanent value to her work, even if her techniques should be discounted later” (218). What

stands the test of time is not the outcome of subjectivity in terms of choices in the form of intellectual, grammatical, or ideological subjectivity, what stands the test of time is Woolf's consciousness of being, her choice to question and to choose for herself.

The key part of the equation for Woolf's success was her philosophy of subjective literature. The "everything" Woolf speaks of in terms of "the proper stuff of fiction" is reality, and, more specifically, subjective reality. Woolf is not referring to Realist Victorian literature in the theoretical sense, but realist literature in terms of actual true life; it is in "Modern Fiction" that Woolf aligns "life" with "spirit" and "truth" with "reality" (par. 2). As a result, the "proper stuff" is "everything" because truth, or reality, is completely up to the discretion of a being. Her style may have seemed chaotic but her philosophy of freedom would have resonated, at least subconsciously, with her readers. Woolf's style is subconsciously familiar because all humans deal with subjective truth through the flood of many thoughts at once, not a single thought perfectly received, contemplated, and understood as absolute truth without question or interpretation. Woolf clarifies:

Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being "like this". Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old, the moment of importance came not here but there; so that, if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention.
(“Modern Fiction” par. 5)

Inspired by her noticed shift in human character, Woolf clearly argues for a new literary tradition. The realization of the freedom to choose on Woolf's part, along with her intense curiosity to question, creates a demand for a subjective approach to her literature. She realizes that writing from a subjective approach not only frees the writer from the absolute truths of Victorian Realist literature and literary convention in general, as forms of ideology, but it also frees the reader to recognize the freedom within them self and of the author. In essence, Woolf's argument for "literary subjectivity" is a call for a

radical change in consciousness that redefines the relationships between the writer, society and the reader and this is where Woolf and Jean-Paul Sartre collide.

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Section Two: Theoretical Subjectivity

2.1

Understanding Subjectivity: Sartrean Freedom and Truth

To fully grasp Sartre's meaning of subjectivity, the presence of consciousness and its active choice to commit an act, we must first delve into existential theory to explore freedom, because being subjective and choosing truth is an act of freedom. An individual's subjectivity, on the whole, is explained in the existentialist theory of Jean-Paul Sartre, who states: "Subjectivism means, on the one hand, the freedom of the individual subject, and on the other, that man cannot pass beyond human subjectivity" ("Humanism" 4). The first meaning applies to the freedom of an individual to choose, or the ability to act subjectively in the three Belsian forms mentioned above. The latter meaning, that "man cannot pass beyond human subjectivity," explains that there is no escape from having to make choices to determine truth, there is no escape from freedom or choosing.

Freedom, however, does have a limiting factor because, according to Sartre, we are "condemned to be free" ("Humanism" 6). "Condemned" since we do not choose to be born but then we are forced to choose and determine who we are. In other words, we are born into being, existence, and then forced into being, consciousness. Sartre's idea that there is no escape from freedom was an outrageous idea at its inception because it suggests the radical notion that "existence precedes essence" ("Humanism" 3). Existence is actual being, most explicitly physical being, whereas essence is the nature of being. Before existentialist thought it was commonly accepted that essence preceded existence. Simply, man was born into a fate ("Humanism" 6), be it religious or otherwise, and he could not change this "fact;" for example, biological determinism. Sartre's existentialist theory, on the other hand, proposes that man is a subjective being in complete control of his essence. Sartre clarifies:

We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world—and defines himself afterwards...Man simply is. Not that he is simply what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wills

(“Humanism” 3)

Sartre's recognition that man is free to determine his own essence brings the notion of subjectivity into the limelight because Sartre is proclaiming that because man is a subjective being he is solely responsible for his essence, he is condemned to have a consciousness and to choose.

Being “condemned to be free” also points to the deep sense of responsibility an individual feels when making a choice because they are solely responsible for their essence. Although essence is only ever fixed at death, the pressure to choose “correctly” is immensely taxing. What results, according to Sartre, is the feeling of anguish (“Humanism” 4). Anguish is a key factor in Sartre's existentialist theory and he explains it through the example of a military leader: on the one hand, a military leader must send his troops into direct danger; on the other hand, the military leader must consider the bigger needs of his country (“Humanism” 5). The anguish felt by the chooser is the dilemma to choose, because he must choose, and choose “right” since he, and no one else, is responsible for the choice.

However, as stated above, Sartre claims subjectivity is not just the freedom to choose, it is also includes that man is *forced* to choose. Anguish also arises from being forced to choose and knowing that our choices “commit the whole of humanity” (“Humanism” 4). According to Sartre, we are incapable of choosing the worse, so, when we choose, the chooser believes it is the best possible choice for all. Since an individual is setting an example for the rest of humanity, a choice becomes a truth for the individual, according to that individual, for the rest of society. In Sartre’s words, once a choice is made “in every respect [they] bear the responsibility of the choice which, in committing [them self], also commits the whole of humanity” (“Humanism” 12). Man “cannot pass beyond subjectivity” because he cannot escape choosing what is best, for him and for humanity. Man must choose.

Subjectivity is acting on the freedom of consciousness and choosing truth for oneself, but, as revealed, the freedom to choose is not a choice at all. Sartre states, “what is not possible is not to choose. I can always choose, but I must know that if I do not choose, that is still a choice”

(“Humanism” 12). The choice not to choose, to deny that one has the conscious ability and responsibility to choose, is what Sartre refers to throughout his work as “bad faith”. Bad faith renders a subjective being into an object, something to be acted upon. As Neil Thompson explains:

The notion of bad faith [is] the idea that many people do not live up to the challenge of radical freedom. They deny this freedom in a number of ways—for example, by relying on the notion of fatalism, social determinism and/or biological determinism. Bad faith is basically a lie to oneself. It is the denial that we are responsible for our actions and therefore ultimately responsible for ourselves.
(16)

Basically, bad faith is accepting absolute truths instead of creating self truth, like Belsey's notion of ideology. Thompson lists “fatalism, social determinism and... biological determinism” as examples of systems of discourse that rely on and promote absolute truth through ideology. Bad faith relieves the responsibility and anguish of having to choose for oneself and for humanity; however, as Sartre notes, whatever one chooses, “it is impossible...not to take complete responsibility” (“Humanism” 12). Therefore, bad faith is a lie to oneself claiming non-responsibility, or “non-consciousness” for choices: “I had to do it”, “I did not have a choice”; regardless, the original choice not to choose is still a choice.

The opposite of bad faith is good faith, or being subjective by consciously questioning choosing to choose and determine truth. Sartre notes that subjectivity is the “quest for freedom itself” since “freedom...[has] no other end and aim but itself” (“Humanism” 13). Good faith perpetuates freedom because it continuously demands subjectivity through choosing. In bad faith, one choice surrenders all future choices; in good faith, one must keep choosing. Being in good faith, having the “quest of freedom,” is harnessing the responsibility to make choices that will propagate more choices. To clarify, one choice in bad faith leads to more predetermined truths of bad faith and not choices of freedom. For example, as Sartre claims, for example, if one chooses gender roles they also automatically choose to support monogamy, certain child rearing practices, social decorum (“Humanism” 4). Bad faith offers “bundles” of predetermined truths so that the individual can claim no responsibility; on the other hand,

in good faith, an individual must choose each truth for them self leaving them with the sole responsibility of truth.

Maintaining good faith builds one's essence authentically and authenticity is the ultimate goal of good faith. Thompson claims Sartre's term "authentic" "means to recognize radical freedom and live accordingly, without attempting to rely on the self- deceptions of bad faith" (17). Being authentic strictly means maintaining subjective behaviour, consistently choosing to choose truth for oneself instead of unquestioned acceptance of ideological, grammatical, and intellectual manifestations of being. Thompson further notes the "existentialist conception of selfhood is...based on the idea that the self is a process of becoming and not a relatively fixed 'personality'" (17); so, even if "truth" does change for an individual, as long as they act authentically, their subjectivity does not. The key to subjectivity is the conscious act of questioning and choosing truth, not the manifestation of the choice. In bad faith, only one choice is made and limits the self to a single fate as prescribed by absolute values; again, consider gender roles. To clarify, consider that good faith is congruous to the belief that existence precedes essence because one is free to choose, whereas, bad faith is congruous to the belief that essence precedes existence because one does not have the consciousness to question or choose for them self. As long as a truth is based on the individual's subjective reasoning, through question and choice, and not based on the absolute truth of a specific discourse, an individual can achieve authenticity.

2.2

Sartre and Woolf

The impact of 1910 historically and personally on Woolf that brought her to fight for literary subjectivity links her to existentialist thought because both Sartre and Woolf argue for consciousness

being, or subjective freedom, as the gateway to authenticity. 1910 may have been the modern moment but it was much later in the twentieth century, when existentialism emerged, that we can fully comprehend Woolf's claims. Woolf poses the thought, what "if a writer were a free man and not a slave"? Although Woolf provides the remedy of modern literature for her situation, her argument does not arrive at a permanent solution of understanding. The application of Sartre to Woolf's work, both theoretically and textually, provides us with a solution for Woolf that substantiates her claims and demands for modern literature that transcends the time gap between the two icons; in return, Sartre's work is applied practically in a literary situation that reveals a more comprehensive occasion for understanding his philosophy.

To begin, Sartre has an answer for Woolf: a writer is not and will never be a slave by choice. Woolf promotes the radical freedom of the writer while Sartre promotes the radical freedom of the individual. The scale of each theory obviously varies greatly; however, regardless of the difference in scale and time, both face the similar ontological puzzle that leads them towards subjectivity. For example, Woolf is reflective of Sartre's theory when she casts aside the traditional conventions of the novel that describe life from the outside in, from the gardens and houses instead of the thoughts and choices of a character ("Bennett" 328). The phrase "bad faith" was not in Woolf's vernacular, but Woolf recognizes the slave-like materialistic cycle of writing that simply reflects convention instead of the freedom of the writer. As she states: "Any method is right, every method is right, that expresses what we wish to express...This method has the merit of bringing us closer to what we were prepared to call life itself" ("Modern Fiction" par. 6). The qualification in Woolf's statement for "every method" is every method that is "what we wish to express"; in other words, any method is right as long as it is made in good faith. Therefore, a writer can write freely if they take the responsibility to question and then choose to determine truth for themselves, a writer is only a slave if they choose to be.

Sartre's theory claims existence precedes essence and Woolf would no doubt agree with this as

she claims reality is actually determined via the consciousness, from the inside out not from outside in. Woolf's criticism about the previous generation of authors mirrors this claim. Just as Sartre notes that previous generations believed essence preceded existence, Woolf sees the same attitude in her Victorian literary counterparts. In "Modern Fiction" Woolf notes the generation of authors before her "write of unimportant things; that they spend immense skill and immense industry making the trivial and the transitory appear the true and enduring" (par. 3). In "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown", more specifically, she states the Edwardians

have laid an enormous stress upon the fabric of things. They have given us a house in the hope that we may deduce the human beings who live there...But if you hold that novels are in the first place about people, and only second in the houses they live in, that is the wrong way to set about it.
(328)

Woolf's writing focuses instead on the characters, the people, and only secondly on the fabric details like the houses they live in. For example, Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* develops through her painting not by her romantic attachments or her beauty; Mrs Ramsay is initially introduced not through her social status but by her defence of James' feelings in regards to a trip to the lighthouse. As a result, Woolf's characters "exist" because she exposes their conscious questioning and subsequently uses their essence to convince readers of their existence.

The problem of the past generation of authors is a problem of objectivity, or unquestioning consciousness. The past generation of writers did not actively question convention or expectation, both forms of ideology, instead of making their own subjective truths about what the novel is and should be. Woolf states in "Modern Fiction", the writer "has to have the courage to say that what interests him is no longer "this" but "that": out of "that" alone must he construct his work" (par. 7). Woolf's statement recognizes the struggle of the writer is the struggle of subjectivity. In her examination, Woolf recognizes some novelists who have been successful, namely James Joyce, at questioning and determining truth to yield subjective text. The unique quality of a successful writer's work is that "they

attempt to come close to life, and to preserve more sincerely and exactly what interests and moves them” (“Modern Fiction” par. 6). Such writers, Woolf concludes, have written the “ordinary mind on an ordinary day” (“Modern Fiction” par. 5). The “ordinary mind” is a testament to Sartre's notion of the subjective being because subjective literature, coming from “the dark places of psychology” (“Modern Fiction” par. 7), is a deeply internalized individual process (“Modern Fiction” par. 7). Successful writers, ones who have chosen “that”, have chosen subjectivity because their texts are a product of their conscious questioning of absolute truth and interpretations of intellectual, grammatical, and ideological subjectivity.

To be fully authentic is to live without bad faith and, for a novelist, that means making the responsible choice to always write based on subjective truth “even if to do so they must discard most of the conventions which are commonly observed by the novelist” (“Modern Fiction” par. 6). Woolf concludes her modern novelist manifesto stating:

there is no limit to the horizon, and that nothing — no “method”, no experiment, even of the wildest — is forbidden, but only falsity and pretence. “The proper stuff of fiction” does not exist; everything is the proper stuff of fiction, every feeling, every thought; every quality of brain and spirit is drawn upon; no perception comes amiss.
 (“Modern Fiction” par. 8)

In true existentialist form, Woolf denounces absolute truth in fiction and claims “falsity and pretence” as the only sin a novelist can commit. Woolf is advocating the questioning being that chooses to choose for them self, or, put simple, Woolf is advocating authenticity.

Just as Sartre claims that existence precedes essence, Woolf claims that literature should not be a predetermined and controlled object. As she famously states:

Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? We are not pleading merely for courage and sincerity; we are suggesting that the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it.

(“Modern Fiction” par. 5)

Sartre and Woolf could not harmonize more melodically. Both recognize the ideological discourse that controls subjectivity. Both call to attention the responsibility and ability of the individual. Plus, both are reaching past the individual in hopes to inspire a social movement toward subjectivity. Ideally, the individual must change first, and then, because the individual's freedom demands freedom in return, subjectivity has the power to perpetuate a society that denounces systematic absolute truth in favour of the questioning conscious being that chooses truth for them self.

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Section Three: Investigating Woolf's Exploration of Subjectivity

3.1

Woolf's Literary Philosophy of Subjectivity: Sartrean Elements of Subjectivity in *To the Lighthouse*

It is argued that both Woolf and Sartre claim subjectivity is the individual determination of truth. Although subjectivity seems to have an odd hybridity of freedom and limitation because Sartre claims one is condemned to choose, its ultimate end is freedom. Throughout the canon of Woolf's novels, subjectivity becomes the philosophy that Woolf uses to approach and tackle a novel. Her curiosity and consideration of subjectivity is present as a thematic undercurrent in every facet of her work: her literary style, techniques, and her characters. As Woolf states, "imagine the art of fiction come alive and standing in our midst, she would undoubtedly bid us break her and bully her, as well as honour and love her, for so her youth is renewed and her sovereignty assured ("Modern Fiction" par. 8). The different aspects of Woolf's work are the outcomes of her questioning consciousness and function in harmony to provide a foundation of subjectivity in her texts; but, subjectivity is not a definite concrete concept to Woolf. In fact, instead of being defensive about the fluidity of her philosophy, Woolf is receptive and willing to examine subjectivity from all angles and perspectives, including bad faith, and, most notably, she uses her characters for this purpose.

Woolf urges readers and writers to consider fiction as an arena to explore subjectivity. Woolf also claims that using fiction to explore subjectivity is the best way to honour it, obeying convention being the worst. To demonstrate the existential undercurrent in Woolf's literary philosophy, *To the Lighthouse* will be examined in three different capacities: the stylistic use of the stream of consciousness technique; the use of time in a flexible and non-sequential manner; and, the character construction and development. In *To the Lighthouse*, the common thread of subjectivity is maintained

throughout. More specifically, Woolf tracks a characters' encounter of absolute truth or ideology, their process questioning, selection of choice and manifestation of subjectivity and this is highlighted most clearly by the focalization of individual perception both literally, in the technical aspects of Woolf's novel, and figuratively, within the narrative of the text.

3.2

Stylistic Subjectivity: Indirect Interior Monologue

The idea of stream of consciousness as a literary style has become somewhat blasé in literary theory and, yet, the exact definition seems to be accepted on the vaguest of terms. The technique, introduced chiefly by Dorothy Richardson, appeared in 1916 when Richardson “published two novels, *Pointed Roofs* and *Backwater*, in which she employed a method described as “thinking aloud” (L. C. Hartley 86). Woolf and Joyce followed quickly after, most notably, with *Jacob's Room* and *Ulysses* respectively. The three authors, according to L. C. Hartley, “in attempting to present a full picture of life... [dealt] with aspects ordinarily barred from conversation and intercourse even by very lax modern decorum” (86-87), and this refers to their stylistic choices and their use of literary techniques. The shocking new technique disobeyed literary convention and expectation in every sense with “the disregard of rules of punctuation, the rejection of anything that approximates orderly sequence, the breaks from scene to scene without transition, the changes from the first person to the third” (Hartley 86). But, the rejection of convention is not simply in rebellion; the artists are seeking to write a true image of life, something that Woolf expresses clearly in her essay “Modern Fiction”.

The history of stream of consciousness as a literary technique is clearly documented, but, as Lawrence Edward Bowling notices, there is still a “state of general confusion” (333). Bowling attests the confusion is largely due to the “[failure] to recognize different variations within the stream of

consciousness technique, and...[the failure] also to distinguish this technique from another similar method” (333). Bowling investigates the various branches within stream of consciousness that include internal analysis, sensory impression, and interior monologue. The conclusion of his research reveals the difference between each format is the level of the author's presence.

To begin, internal analysis must be distinctly separated from the rest of the terms as it is not a form of stream of consciousness. In internal analysis the author acts as a mediator or an “interpreter between [the reader] and the character's mind and gives us [their] *interpretation* of what the character feels and thinks” (Bowling 343). The reader is not reading the character's thoughts; the reader is reading the author's thoughts about the character's internal thoughts. In internal analysis, the author is the main subject of the text rendering the style outside of the boundaries of stream of consciousness.

The rest of the techniques that Bowling explores are different types of stream of consciousness. It must be noted that stream of consciousness, for this paper, is considered to be the parent term (Baldick 170). First, consider sensory impression “is the writer's nearest approach to putting pure sensations and images on paper” as it is “concerned merely with perceiving concrete sense impressions” (Bowling 342). Second, and arguably the most prevalent, is interior monologue. Contrary to the passive mind that is a factor of sensory impression, interior monologue relies on an active mind (Bowling 342). “Interior monologue”, as Bowling points out, is often used synonymously used with “stream of consciousness” and this can cause confusion; however, it is not far off the mark if the term is used correctly. Incorrect usage is perhaps the root of the problem of confusion and it is understandable since interior monologue itself has sub-categories. According to Robert Humphrey, interior monologue generally refers to the character's internal thoughts presented on the page without the interference and analysis of the author (25). More specifically, interior monologue can be further spliced into two categories: direct and indirect.

Humphrey defines: “*direct* interior monologue [as] that type of interior monologue which is

represented with negligible author interference and with no auditor assumed” (25 italics added). The syntactical traces of the author are insignificant and the character is not speaking to anyone, the reader is simply an unseen observer or listener (Humphrey 25). *Indirect* interior monologue, according to Humphrey, is the “type of interior monologue in which an omniscient author presents unspoken material as if it were directly from the consciousness of a character and, with commentary and description, guides the reader through it” (29). The vast majority of Woolf’s major works, “eight out of nine” (Snaith 134) are written in the style of indirect interior monologue. For example, consider the scene in *To the Lighthouse* where Lily ties Mr Ramsay's boot:

Mr Ramsay sighed to the full. He waited. Was she not going to say anything? Did she not see what he wanted from her? Then he said he had a particular reason for wanting to go to the Lighthouse. His wife used to send the men things. There was a poor boy with a tuberculosis hip, the lightkeeper's son. He sighed profoundly. He sighed significantly. All Lily wished was that this enormous flood of grief, this insatiable hunger for sympathy, this demand that she should surrender herself up to him entirely, and even so he had sorrows enough to keep her supplied for ever, should leave her, should be diverted
(TL 355)

In the passage, the omniscient narrator places the internal thoughts of Mr Ramsay and Lily side by side. In each case, the silent commentary and contemplation is not aimed at the reader but instead are the characters’ thought pattern as it happens; this is obviously clear when Mr Ramsay questions Lily’s behaviour and then suddenly remembers how Mrs Ramsay used to make things for the lighthouse keeper's child. The narrative pronouns, prevalent throughout the passage and the novel, and the lack of first- and second-person pronouns are indicative of indirect interior monologue. Pronouns, along with adverbs, serve only as literary guidelines so that the reader has the ability to follow and understand the narrative with ease; for example, “*then* he said”. Signals from the narrator in indirect interior monologue are often used but the reader can be left to locate without the use of signal phrases. “In either case”, Snaith claims, “the reader has to be alert for signs such as the character's idioms, components of direct speech such as exclamatory phrases, and signs of internal thought such as free

association and fragmented sentence structure” (134). Regardless of signals, the thoughts of the characters are verbatim. The text is not interpreted, interrupted or filtered by Woolf or the narrator and it is impressed upon the reader that they are privy to uncensored private thoughts.

The varying degree of the author's involvement is the difference between the different forms of stream of consciousness. Although in both types of interior monologue the author must not interfere, indirect interior monologue gives the author license to assist the reader (not the speaker) with syntactical devices. To compare, the traditional monologue, which is not a form of stream of consciousness at all, acknowledges and indulges its audience by obeying convention; whereas, according to Humphrey, “interior monologue [both direct and indirect] proceeds in spite of the readers expectations in order to represent the actual texture of consciousness” (26). Humphrey lists the difference between the two types of interior monologue also include “the use of third-person instead of first-person point of view; the wider use of descriptive and expository methods to present the monologue; and the possibility of greater coherence and of greater surface unity through selection of materials” (29). It should be noted that Humphrey's final point on comprehension is the acknowledgement of the reader. The presence of the reader, is just like the author's relationship with the syntax, they are notably present but they do not change the accuracy of the character's thoughts.

To the Lighthouse is classified as a stream of consciousness novel that utilizes the more specific form of indirect interior monologue. It is common knowledge that many scholars argue that Woolf's style is too doctored to be considered stream of consciousness. Although she does incorporate non-stream of consciousness styles, such as descriptive narration, Woolf's work typically does adhere to the boundaries of interior monologue as described above. Nevertheless, consider the section “Time Passes” in *To the Lighthouse*. The section stands out from the other two sections clearly because of the noticeable shift in style. The portrayal of time in more chronological fashion, along with the symbolic deterioration of the house, is met with descriptive narration. For example, in chapter six of “Time

Passes”, the narrator describes the summer scene in the Hebrides:

And now in the heat of summer the wind sent its spies about the house again. Flies wove a web in the sunny rooms; weeds that had grown close to the glass in the night tapped methodically at the window pane. When darkness fell, the stroke of the Lighthouse, which had laid itself with such authority upon the carpet in the darkness, tracing its pattern, came now in the softer light of spring mixed with moonlight gliding gently as if it laid its caress and lingered stealthily and looked and came lovingly again.
(TL 342)

The use of descriptive narration functions to progress the plot and demonstrate the passing of time, but more importantly, it is used to demonstrate the function and value of stream of consciousness.

Specifically, in “Time Passes”, the new character Mrs McNab is introduced as the lady who cleans the Hebrides house for the Ramsay's while they are away. Initially, Mrs McNab is described through the narrator who states “she lurched (for she rolled like a ship) and leered (for her eyes fell on nothing directly, but with a sidelong glance that deprecated the scorn and anger of the world—she was witless, she knew it)” (TL 340). The narrator also claims when she sings a song it is “robbed of meaning” as it “seemed to say how it was one long sorrow and trouble, how it was getting up and going to bed again” (TL 340). In addition, other adjectives describing Mrs McNab include “hobbled” and “weariness” (340 TL). However, as Anna Snaith points out, “with typical Postmodern selfconsciousness, Woolf lets McNab prove the narrator wrong. Through indirect interior monologue, she is given her own voice, at which point the narrator's prescriptive comments are subverted” (141-142). Mrs McNab takes control of the text; for example in chapter eight:

Mrs McNab stooped and picked up a bunch of flowers to take home with her. She laid them on the table while she dusted. She was fond of flowers. It was a pity to let them waste. Suppose the house were sold (she stood arms akimbo in front of the looking-glass) it would want seeing to—it would...they had left clothes in all the bedrooms. What was she to do with them? They had the moth in them—Mrs Ramsay's things. Poor lady!...She could see [Mrs Ramsay], as she came up the drive with the washing, stooping over her flowers
(TL 343)

Mrs McNab's voice takes control of the narrative and subsequently challenges what the narrator has

already told the reader. Snaith notes that Mrs McNab's "ability to imagine and analyze" shows her "agency" as a character, reclaiming it from the narrator who describes her as "witless" (TL 340, Snaith 142). The unreliability of the narrator in "Time Passes" serves to highlight the importance and truth associated with stream of consciousness. In agreement, Snaith notes that Woolf uses indirect interior monologue to "[show] the necessity of letting McNab speak for herself, and the danger inherent in an omniscient narrator" (142). The indirect interior monologue of Mrs McNab does not serve to debunk the narrator overall but it does aim to make the reader aware of the narrator's presence.

Far from setting out to destroy the notion of a narrator, Woolf's style does depend on the narrator; however, although the narrator is a functional necessity, it is strictly at the mercy of the characters. As Snaith suggests, "although Woolf's narrators have access to the characters' private thoughts, they do not reveal their own...they are functionaries in that they are present in the text so as to relate the actions and thoughts of characters others than themselves" (134). Snaith grants that a narrator is not necessarily characterless, but, just like the author, the narrator must not interfere and this renders them powerless. However, the narrator does provide a necessary literary service. A narrator "makes sense" of a character's thoughts or subjective process, which is typically lacking in direct interior monologue and this is most notable in the union of a character's public and private realms.

Indirect interior monologue has the added benefit of mixing the public and private. Snaith determines that with indirect interior monologue the narrator can "move the focus swiftly and smoothly from voice to voice. This shifting of perspective allows Woolf to undercut the dominance of the narrator without replacing it by what she saw as the "tyranny of the first-person monologue" (Snaith 138). For example, throughout the climactic dinner scene of "The Window" in *To the Lighthouse*, the text shifts between Mrs Ramsay's thoughts, actions, and dialect:

'Andrew,' she said, 'hold your plate lower, or I shall spill it.' (The Boeuf en Daube was a perfect triumph.) Here, she felt, putting the spoon down, was the still space that lies about the heart of things, where one could move or rest; could wait now (they were all

helped) listening; could then, like a hawk which lapses suddenly from its high station, flaunt and sink on laughter easily, resting her whole weight upon what at the other end of the table her husband was saying about the square root of one thousand two hundred and fifty-three, which happened to be the number on his railway ticket.
(TL 323)

In the passage, Mrs Ramsay shifts quickly but seamlessly between speaking to Andrew, her actions of serving dinner, and her emotional response and mental thoughts about her “perfect triumph” and the ease it brings her mind. The easy flow between public and private allows for the simultaneous development of a character's private and public self, which, according to Snaith, “if developed in isolation from each other, would result in narrowness and restriction” (136) and this falsity is exactly what Woolf is trying to avoid. Mrs Ramsay's character is tied to her roles as a wife, mother, and woman, and if the narrative split her public persona from her private thoughts, the integrity of Mrs Ramsay as a character would be compromised. In addition, the subjectivity of Mrs Ramsay, or any character, would lack understanding because tracking of the questioning process and selection of choice would lack the context, namely the ideology, that the questions are based on. The fact that it is Mrs Ramsay who serves the *Boeuf en Dabue* is just as important as the indirect interior monologue following as she is doing so and to separate the two would be naturally disruptive, dislodging the subjective process, and compromise the style because the narrator and author would have to interfere.

The move from public to private is also apparent between characters. If many characters are involved in one public situation the text has the privilege of being involved in the public event and the private thoughts of each character involved. For example, consider when Mr Ramsay is looking at his “lovely” wife knitting and internally longs to speak to her. The narrative hovers in the public physical silence but also reveals the mental thoughts of both Mr and Mrs Ramsay. The transition is made easily in one sentence:

And again he would have passed her without a word had she not, at that very moment, given him of her own free will what she knew he would never ask, and called to him and taken the green shawl off the picture frame, and gone to him. For he wished, she knew,

to protect her.
(TL 298)

Again, there is an easy movement between both Mr and Mrs Ramsay and their shared public interaction. By seamlessly incorporating the public and private Woolf's text develops more realistically because thought and action, public and private, are not separate within an individual in the real world. In the example above, the reader is simultaneously privy to Mr and Mrs Ramsay because each character is present as an individual and as a partner in the marriage. The full exposure of the individual characters' and their relationship with one another reveals the significance of the situation. The reader can fully appreciate the significance of Mr Ramsay's emotional turmoil and Mrs Ramsay's action of going to her husband amidst the complexity of their externally silent emotions. Moreover, because it is the character's public and private life that is being relayed verbatim, the power of the narrative lies with the character, not the narrator or the author.

As previously mentioned, Woolf is often criticized for being too involved in her stream of consciousness, for “interpreting” instead of “transcribing” her characters. Her choice to use indirect interior monologue has the air of convention because the style allows for signs, including syntax, diction, and grammar choices, which serve to guide the reader through the thoughts of a character. For example, James' thoughts in the beginning of the novel include words such as “exaltation”, “sublimity” and “egotism”, which are too well advanced for a child (TL 280). Stream of consciousness was not an established conventional style in the early twentieth century, but today these “signs,” now less shocking, simply alert critics to the author's presence. Perhaps this debate embodies Woolf's stance on convention. As she claims, convention is necessary to establish a bond between the reader and the text but convention can also stifle the writer (“Bennett” 325); so, where does that leave direct interior monologue?

Instead of claiming that Woolf was too present in her text, consider that indirect interior

monologue is akin to Woolf's philosophy of subjective writing. As Snaith notes, "direct interior monologue is restrictive, in Woolf's view, because it traps the reader within a single subjectivity" (147); whereas, indirect interior monologue "acknowledges the variety, fragmentation, and sense of being situated that are inherent within subjectivity" (Snaith 146-7). As a result, indirect interior monologue is the most respectful of subjectivity because it does not control the character or the writing, as do the very conventions Woolf was fighting, but it allows for the depiction of the subjective process in terms of a questioning and choosing consciousness. According to Snaith, "the narrator...relinquishes his or her authority...making pure narration secondary to the indirect interior monologue" (146) and this technique allows for the subjectivity of the writer, the characters, the text in general, and subsequently the reader, to be uninhibited by convention. In Woolf's view, the stylistic choice of indirect interior monologue provides the freedom to write subjectively without the impediment of convention but with the benefit of the reader's comprehension.

3.3

Subjective Literary Elements: The Perception and Portrayal of Time

The style of stream of consciousness during the early twentieth century was unconventional, so Woolf was able to determine stylistic elements freely. Woolf constructs literary elements that support her writing philosophy of subjectivity; as Beth Carole Rosenberg notes, Woolf is focused on "competing subjectivities, and it is the construction and relation between those subjectivities that she is concerned with" (1115). By applying Sartre's concept that *existence* precedes essence to the literary world, convention would be like placing *essence* before existence. On the other hand, Woolf chooses to build essence by tracking conscious questioning and choosing through her novels instead of relying on literary conventions that predetermine essence.

Through its portrayal and function, Woolf uses time as a literary element that epitomizes her philosophy of subjectivity. In a conventional sense, time in a novel is strictly chronological and serves to uphold literary conventions including plot and character development; however, in Woolf's texts, time is portrayed in a flexible and non-chronological manner. As N. Elizabeth Monroe argues, "Mrs Woolf has used almost every conceivable device to give the effect of the immediacy of experience in time and of the alternate shrinking and stretching of time on the mind and of the constant evolution of character in time" (226). Woolf builds the essence of her characters by solely trusting subjectivity and, as Monroe relates, she allows literary elements, specifically time, to be functions of the characters, not the text.

What results from changing the role of time is a power shift. Contrary to the conventional use and expectations of time associated with the Victorian Realist novel, Woolf, as indirect interior monologue allows, places the element of narrative time in the control of characters. With her determination to depict subjective truth, she uses time to allow significance to be placed where a character deems it is necessary. A character controls the narrative externally and internally, suspending the external narrative, namely the dialogue, to reflect and comment internally on the situation; therefore, time passes not chronologically, but psychologically according to the characters' process of questioning, choice selection and manifestation of choice.

First, consider the basic presentation of time in *To the Lighthouse*. The first and last sections, "The Window" and "The Lighthouse", make up the vast majority of the text and each depict a few days; but, in the middle section, "Time Passes", time lapses over nearly a decade in a brief amount of pages. The time disparity between the sections mirrors the use of time. In "Time Passes", as the title suggests, the main characters are not present and Woolf documents the decay of the Ramsay estate in the Hebrides as time passes more chronologically. The section moves through seasons and demonstrates the passing and effect of time on inanimate objects, instead of people, such as the

“mouldy” books, the “fallen in” plaster, the “ruined” carpet and the “pitiful sight” of the garden (TL 343-4). There is obvious symbolic reference to the decay of Victorian ideals, including literary conventions, as Woolf shows how the standard presentation of time can sideline significance in order to uphold the “gig lamp”, or essence before existence, philosophy. To demonstrate, the more important events that occur during “Time Passes” are sidelined by the use of square brackets. Specifically, Andrew dies in war (342), Prue is married, falls pregnant and dies of complications (341), and even Mrs Ramsay, the lynchpin of the first section, “die[s] rather suddenly the night before” (339). The use of square brackets to downplay major character events demonstrates how the institution of time, as manifest in realm of the Victorian novel, is not necessarily reflective of significant reality because significance is determined from the inside out as a result of subjectivity. Since significance depends on the character, *To the Lighthouse* establishes that time is according to their truth.

Within “Time Passes” Woolf includes Mrs McNab's indirect interior monologue and this inclusion further shows the importance of subjective truth and its relationship to time. In chapter eight, for example, as Mrs McNab continues, the pace of the novel returns to its former self as McNab controls the time. Far from jumping quickly from season to season and event to event, time slows down as the reader slips into the thoughts of the housekeeper and her duties as she performs them. Placing McNab's monologue by the square brackets that detail notable events, Woolf shows the need for a character to determine significance and that the psychological passing of time achieves this.

The psychological passing of time dominates the other two large sections of the text. Time must be flexible for Woolf because the narrative is progressed by several points of view simultaneously in the style of indirect interior monologue. According to the style, the third person narrator switches between the external actions and dialogue of a character and their internal thoughts, reactions, and feelings. To demonstrate, the dinner scene at the end of “The Window” has every notable character seated around the dinner table and as the dinner continues the point of view shifts fluidly from one

character to the next. While Mrs Ramsay acts as the grounding point for the chapter, when a notable moment occurs, time slows down or stops as the narrative ventures into the thoughts of the participating characters. For example, mid-way through Chapter XVII, Mrs Ramsay, Mr Tansley and Lily all discuss making a trip to the lighthouse. During the dialogue, the reader is privy to the thoughts of three characters including the silent exchange of “thoughts”:

‘Will you take me [to the lighthouse], Mr Tansley?’ said Lily, quickly, kindly, for, of course, if Mrs Ramsay said to her, as in effect she did, ‘I am drowning, my dear, in seas of fire. Unless you apply some balm to the anguish of this hour and say something nice...when Mrs Ramsay said all this, as the glance in her eyes said it
(TL 314)

As the excerpt clearly shows, time stops at Lily’s command so she can mentally translate Mrs Ramsay’s glare before she answers. The psychological passing of time gives the reader the opportunity to experience the scene from the perspective of each character involved. By allowing multiple points of view significance, Woolf demonstrates her subjective disposition. In addition, Woolf also implicitly shows how chronological time in a novel can usurp the subjectivity of a character and the reader.

Psychological time also allows what is significant to be controlled by the character. The use of chronological time organizes significance according to sequentiality, which predetermines importance; conversely, psychological time in indirect interior monologue ignores the conventional limits and expectations of time in order for the character to claim what is significant. In Woolfian terms, “life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo” (“Modern Fiction” par. 8). This perspective is echoed in the text when James cannot go to the lighthouse and Mrs Ramsay becomes concerned with her children recalling disappointment in their childhood, she worriedly states: “Children don’t forget” (TL 296). Briefly, Mrs Ramsay is commenting on how memories are dominated by emotions not “facts”. Consider also, Lily’s complete painting is not what is ultimately important; it is her “vision” that she has had (TL 391). As Woolf might say, it is the focus on the spirit, not the body, which the psychological passing of time allows and the chronological portrayal of time

destroys.

On another level, because time allows a character to deem what is worthy subjectively, according to their choices, the inclusion of mundane subject matter finds space in Woolf's novels. Woolf places importance on the everyday occurrence and the "immediate experience" (Monroe 227) in the novel because they depict the nature of subjectivity. Reconsider the time disparity between the sections as noted above. The time disparity is initially odd considering that the most jarring events occur in "Time Passes", namely the deaths of half the Ramsay family. However, reflecting on Woolf's philosophy of subjectivity, it is the everyday occurrence represented immediately to the reader that accounts for the majority of the novel because it is the everyday occurrence that demonstrates conscious questioning and truth selection that builds essence. More specifically, Woolf demonstrates how seemingly trivial events can be powerful and symbolic in a character's essence. In the opening pages of the novel James' request to go to the lighthouse is denied by his father; by the end of the novel, the voyage James, Cam, and Mr Ramsay take to the lighthouse is of utmost importance, not just because it offers the text a conclusion, but because it is the scene of character confrontation and resolution. What is important is that the boat trip is not an extraordinary event by any means, except to the Ramsay family. To draw on another novel, Clarissa's party in *Mrs Dalloway* plays the same purpose because, although it is actually trivial event, for Clarissa it is significant and contextualizes her subjective process demonstrating the importance of everyday life.

For another example, the relationship between James and his mother is built on their everyday interaction that consists of trivial pursuits. The novel opens with James sitting on the floor in front of his mother cutting out catalogue pictures. The simple interaction between the two is what bonds them together. James recalls the ordinary moment when he thinks of his dead mother on the boat going to the lighthouse. He thinks, "she had risen somehow and gone away and left him there, impotent, ridiculous, sitting on the floor grasping a pair of scissors" (TL 377). There is much to read into the

passage about the relationship between James and Mrs Ramsay, but, most importantly, their relationship in the text is based on the everyday occurrence between son and mother. Moreover, James states, “she alone spoke the truth; to her alone could he speak it; she was a person to whom one could say what came into one's head” (TL 377). James' affiliation of truth with his mother not only reveals James' subjective process of viewing, questioning and determining truth, but it demonstrates how the everyday occurrence holds power and builds essence over time.

As Woolf argues in her essays for literary subjectivity, the trivial is just as important as the triumphant (“Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown”). Lily Briscoe poses the same question as Sartre and Woolf must have contemplated when she asks: “What is the meaning of life?” (TL 361). Lily realizes that “the great revelation had never come” and concludes that “perhaps [it] never did” (TL 361). Woolf may have been slightly more focused on literature, but the wisdom that Lily passes on to the reader is that the “great revelation” is the everyday occurrence, the “little daily miracles” (TL 361). Sartre would no doubt agree because, as he theorizes, essence is based on the subjectivity of an individual, or the individual determination of truth through questioning, which, consequently ebbs and flows on an everyday basis. As demonstrated, the psychological use of time allows for events to be completely subjective and, not only is this demonstrated explicitly in the format of the text in *To the Lighthouse*, but the novel itself embodies Woolf's philosophy on a thematic and symbolic level as demonstrated by the characters' relationship to time.

3.4

Subjectivity in Character Development: Existential Faith

Woolf continues her exploration of subjectivity in her novels through her characters. With her aim to write reality as closely, intimately, and immediately as possible, she primarily concerns herself

with the essence of her characters. As she states quite perspicuously in “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown”, “I believe that all novels, that is to say, deal with character, and that it is to express character” (322). Unlike the previous generation of writers who spend their efforts on “the fabric of things” (“Bennett” 328), Woolf emphasizes the essence of a character in order to bring them into existence. In other words, instead of relying on convention, which predetermines essence, Woolf builds a character's essence, from the inside out, to convince a reader of their existence.

Essence has its foundation in subjectivity. Essence or the nature of one's being, is developed over time and is dependent on an individual's choices as a result of their subjective process of conscious questioning. For example, if someone always chooses to tell the truth they are an honest person and honesty becomes part of their essence. The freedom to choose, to be subjective, translates into the freedom to control essence. Therefore, in a text, it is the subjective choices and how they are made that Woolf documents to develop a character's essence. However, as Sartre claims, with radical freedom comes radical responsibility. The process of essence may sound relatively simple, but, because of subjectivity, it is actually complex. Subjectivity means having the radical freedom to choose, but it also means being forced to choose. Being subjective becomes taxing on the individual because one is “condemned to be free”; they cannot escape choosing or their responsibility for their essence (Sartre “Humanism” 6). As Sartre claims:

If, however, it is true that existence is prior to essence, man is responsible for what he is. Thus, the first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as his is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders
 (“Humanism” 3)

By writing the complexities of subjectivity in her novels, the essence of Woolf's characters are believable because they reflect the realities of the human condition, freedom. In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf explores the different avenues of subjectivity including anguish, good and bad faith.

3.4.1

Anguish

An individual feels deep responsibility during the decision making process which results, as Sartre claims, in anguish (“Humanism” 4). An individual is not only responsible for their own essence; when an individual chooses, they choose for them self and for the rest of humanity because, as Sartre claims, it is impossible to choose worse. Whatever decision is made the chooser believes to be the best choice possible because the chooser is solely responsible for them self. The responsibility to choose for oneself and for humanity, coupled with the fact that a choice must be made, causes anguish. Sartre states:

When a man commits himself to anything, fully realising that he is not only choosing what he will be, but is thereby at the same time a legislator deciding for the whole of mankind—in such a moment a man cannot escape from the sense of complete and profound responsibility.
 (“Humanism” 4)

In *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs Ramsay demonstrates anguish when she realizes the affect that her choices have on her children when she notes that they “never forget” (TL 296). She thinks, “For this reason it was so important what one said, and what one did” (TL 296). In addition, when she plays matchmaker to Paul and Minta, she feels “sinister...making Minta marry... Was she not forgetting again how strongly she influenced people?” (TL 294-5). Mrs Ramsay is aware that she holds her choices as truth for others and she feels anguish when she thinks that she might have a negative effect on someone. Although she holds true throughout the text that “people must marry; people must have children” (TL 294), when she suspects that she is pressuring Minta, she questions herself: “Was she wrong in this?” (TL 294). Even though she resolves to continue with her plans, the momentary pause reflects her sense of anguish before she recommits herself, and the whole of humanity, to the bad faith institution of marriage.

3.4.2

Bad Faith: “Individual Reception,” Marriage, and Legacy

Bad faith, or the denial of radical freedom and the acceptance of absolute truth, is a central area of exploration because it plays devil's advocate to an individual's subjectivity. The character shift of 1910 that Woolf identifies is not just a realization of subjectivity; it is the realization of objectivity as well. Bad faith institutions, most notably society, reject subjectivity to favour systems of absolute truth that objectify the individual. However, bad faith purveyors seem to energize Woolf's curiosity of subjectivity because they are part of building essence; recall the Dreadnought hoax as Woolf's awakening to subjectivity because she rejects the bad faith institution of the monarchy and the government. Woolf recognizes bad faith as a point of crisis for subjectivity and, as a result, bad faith is extensively explored in *To the Lighthouse*.

Bad faith plagues many of the characters in *To the Lighthouse* and is represented by the theme of “individual reception”. “Individual reception” is the process of an individual receiving their self-perspective from an outside source. For example, gender roles dictate how a woman dresses, acts, and speaks and someone who accepts gender roles will inflict these expectations and absolute truths on them self, even though they are not self-chosen but created by the public institution of social society. Basically, instead of being subjective one is being objective and allowing others, people, institutions, or systems of discourse to decide what truth is for them. Mrs Ramsay suffers from bad faith because her role as a wife and mother are carried out according to Victorian ideals; as a result, she is objectified and her essence becomes predetermined. Specifically, Mrs Ramsay thinks to herself:

the monotonous fall of the waves on the beach, which for the most part beat a measured and soothing tattoo to her thoughts and seemed consolingly to repeat over and over again as she say with the children the words of some old cradle song, murmured by nature 'I am guarding you—I am your support,' but at other times suddenly and unexpectedly, especially when her mind raised itself slightly from the task actually in hand, had no such kindly meaning, but like a ghostly roll of drums remorselessly beat the measure of life, made one thing of the destruction of the island and its engulfment in

the sea, and warned her whose day had slipped past in one quick doing after another that it was all ephemeral as a rainbow—this sound which had been obscured and concealed under the other sounds suddenly thundered hollow in her ears and made her look up with an impulse of terror.
(TL 266-7)

The truths that Mrs Ramsay commits to, concerning her role as a wife, mother, and woman, are absolute. Absolute truths are the foundation of bad faith and they are basically one truth selected by an institution or system of discourse for all to abide by; Mrs Ramsay notes this when she compares her life to a “tattoo” (TL 266). The permanence of a tattoo conjures the notion that Mrs Ramsay's life is already decided. Repetition in the passage is of utmost importance because it represents the predetermined life that bad faith leads to. Repetition is signalled by the use of metaphor and specific rhythmic diction; for example, the “monotonous” waves, the measured “beat”, “repeat over and over”, and “roll of drums” all signal the “measure of life” (TL 266-7). On the one hand, as Mrs Ramsay notes, bad faith is “soothing” and “kindly” because, even though it is an illusion, it relieves the responsibility, or at least the anguish, to choose. On the other hand, bad faith also “terrifies” Mrs Ramsay because, not only does it objectify her but it forces the individual to live up to certain standards (“measure of life”). When Mrs Ramsay contemplates her existence, the “soothing tattoo” becomes a “ghostly roll of drums remorselessly [beating] the measure of life” (TL 267). Her subjectivity becomes “[engulfed] in the sea” and she senses that her subjectivity has “slipped past” making her existence feel “ephemeral” (TL 267). Mrs Ramsay is aware of her bad faith. She is aware that she measures herself and her life according to society and not according to her own determined truths.

Later in the text, Mrs Ramsay is aware of the freedom a child has being “less exposed to human worries” and wishes her own did not have to “grow up and lose it all” (TL 294). She contemplates life again, but “life” is not on Mrs Ramsay's subjective terms: “There is was before her—life. Life: she thought but she did not finish her thought” (TL 294). Mrs Ramsay's concept of life is determined by an outside source, in this case Victorian ideals; thus, she does “not finish her thought” because it is not her

thought to begin with. The “thing that she called life” (TL 294) is not a concept created by Mrs Ramsay but a concept decided by society which explains why she casts “life” as her opponent, “she...on one side, and life was on another” (TL 294). The “reconciliation” between her and “life” that Ramsay speaks of relates the relief of anguish and responsibility she feels choosing to be married, but once an individual decides to relinquish their freedom to choose they fully commit to that choice. For example, if one decides to be married one is obliged to the subsequent marital role. Mrs Ramsay, contemplating her past choices, realizes that life, or bad faith, is “terrible, hostile, and quick to pounce...if you [give] it a chance” (TL 294) because bad faith is not one choice, it is a commitment.

It must be noted, however, that Mrs Ramsay does choose. As Sartre notes, it is impossible not to choose (“Humanism” 12). Mrs Ramsay did choose to relinquish her radical freedom to adhere to Victorian ideals. For example, typical of Victorian ideals, Mrs Ramsay is religious. Theoretically, religion is a system of bad faith because it preaches a system of absolute values. Mrs Ramsay realizes this when she catches an “insincerity slipping” from her lips:

What brought her to say that: 'We are in the hands of the Lord?' she wondered. The insincerity slipping in among the truths roused her, annoyed her. She returned to her knitting again. How could any Lord have made this world? she asked. With her mind she had always seized the fact that there is no reason, order, justice: but suffering, death, the poor. There was no treachery too big for the world to commit; she knew that. No happiness lasted; she knew that.
(TL 297)

Mrs Ramsay realizes her religiousness is in bad faith; yet, as it was her decision, religious faith has become part of her essence as indicated by her “insincere slip” (TL 297). She chastises herself for her bad faith faux pas, but her anger is more directed at the reflex and unconsciousness of her statement. Her statement comes out so naturally because Mrs Ramsay’s bad faith is part of her essence and her statement reflects the fact that she is not making subjective choices but receiving her decisions from bad faith. Mrs Ramsay even subjectively proves to herself that religious faith is irrational because she knows there is “no treachery too big for the world to commit”; subsequently, this further proves that her

religious faith is merely based on her commitment to Victorian ideals. In addition, Mrs Ramsay is profoundly aware that “no happiness [lasts]”, not just because there is “suffering, death, [and] the poor”, but, as she previously expresses when she wishes her children could stay young (TL 294), there is always the “human worries” of anguish and the responsibility to choose which cannot be escaped (TL 294).

Bad faith in *To the Lighthouse* is symbolically represented by marriage. The text renders a married individual an object that is dependent on individual reception; that is, that the individual receives their choices from an outside source and accepts them as their own. First, consider marriage as an institution of Victorian ideals. Marriage not only stipulates the appropriate relationship between a man and a woman, but, it is also the gateway to the Victorian nuclear family. Marriage promises happiness, fulfillment, and it heavily promotes that it is the “right” way of life, especially for a woman. However, the institution of social society contrives the ideal of marriage, and, because marriage founded on a series of absolute truths, it is not a subjective choice. In *To the Lighthouse*, marriage becomes symbolic of bad faith as it is seen as the point of subjective crisis, aspersion, and poignancy.

In the novel, marriage is the only appropriate life choice for a woman. As Mrs Ramsay states, “an unmarried woman [has] missed the best part of life” (TL 288). Still, Mrs Ramsay's statement that marriage is the best part of life is odd since her marriage is a failure. What her statement represents is merely the attitude that Victorian ideals stipulate, she is reflecting her received notion of marriage. As she ladles out soup during the dinner party, she wonders: “what have I done with my life?” (TL 309). She has done nothing with her life subjectively, and since her marriage is a failure, she has not lived up to Victorian marital expectations either. All that she has left is “an infinitely long table and plates and knives” (TL 309), but even as she fills the table as the perfect Victorian host, she feels like an outsider. Even looking at Mr Ramsay, “she [can] not understand how she had ever felt any emotion or affection for him” (TL 309). She has “a sense of being past everything” (TL 309), as if she has missed her

chance to be subjective and her commitment to bad faith, symbolized by her marital commitment to her husband, has completely robbed her of a life that she wanted. She considers her marriage poignantly and, thinking about the successful qualities of a marriage, wonders “had they had that?” (TL 295). Mrs Ramsay is aware her marriage is a failure now, but cannot recall what brought her to her husband in the first place. In retrospect, it can be considered that Mrs Ramsay was summoned to the idea of marriage by her bad faith in Victorian ideals and now that the allure has faded and let her down, there is nothing left between her and her husband except expectations.

As she reflects at the dinner table, Mrs Ramsay references an “eddy” that she feels “out of” (TL 309); since an “eddy” is a current of water moving in an opposite direction of the main current, it can be assumed that Mrs Ramsay feels like she is caught in the current of main society. The end of the passage has Mrs Ramsay waiting for someone to give her meaning to her life, but again, Mrs Ramsay is waiting for an outside source to define her instead of claiming purpose subjectively herself. Even though she is disheartened, she reserves that she must be “passive” and not yearn for attention, for, to be a good hostess, she must just continue to ladle soup (TL 309).

Sartre maintains that when a choice is made it is a commitment for the chooser and humanity because the chooser believes the choice to be the best possible (“Humanism” 4). Again, Mrs Ramsay's marriage is a failure, yet, she is committed to the choice because, according to Victorian ideals and subsequently Ms Ramsay, marriage is the “best part of life” (TL 288). Throughout Mrs Ramsay's presence in the novel, she acts as matchmaker for Paul and Minta, and Lily and William. Mrs Ramsay seems to cast aspersions on Paul who, in the end, feels she “made him” propose to Minta (TL 306). She “strongly influences” (TL 294) Paul and convinces him to the extent that he feels she “expects it” of him (TL 306). His proposal is made almost to prove to Mrs Ramsay that he will do the “right thing” by Minta; after he proposes he wishes to announce to Mrs Ramsay “I've done it” (TL 306). Mrs Ramsay's promotion of marriage to Paul renders him an object at the mercy of his newly chosen bad

faith in marriage.

Mrs Ramsay's manipulation of Minta and Paul into marriage makes her feel "sinister" and "uneasy" (TL 294), but Mrs Ramsay's motivations do not appeal to the reader as wicked or malicious. In fact, although Mrs Ramsay does contrive some situations, it is never in a mean-spirited manner. She gets giddy at the possibility of matchmaking when she initially thinks of Lily and William Bankes together, claiming it is an "admirable idea" (TL 301). Her conflict, nevertheless, is brought on by her bad faith as she measures success on the terms of Victorian ideals, most notably, marriage. Even though her marriage is unsuccessful, "and she had had experiences which need not happen to everyone" (TL 294), her bad faith legitimizes the continuation of her marriage because to Mrs Ramsay a bad marriage is better than no marriage. She continues her matchmaking, "too quickly she knew, almost as if it were an escape for her too, to say that people must marry; people must have children" (TL 294). As Sartre would note, Mrs Ramsay's promotion of marriage demonstrates her commitment to her bad faith in Victorian ideals. The modal verb of "must" indicates that Mrs Ramsay believes that people are obliged to society to get married and have children because, she reflects, after the happiness of childhood is gone, this is what makes people "perfectly happy" (TL 294). Matchmaking pleases Mrs Ramsay because her marriage is a failure and seeing another succeed, especially one she has arranged, legitimizes her existence, especially her existence in her own marriage.

Mrs Ramsay attempts to unite Lily and William in the text but she is ultimately unsuccessful. Mrs Ramsay spots Lily and William together and decides: "What an admirable idea! They must marry!" (TL 301). Mrs Ramsay notices Lily's independence, which she claims she admires, "but no man would...unless they were a much older man, like William Bankes" (TL 322). She resolves that even though William "was not 'in love'" with Lily that "nonsense...William must marry Lilly. They have so many things in common. Lily is so fond of flowers. They are both cold and aloof and rather self-sufficing. She must arrange for them to take a long walk together" (TL 322). Her excitement over

the possibility of their union eases and gives her a sense of “security” (TL 322). Moreover, during dinner when Mrs Ramsay is feeling empty, the possibility of their union gives her purpose, for “the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her” (TL 309).

Lily is aware of Mrs Ramsay's plan (TL 302) and sees her assessing William. Lily notices that Mrs Ramsay pities William, “poor man! Who had no wife and no children” (TL 309), and realizes Mrs Ramsay probably pities Lily for the same reason. However, she asks herself: “Why does she pity him?” and she continues:

For that was the impression she gave, when she told him that his letters were in the hall. Poor William Bankes, she seemed to be saying, 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. And it was not true, Lily thought; it was one of those misjudgements of hers that seemed to be instinctive and to arise from some need of her own rather than of other people's. He is not in the least pitiable. He has his work, Lily said to herself. She remembered, all of a sudden as if she had found a treasure, that she too had her work.
(TL 310)

Mrs Ramsay's feelings are “instinctive” because marriage is part of her essence and Lily supports this, noting that Mrs Ramsay's pity is not sourced from William but from “some need of her own” (TL 310). Lily looks at William more subjectively, assessing him on his own merit, and concludes that he “is not in the least pitiable” because he “has his work” (TL 310). Lily realizes she is in the same situation with her painting: she chooses subjectively what matters to her and not by Victorian ideals. In fact, Lily knows Mrs Ramsay does not care “a fig for her painting” (TL 288), only her marital status, and thus probably pities her too. Mrs Ramsay pities both of them because she does not recognize William's philosophical achievements, nor does she “take [Lily's] painting very seriously” (TL 267) since they are not measurable in Victorian ideals.

Lily decides not to marry even though, she admits much later in the text, that “she loved William Bankes” (TL 370). Lily reflects that she “escaped [marriage] by the skin of her teeth”; the closeness represented by William almost knocking over her painting (TL 268). When Lily does decide

she “need never marry anybody...she [feels]...enormous exultation” (TL 370). As she explains to William, when he was “shocked by her neglect of the significance of mother and son”, “it was not irreverence” (TL 370). His understanding, “thanks to his scientific mind...pleased her and comforted her enormously” (TL 370). It is William's “disinterested intelligence” that attracts Lily the most because they have it in common. Both William and Lily have subjective intelligence, which separates them from all other characters in the text. “Disinterested” is used to connote Lily and William's subjectivity that is independent of, or disinterested in, bad faith, particularly the Victorian ideal of marriage. Lily struggles with her subjectivity throughout the text, as mirrored by the progress of her painting and antagonized by Mrs Ramsay, but, at the end, she is clearly in good faith and living authentically. Lily's turning point comes after she returns to the Hebrides house in the third section, “The Lighthouse”. Freed from Mrs Ramsay's influence only after her death, Lily realizes that she “can override her wishes, [and] improve away her limited, old-fashioned ideas” (TL 369). Lily questions Mrs Ramsay's “mania...for marriage” (TL 369) and even imagines Mrs Ramsay saying to her “Marry, marry!” to which she responds, “I'm happy like this” (TL 369). Moreover, Lily imagines a horrible fate for Paul and Minta, who undertook marriage in bad faith, and she pleasurably envisions that their “marriage had turned out rather badly” (TL 368). Lily's struggle with marriage is reflective of her struggle with bad faith; ultimately, however, Lily stays single and in good faith.

Similarly, before Mr Ramsay is married, William recalls that he too had a subjective mind.

William recalls:

[Mr] Ramsay striding along a road by himself hung round with that solitude which seemed to be his natural air. But this was suddenly interrupted, William Bankes remembered (and this must refer to some actual incident), by a hen, straddling her wings out in protection of a covey of little chicks, upon which Ramsay, stopping, pointing his stick and said, 'Pretty—pretty,' an odd illumination into his heart, Bankes had thought it which showed his simplicity, his sympathy with humble things; but it seemed to him as if their friendship had ceased, there, on that stretch of road. After that, Ramsay had married. After that, what with one thing and another, the pulp had gone out of their friendship. Whose fault it was he could not say, only, after a time, repetition had taken

the place of newness.
(TL 270)

William remembers that Mr Ramsay used to have a more subjective disposition. Mr Ramsay was not only capable of being alone without the need for praise or attention, but solitude seemed to be his natural environment. In addition, Mr Ramsay demonstrates his capability of sympathy to “humble things” (TL 270) instead of being “a figure of infinite pathos” (TL 356). It is after he marries that William feels their paths separate and that “repetition [takes] the place of newness” (TL 270). The “repetition” notes a sense of unquestioned sequential action that is Mr Ramsay's life in his work and his marriage. Mr Ramsay surrendered his subjective nature for the absolute truths of Victorian ideals and followed the path of marriage unquestioned to child rearing. In terms of his work, although “he made a definite contribution to philosophy in one little book when he was only five and twenty; what came after was more of less amplification, repetition” (TL 272). Mr Ramsay is even aware of the lack of “newness” in his work and sighs to himself “he would have written better books if he had not married” (TL 300). As he gazes “across the bay”, Mr Ramsay even recalls, “before he had married” he was able to work all day in solitude (TL 300). Even when he worked in a “public house” he was able to work “ten hours at a stretch; an old woman just popped her head in now and again and saw to the fire” (TL 300). Before marriage, Mr Ramsay was able to function without the constant need for sympathy. It would be expected that Mr Ramsay would accost the woman who enters his room to check the fire for praise as he typically does throughout the novel much to Mrs Ramsay and Lily's dismay, but he is content in his solitude. Mr Ramsay is aware himself that his moment of marriage is when he relinquished his former subjective life of academic greatness and independence for a predetermined life of absolute truths.

Marriage, as a symbol of bad faith, has a smaller counterpart in *To the Lighthouse*: legacy.

Legacy, just like marriage, is a system of bad faith because it is founded on individual “reception”.

Legacy, how one is remembered by what they leave behind, is outwardly focused because it is dependent on how whatever is left behind, memory, deed, text, et cetera, is received and judged. Just like marriage, those obsessed with legacy are in bad faith because their choices made while they are alive are made with the goal of pleasing those who will determine legacy; therefore, the chooser is objectified because they rely on the reception of truths from outside sources. Mr Ramsay is the most obvious example of a character preoccupied with legacy. With his decision to marry, Mr Ramsay lost his subjectivity, which influences his work greatly, as noted above. Mr Ramsay becomes obsessed with his legacy: “He was always uneasy about himself... He would always be worrying about his own books—will they be read, are they good, why aren’t they better, what do people think of me?” (TL 330). However, Mr Ramsay does consider himself a great contributor to the discipline of philosophy but he never measures his success subjectively. For example, Mr Ramsay conjures up a metaphorical A to Z alphabet in which he “had no sort of difficulty in running over those letters one by one, firmly and accurately, until it had reached, say, the letter Q” (TL 278). Mr Ramsay is quite smug about his academic achievement and his “splendid mind” (TL 278). He considers himself an elite, not only because he has been published (TL 272), but because he “runs” over the beginning of the alphabet which, according to his assessment, most common people cannot do. Mr Ramsay appears quite pompous; yet, he measures his success against others; as he states later in the text, “very few people in the whole of England ever reach Q” (TL 278). Further, Mr Ramsay even ponders the legacy of Shakespeare in comparison to his own pending legacy, asking if the world would “have differed much” without such “great men” (TL 284). He concludes “the greatest good requires the existence of a slave class” because it is not “the lot of the average human...by which we judge the measure of civilisation” (TL 284). Mr Ramsay's conclusion obviously shows that he considers himself an elite that civilization can use to measure progress. He then concludes that the “great men” depend on the “existence of a slave class” (TL 284) because there needs to be something to measure greatness against, like his

metaphorical alphabet. His conclusion suggests that great men must not only be measurable according to absolute truths, but they must be measurably above the slave class so they can be seen as superior. Having bad faith in legacy renders Mr Ramsay an object because he does not subjectively determine truth; he is completely dependent and focused on outside judgement.

Throughout the novel, Mr Ramsay not only obsesses over what others think of his work but of him as well. For example, William and Lily see Mr Ramsay reciting a poem and he becomes embarrassed. Despite his “peevisish shame”, he attempts to “brush off” their “gaze”, “as if he begged them to withhold for a moment what he knew to be inevitable” (TL 273). Mr Ramsay, “determined” to seem self-controlled, takes his only viewable defence against their inevitable judgement and “[slams] his private door on them” (TL 273). Mr Ramsay cannot handle feeling inferior in any sense, even in the petty situation of being caught acting a poem out loud. His self-worth is determined solely upon outside sources and, when they are negative, Mr Ramsay's childlike resentment comes to the forefront. Mr Ramsay's childlike attitude is reflective of his inferior position to outside judgement and it is Mr Ramsay's bad faith in legacy that places him in such a pathetic state.

Mr Ramsay appears to be utterly incapable of being subjective because of his need for praise and sympathy to ease his insecurities about his greatness. Even in his marriage, where he would dominate according to Victorian ideals, he relies heavily, much to her chagrin, on Mrs Ramsay for praise (TL 281). His self-consciousness drives him for praise and sympathy from her constantly. For example, Mr Ramsay “interrupts” his wife and James in first section and stands silently “demanding sympathy” (TL 280).

He wanted sympathy. He was a failure, he said. Mrs Ramsay flashed her needles. Mr Ramsay repeated, never taking his eyes from her face, that he was a failure. She blew the words back at him. 'Charles Tansley...' she said. But he must have more than that. It was sympathy he wanted, to be assured of his genius, first of all, and then to be taken within the circle of life, warmed and soothed, to have his sense restored to him, his barrenness made fertile, and all the rooms of the house made full of life... Charles Tansley thought him the greatest metaphysician of the time, she said. But he must have

more than that. He must have sympathy. He must be assured that he too lived in the heart of life, was needed; not here only, but all over the world.
(TL 280)

The passage above clearly highlights Mr Ramsay's failure to be subjective and his dependence on the truths of others. Mr Ramsay's statement of failure is said only to provoke a reaction proving the contrary. Mrs Ramsay appeases her husband's petulant needs, reminding him that "Charles Tansley", another outside source, "thought him the greatest metaphysician of the time" (TL 280). After Mrs Ramsay has died, Mr Ramsay turns to Lily for sympathy, stopping at nothing until she submits to him. When she initially refuses Mr Ramsay is shocked and thinks to himself, "Why...should she look at the sea when I am here?" (TL 354). Mr Ramsay physically groans and sighs "profoundly" and "significantly" to Lily so much, that "any other woman in the whole world would have done something...for what woman could resist him" (TL 355-6). Eventually Lily, ashamedly, engages with Mr Ramsay, complementing his boots: "Mr Ramsay smiled. His pall, his draperies, his infirmities fell from him" (TL 356). After an extensive analysis of how wonderful his boots are, Mr Ramsay makes Lily bend down and tie her shoelaces so he can examine her method (TL 356). Although not the kind of sympathy that he was searching for, Lily eventually feels sympathy for him because "there was no helping Mr Ramsay on the journey he was going" (TL 356). Lily is not sympathetic to his need for personal praise and approval, she is sympathetic because she acknowledges Mr Ramsay has committed himself as an object to the mercy of bad faith; as she states: "he seemed to her a figure of infinite pathos" (TL 356). Both textual examples demonstrate the scope of Mr Ramsay's legacy desires, outlining that not only does he want his work to be recognized but also that "he too lived in the heart of life"; moreover, he wishes to be praised "not here only, but all over the world" (TL 280).

3.4.3

Good Faith: Individual Perception, Vision, and Light

Good faith requires being constantly subjective, actively choosing to choose, and accepting the responsibility of one's essence. In *To the Lighthouse* subjectivity is represented by the theme of “individual perception”. Subjectivity requires individual perception and the denial of outside opinion and absolute truth. More specifically, individual perception, as the phrase denotes, means being subjective because it suggests the ability to see, assess, and understand on one's own terms or according to one's own choices. On a stylistic level, Woolf allows multiple perspectives to progress the narrative simultaneously, which allows for each character's individual perception. In the narrative, however, individual perception is also symbolically represented by vision.

Vision offers a variety of meanings, both connotatively and denotatively, including: the ability to see, the act of seeing, having clarity, a vivid mental image or goal, or even seeing something beautiful. The originating subjective “visualizer” links all the various meanings of vision; as such, the ability to see, in the text, is associated with subjectivity and the inability to see is associated with objectivity. In addition, the ability to see is represented not only explicitly by vision but by light as well; consequently, bad faith and not being able to see, is associated with darkness. For example, after Paul proposes to Minta he walks back to the Ramsay house: “The house was all lit up, and the lights after the darkness made his eyes feel full” (TL 306). Paul returns to the light, placing his moment of marital commitment, which is representative of bad faith, in the dark. Also, consider that during dinner, eight candles are placed in the middle of the table bringing a sense of unity, but also a sense of clarity (TL 318). Even William states, in the opening of “Time Passes”, “we must wait for the future to show” as he is “coming in from the terrace”, to which Andrew replies: “It's almost too dark to see” (TL 337). Although Andrew is talking about the lack of physical lighting in the house, it is no mistake that his statement follows William's conclusions about the future. Moreover, William's use of the word

“show” indicates that one must wait for the future to be visible. Finally, consider Lily's conclusion about the “meaning of life” being the “little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark (TL 361). Lily resolves that there is no grand moment of “revelation”, only moments of clarity. As highlighted by the light a “match” provides and the word “illuminate”, the moments of clarity are identified by the presence of light. Light not only literally enables vision but also metaphorically implies enlightenment.

It must be noted that the lighthouse and its beam are the most prolific example of light and sight. The lighthouse is often associated with vision, even being called an “eye” that “opened suddenly and softly” (TL 376) and in the “darkness of winter”, “sent its sudden stare over the bed and wall” (TL 345). For Mrs Ramsay the light beam acts as a ray of truth, allowing her moments of clarity. Mrs Ramsay justifies her bad faith by telling herself that “not as oneself did one find rest ever, in her experience” (TL 296). She bargains with herself claiming by “losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry and the stir” and the “rest” that this transaction gives her leaves her feeling “[triumphant] over life” (TL 297). Knowing that “no happiness lasted” (TL 297), Mrs Ramsay decides that living bad faith saves one from the tragedies of life. Mrs Ramsay keeps her true self in darkness (TL 297) and when she is alone, “having shed...attachments”, she “was free for the strangest adventures...the range of experience seemed limitless” (TL 296). Her approval of bad faith makes her feel triumphant and safe but she remembers that there is no divine protection. The beam of the lighthouse then shines in to where she is knitting, the light acting as a limelight on her unquestioning nature, forcing her to remember that she is capable of the subjective process:

...and pausing there she looked out to meet the stroke of the Lighthouse...and it seemed to her like her own eyes meeting her own eyes, search as she alone could search into her mind and her heart, purifying out of existence that lie, any lie...but for all that she thought, watching [the beam] with fascination, hypnotised, as if it were stroking with its silver fingers some sealed vessel in her brain whose bursting would flood her with delight, she had known happiness, exquisite happiness, intense happiness...and the ecstasy burst in her eyes and waves of pure delight races over the floor of her mind and

she felt, It is enough! It is enough!
(296-7)

The beam of the lighthouse acts as a mirror and Mrs Ramsay is forced to confront her bad faith eye-to-eye. Her reflected vision “purifies” her outlook on life and she remembers happiness associated with truth, so much so that she urges it to stop so she can return to her haven of “safety”. The beam of the lighthouse plays an important role in Mrs Ramsay's moment of individual perception as it lights up her “core of darkness” and reveals truth. In addition, it is the light that forces her to see herself subjectively, eye-to-eye.

Lily has a similar experience one night when she is internally countering Mrs Ramsay's attempts to marry her to William, because, according to Mrs Ramsay, “an unmarried woman had missed the best of life” (TL 288). Lily justifies that she has a “full” life, “her father; her home; even, had she dared to say it, her painting” (TL 288). Lily is subjective in what she considers a full life, but, she doubts herself (TL 288) until “the white lights parted the curtains” leading her to “[gather] a desperate courage” to confront Mrs Ramsay's “serious stare of unparalleled depth” and “urge her own exemption from the universal law; plead for it; she liked to be alone; she liked to be herself; she was not made for [marriage]” (TL 288). It is the light of the moon that signals her moment of clarity amid the darkness of “universal law”. Both examples make it clear that good faith and subjectivity are represented by light and subsequently the vision it enables.

On the other hand, Mrs Ramsay also connects bad faith with darkness (“wedge-shaped core”). Similarly, it is William that notes that, before marriage, Mr Ramsay was aware of his surroundings, even stopping to admire a “covey of little chicks” (TL 270). William notes Mr Ramsay's reaction as “an odd illumination into his heart” (TL 270). His use of the noun “illuminate” has double meaning, connoting insight and clarity into his heart and, as the second meaning of light suggests, the ability to enable physical sight. After he is married, however, Mrs Ramsay notes that her husband is “blind, deaf

and dumb to the ordinary things...did he notice the flowers? No. Did he notice the view? No” (TL 301). His decision to marry commits Mr Ramsay to bad faith and he loses his ability to see as he used to. At the end of the novel, however, when they journey to the lighthouse, Mr Ramsay seems to regain a sense of sight, regain some vision; most notably, Mr Ramsay's sees James' skill as a sailor and praises him, which he had never done before (TL389). When they are preparing to land, Mr Ramsay “[sits] looking back at the island. With his long-sighted eyes perhaps he could see the dwindled leaflike shape standing on end on a plate of gold quite clearly” (TL387-8). Noticing her father's sense of perspective, Cam wonders: “What could he see?...It was all a blur to her” (TL 390). Cam cannot see the “leaflike” island but Mr Ramsay can, which demonstrates his regained ability to see. Paralleled with the completion of Lily's painting, the successful voyage to the lighthouse symbolizes Mr Ramsay's move towards good faith. His movement towards subjectivity is mirrored by his movement from darkness towards the light of the lighthouse where he is able to see again.

The lighthouse as a building is also symbolic of individual perception. For the majority of the novel, the trip to the lighthouse is constantly delayed. James, who is initially denied the trip as a child, finally gets to make the journey with his father and sister, Cam, at the end of the novel when he is an adult. However, when they reach the lighthouse, James does not see what he envisioned his whole life. When he looks at the lighthouse, he sees the familiar components including the “whitewashed rocks”, the black and white lines of the lighthouse tower, and even the “washing spread on the rocks to dry” (TL 376). James is taken aback: “So that was the Lighthouse, was it?” (TL 376). As James' bewildered tone indicates, what he sees in front of him is clearly not what he expected to see, what he always envisioned as a child. However, James resolves, “No, the other was also the Lighthouse.” For nothing was simply one thing. The other was the Lighthouse too (TL 376). Although James does not see what he expected, he is more intrigued than shocked. James reckons that what he envisioned from the house and what he sees up close are both real and worthy. His statement embodies subjectivity because

James realizes that, although they both differ, both are true to him; as he states, “nothing was simply one thing” (TL 376).

Lily, of all the characters, is associated the most with good faith. Throughout the narrative, she actively fights to keep her individual perception, as the journey of her painting most explicitly represents. First, however, consider Lily's response when William asks her if she has seen any famous paintings: “Lily Briscoe reflected, perhaps it was better not to see pictures: they only made one hopelessly discontented with one's own work” (TL 302). Her response to William shows her appreciation of her individual perception; she is subjective about her work and, therefore, content not to compare it to the socially decided absolute truth of “good art”. In addition, earlier in the text when William sees her painting, Lily feels objectified; Lily states, “But it had been seen; it had been taken from her. This man [William Bankes] had shared with her something profoundly intimate” (TL 290). Regardless of his actual response, Lily feels she had been objectified, via her painting, because it has been judged against absolute truth.

In any case, Lily states “she would always go on painting, because it interested her”. Lily's painting is the source of her subjectivity; for example:

The jacmanna was bright violet; the wall staring white. She would not have considered it honest to tamper with the bright violet and the staring white, since she saw them like that, fashionable though it was, since Mr Paunceforte's visit, to see everything pale, elegant, semi-transparent. Then beneath the colour there was the shape. She could see it all so clearly, so commandingly, when she looked: it was when she took her brush in hand that the whole thing changed. It was in that moment's flight between the picture and her canvas that the demons set on her who often brought her to the verge of tears and made this passage from conception to work as dreadful as any down a dark passage for child. Such she often felt herself—struggling against terrific odds to maintain her courage; to say: 'But this is what I see; this is what I see,' and so to clasp some miserable remnant of her vision to her breast, which a thousand forces did their best to pluck from her.
(TL 269)

The diction reveals the passage is centralized around Lily's vision: “saw”, “see...clearly”, “looked”, “vision”, “this is what I see”. Lily's vision is both literal and figurative. Literally, it is what Lily sees

in the garden that she wants to paint truthfully because painting it through the lens of socially approved art form would mean changing the “bright violet and staring white” to something “pale, elegant, [and] semi-transparent” (TL 269). Figuratively, Lily has to fight against bad faith to maintain her artistic vision, “struggling against terrific odds”, “demons”, and “a thousand forces”, to maintain even a “remnant of her vision” (TL 269). Subjectivity, clearly represented by Lily's individual perception, is culminated by her statement of visual certainty, “But this is what I see; this is what I see” (TL 269). Again, the fight to maintain good faith is associated with vision and sight, whereas bad faith is associated with a lack of vision.

After she begins to paint, Lily loses “consciousness of outer things”, including “her name and her personality and her appearance, and whether Mr Carmichael was there or not” (TL 359). In other words, when she begins to paint, Lily can fully commit to her subjective truth; she fully trusts what she sees and allows it to “[dictate] to her” what to paint (TL 359). As she paints, she travels through moments of clarity. She envisions Mrs Ramsay is with her but Mrs Ramsay cannot see in Lily's dream: “Is is a boat? It is a cask?’ Mrs Ramsay said. And she began hunting round for her spectacles” (TL367). The fact that Mrs Ramsay cannot initially see represents Mrs Ramsay’s bad faith. Lily then envisions Mrs Ramsay's handy-work of Paul and Minta, who she decides, without any proof, have a terrible marriage. As Lily decides on her own truths, Mrs Ramsay becomes invisible as she “[fades]” away; simultaneously, as Lily finally “[triumphs]” over Mrs Ramsay, Lily finds herself in light “with the sun hot on her back” (TL 369). The imagery of Lily standing in the beams of the sun illuminates her moment of clarity. Although Mrs Ramsay can still “inflict” a sense of “horror” (TL 386), Lily relegates Mrs Ramsay to the back of her mind, like the imaginary table she uses to understand Mr Ramsay's philosophical theory (TL 271). Lily accepts Mrs Ramsay will always be there in the darkness, just as bad faith will always be there, taunting her to marry and “[casting] her shadow” (TL 387). Letting Mrs Ramsay go, Lily realizes that her painting “would be hung in the attics...it would be

destroyed. But what did that matter?” (TL 391), it was not the lasting effect or legacy of the painting it was the choice to paint the painting. Just like the table, the artwork was an “attempt at something” (TL 391) and as she realizes this, she suddenly becomes parallel with Mr Ramsay. As Mr Ramsay reaches the lighthouse, so does Lily:

She looked at the steps: they were empty; she looked at her canvas: it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision.
(TL 391)

The lighthouse, for both Mr Ramsay and Lily, is a symbol of light and vision. Her blurred canvas suddenly becomes “clear” as she adds a line in the centre, symbolizing the lighthouse (TL 391). Her moment of clarity is a full acceptance of her subjectivity as she realizes that her painting is about the free choice to paint which is the moment of clarity it brings. Her final statement, and the concluding statement of the novel, is a declaration of accepting the individual perception of truth. As a result, painting for Lily, just like the “art of fiction” for Woolf (“Modern Fiction” par. 8), is a means to subjectivity, a means to embrace and express individual perception.

The use of indirect interior monologue, the literary element of time, and her use of characters to explore existential subjectivity demonstrates Woolf’s dedication to explore her philosophy of literary subjectivity. The different capacities of subjectivity, reflected by the different facets of literary analysis, show the presence of both freedom (subjectivity and good faith) and limitation (objectivity and bad faith). However, most importantly, the investigation of *To the Lighthouse* highlights that “no perception comes amiss” (“Modern Fiction” par. 8); in other words, subjectivity is the individual determination of truth.

Section Four: The Subjectivity of the Writer and Reader

4.1

Freedom of Text as a Means to Subjectivity: The Hegemonic Relationship of the Writer and the Reader

Sartre claims that all texts have the common ground of freedom. According to Sartre, “the writer, a free man addressing free men, has only one subject—freedom” (“Literature” 46). Freedom is the only subject of a writer, according to existentialist theory because:

the one who writes recognizes, by the very fact that he takes the trouble to write, the freedom of his readers, and since the one who reads, by the mere fact of his opening the book, recognizes the freedom of the writer, the work of art, from whichever side you approach it, is an act of confidence in the freedom of men. And since readers, like the author, recognize this freedom only to demand that it manifest itself, the work can be defined as an imaginary presentation of the world in so far as it demands human freedom.
 (“Literature” 45)

Woolf did not specifically theorize about the relationship between the reader and writer, only that each be subjective; however, Sartre's examination of the role and relationship between the reader and the writer reveals how writing and reading is a means to subjectivity.

First, consider the role of the writer. Sartre asks: “Why Write?” (“Literature” 26). The answer is deceptively simple because one writes as a means to determine truth subjectively. James Naremore succinctly states, Woolf “regarded the aesthetic act...as a means of apprehending an ever-present order which is concealed from us by our everyday lives” (123). Naremore's claim references both Sartre and Woolf's theory to apprehend absolute truth. Consider for example, Lily's choice to paint what she sees and how “the “[creating]” that the aesthetic act demands, refers explicitly to the subjective creation of truth, so, writing [or painting] is a means for an individual to be subjective (Naremore 123).

Sartre and Woolf are on the same page about the aesthetic act of writing. However, Sartre goes a step further and considers the role of the reader: “the author writes in order to address himself to the

freedom of the reader, and requires it in order to make his work exist” because “any attempt to enslave his readers threatens him in his very art” (“Literature” 36). The role of the reader may seem dependent on the writer, but, in actual fact they are co-dependent because a text is only successful, or exists, if the reader co-operates with the writer.

Reading is a pact of generosity between author and reader. Each one trusts the other; each one counts on the other, demands of the other as much as he demands of himself... Nothing can force the author to believe that his reader will use his freedom; nothing can force the reader to believe that the author has used his. Both of them make a free decision
(Sartre “Literature”, 39).

Co-operation comes through an authentic text that promotes and allows the freedom of not only the writer but, more importantly, the reader. The reader is necessary for a work to exist because he must lend his freedom to bring the aesthetic object into existence.

The reader is necessary for a work to exist because the text is not the aesthetic object; rather, the reading of the text is the aesthetic “object”, or, in this case, the aesthetic act. The text is simply the material object and it is the language of the text, which is actually “absent” because it only exists in the mind of the reader; therefore, the writer, vis-a-vis the text, is dependent on the reader. As Christina Howells explains: “the writer is responsible for respecting the reader's liberty...leaving him free to make his own decisions about the events or attitudes of the work” (6). If a reader is not allowed to make a free choice, the reader will not lend their subjectivity to a text rendering the aesthetic object obsolete.

The freedom of the reader is based on their decisions of interpretation. Howells points out that art is “liberating” because it presents the reader with “an imaginary world by which [they] can escape...reality. Art depends on the imagination, and the imagination is synonymous with the freedom of human consciousness” (18). The reader is in complete control of their imagination; they ultimately choose and decide what the text can be. Imagining is the fundamental action of a free reader and,

therefore, it is necessary for a reader to lend their subjectivity.

According to Howells, imagination functions distinctly from perception. Perception, as Howells defines, is a passive practice that involves sensory stimuli along with the reader's knowledge and intentions (2), whereas, imagination is an absent awakening as the images are “unreal and [dependent] almost totally on the spontaneity of the person imagining” (2). Both perception and imagination work hand-in-hand and are the two facets of freedom during the act of reading because they are completely uninhibited and therefore inherently subjective. It is up to a reader as they encounter a text how they perceive and imagine the text and the future of the text. Sartre's clear description of the act of reading demonstrates how perception and imagination work together freely:

In reading, one foresees; one waits. One foresees the end of the sentence, the following sentence, the next page. One waits for them to confirm or disappoint one's foresights. The reading is composed of a host of hypotheses, of dreams followed by awakenings, or hopes and deceptions. Readers are always ahead of the sentence they are reading in a merely probable future which partly collapses and partly comes together in proportion as they progress, which withdraws from one page to the next and forms the moving horizon of the literary object.
 (“Literature” 28)

Perception and imagination make reading an active occurrence. The process is an “active occurrence” because the act of reading, and writing for that matter, exercises an individual's subjectivity. Sartre's philosophical theory calls for “literature of praxis” (Caute xiii), which, according to David Caute, means that “literature should not be a sedative but an irritant, a catalyst provoking men to change the world in which they live and in so doing to change themselves” (x). One writes to determine truth subjectively and, because freedom demands freedom, the reader plays an essential role. The writer utilizes the text as an arena to allow and encourage their reader to perceive and imagine, in an act “not to escape reality” but to exercise their subjectivity (Caute x). As Howells states: “The act of perception implies the possibility of imagining more than can in fact be taken in by the senses...it is this possibility which provides the key to Sartre's conception of human freedom” (4).

Imagination and perception are acts of freedom but they are obviously triggered from the writer's text putting the reader in a position of persuasion. However, as Howells states: "images are essential to capture the emotional response of the reader, but they must not also capture his freedom" (6). A writer must not impede a reader's freedom to imagine and perceive and must remember that, to their reader, their role is that of a projector and their motivations are irrelevant to the finished work. If a writer does impede on the reader's freedom, however, the reader will not engage in either imagination or perception leaving the text non-existent. Remember, a reader must lend their subjectivity to bring a text into existence because the aesthetic act is the reading of the text, not the actual physical novel. It must be questioned, however, that since the writer is in a position of persuasion, how much can the writer influence the reader without hindering their freedom?

To begin, consider that literature is a form of committed art. "Committed" because literature depends on the signs of language in order to create an idea or mental image and, although interpretation can be broad, words do have limited understanding in the sense that they are limited to the scope of denotative and connotative understanding; on the other hand, for example, a painting can have many interpretations because it depends on sensual qualities, which vary greatly with the viewer (Sartre "Literature" 12). Sartre notes that "each word is a path of transcendence; it shapes our feelings, names them, and attributes them to an imaginary personage who takes it upon [them self] to live them for us and who has no other substance other than these borrowed passions ("Literature" 31-2). Writers carefully craft their text so that each word seduces the reader to imagine and perceive a specific output, for example, to create sympathy or loathing for a character; however, the seduction of a reader is delicate. Since a text has "no other substance" but the reader's, if the reader is not convinced to lend their subjectivity a text simply fails to exist.

For example, in *To the Lighthouse* the reader lends James their animosity when his father interrupts him and his mother:

But his son hated him. He hated him for coming up to them, for stopping and looking down on them; he hated him for interrupting them; he hated him for the exaltation and sublimity of his gestures; for the magnificence of his head; for his exactingness and egotism (for there he stood, commanding them to attend to him); but most of all he hated the twang and twitter of his father's emotion which, vibrating round them, disturbed the perfect simplicity and good sense of his relations with his mother.
(TL 280)

The hatred James feels becomes real because the reader, as impelled by the diction and syntax, reflects their own subjectivity to him; as a result, James, and his emotions, become essentially real, they exist. The writer entices the reader most obviously through the repetition of “hate”. Not only is “hate” a connotatively strong word choice, but it is audibly strong with a harsh “t” sound. Along with the repetition and the use of semi-colons to stack short, intense sentences upon one another “hate” crescendos along with the reader's and James' emotion. Mr Ramsay's emotions have audible qualities that further irritate and build hatred for James' father. The reader is seduced into this by onomatopoeia: Mr Ramsay “twangs”, “twitters”, and “vibrates” James and the reader into a state of audible aggravation. In addition, the use of alliteration and the continued use of the harsh “t” consonant carries on building the hatred that James feels.

The use of seduction tactics by a writer begs the question of whether or not enticing a reader is in good faith. As long as each party is acting freely the process is in good faith; but, how does one know whether the author is acting in good faith or not? Remember, the aesthetic object is the reading of the text, not the actual book, so a writer must not inhibit the reader's freedom for if they do the reader cannot bring a text into existence.

Furthermore, the seduction of a reader is not truly to reach a specific end, it is to encourage the reader to actively lend their subjectivity. Part of the syntactic and dictional seduction is to initiate the reader's imagination and perception. Regardless if the decisions of a reader match the intentions of the author, a reader must actively engage with the text for it to exist, making the active process the basic goal of the author. With this in mind, the writer also aims to ignite the reader's subjective awareness.

As Howells claims, “Literature, by its very nature, reveals the possibility of change” because a text presents the opportunity to “[transform] our non-reflective awareness of the world into a reflective,thetic, self-conscious awareness (15). The “possibility of change” (Howells 15), which is realized through the subjective act of perceiving and imagining, reignites the radical freedom of the individual. Since an individual is responsible for their essence they have the power to change it and a text can initiate this process by stimulating a reader’s subjectivity. To draw back to *To the Lighthouse*, the excerpt about James should inspire the reader to imagine them self in James' position. Next, and most importantly, they should then extend their imagination to envision how they or James would react and change the situation if they were in it. Finally, the reader perceives the forthcoming action of the text. Regardless of the outcome of the text, the reader's participation is an exercise in radical freedom and reveals the “possibility of change” because it demonstrates and reminds the reader of their subjective power.

So, although the writer may use seductive techniques to initiate perception and imagination so his work can exist, the balance of power is maintained because a reader's freedom must not be inhibited. As Sartre claims, “the aesthetic object presents only the appearance of finality and is limited to soliciting the free and ordered play of the imagination” (“Literature” 33). Diction, syntax, and other literary techniques are only employed to seduce the reader into the state of imagination and perception, no more, no less. For example, James' excerpt is successful if the reader is empathic with James; however, if the reader chooses to sympathize with Mr Ramsay instead the excerpt would still be successful because the reader is freely engaged with the text. It may appear the writer may use specific techniques to encourage a reader towards a calculated end, and, certainly, the literary tools of author do serve to usher a reader in a certain direction, but they are more like compass points: a reader is still free to draw their own map. In the end, the result is always freedom because otherwise the text fails; as Sartre states, “the writer, a free man addressing free men, has only one subject—freedom” (“Literature”

46).

Woolf's texts are about freedom because she writes according to her own subjective truth about what the novel is, not what convention dictates, and this is reflected not only in the content of her novels but in the style and literary techniques she employs. Specifically, Woolf's use of the ordinary mind on an ordinary day is relatable since it is a reflection of actual chaotic real life. Her literary technique, specifically indirect interior monologue, would not have been what readers were used to but, because she writes of ordinary things, the reader can relate to it and proceed to perceive and imagine; as a result, her texts "allow" for the reader to be subjective. Moreover, because indirect interior monologue implies such intimacy, immediacy and sincerity Woolf's texts encourage and seduce the reader into subjective reading, because not only does it allow her text to exist, but because she is consciously writing to ensure the reader experiences the same subjective power that Woolf and her characters experience. Again, Woolf and Sartre are congruent. Sartre explains the role of subjectivity in the relationship between the writer and the reader; Woolf performs her role as a writer aware that she must expect and demand what the reader expects and demands of her: freedom. Sartre highlights "the creative act is only an incomplete and abstract moment in the production of a work...It is the joint effort of author and reader which brings upon the scene that concrete and imaginary object which is the work of the mind ("Literature" 29). Although Woolf definitely chooses to write to assert her own subjectivity, she is aware of the reader. Woolf argues for writers to embrace their own subjective method but the other half of her argument is for the reading public to accept this new radical freedom in fiction and, as Sartre points out, the input of the reader is a necessity.

Woolf argues to dismantle novelistic conventions for not only the writer but also the reader. Readers of the previous generation, just like their generational writing counterparts, are programmed by convention to have expectations and obligations so one can label them as materialists as well. Readers have come to expect, just as authors, only "the proper stuff of fiction" ("Modern Fiction" par.

8) However, for a text to exist, the reader must have their freedom, and the absolute truths of a “good novel” according Victorian ideals disallow the subjectivity of a reader. Remember, Sartre believes literature is a “joint effort of author and reader” (“Literature” 29) and Woolf agrees: “The writer must get into touch with his reader by putting before him something which he recognizes, which therefore stimulates his imagination, and makes him willing to cooperate” (“Bennett” 328). The “something which he recognizes” is the initial common ground that hopefully ignites the reader's imagination so the seductive techniques the writer uses to encourage the reader to lend the text their subjectivity have a chance of operation.

The role of the reader is not only a that of a judge that the writer must convince; the reader operates as literary companions to the writer. As Woolf addresses the reader in “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown”:

May I end by venturing to remind you of the duties and responsibilities that are yours as partners in this business of writing books...you allow the writers to palm off upon you a version of all this, an image of Mrs. Brown, which has no likeness to that surprising apparition whatsoever. In your modesty you seem to consider that writers are of different blood and bone from yourselves; that they know more of Mrs. Brown [than] you do. *Never was there a more fatal mistake. It is this division between reader and writer; this humility on your part, these professional airs and graces on ours, that corrupt and emasculate the books which should be the healthy offspring of a close and equal alliance between us*

(336 italics added)

The cardinal sin of a reader is complacency, or, more specifically, a reader who does not demand, insist, and act on truth (“Bennett” 336). Woolf, just like Sartre, points out the crucial umbilical link between reader and writer. Although Sartre solidified the collaborative relationship in theoretical terms, Woolf was obviously aware that modern literature would fail without the support and counter demands of the reader. Overall, Woolf's exploration of subjectivity, especially through her writing, exemplifies Sartre's existential theory of literature; moreover, Sartre's analysis of the role of the reader extends Woolf's initial theory of modern literature and extrapolates how subjectivity is the single word answer to the

question “why write?”.

4.2

The Balance of Power and the Relationship of the Reader and Writer: Freedom and Limitation

As Sartre points out, we are in fact “condemned to be free” (“Humanism” 6). Freedom in terms of subjectivity only extends to choosing because we are forced to make an actual choice regardless. Even when choosing not to choose, Sartre maintains that it is still a choice. Theoretically, the limitation of subjectivity is just that, that we are forced to choose; in real life, the limitation of subjectivity is that we are forced to choose within the boundaries of civility. Although technically one is ultimately free to choose, because we do choose to abide by the terms of civility, if a choice is made outside the acceptable boundaries there will be a backlash. For example, although we choose what clothes to wear we are still forced to wear clothes; if we choose not to wear clothes, because we can make this choice, we will be stigmatized and punished in society. The Dreadnought Hoax was an manifestation of subjectivity because it denounced absolute truth and, because they had not broken any laws, there was no legal punishment; however, since one is only free to choose within the boundaries of civility, the hoaxers experienced social backlash. Both Cole and Duncan were sought out by naval officers for physical punishment and Woolf was publicly labelled a prostitute (Kennard 150). The boundaries of civility are a function of ideological subjectivity because they tell an individual who they should be and how they should act through various systems of discourse. The individual internalizes these systems of discourse and, typically, then chooses within the boundaries to avoid discipline.

However, it must be noted that the boundaries of civility, even if we are aware of the constraint, are agreed to for reasons that typically revolve around safety. Institutions of absolute truth, such as the law, are in fact accepted without major dispute because they provide a consensus of security. The

forfeiting of absolute radical freedom for security then triggers the question regarding the limits of actual freedom. Nevertheless, are we content with the freedom we do have? This question highlights the boundaries of society further posing whether or not we actually can experience or choose radical freedom.

In a philosophical utopia, yes, as Sartre theorizes, we are totally free and have the ultimate power to choose; in reality, however, we must be concerned with safety (physical, emotional, social) and the function of society. So, when we seem to have the freedom to choose are we actually choosing? Or, are we choosing from society's pre-selected choices? And, if so, are the consequences of ridicule and alienation enough to keep us from seeking true radical freedom? Are we even aware that radical freedom is a possibility? Or, is radical freedom a mere philosophical utopia? The answers to the above questions, as applied to literature, are complex and find a foundation in the investigation of Woolf's medium: language.

In terms of literature, it has already been noted that novels are a form of committed art because language has a finite number of interpretations. Remember, grammatical subjectivity is the first form of subjectivity an individual experiences as they learn to verbalize their demands and understanding as a child; therefore, the manner in which language is intertwined with subjectivity is inextricable and paramount. The connection between subjectivity and language is not new and nor has it been neglected by academic research. Benjamin Lee Whorf points out that language, just like science, is an institution; as Whorf states, "we are inclined to think of language simply as a technique of expression, and not realize that language first of all is a classification and arrangement of the stream of sensory experience (55). Whorf's statement on language echoes Woolf's view of how literary convention depicts life as "series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged" ("Modern Fiction" par. 5) In Sartrean terms, language seems to put essence before existence. When considering language through these perspectives the actual freedom of the novel comes into question. Although both Sartre and Woolf investigate the role

of the reader and the writer, are they nevertheless trapped in, as Nietzsche described it, the “prison house of language”.

Saussure famously states, “language itself is not a function of the speaker” (14) and, as Derrida points out, Saussure further claims that “[the subject] is a 'function' of language, [and] becomes a speaking subject only by making its speech conform” (5). The philosophy of language over the years has gone through Descartes, Husserl, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein, to name a few; however, without venturing too far into the realm of linguists, we can draw off the basic agreement that language can never be radically subjective. In fact, we can, for theoretical purposes, explore Nietzsche’s famous notion of “the prison house of language” in the novel as convention. Novelistic convention is none other than prearranged structures of language, for a writer and their text are also a “function” of language.

To begin, first consider Woolf’s thoughts on novelistic convention during that famous period initiated by the character shift of 1910; in “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown” she states:

A convention in writing is not much different from a convention in manners. Both in life and literature it is necessary to have some means of bridging the gulf between the hostess and her unknown guest on the one hand, the writer and his unknown reader on the other. The hostess bethinks her of the weather, for generations of hostesses have established the fact that this is a subject of universal interest in which we all believe. She begins by saying that we are having a wretched May, and, having thus got into touch with her unknown guest, proceeds to matters of greater interest. So it is in literature. The writer must get into touch with his reader by putting before him something which he recognizes, which therefore stimulates his imagination, and makes him willing to cooperate in the far more difficult business of intimacy.
(330-1)

Woolf does see the necessity of convention. Convention provides that initial common ground between reader and writer that strikes up the possibility of a further relationship and, much to Woolf’s chagrin, without convention the writers chances of seducing a reader into lending their subjectivity seems practically impossible. On one hand, convention traps the writer in the “topic of the weather” (Woolf “Bennett”, 330), but, on the other hand, as Michael Boyd notes, the reader “knows no other code by

which to come to terms with its authors” (101).

Nevertheless, Woolf postulates convention as her enemy: “convention ceases to be a means of communication between writer and reader, and becomes instead an obstacle and an impediment” (334). It is here where Woolf draws a line in the sand. Woolf argues that although convention on one hand is necessary, it is only necessary as a “prelude to the more exciting intercourse of friendship”; however, she claims convention is “artificial—you have to talk about the weather and nothing but the weather throughout the entire visit” (334). Woolf fights for this fundamental break between prelude and intimacy throughout her career demonstrating her subjective nature and her attitude towards the necessity of subjectivity.

By 1930, according to Boyd, Woolf's hard work, along with her fellow comrades including Joyce, had come full circle because she was successful in establishing a “new code of communications with...readers” (101); however, the process did come “full circle” because “readers came to know what to expect” leaving the novel compromised by convention all over again (101). Readers and writers are dependent on convention, but, when convention becomes “an obstacle”, it renders itself destructive and leads to “falsity and pretence” (“Modern Fiction” par. 8).

Convention is a writing quandary that does not seem to offer a solution, only a unique dilemma between freedom and limitation, and this is where language must come into consideration. Just like convention, the very language used to communicate freedom, in the form of a novel especially, seems to be compromised by the fact that language is an institution. As Whorf claims, language is like “science” in the sense that it orders and labels our experience (55) and this is no different in the novel. First, consider the novel is a committed form of art because language has a finite number of interpretations; the “signs”, or words, in a novel are relatively specific. Second, the author must consider convention, and even if they decide to disobey it, the author still has specific motivations for choosing language because they seek to elicit a specific response from the reader; however, on a third

note, they are depending on the subjectivity of the reader to bring their text alive so they must respect the readers' freedom. In addition, the reader is also caught in the crossfire of freedom and limitation. So, does language actually allow for freedom?

A full investigation of this subject is not in the scope of this paper, but Nietzsche can offer a temporary solution. As he famously stated: "We have to cease to think, if we refuse to do it in the prison house of language; for we cannot reach further than the doubt which asks whether the limit we see is really a limit" (Nietzsche qtd. In Lovekin, 2009). As Nietzsche advocates, the limitations of language should be recognized but not obeyed. To demonstrate, consider how Woolf's campaign for modern literature, specifically the stream of consciousness style, pushed the boundaries of the Edwardian and Georgian period and she found an era of freedom during the modern period. When her freedom became solidified into convention there was another revolution to push the boundaries farther and the post-modern era of literature was born. Being aware of the limitations of language allows one to test and push them and perhaps discover a new sense of freedom. Language, just like subjectivity, is, in fact, a prison house, but without it, as Nietzsche notes, there would be no freedom.

Conclusion

It should be clear that subjectivity is not only the reason that Woolf writes but, as demonstrated in the analysis of *To the Lighthouse*, also the reason for her stylistic choices, her use of literary elements, and why she develops and builds a character that even Mr Bennett would be proud of. Her commitment to her subjectivity mirrors her commitment to show life immediately, intimately, and faithfully to her readers, even allowing, guaranteeing, that they, and their freedom, are just as important as hers is. The analysis of her essays show her unconventional interpretation of the genre and art form of the novel and demonstrates her good faith in literature and her expectation of both readers and writers to uphold freedom through their good faith. As a result, Woolf's philosophy of literary subjectivity is not focused solely on her work; she sets out to revolutionize the realm of writers, readers, their relationship with texts and each other.

Woolf's philosophy of literary subjectivity comes into understanding with Sartre's theory of existentialism; however, the scope of this paper only briefly touches on the various aspects of insight that the relationship provides, including why Woolf was writing in the style of indirect interior monologue, as well as the relationship between the reader, writer, and the text. Each section of this paper hopes to act as a catalyst for other investigations of Woolf's philosophy of literary subjectivity. Especially, there is possibility to explore a more linguistics-based approach to the textual analysis of subjectivity in Woolf's novels. As Thompson notes, "existentialism is an underrated source of theoretical and practical insights" (20) and the awakening that it brings to Woolf's work is not only illuminating but also offers clear proof of her philosophical movement towards literary subjectivity.

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