

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman: The 20th-Century Development of the Female *Künstlerroman*

An Analysis of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and
Margarita Lymberaki's *Τα Ψάθινα Καπέλα (Straw Hats)*

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation will attempt to provide a productive comparison of two Modernist novels, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and Margarita Lymberaki's *Straw Hats* (1946). Whereas there are ample differences between these two novels, e.g. geographically, chronologically and narratologically, this comparison has several merits: not only were both novels written in the Modernist period of their respective countries (i.e. the United Kingdom and Greece) by female authors; more importantly, both of them revolve around a female protagonist with artistic ambitions. Having examined Modernist novels with female authors, the latter similarity occurred to me relatively soon, and since several literary critics referred to either of these novels as a *female Künstlerroman*, I decided to analyse them in relation to each other. It seemed likely that a comparative analysis of these two literary texts would result in an interesting conclusion because of the different techniques that characterise them.

Originally, my expectation was that the comparison of two such female *Künstlerromane* would produce results in terms of how they deal with gender subversion and artistic development. As it turned out, the two novels provide a prototypical framework for other 20th-century female *Künstlerromane*. During the writing process, this option became plausible due to the comparison of the techniques at work in the two novels. Therefore, I will argue that the synthesis of *To the Lighthouse* and *Straw Hats* provides a blueprint for the 20th-century female *Künstlerroman*. As I will discuss in more detail in the section on the female *Künstlerroman*, there is a major difference in the plot of female *Künstlerromane* of the 19th century and those of the 20th century: whereas the earlier works touch upon the possibility of women becoming artists, they ultimately provide only two alternate endings, marriage or death. This is no longer the case in the 20th-century representatives of the genre, since the authors scrutinise the gendered roles and find a solution for the either/or dilemma of their female protagonists.

Hence, a Modernist female *Künstlerroman* is inevitably perceived as more gendered than its male counterpart, since it deviates from the 'default' model with a male protagonist. Therefore, and because the female protagonist in each novel desires an alternative feminine position, I have opted for Judith Butler's notions of performativity and gender norms as the theoretical background for this dissertation. Her theory sheds the necessary light on the protagonists' attempts to divest themselves of the yoke of rigid gender norms that is forced upon them by society. Furthermore, Butler's notions of performativity and the gender norm provide a framework for the behaviour, thoughts and desires of the other characters in these novels.

The first chapter of this dissertation discusses the background to these novels: first, Modernism is presented from several perspectives. After a section on the general characteristics of the literary movement, Modernism in Greece is highlighted, before focussing on women in the Modernist period. Since Modernism is a hard term to define, this chapter will pay attention to several nuances. Secondly, the genre-specific background of the novels, i.e. the genre of female *Künstlerroman*, will be dealt with. Even though this section does not take up a whole chapter, it will provide an important theoretical frame for the analysis of the novels. Since the female *Künstlerroman* of the 20th century is unavoidably centred on gender roles, the second chapter focuses on Butler's theory on performativity and the gender norm. Hence, this chapter, together with the section on the female *Künstlerroman* will function as the central framework for the actual analysis of the novels in the two following chapters. The third chapter provides an analysis of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, whereas the fourth chapter discusses *Straw Hats*. Even though the analysis of the respective novels is positioned in a separate chapter, the structure of each study is similar, in order to clarify differences and similarities between the two literary works. Finally, these differences and similarities are clarified in the conclusion, which takes up the sixth chapter. In this conclusion, I hope to show that the combined analysis of these two novels has been fruitful in terms of the study of the female *Künstlerroman*, because it provides a theoretical framework for later 20th-century novels of the genre.

CHAPTER 1 | MODERNISM AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE FEMALE *KÜNSTLERROMAN*

1. Modernism

1.1 General

After extensive research, discussions and publications, critics agree that there is no absolute, all-encompassing definition of Modernism that does justice to the variety of the movement¹. Not only have the main stylistic features, central ideas and general concepts been widely discussed and do they continue to be scrutinised, even the period that can be called Modernist has proven difficult to define. Nevertheless, the reason why Modernism came into existence is easier to imagine:

The early 1900s witnessed a paradigm shift in the metaphysics of space and time that pervaded scientific, philosophical and cultural discourse and quickly extended to the broader popular imagination, posing profound questions about the nature of the universe and the human subject within it. For many artists and intellectuals the theories of Bergson and Einstein, with their challenge to the mechanistic determinism of traditional ontological and scientific theories, dovetailed with the broader cultural and psychological turn to relativized explanations of the world whose widespread circulation and effect were marking the first decades of the twentieth century. Science and art no longer seemed in opposition, but part of the same radical reframing of modern reality. (Parsons 2007: 131)

Bradbury and McFarlane (1991: 57) consider Modernism ‘an art of a rapidly modernizing world, a world of rapid industrial development, advanced technology, urbanization, secularization and mass forms of social life’. Nevertheless, at the same time they point towards the loss of Victorian confidence in the progress of the human race (*ibid.*). The combination of these two characteristics

¹ Even the term ‘movement’ has been disputed: ‘Modernism is not a movement. It is a term that masks conflict and upheaval and any number of contradictory positions’ (Kolocotroni, Goldman & Taxidou 1998: xvii).

leads Parsons (2007: 11) to conclude that there is a contradiction at the centre of Modernism, since there is on the one hand a general urge to 'make it new', to innovate art and society with it, and to get rid of the artistic conventions of the past, while on the other hand the atmosphere of insecurity and chaos leads intellectuals to art, which has the ability to provide order and stability.

Furthermore, Bradbury and McFarlane (1991: 25) associate Modernism with 'the coming of a new era of high aesthetic self-consciousness and non-representationalism, in which art turns from realism and humanistic representation towards style, technique, and spatial form in pursuit of a deeper penetration of life'. The significance of this type of definition is that Modernism is highly individual, which is the reason why a specific definition is bound to fail: 'Modernism is less a style than a search for a style in a highly individualistic sense' (*ibid*: 29). Nevertheless, it is possible to describe certain features that occur in a lot of Modernist writings, and, more specifically, in the two novels that will be analysed in the following sections, i.e. Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and Margarita Lymberaki's *Straw Hats* (1946).

First, there is a general fascination with human consciousness, and even more with the unconscious. Obviously, these ideas are partially linked to Sigmund Freud, whose *Traumdeutung* (1900) was very successful amongst his contemporaries. This fascination explains the next characteristic, i.e. the formal experiments and innovations (Lodge 1991: 481), which are necessary for the writer to provide her/his readers with a psychological perspective on the characters. This is related to a third important characteristic, the fluid notion of time, which is no longer dealt with chronologically, but rather the way the novel's characters perceive it. This is described by Woolf in a more poetic way:

Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; but 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?²

This personal notion of time is related to the narration: rather than using the omniscient, impersonal narrator of 19th-century realism, Modernists prefer 'a single, limited point of view, or multiple viewpoints, all more or less limited and fallible' (Lodge 1991: 481). In other words, the altered world view during the period of Modernism had a direct influence on the narrative form of the novels of this period. Even though Modernists such as Joyce and Woolf did not completely renounce realism, they had a different conception of what constituted reality, which resulted in the concept of a new subjective realism (Parsons 2007: 53).

The recurrent elements mentioned above explain the popularity of the technique called 'stream of consciousness', a term coined by William James in *Principles of Psychology* (1890), where he identifies consciousness as something incessant and continuous: 'It is nothing jointed; it flows. A "river" or "stream" are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described... Let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life' (qtd. in Parsons 2007: 56). Hence, the term 'stream of consciousness' can be defined as 'the never-ending associative flow of our conscious or half-conscious thoughts and perceptions and feelings, the activity of the mind that we are always at least sensible of' (Parsons 2007: 56).³ Because the reader of Modernist novels has the opportunity to follow the characters' stream of consciousness, one's empathy for and understanding of these characters is heightened.

Despite several attempts by Modernist artists to find a date that symbolised the beginning of the Modernist era in Western Europe, they did not succeed in finding a year that suited all of them, nor one that was agreed upon by later critics and scholars. For example, Virginia Woolf herself was in favour of the year 1910 as the moment in which British society underwent a major and irrevocable

² Woolf, Virginia. 1951. *The Common Reader, First Series*. London: The Hogarth Press (p. 189). Quoted in Bradbury & McFarlane 1991: 408.

³ Even though 'stream of consciousness' and 'interior monologue' are often identified as one and the same thing, Parsons (2007: 56) points out that it would be more accurate to consider stream of consciousness 'the active subjective life that interior monologue, in an attempt to represent it, imitates in the symbolic form of language'.

change, because she perceived a shift in human character. Nevertheless, she realised that obviously this change did not happen in the course of one day, and that an evolution towards the actual change must have been on its way before 1910 (Shiach 2010: 21-22). Like other Modernist writers, such as Pound and Marinetti, she did consider the early 20th century the beginning of the Modernist period in Britain. However, critics of Modernism have recently taken a different stance, since they now believe that the late 19th century was the setting for Modernism's 'emergent historical forms' (*ibid.*: 23). Bradbury and McFarlane (1991), for example, begin their overview of the Modernist period in 1890, thus focusing on the broader spectrum of Modernism, both chronologically and geographically. A useful starting date is further problematised by the question *which* Modernism one is talking about, since Modernism can be found in a wide range of art forms, but also in numerous countries. Obviously, the seeds of Modernism were not sown everywhere at the exact same time. Thus, it should be pointed out that the designation of 1890 as the very beginning of Modernism is limited to a British, or West-European context, and is not useful with regard to the Greek literary context, about which more will be said below.

As Parsons (2007: 11) points out, 'the label "high modernism" refers specifically to the canonical account of Anglo-American literary experimentation between the world wars, characterised by a turn away from direct modes of representation towards greater abstraction and aesthetic impersonality and self-reflexivity'. This is the type of Modernism for which, amongst others, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf are considered canonical figures (*ibid.*). The most experimental tendencies came to an end around 1930 (in Western Europe), but it is nevertheless hard to establish the end of the Modernist period. Even works that were published in the 1950s and 1960s have been considered Modernist. Shiach (2010: 30) goes as far as arguing that 'Modernism has not yet come to an end, and its periodization remains, necessarily, incomplete' because contemporary writers still use and consciously relate to texts of the high Modernist period.

1.2 *Modernism in Greece*

If Modernism is generally tricky to define and describe, the term becomes even more problematic with regard to Greece. The title of Mary Layoun's *Modernism in Greece?* (2010) points towards the discussion that took place throughout the 20th century on whether Greek Modernism is a fact or a fiction. Even though critics no longer disagree on the existence of Greek Modernism, there is still a lot of work to be done, since Greek Modernism has long stayed out of the spotlights. As with Modernism in general, there is also discussion about the exact period in which the Greek variant should be situated. Nevertheless, in general one can state that high Modernism in Greece took place during the 1930s, a decade after which the 'Generation of 1930' is eponymously named (Borghart, De Boel & Penninck 2009: 97).

The questions about the existence of Greek Modernism were partially raised due to the different nature of Greek Modernism in comparison to the Modernism(s) in Western Europe:

Modernism in Europe has been associated with universal capitalism and cultural imperialism. In contrast, Greek modernism, experienced as an identity problem, can be seen as introverted, ethnocentric and anti-colonial ... Modernism in Greece insisted on viewing literature through the prism of Greekness in an attempt to aestheticize the politics of national identity. (Tziovas 1997: 2; my ellipsis)

In other words, Greek Modernism can be defined as the literary externalisation of a collective search for the concept 'ελληνικότητα' (i.e. 'Greekness'), as was also the case with regard to Greek Romanticism, Realism and Naturalism in the 19th century (Borghart et al. 2009: 109-110). Modernism in Greece and the specific wish for reassurance of the Greek identity was triggered by the events in Asia Minor in the early 20th century. In September 1922, the Greek army was defeated by the Turkish army led by Mustafa Kemal (later referred to as Atatürk) in Smyrna (now Izmir). As a result, more than a million Orthodox inhabitants were forced to leave Asia Minor (i.e. Turkey) for Greece. This was part of the peace convention of Lausanne (1923), which contained a compulsory population

exchange between Orthodox inhabitants of Asia Minor and Muslim inhabitants of Greece. However, there were approximately ten times more Orthodox immigrants who arrived in Greece than there were Muslims who returned to Turkey. As a result, Greek literature changed drastically, not only because the events in Asia Minor functioned as the major theme of a fair amount of novels and poems, but also because they altered Greek society and the achievements that Greek authors aspired to by using their pens. The first novels that were highly influenced by the Disaster were written by the 'Generation of 1930', a term which refers to the 'writers of fiction whose primary concern is the description of the social, political, and moral realities of Greece in the interwar period, that is, between 1922 and 1940', who nevertheless 'continued to write important work after the Second World War' (Doulis 1977: 152).

It should be noted that Modern Greek literature is generally understood as imitating the developments in European literature. There is usually a delay with regard to these literary tendencies, which is partly related to Greece's peripheral position in geographical terms. This is also the case for the Generation of 1930, who made the first Greek attempts at Modernism, which was then already past its climax in Europe. However, Beaton (1994: 11) refuses to consider Greek literature a 'minor' or 'marginal' imitation, since 'it is a constituent part of the literature of modern Europe'. Nevertheless, there are obvious Western European influences, since '[d]uring the 1930s, Greek writers made a more conscious and concerted effort to align themselves with contemporary European literature than possibly at any other time in the history of the modern Greek state' (Mackridge 1984: 1).⁴ Therefore, many technical innovations such as multiple perspectives and the interior monologue were used by the Greek Modernists as well. Hence, Kayalis (2007: 185) refers to Greek Modernism as a 'double image': Greek Modernists focused on the Greek identity, while at the same time travelling through and adapting tendencies from Western Europe. Lymberaki's writing

⁴ An early example of the European influence on Greek writers can be found in Konstandinos Kavafis – in English usually referred to as C.P. Cavafy (1863-1933) –, who spent his childhood in England. Since he spent the rest of his life in Alexandria, 'on the periphery of [the] Greek-speaking world' (Beaton 1994: 91), his poetry was only really discovered in Greece during the 1920s. By that time he had already been praised by E.M. Forster, which had led to international recognition of his poetry. (Politis 1973: 186-193)

belongs to the late wave of Modernism, situated between 1949, the ending of the Greek civil war, and 1967, the beginning of the colonels' regime. While there were several literary tendencies in this later period, four of which were major, Lymberaki belonged to the group of writers who continued the Modernist formal innovation (Borghart et al. 2009: 123).

1.3 Women and Modernism

As Showalter (1991: 3) points out in the introduction to her study of gender at the *fin de siècle*, the two final decades of the 19th century were a period of 'sexual anarchy', during which the terms 'feminism' and 'homosexuality' were coined and redefinitions of masculinity and femininity were undertaken by New Women and others. During the final moments of Victorian society, 'feminism, the women's movement, and what was called "the Woman Question" challenged the traditional institutions of marriage, work, and the family' (*ibid.*: 7).⁵ Therefore, it is not surprising that the late 19th and early 20th centuries not only staged the gradual emergence of Modernism, followed by its heyday, but also the massive production of works by female writers. Two of the most significant Anglophone female writers, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Virginia Woolf, considered their sex an encumbrance, and therefore argued for a form of androgyny: Gilman wrote, 'The true artist transcends his sex, or her sex. If this is not the case, art suffers'⁶. Woolf (2000a: 102) agreed with her in *A Room of One's Own*: 'It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly'. Whereas certain feminists in the 1970s and 1980s repudiated this stance and defended the right to be 'feminine', the female Modernists considered the concept of androgyny one of many innovations that Modernism made possible. As Patricia Juliana Smith (2010: 78) states, Woolf's proclamation is 'one of the most revolutionary statements by a Modernist

⁵ Obviously, the redefinition of gender during the turn of the century was not limited to women: masculinity was being altered as well (Showalter 1991: 8), but I shall not go into that here, since it is less relevant for this section.

⁶ Perkins, Charlotte Gilman. 1911. *The Man-Made World, or Our Androcentric Culture*. New York: Charlton Company (p. 103). Quoted in Linett 2010: 2.

woman writer advocating the overthrow of the traditional patriarchal gender roles that rendered women unequal and inferior in the perceptions of Western societies’.

In Greece, the absence of women writers was filled in the 19th century, with early feminist writers such as Kallirhoe Parren (1861-1940) and Alexandra Papadopoulou (1869-1906). The emergence of women’s writing was facilitated by the institutional changes initiated by Greek feminism (Hohlfelder 1997: 2). As soon as 1887, Parren started publishing the “Women’s Journal” (“Εφημερίς των Κυριών”), which was the first exclusively female journal in Greece (Polykandrioti 1997: 338). Her main concerns were the education, protection and emancipation of women. She began her career as a journalist, in order to utter these concerns, and later decided to focus on literature, with the same feminist aspirations in mind. Hence, it is not surprising that her novels have female protagonists: her trilogy *The Books of Dawn* (*Τα Βιβλία της Αυγής*) was finished in 1902 and stages several young women who ‘break away from the tradition of hypocrisy and obedience’ (*ibid.*: 345). The popularity of her journal (of which the first edition sold 3000 copies in one hour) indicates her influence on the Greek citizens and the audience’s ardent desire for a journal of this nature (*ibid.*: 340).

Obviously, the emergence of women writers is, like Modernism itself, not an evolution that took place within a limited time span: 19th-century female authors like George Eliot, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, and others played an important role in this regard. It is in the context of the early 20th-century activism for women’s education and their right to vote that the idea of the New Woman appeared, as an alternative for the “Angel in the House”. The latter term was coined by Coventry Patmore, whose poem “The Angel in the House” focused on the Victorian ideal of obedient women (*ibid.*). Elert (1979: 25-26) links the term to the predominant notion in the Victorian age that women should be ‘soft, modest, submissive and docile’, be kept away from ‘extensive knowledge’ and function as the ‘custodians of the sacred places’, i.e. the home. Patronising as this view on women may be, it does entail a certain ‘adoration of women which owed much to the courtly love of the Middle Ages ... and to religion’ (*ibid.*). Whereas the “Angel in the House” was supposed to be

charming, unselfish, self-sacrificing and pure, the New Woman 'clearly had a mind and wishes of her own' and 'defied traditional gender roles' by following a similar education to that of men, choosing whether or not she wanted to marry and, if so, whom she wanted as her husband and whether or not she wanted to have children (*ibid.*: 79).

Ironically, the First World War, a clash between patriarchal nations, had an emancipatory effect: 'if male-dominated institutions long restricted sexuality, political infighting among the governments of the world's most powerful nations, the highest echelons of the patriarchy, eventually ... necessitated the entrance of women into occupations that had previously been the sole province of the male sex' (Smith 2010: 86). Women whose lives had been limited to 'restrictive domestic roles' up until the outburst of the First World War became important workforces after most of the male members of society had been sent off to fight the enemy: they drove lorries, nursed the wounded, worked in factories, etc. (*ibid.*: 87). No matter how temporary this shift was for some, it provided women in general with the opportunity to realise what they were capable of doing and to experience working outside of the domestic sphere. Moreover, the fact that lots of young men died during the war resulted in a shortage of suitable husbands, so that women who had been raised to become wives, now had to find a different way of living and often became working bachelorettes instead (*ibid.*).

As Smith (2010: 79) points out, a large number of authors were members of organisations in favour of the emancipation of women, which resulted in the popularity of the New Woman in literary plots, where she functioned as a significant figure. Furthermore, many women writers insisted on paying more attention to the female characters in their novels, and to the relations these characters had with each other (Linett 2010: 2). Smith (2010: 91) argues that Woolf's collection of works very much focused on sex, gender and sexuality, arguably to a larger extent than was the case for other female Modernists: the most striking illustration is obviously *Orlando*, in which the male protagonist lives for several centuries and around the middle of the novel wakes up to find that he has (biologically) become a woman overnight. However, the themes of gender and sex are also

central in *To the Lighthouse*, in which the ‘anti-wedlock plot’ is developed with concern to Lily Briscoe (*ibid.*).

Both Greek and English Modernism were influenced by the wars that took place during that period. Critics have written extensively on the relationship between Modernism and the First World War (1914-1918), since Modernism only really took off after the latter event. Whereas some critics argue that ‘it wasn’t simply that the war created modernism ... but also that the Modernist sensibility helped to make the war’, others suggest ‘that literary and cultural critics have strongly overstated the association of the First World War with modernism’ (Mackay 2010: 463). It clearly depends on what point of view one uses and, more importantly, which author one is discussing. In both of the novels analysed here, the war is present: in *To the Lighthouse*, the decade in which World War I takes place is described in the central part. In *Straw Hats*, on the other hand, the setting is right before the Greek civil war, but it is never mentioned explicitly. This absence has been interpreted by critics as a way of making the war present.

2. The Female *Künstlerroman*: the Subversion of a Genre

The novels *Straw Hats* and *To the Lighthouse* have repeatedly been referred to as *Bildungsromane*. The apparent simplicity of this statement is complicated by the fact that each novel has a *female* protagonist, since the central character in *Bildungsromane* was originally male. Furthermore, these novels are not only female *Bildungsromane*, but also *Künstlerromane*, since the female protagonists are artists in search of their artistic vision. Therefore, it is relevant to discuss the terms *Bildungsroman* and *Künstlerroman* and to analyse the implications of a female protagonist. Furthermore, this categorisation places the novels in a historical and literary overview of female *Künstlerromane*, which is significant with regard to the further discussion of both works.

To define the *Bildungsroman* in a general way, one could state that it is a ‘novel of all-around development or self-culture with a more or less conscious attempt on the part of the hero to

integrate his powers, to cultivate himself by experience'⁷. As Buckley (1974: 13) points out, the genre of the *Bildungsroman* had become popular 'in Germany among the Romantics and in England by the time of the early Victorians'. There are several subcategories to the genre, one of which is the *Künstlerroman*, 'a tale of the orientation of an artist' (*ibid.*). The latter subcategory is the most popular type of *Bildungsroman* in England, the most famous illustration of which may well be James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1917). When considering this work a prototype of the English *Künstlerroman*, it becomes clear that the genre does not merely focus on the development of the artist-protagonist, but also provides a 'study of the inner life, the essential temper, of the artist in his progress from early childhood through adolescence' (*ibid.*: 14).

Buckley (1974: 17-18) provides a whole list of specific characteristics of the *Bildungsroman*, which usually follows a clear-cut plot: a child, not well-liked by his father and not particularly enthusiastic about his first encounter with school and education, leaves home for a city, where he discovers real life by means of a couple of love affairs and other encounters, and eventually reaches maturity. Even though these specific characteristics do not all apply to the novels I will analyse – the use of the *masculine* personal pronoun is ominous in this respect –, there is no doubt that the model of the *Bildungsroman* is useful with regard to both of them. Not only have critics repeatedly referred to both novels in these terms, the most important characteristic of the *Bildungsroman* in general (the psychological development of a protagonist) and of the *Künstlerroman* in particular (the growth of the artist) functions as the plot of both narratives.

An obvious problem with Buckley's definition of the *Bildungsroman* is the limitation to male heroes. Nevertheless, the 1970s, during which his book was published, were also the setting for the emerging interest of feminist critics for the female *Bildungsroman*, i.e. 'the novel of the development of a female protagonist' (Fuderer 1990: 1). The renewed definitions by these feminist critics are rather explicit: Ellen Morgan's 1972 article considers the female *Bildungsroman* 'a "recasting" of an old form that was distinctly male until the twentieth century' and a result of neo-

⁷ Howe, Susanne. 1930. *Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen*. New York: Columbia University Press. Quoted in Buckley 1974: 13.

feminism because 'woman as neo-feminism conceives of her is a creature in the process of becoming, struggling to throw off her conditioning, the psychology of oppression' (qtd. in Fuderer 1990: 2). According to Esther Kleinbord Labovitz, the female subcategory of this genre was 'made possible only when *Bildung* became a reality for women' (qtd. in Fuderer 1990: 3). However, Lorna Ellis (1999: 17) and Penny Brown (1992: 3) disagree with these assertions: they point out that the female *Bildungsroman* already existed in the 19th (and even in the 18th) century. Ellis therefore prefers stating that the female *Bildungsroman* was not a 20th-century invention, but that its plot did undergo major changes in the transition from the 19th to the 20th century. This statement is in accordance with Rachel Blau DuPlessis's interpretation of 19th-century female *Bildungsromane* as 'scripts of heterosexual romance' (DuPlessis 1985: 2). She argues that the 19th-century female *Bildungsroman* contradicts 'love and quest', thus offering only one solution: 'an ending in which one part of that contradiction, usually quest or *Bildung*, is set aside or repressed, whether by marriage or by death' (*ibid.*: 3-4). This is what renders 19th-century novels like Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* or Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (which is written in verse) so different from 20th-century novels like the ones discussed here: the 20th-century women authors invent alternative endings, apart from marriage or death, and thus drastically alter the plot of the female *Bildungsroman* (*ibid.*: 4).

Strikingly, the genre of the *Bildungsroman* has been argued to be 'inherently paradoxical... for women' (Hohlfelder 1997: 24), since

[a]uthors of the *female Bildungsroman* find themselves in a quandary: after their female heroines evolve to an enlightened state, how can these mature and self-aware protagonists submit to the confines of patriarchal norms? Furthermore, how can the woman author avoid writing a novel which ultimately reifies the norms that she is challenging? (*ibid.*)

This problem is also touched upon by Linda Huf, who states that the female artist is torn between the role of the selfless woman and that of the artist who is exclusively committed to work (qtd. in Jones

1991: 2-3). Because the female characters who undergo a successful spiritual and intellectual growth are exceptions within the literary context of the novel they feature in, they do not 'succeed in life' in the same way their male counterparts do. This is the case because the characters by whom they are surrounded, such as Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, still expect these women to become, ultimately, what has always been expected from them: wives and mothers. Therefore, it is not coincidental that both novels repeatedly refer to marriage: in *To the Lighthouse*, Lily Briscoe feels obliged by Mrs. Ramsay to find a suitable husband; and in *Straw Hats*, Katerina first woos a young man, before realising that there are other options for her. Hence, it can be argued that elements of the 'romance plot' that defined the 19th-century female *Bildungsromane* are still present in these 20th-century works, but that they convert this plot in order to criticise gender norms. The tension between the outsiders' expectations and the personal desires of these women contributes to the appeal of female *Künstlerromane*. This appeal is strengthened because a female *Künstlerroman* focuses on two developments: it can be read as a female *Bildungsroman*, in which a female protagonist comes to terms with her identity, and as a *Künstlerroman*, in which the artist-protagonist creates her own artistic framework.

Woolf's novel *To the Lighthouse* depicts the painter Lily Briscoe in several stages, which coincide with the three parts into which the novel is divided. In the first part, – "The Window" –, Lily is repeatedly depicted as an insecure artist who feels uncomfortable when others, especially men, look at her painting. Moreover, during the dinner party at the end of the first part, Woolf uses the stream-of-consciousness technique to present the heroine's doubts about the painting she is working on. In the third part, when the reader encounters Lily after more than a decade, important changes have taken place in her psyche, both on the level of her emotional life and on that of her art. In the final pages of the novel, Lily can be said to experience an epiphany: by evoking the image of Mrs. Ramsay, deceased in the mean time, she manages to come to terms with her gender and to define her art.

Lymberaki's *Straw Hats* is slightly closer to the classical *Bildungsroman*. As opposed to Lily in *To the Lighthouse*, this protagonist is an adolescent who is not particularly close to her father, whom she only sees on Sundays, as a result of her parents' divorce. She has a rather innocent love affair with a young man from the neighbourhood, but is also fascinated by narrating and by the influence of language on reality, which leads us to the conclusion that this is also a *Künstlerroman*. There is a clear development, up to the point where she falls in love with the art of narration and decides that she wants to travel and discover the world. Thus, according to the stereotypical model of the genre, the *Bildungsroman* is not quite finished, since the reader does not find out what happens on her travels and whether she reaches maturity. However, the fact that Katerina is the narrator of the story who looks back upon three summers in her youth, suggests that she is the author of the work, and that she has thus succeeded as an artist (Hohlfelder 1997: 13).

Therefore, both of these novels can be read as assertions that women can be capable artists: as Hohlfelder (1997: 15) points out, Lymberaki even 'goes beyond merely discussing this view within the text, but also presents the text as a testimony of the success of the woman novelist'. Hence, Lymberaki's novel can be argued to be more self-reflexive and metafictional than Woolf's. The fact that neither of these novels contains all the characteristics that Buckley considers necessary for a novel to belong to the genre of the *Bildungsroman* does not mean that one should discard them as outside of the genre. On the contrary, one of the trademarks of Modernism is its tendency to deviate from and innovate existing genres and models.

As I have pointed out, 20th-century female *Künstlerromane* have undergone a major change with regard to their 19th-century counterparts, which function according to the romance plot. The 20th-century female *Künstlerromane*, on the other hand, use 'the romance plot ... [as] a major site for their intrepid scrutiny, critique, and transformation of narrative' (DuPlessis 1985: 4). Because this romance plot 'muffles the main female character, represses quest, valorizes heterosexual as opposed to homosexual ties, ... separates love and quest, values sexual asymmetry, including the division of labor by gender,' etc., the romance plot 'is a trope for the sex-gender system as a whole' (*ibid.*: 5).

The authors of the 20th-century female *Künstlerromane* invent transgressive narrative strategies that deviate from the dominant narrative, such as reparenting, woman-to-woman⁸ and brother-to-sister bonds', thus scrutinising the rigid social and ideological organisation of gender (*ibid.*). Because the 20th-century female *Künstlerroman* is so critical of the obligation of heterosexual relationships and all the implications of such a system, Judith Butler's theory about the heterosexual matrix and subversions of the gender norm will prove to be useful for the analysis of *Straw Hats* and *To the Lighthouse*.

⁸ Especially the mother/daughter relationship becomes imperative in the 20th-century female *Künstlerromane*, as both DuPlessis (1985: 91) and Brown (1992: 7) point out. This argument will be further developed in the analysis of the respective novels.

CHAPTER 2 | TO DO OR NOT TO DO... GENDER: JUDITH BUTLER'S NOTIONS OF GENDER AND PERFORMATIVITY

In dealing with the way female protagonists in the novels *The Straw Hats* and *To the Lighthouse* productively use elements of and innovate patriarchal norms, I would like to focus on Judith Butler's notions of performativity and gender regulations. In *Undoing Gender* (2004), Butler uses the second chapter, "Gender Regulations", to analyse gender as a norm, by basing her framework of analysis on Foucauldian theory. According to Butler (2004: 40-41), the idea that gender comes into existence 'under the exterior force of a regulation' is a misconception: she argues that the gendered subject emerges in being subject to regulation, i.e. that gender does not pre-exist its regulation. This idea is based on Foucault, whose theory on subjection and regulation points out that

(1) regulatory power not only acts upon a pre-existing subject but also shapes and forms that subject... and (2) to become subject to a regulation is also to become subjectivated by it, that is, to be brought into being as a subject precisely through being regulated. This second point follows from the first in that the regulatory discourses which form the subject of gender are precisely those that require and induce the subject in question. (Butler 2004: 41)

Consequently, gender is considered a norm, i.e. something that 'operates within social practices as the implicit standard of *normalization*' (*ibid.*, original italics). This means that gender is always embodied by the subject in social actions; therefore, the social intelligibility of action is governed by the norm, i.e. gender. Moreover, as long as 'the norm renders the social field intelligible and normalizes that field for us', there is no escaping the norm: even subjects who try to be outside of the norm will still be defined in relation to it (*ibid.*: 41-42). Claiming that gender is a norm implies that it is not 'a model that individuals seek to approximate', but 'on the contrary, it is a form of social power that produces the intelligible field of subjects, and an apparatus by which the gender binary is

instituted' (*ibid.*: 48). Butler furthermore follows Foucault's opinion that there is no outside to the norm, because it integrates every subject and action that tries to surpass it. Therefore, 'any opposition to the norm is already contained within the norm' (*ibid.*: 51). An important characteristic of gender norms is the fact that they are reproduced, which is what creates the impression that they are internal to human subjects (*ibid.*: 52). This is closely related to what Butler states with regard to performativity. Butler (1993: 2) argues that

performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act", but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names ... [T]he regulatory norms of "sex" work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the *heterosexual imperative*. (my emphasis)

The heterosexual imperative, or 'heterosexual matrix', is the binary system of masculinity and femininity, which is reinforced by the gendered performances and acts of everyday life. This binary system is repressive and exclusionary: 'Performances that do not serve to reinforce this law are repressed, mocked, denied recognition: ... knights will not grow up to marry other knights' (Loxley 2007: 119-120). Butler wants to denaturalise this 'heterosexual matrix' (Bristow 1997: 213), in order to rid society of the misconception of its presumed naturalness.

An important remark with regard to Butler's notion of performativity is that it does not equal the notion of 'performance': rather, performativity should be considered the process of which performance is the result. The performance always carries marks of the way it is constructed, and can even explicitly focus on performativity (e.g. by means of 'drag'). People 'perform' their gender because they have internalised the norms that are related to it by means of imitating and reproducing them. As Butler states, 'this act is not primarily theatrical' (*ibid.*: 12). Butler's perception of performativity has several consequences:

(a) gender performativity cannot be theorized apart from the forcible and reiterative practice of regulatory sexual regimes; (b) the account of agency conditioned by those very regimes of discourse/power cannot be conflated with voluntarism or individualism, much less with consumerism, and in no way presupposes a choosing subject; (c) the regime of heterosexuality operates to circumscribe and contour the “materiality” of sex, and that “materiality” is formed and sustained through and as a materialization of regulatory norms that are in part those of heterosexual hegemony; (d) the materialization of norms requires those identificatory processes by which norms are assumed or appropriated, and these identifications precede and enable the formation of a subject, but are not, strictly speaking, performed by a subject; ... (Butler 1993: 15)

Consequently, she points out in *Gender Trouble* that

gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. (Butler 1999: 179, original emphasis)

According to Butler, one of the main misconceptions with regard to gender is that acts follow out of and can be traced back to one’s gender, while, on the contrary, it is really one’s acts that constitute one’s gender, the way it is perceived by others and by the self. Thus, these acts, ‘as stylised and repeatable, taking place in the public world and reiterated through time, are *conventional*’ (Loxley 2007: 119), i.e. they are arbitrary and changeable. The colour of children’s bedroom walls and the toys they play with are not inherent to their gender, but ‘through the repetition of these recognised styles we come to be gendered, to take on a recognisable or

conventional gender identity' (*ibid.*). In other words: the idea of a gender core is a delusion. Nevertheless, one should be wary of considering gender a 'matter of choice', for which Butler herself uses the image of pieces of clothing. She warns her readers that gender is not something you pull out of your closet every morning, nor something that you change and stylise exactly as you want. This is a hoax, because 'we inhabit our sense of gender' through a contradictory mode, 'not as identity that we freely embrace, but one that we also struggle against, that sustains us at the same time as it constrains us ... [G]ender underpins our capacity to make decisions and act upon them, while constantly slipping out of our control and ensnaring us in complex webs of meaning that no single individual can ever hope to master' (Glover & Kaplan 2000: XXVII).

The conventions of gender acts are not innocent: Butler perceives the performative norm a 'form of compulsion'. Being subjected to the norm, 'bodies are normalised, and they suffer under the weight of the conventions that they are thus brought to repeat' (Loxley 2007: 121). The problem lies in the fact that normativity results in the creation of two groups: 'relatively successfully gendered subjects' and 'the abjected, excluded or penalised bodies of those who define the limits of the norm by falling outside it' (*ibid.*). This problematic division by the norm is related to Foucault's notion of 'internalising the norm': he argues that the external norm is so all-encompassing that eventually it becomes internalised by the subject, which thus starts considering it a natural characteristic of humanity. In *Surveiller et Punir: Naissance de la Prison* (1975), he explains this by means of the concept of the 'panoptic gaze': strictly speaking, this term refers to Jeremy Bentham's model of prisons (1785) in which all the cells are centred around a court yard, in the middle of which is a large tower with a guard. The guard can look straight into every cell, but the prisoners cannot see the guard, i.e. they never know whether they are being observed or not. This idea can be extrapolated to society: people behave the way they know society expects them to behave. Because of the all-encompassing nature of these expectations, they will internalise the norms that dictate their behaviour. Thus, one's acts, which are regulated by an internal sense of right and wrong, are externalisations of the norm; they are instances of 'acting out' the norm. Butler uses these notions

to explain the performativity of gender: from one's childhood onwards, one perceives the gender norms that regulate society and thus unconsciously adopts and performs them.

The main characteristic of performativity, i.e. its repetitive nature, is at the same time its vulnerability. Loxley states that the norms

are in the end nothing but their repetition, they exist as norms only on that temporal basis, and they do not and cannot programme or determine everything that is possible. They are not, therefore, a law that we are simply condemned to obey; they *become* law-like only through being repeated, re-enacted, and the spell could be broken. Thus, for Butler, the chance for a political intervention occurs because the work of gendering is vulnerable in what she calls its 'iterability' or its 'citationality' (Loxley 2007: 124)

To Butler, this 'iterability' or 'citationality' is the process that momentarily produces the subject as the fictive source of the performative itself. The focus on the fictional nature of the compulsory performance of gender is imperative, since it points out that gender is a 'groundless performance, a kind of fiction' and that even though 'our gendered behaviour seems to be an aspect of a natural or given identity, ... that identity is itself a product of the performative process' (Loxley 2007: 125). This implies that there is the possibility of adapting the gender norms to one's own identity and of slowly moving away from them, by repeating acts differently (*ibid.*: 127). Therefore, subjects are able to undermine the gender norms by subverting gender acts. In Butler's own words, 'the task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat, or, indeed, to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, to *displace* the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself' (1999: 189, original emphasis).

This possibility of the subversion of gender norms will prove to be essential to the analysis of the novels *To the Lighthouse* and *Straw Hats*, since the female protagonists of both novels can be argued to attempt an act of this nature. Both novels are excellent illustrations of how the gender norms are performed by most members of society, and of how it nonetheless remains possible to undermine

these norms to a certain extent. Considering the historical context of both novels, i.e. feminism in the first half of the 20th century, these subversions are not as extreme as Butler's frequent discussion of drag would suggest.⁹ Nevertheless, there is an obvious discrepancy between the female protagonists and (most of) the other characters in these novels, as I will point out later in my analysis.

One of the instances of performativity is touched upon by Nancy Chodorow in *The Reproduction of Mothering*, where she points out that the role of women 'as we know it' is a historical product (1999: 32). According to Chodorow, the development of industrial capitalism in the western world is responsible for women's role within the family as the cornerstone of stability (*ibid.*). Thus, she seems to agree with Butler's statements on the reproduction and reiteration of gender roles, which are culturally and historically defined, rather than naturally obtained and embedded within the self. Furthermore, Chodorow refers to the expectations of continuity of the relationship between the mother and her child, i.e. 'women's mothering is central to the links between the organization of gender ... and economic organization' (*ibid.*: 34). Moreover, 'sexual inequality is itself embedded in and perpetuated by the organization of these institutions, and is not reproduced according to or solely because of the will of individual actors' (*ibid.*). In general, Chodorow stresses that boys and girls obtain their gender personalities as a result of women's mothering (*ibid.*: 173). The relationship to the mother will be an important element in my analysis of the two novels, since the image of the mother is very much present in both of them, as well as the desire for the mother and the reactions against her.

Even though the female characters, and especially Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* and Katerina in *Straw Hats*, will receive most of my attention throughout the analysis of both novels, the male characters will also be discussed. Not only do their thoughts and actions often throw a different light on the female characters and the reader's perception of them, but they are also seldom one-dimensional. Even though a number of the male characters in each novel can be

⁹ According to Butler, drag illustrates the 'imitative structure' that gender is: the 'flamboyant theatricality' of drag performances 'shows how all gender identities are themselves derivative copies' (Bristow 1997: 215).

argued to function as products and producers of the norm against which the female protagonists try to react, others appear to constitute more profound and layered types of masculinity. This is indicative of the sensibility of the authors of those respective novels, who did not neglect to pursue a nuanced view on men and their role within society, while writing novels in which women play the major parts. After all, it is fallacious to think that only women are restrained and bound by the gender norm.

Following Butler's notion that even when rebelling against gender norms, one remains defined in relation to these norms, I would like to argue that both novels depict female protagonists who try to subvert the gender norms¹⁰, within the boundaries of the gender norm system. This implies that they do not simply reject the gender norms, but rather use them creatively, by combining the classic gender norms of their society with new notions of what women are able to achieve. Both novels, each in their own specific way, creatively deal with the accustomed gender roles and the options that are left open with regard to a less rigid norm system.

With regard to specific historical norms of femininity, both novels, set in the first half of the 20th century, use the model of the "Angel in the House". At the time in which the novels are situated, this type of womanhood was still expected by society. As I have already pointed out in the section on Modernism, this model refers to the selfless woman who is primarily a mother and a wife. This means that she is defined as a person in the service of someone else: she is important within the domestic sphere, not because of her own identity or achievements, but because she provides mental and practical support to her husband and because she raises their children. In both novels women of this type can be found, although *Straw Hats*, which, after all, was written twenty years later, is more subtle in this regard than *To the Lighthouse*. The primary mother figures in both novels, i.e. Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* and Katerina's mother Anna in *Straw Hats*, behave according to most of the characteristics of the "Angel in the House", although there are also subtle

¹⁰ Subversion, in this text, does not necessarily imply an alteration of the norm as such – let alone a significant social change. Rather, I use the word to refer to a citation of the norm that lays bare its imaginary underpinnings; a creative mis-citation that shows the norm for what it is: a social construct.

(and more explicit) deviations from the paradigm. This is obviously related to the authors' own stance on the "Angel in the House", who was fervently hated by most early 20th-century female intellectuals and authors.

CHAPTER 3 | THE FEMALE ARTIST IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *TO THE LIGHTHOUSE* (1927)

'There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results.'
- Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (33).

1. Synopsis

To the Lighthouse is divided into three parts, the first of which, "The Window", is the most extensive one. In "The Window", the reader encounters the Ramsays, an upper-middle-class family with eight children. Mr. Ramsay is an accomplished scholar, while his wife, Mrs. Ramsay, is responsible for the well-functioning of the household. The story is set on the Hebrides, an archipelago off the west coast of Scotland, where the Ramsays have gathered a couple of friends in their summer house. One of these friends, Lily Briscoe, is a 33-year old unmarried artist, who is still very insecure at this primary stage. Her insecurity is nothing but heightened by the presence of Charles Tansley, a misogynist businessman. Nevertheless, she does have a good relationship with William Bankes, an elderly gentleman. The first part climaxes with a fancy dinner party, hosted by Mrs. Ramsay, during which a lot of the tension between the characters is displayed by means of the stream-of-consciousness technique.

The second part, "Time Passes", is rather short and functions, as is suggested by its title, to indicate the passing of time, more specifically to denote the chronological elapse of a decade, during which WWI takes place. The reader learns that Mrs. Ramsay and two of her children have died in the mean time. Furthermore, the focus shifts towards the female servants of the house, Mrs. McNab and Mrs. Bast, the only characters who are depicted in their daily activities in this second part of the novel. They are portrayed while hurrying to prepare the house for a visit of the family, who have not returned to their holiday house since Mrs. Ramsay's death.

This visit is described in the third and final part, “The Lighthouse”. Not only Mr. Ramsay and his children James and Cam return to the summer house, but also Lily Briscoe and Augustus Carmichael, a poet who was also present during the dinner party in the first part of the novel. Mr. Ramsay and his children decide to visit the lighthouse, while Lily Briscoe remembers a painting she started during her previous visit to the house (as it is described in “The Window”) and sets out to finish it. The narration switches between these two endeavours, both of which are successful: the Ramsays reach the lighthouse and Lily experiences an artistic epiphany, thus bringing this *Künstlerroman* to an end.

2. Femininity or androgyny?

Firstly, it is important to point out that *To the Lighthouse* seemingly divides women into two types. However, the extent to which this is actually the case is important for the general analysis of Lily’s development. Does Mrs. Ramsay simply represent the “Angel in the House” and is Lily Briscoe the “Modern Woman”, or is there more to it? Mrs. Ramsay’s character largely corresponds to the “Angel” image¹¹: she is the one in charge of educating the children and she constantly worries about the household. Moreover, she adores her husband and spends most of her time reassuring him of his valour. Thus, as a wife she is entirely husband-centred, which, according to Elert (1979: 49), is a typical theme in Virginia Woolf’s novels, where the ‘scholarly husbands ... make excessive demands on the time and attention of their wives’. Elert (*ibid.*: 53) also points out that Virginia Woolf’s protagonists are often ‘middle-aged women of remarkable beauty and charm, ideally suited to perform the role of the hostess’. This statement can easily be reinforced by textual evidence from the novel, such as:

And, like some queen who, finding her people gathered in the hall, looks down upon them, and descends among them, and acknowledges their tributes silently, and accepts their devotion and their prostration before her..., she went down, and crossed the hall

¹¹ Nevertheless, her position in the novel is very dualistic in terms of power, as I will point out later.

and bowed her head very slightly, as if she accepted what they could not say: their tribute to her beauty. (*To the Lighthouse* 90, my ellipsis)¹²

Since these lines are focalised by Mrs. Ramsay, they inform the reader about her perception of other people's opinions about her: 'their tribute to her beauty' is therefore an indication of Mrs. Ramsay's perception rather than that of the surrounding characters. It is uncertain whether the other characters indeed gather around her in order to admire her beauty, or whether this is merely the way Mrs. Ramsay interprets their behaviour. Hence, these lines illustrate Mrs. Ramsay's internalisation of the gender norm: the norm partly reduces her to an aesthetic object, so that Mrs. Ramsay also perceives herself thus. The excerpt implies that she momentarily considers herself a queen because of her beauty, not because of certain character traits or intellectual capacities. She deems impressing and taking care of her guests her most important role, as if she were a commodity belonging to her husband. Thus, the excerpt also refers to another element of the notion of the "Angel in the House" that has already been touched upon, i.e. the male admiration for women.

Lily Briscoe, on the other hand, performs a different type of femininity. She is not married and does not have any children, even though she is (already) 33 years old at the beginning of the novel. Furthermore, she is an artist who is trying to find her own style. This leads the critic Toril Moi to conclude that this novel of Woolf's, and more specifically Lily Briscoe's role in it, is a foreboding of Kristeva's feminism. Moi (1985: 12) explains how Kristeva distinguishes three types of feminism, the first of which focuses on equality between men and women and the second of which is radical feminism. Kristeva herself prefers the third type, namely that in which 'women reject the dichotomy between masculine and feminine as metaphysical'. As Moi points out, this final position 'is one that has deconstructed the opposition between masculinity and femininity, and therefore necessarily challenges the very notion of identity' (*ibid.*).¹³

¹² From here onwards, I will use the abbreviation 'TL' when citing from *To the Lighthouse* (2000b).

¹³ In this particular point of view, Kristeva's theory of sexual identity is compatible with Butler's notion of gender: they both agree that there is no naturally fixed boundary between masculinity and femininity.

Read from this perspective, *To the Lighthouse* illustrates the destructive nature of a metaphysical belief in strong, immutably fixed gender identities – as represented by Mr and Mrs Ramsay – whereas Lily Briscoe ... represents the subject who deconstructs this opposition, perceives its pernicious influence and tries as far as is possible in a still rigidly patriarchal order to live as her own woman, without regard for the crippling definitions of sexual identity to which society would have her conform. (*ibid.*: 13)

In other words: Lily Briscoe takes the gender norms of masculinity and femininity into consideration and attempts, without trying to break away from the gender norm, to repeat it in a deviant way that suits her. Furthermore, this behaviour is an illustration of Woolf's conception of 'androgyny', which refers to the deconstruction of the gender binary. However, as Moi points out (*ibid.*: 14), there have also been critics who consider Mrs. Ramsay rather than Lily Briscoe to be the androgynous character. Even though Moi rejects this reading, I will argue below that there is certainly something to say for this point of view: even though the novel clearly depicts a patriarchal world, it is also entirely set in the domestic world of the Ramsays' holiday home, which results in Mrs. Ramsay being the implicit instance of power throughout the whole first part. Furthermore, even though she is embedded in the gender norms that have been subscribed to her, she has a powerful position with regard to securing the continuity of these gender norms. This is rather paradoxical, since, by playing the leading role within this miniature society, she reinforces the patriarchal system in which men are the powerful subjects. As Daugherty puts it in her article on 'The Power of the Feminist Imagination in *To the Lighthouse*' (1991: 303), 'the mother's tactics against the daughter are actually the weapons wielded by ... patriarchy against all women'.

Woolf herself wrote about the "Angel in the House" model, claiming that she had needed to kill the angel inside her early in her career: 'If I had not killed her, she would have killed me – as a writer' (qtd. in Daugherty 1991: 290). With this statement in mind, one can read *To the Lighthouse* as an artistic statement: Woolf literally kills the "Angel in the House" by creating a separate character, i.e.

Mrs. Ramsay. Thus, the artist, i.e. Lily Briscoe, after a struggle of a decade, succeeds in resisting the pressure and comes to terms with and understands Mrs. Ramsay (Daugherty 1991: 290).

3. Mother/Daughter-Relationships

Many readers of *To the Lighthouse* before me have argued that Lily Briscoe's behaviour suggests that she subconsciously considers Mrs. Ramsay her surrogate mother. The novel portrays Lily as the child of an elderly, bedridden father and a deceased mother, which practically renders her an orphan, since she has no parents to take care of her.¹⁴ Together with the abundant textual suggestions, this leads one to the conclusion that she attempts to establish a mother-daughter relationship with Mrs. Ramsay, but fails, because Mrs. Ramsay cares more about pleasing men and fulfilling their needs.¹⁵ Furthermore, she has eight children of her own, and is constantly at the service of each member of her household, so that she remains largely out of Lily's reach.

At one point, Lily remembers a moment where she was '[s]itting on the floor with her arms round Mrs. Ramsay's knees, close as she could get, smiling to think that Mrs. Ramsay would never know the reason of that pressure' (TL 57). The physical pressure she uses while holding Mrs. Ramsay's knees symbolises her need for unity, so that one gets the impression that Lily hopes to reach a psychological unity by means of physical closeness:

Could loving, as people called it, make her and Mrs. Ramsay one? *for it was not knowledge but unity that she desired*, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge, she had thought, leaning her head on Mrs. Ramsay's knee. (TL 57, my emphasis)

¹⁴ Liliendorf (1977: 348) suggests that Lily's deprivation of parents is not coincidental but linked to Victorian fiction, in which the survival figure is often an orphan.

¹⁵ Critics have often referred to the relationship between Lily and Mrs. Ramsay as symbolic of the relationship between Virginia Woolf and her mother Julia Stephen. There are indeed a lot of biographical references: Julia also had 8 children and spent a lot of time taking care of her husband, which made Virginia feel deprived of mothering (cf. Liliendorf 1977: 348). Nevertheless, I will not focus on the biographical perspective of this novel, since I do not consider it relevant for this analysis.

Moreover, this passage contains a reference to secret knowledge that Mrs. Ramsay carries inside her, according to Lily. This 'secret knowledge' can be argued to refer to the gender norm, which Mrs. Ramsay performs to perfection:

[Lily] imagined how in the chambers of the mind and heart of the woman who was, physically, touching her, were stored, like the treasures in the tombs of kings, tablets bearing sacred inscriptions, which if one could spell them out would teach one everything, but they would never be offered openly, never made public. What art was there, known to love or cunning, by which one pressed through into those secret chambers? (TL 57)

Mrs. Ramsay seems to know perfectly well how to behave according to these norms without any inner struggle, while Lily is at a loss in this respect. In the first part of the novel, she appears to be doubtful on whether or not she would like to adopt this type of behaviour herself. From this excerpt, one could derive that she wishes she could effortlessly perform the norms of femininity, but elsewhere the opposite appears to be true, e.g. 'she said to herself ... she need not marry, thank Heaven: she need not undergo that degradation. She was saved from that dilution' (TL 111). This latter stance, in which she displays the wish to deviate from the example that Mrs. Ramsay has set for her, will become dominant towards the end of the novel. Lilienfeld (1977: 346) states that 'throughout the first part of the novel Lily Briscoe is so enmeshed in Mrs. Ramsay's powers that the painter cannot acknowledge consciously the depths of her anger at the older woman'. It seems that, as long as Mrs. Ramsay is alive, her presence is too all-encompassing for Lily to take enough distance to actually make a decision about her own preferred way of living.

Nevertheless, Lily subconsciously realises that she does not aspire to the role that Mrs. Ramsay performs perfectly:

[G]athering a desperate courage she would 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 that; and so have to meet a serious stare from eyes of unparalleled depth, and confront Mrs. Ramsay's simple certainty (and she was childlike now) that her dear Lily, her little Brisk, was a fool. Then, she remembered, she had laid her head on Mrs. Ramsay's lap and laughed and laughed and laughed, laughed almost hysterically at the thought of Mrs. Ramsay presiding with immutable calm over destinies which she completely failed to understand. (TL 56, my emphases)

These lines rather implicitly point out that Lily realises that she is not cut out for a life and a position like Mrs. Ramsay's. Nevertheless, she is aware of Mrs. Ramsay's severe judgement on any deviation from the gender paradigm, which at this stage still bothers her. Lily shows a great deal of insight, even though she cannot yet grasp the implications of this perspective. However, she does realise that she understands more of the norms and methods that are at work than Mrs. Ramsay does. Her laughter is an instance of rebellion: whereas Mrs. Ramsay considers the whole business very serious, Lily ridicules her. These elements suggest that Lily will repeat the norm in a deviant way, but that she has not yet reached a stage in which she is explicitly able to do so.

Since the patriarchal normative structure of society is more present in the first part than in the final part of the novel, it is not surprising that Lily Briscoe is originally more insecure about her talent as a painter. This insecurity is indicated by her fear of others looking at her work: 'But so long as he kept like that, waving, shouting, she was safe; he would not stand still and look at her picture' (TL 22). Moreover, even though she realises how preposterous Charles Tansley's misogynist views are, she cannot deny their impact on her:

He was really, Lily Briscoe thought, in spite of his eyes, the most uncharming human being she had ever met. Women can't write, women can't paint – what did that matter coming from him, since clearly it was not true to him but for some reason helpful to him, and that was why he said it? Why did her whole being bow, like corn under a wind, and erect itself again from this abasement only with a great and rather painful effort? (TL 94)

Regardless of Lily's loathing of Charles Tansley, she still *cares* about his opinion. Moreover, she even performs the role that Mrs. Ramsay – and the patriarchal norm in general – expects her to perform at dinner. She comes to the rescue of Mr. Tansley, who scolds and embarrasses her in public, because of the psychological pressure Mrs. Ramsay puts on her, even though she originally refuses:

But, she thought, ... remembering how he sneered at women, 'can't paint, can't write', why should I help him to relieve himself? There is a *code of behaviour* she knew, whose seventh article (it may be) says that on occasions of this sort it behoves the woman, whatever her own occupation may be, to go to the help of the young man opposite so that he may expose and relieve the thigh bones, the ribs, of his vanity, of his urgent desire to assert himself ... *But how would it be, she thought, if neither of us did either of those things?* So she sat there smiling. (TL 99, my emphases and ellipsis)

The 'code of behaviour' that Lily refers to generally equals the gender norm: the behaviour that she describes is that of the Victorian ideal of the "Angel in the House", in which women are supposed to help men assert themselves. In other words, Lily realises that there is a culturally defined 'code' or norm to which women (and men, for that matter) are supposed to confine themselves. Therefore, her refusal to act this way, even though she realises very well what is expected of her, is a first step towards her subverting of the norm. She does not just neglect her duty as a woman because she does not realise what the norm prescribes her to do, but she very consciously refuses to perform and 'act out' this norm. Hence, she purposefully attempts to subvert the norm by discontinuing its iterability, which is the weakness of the normative system. Nevertheless, she is persuaded by Mrs. Ramsay's look and ultimately *does* perform according to the norm:

'Will you take me, Mr. Tansley?' said Lily, quickly, kindly, for of course, if Mrs. Ramsay said to her, as in effect she did, '... Unless you apply some balm to the anguish of this hour and say something nice to that young man there, life will run upon the rocks ...' when Mrs. Ramsay said all this, as the glance in her eyes said it,

of course for the hundred and fiftieth time Lily Briscoe had to renounce the experiment – what happens if one is not nice to that young man there – and be nice. (TL 100, my ellipses)

Lily does not yet have the ability to restrain herself from the norm, because Mrs. Ramsay's presence is too overwhelming for her to object. These excerpts, which show beautifully how Lily is in the process of becoming aware of and re-creating gender norms, are especially relevant with regard to the third part of the novel, in which Lily once more feels that she should behave in a certain way, this time towards Mr. Ramsay rather than Mr. Tansley, but by that time she has evolved to the stage where she can no longer obey these normative urges:

No, she could not do it... the pressure on her was tremendous. But she remained stuck. (TL 165, my ellipsis) It was immensely to her discredit, sexually, to stand there dumb. (TL 166) So they're gone, she thought, sighing with relief and disappointment ... She felt curiously divided. (TL 171, my ellipsis)

These lines suggest that Mrs. Ramsay's death has not only enabled her to iterate the norm in a deviant way, but has also forced her to do this constantly. Lily no longer seems able to behave the way one would expect her to, merely because of her being a woman. The section on Lily's development will go further into this.

Lily's relationship with Mrs. Ramsay is rather similar to Mrs. Ramsay's relationship with her real daughters. She constantly ponders Lily's marital prospects: 'William must marry Lily ... She must arrange for them to take a long walk together.' (TL 113, my ellipsis) Nevertheless, her general notion of Lily is coloured by the norms she has internalised: 'With her little Chinese eyes and her puckered-up face she would never marry; one could not take her painting very seriously; but she was an independent little creature, Mrs. Ramsay liked her for it' (TL 21). These lines indicate that Mrs. Ramsay is unable to think outside of the normative gender system. She realises that Lily is independent and she even appreciates this character trait of hers, but she cannot value her

autonomy and its possible implications. Rather, she seems to find it endearing that this 'little creature' aims to be self-sufficient. Therefore, the patronising tone of these lines proves how much Mrs. Ramsay is embedded in the norms.

Nevertheless, Lily as well as Mrs. Ramsay's daughters do not intend to fulfil her expectations about their future: 'it was only in silence that her daughters – Prue, Nancy, Rose – could sport with infidel ideas which they had brewed for themselves of a life different from hers; in Paris, perhaps; a wilder life; not always taking care of some man or other' (TL 10). Since it is stated how Lily gets on well with the Ramsay children, it might be argued that they consider her lifestyle more appealing than Mrs. Ramsay's. Furthermore, these children belong to a next generation that no longer shares the Victorian ideas of their predecessors. This does not necessarily entail that they will subvert the gender norm, but at least that they realise that there is more than one option for young women.

4. Sons and lovers

Generally speaking, the male characters can be said to embody patriarchy within the novel. Mr. Ramsay is the prototype of male gender expectations: he is an academic who does not really have a relationship with his children and who constantly relies on his wife to reassure him of his genius and to take care of his home. Moreover, he constantly praises her beauty, but he nevertheless considers her less intelligent than himself – after all, she is a woman:

And he wondered what she was reading, and exaggerated her ignorance, her simplicity, *for he liked to think that she was not clever*, not book-learned at all. He wondered if she understood what she was reading. Probably not, he thought. She was astonishingly beautiful. Her beauty seemed to him, if that were possible, to increase. (TL 131-2, my emphasis)

This excerpt indicates how Mr. Ramsay commodifies his wife: he cannot imagine that she has a fully extended intellect, but he does appreciate her for the aesthetic pleasure that she provides.

Moreover, it can be argued that the idea of Mrs. Ramsay being an intelligent subject is threatening to him: the phrase that 'he liked to think that she was not clever' suggests that Mrs. Ramsay is in fact clever, but that Mr. Ramsay feels threatened by this possibility. Since Mr. Ramsay is the focaliser of these lines but not the narrator, there is a tension between both instances: Mr. Ramsay's train of thought does not convince the reader, because of the phrase used by the narrator. Now, however, since the narrator is the final instance between the focaliser and the reader, it is obvious that Mr. Ramsay is merely trying to convince himself that she is 'not clever', so that she is not a threat to his own intellect. Even though her intelligence has never been cultivated because of her gender identity, the reader knows that she is not a silly woman, since the stream-of-consciousness technique provides them with the opportunity to follow her emotional and psychological side.

Furthermore, from the first pages of the novel onwards, it becomes obvious that Mr. Ramsay is desperate to establish himself as the head of the family: whereas Mrs. Ramsay tries to be hopeful that the weather the next day will be good enough for the family to sail to the lighthouse, which is what her son James wishes to do, Mr. Ramsay rids the young boy of all hope: 'There'll be no landing at the Lighthouse to-morrow' (TL 11). Thus, he tries to obtain the power of the *pater familias*. Elert (1979: 113) even goes as far as calling him the 'family tyrant', since she perceives his 'excessive demand for sympathy from his wife' as a 'heavy burden on her and the children' (*ibid.*: 114). This insatiable need of self-establishment and reassurance is a perpetually returning motif: 'Mr. Ramsay repeated, never taking his eyes from her face, that he was a failure ... Charles Tansley thought him the greatest metaphysician of the time, she said. But he must have more than that' (TL 43, my ellipsis). As Lilienfeld (1977: 346) puts it, Mr. Ramsay is an 'emotional sponge', who expects his wife to be at his service whenever he needs her. This renders him rather ridiculous, since his insatiable need of affirmation points towards a poignant lack of self-assertion.

Nevertheless, not only Mr. Ramsay is in need of female sympathy, since the same characteristic largely defines Charles Tansley's personality. Furthermore, both men share a sense of male superiority: 'It was all the women's fault. Women made civilisation impossible with all their "charm",

all their silliness' (TL 93). Tansley is more explicitly misogynistic than Mr. Ramsay: 'Women can't paint, women can't write...' (TL 54). The patriarchal view on women is already being adopted by a member of the next generation of men, i.e. Andrew, one of the Ramsay sons: 'She had no control over her emotions, Andrew thought. Women hadn't' (TL 84). Because Andrew is already a teenager in the first part of the novel, he has internalised the norm, since he is old enough to have been plentifully confronted with it. However, his brother James, who is 5 years old, has not yet reached this stage, and hates his father for his behaviour to his wife and children.

Another important male character, William Bankes, is much more amiable than Mr. Ramsay and Charles Tansley, even though it cannot be stated that he is a feminist: he 'cherishes the Victorian ideal of what a woman should be like' (Elert 1979: 114). This does not prevent him from getting along well with Lily Briscoe, who obviously notices the difference between Bankes and the other men, since he is the only person whom she allows to peek at the painting she is working at. Bankes also differs from the other two male characters in that he is not in dire need of reassurance of his intellect, which is stated explicitly when Mr. Ramsay worries about the survival of his writings through time:

How long would he be read – he would think at once. William Bankes (who was entirely free from all such vanity) laughed, and said he attached no importance to changes in fashion. Who could tell what was going to last – in literature or indeed in anything else? "Let us enjoy what we do enjoy", he said. His integrity seemed to Mrs. Ramsay quite admirable. (TL 116)

Furthermore, he envies Mr. Ramsay for having a family, which entails that he does not consider marriage an intellectual sacrifice for men, unlike the other male characters (and Mrs. Ramsay). He seems to be platonically in love with Mrs. Ramsay, who is constantly adored by him. This adoration is materialised by several instances of looking, e.g. when he compares Mrs. Ramsay to a renaissance painting and Lily Briscoe explicitly refers to this ('Let him gaze', TL 54). This is not the only instance where Lily perceives Mrs. Ramsay's appeal to William Bankes:

For him to gaze as Lily saw him gazing at Mrs. Ramsay was a rapture, equivalent, Lily felt, to the loves of dozens of young men (and perhaps Mrs. Ramsay had never excited the loves of dozens of young men). It was love, she thought, pretending to move her canvas, distilled and filtered; love that never attempted to clutch its object; but, like the love which mathematicians bear their symbols, or poets their phrases, was meant to be spread over the world and become part of the human gain. (TL 53)

The stereotypical gender division is furthermore reinstated by this repeated description of the 'male gaze'. As Mulvey (1989: 19) points out,

[i]n a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness* (original emphasis).

Even though Mulvey limits her theory to cinema, it can easily be adapted to the world of literature. After all, the description of a female body can evoke a very similar visual effect and induce the pleasure of aestheticism. In *To the Lighthouse*, the reader is constantly confronted with descriptions of this 'male gaze' on the female characters. Lily repeatedly observes male characters while they are 'gazing' at Mrs. Ramsay or another woman, which suggests once more that she grasps some of the aspects of the gender norm.

The constant reminder of the visual presence of women seems to reinforce their general commodification. Moreover, the type of love Lily talks about in the previous excerpt is reverence. As Daugherty (1991: 291) points out, 'no one can read "The Window" and fail to feel the aura of reverence around Mrs. Ramsay': every male adult adores her. According to Daugherty (*ibid.*: 292) this is related to Mr. Bankes's observation of Mrs. Ramsay and her son James, who are posing for Lily's painting: 'Mother and child then – objects of universal veneration, and in this case the mother

was famous for her beauty – might be reduced, he pondered, to a purple shadow without irreverence’ (TL 59). This excerpt provides an explanation for Mrs. Ramsay’s reverence, since ‘with these lines, Woolf refers to the mythic origins of the Angel in the House role: the Virgin Mary’ (*ibid.*). The intricate relationship between the Angel and the Virgin Mary is the reverence of both women that is due to their self-denial: ‘the Mary myth thus suggests that to be revered, women must be nonfemale, nonhuman’ (*ibid.*).

5. Mrs. Ramsay: Angel or God?

Patriarchal and normative as the environment of the novel appears to be, the domestic setting has an interesting connotation. Emery (1992: 219) suggests that ‘the binary oppositions, especially that of masculine/feminine, are undone’ in *To the Lighthouse*, because the masculine sphere, i.e. the outside world of activity, is absent. The first part of the novel is entirely set in and around the summer house of the Ramsays, which is Mrs. Ramsay’s realm, since she rules it as the preserver of the sanctity of the house. Hence, the men can be considered powerless within the boundaries of the novel: even though most of them are patronising and dominant, their lack of power renders them prone to ridicule. An example can be found in Charles Tansley’s thoughts: ‘He felt extremely, even physically, uncomfortable. He wanted somebody to give him a chance of asserting himself’ (TL 98). Thus, Mrs. Ramsay’s ‘domestic sovereignty’ is not actually threatened by ‘masculine opposition’ (Emery 1992: 219).

Consequently, Mrs. Ramsay finds herself in a paradoxical position: she perfects the art of serving men, but at the same time dominates them by means of the domestic setting, her beauty and her unnoticed power play. Lily is the only character who seems to realise that Mrs. Ramsay is not as innocent and stupid as she comes across: ‘How childlike, how absurd she [i.e. Mrs. Ramsay] was, sitting up there with all her beauty opened again in her, talking about the skins of vegetables. There was something frightening about her. She was irresistible. Always she got her own way in the end,

Lily thought.’ (TL 110) This is an interesting train of thought: while observing Mrs. Ramsay, Lily starts off from the perspective of the men around her, but then it strikes her that this is a misconception. Therefore, the excerpt indicates that, originally, Lily is also embedded in the normative system, although she manages to distance herself from it. Her first reaction is to consider Mrs. Ramsay the way she is perceived by the male characters of the novel: silly but beautiful. Nevertheless, Woolf provides her readers with the opportunity to perceive just how swiftly Lily gains insight into Mrs. Ramsay’s nature.

Since the whole first part of the novel is set in the domestic sphere, Mrs. Ramsay is in charge, although not always in an explicit way. She arranges the whole dinner party, including where the guests are seated; she repeatedly urges the younger generation to get married, which is successful in the case of Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle; she is responsible for the education of her children; etc. Her most important role is to preserve the gender norm: she scrutinises everyone around her and urges those who deviate from the norm to adapt themselves to it. Nevertheless, claiming that she is an all-empowered subject would be too bold a statement to make. No matter how powerful Mrs. Ramsay may be behind the scenes, she remains part of the patriarchal normative system. Furthermore, the reader does not find out whether she is aware of the power she exercises. There is only one instance that can be said to shed some light on this question:

Was she wrong in this, she asked herself, reviewing her conduct for the past week or two, and wondering if she had indeed put any pressure upon Minta, who was only twenty-four, to make up her mind. She was uneasy. Has she not laughed about it? *Was she not forgetting again how strongly she influenced people?* (TL 67, my emphasis)

This excerpt, and especially the word ‘again’, suggests that she is aware of how she has the tendency to steer other people’s lives according to what is ‘proper’. Nevertheless, the fact that she is questioning rather than stating this influence indicates her own insecurity in this regard. Her position, powerful and vulnerable at the same time, makes her a tragic figure whom the reader is

tempted to pity: no matter how hard she tries to follow and hand on the gender norm, she will never be rewarded by the men who surround her. She will only be revered by them as long as she pleases and serves them. Furthermore, as Daugherty (1991: 294) points out, 'Mrs. Ramsay cannot even allow herself to feel satisfied about playing the Angel role so well', because of her self-doubt:

For her own self-satisfaction was it that she wished so instinctively to help, to give,
that people might say of her 'O Mrs. Ramsay! dear Mrs. Ramsay ... Mrs. Ramsay, of
course!' and need her and send for her and admire her? (TL 47, original ellipsis)

In this regard, it is not coincidental that the tale Mrs. Ramsay is reading to her son James in the first part of the novel, is a fairy tale by the Grimm brothers, entitled 'The Fisherman and his Wife'. In this particular story, 'the poor fisherman who lives in a pigsty catches and releases a golden Flounder, who is a Prince in disguise. He is urged by his bullying wife to ask the fish, first for a little hut, and then, successively, for more and more exorbitant requests: he must be king, emperor, Pope, and, at last, like God. Each request is granted in stormier weather, and, at the final blasphemy, the Flounder sends them back to their original pigsty' (note 42 by Hermione Lee, TL 44). The morale of this story is that ambitious women should be castigated, because they do not know their place in society. In other words, it 'implies that a woman who desires, or worse, *attains* power is unnatural and must be punished. The tale also justifies society's control of women, since it portrays women's desire for power as insatiable' (Daugherty 1991: 293).¹⁶ The image of the fisherman's wife and her severe punishment repeatedly surfaces in the thoughts of Mrs. Ramsay, who seems to consider it a reprimand for herself: 'for the story of the Fisherman and his Wife was like the bass gently accompanying a tune, which now and then ran up unexpectedly into the melody' (TL 63). As Daugherty (1991: 292) observes, this 'punishment-oriented fairy tale subconsciously affects Mrs. Ramsay's thoughts about herself, causing her to work even harder to be the Angel'. The clearest

¹⁶ Furthermore, this excerpt can be analysed as a reference to the altered nature of the female *Künstlerroman*: as DuPlessis (1985: 87) points out, the 19th-century female *Künstlerroman* presented self-realisation and ambition as a female crime. Hence, Woolf seems to allude to the predecessors of the literary genre she uses.

illustration of this statement is Mrs. Ramsay's train of thought while she is reading the story to her son:

Not that, as she read aloud the story of the Fisherman's Wife, she knew precisely what it came from; nor did she let herself put into words her dissatisfaction when she realised, at the turn of the page when she stopped and heard dully, ominously, a wave fall, how it came from this: *she did not like, even for a second, to feel finer than her husband*; ... Universities and people wanting him, lectures and books and their being of the highest importance – ... but it was their relation, and his coming to her like that, openly, so that anyone could see, that discomposed her; for then people said he depended on her, when they must know that *of the two he was infinitely the more important*, and what she gave the world, in comparison with what he gave, negligible. (TL 44-45, my ellipses and emphases)

Not realising that she has been influenced by the tale's implications, Mrs. Ramsay suddenly feels guilty for being morally supportive towards her husband, since she fears that others might consider her superior to her husband because he relies on her. However, as Daugherty (1991: 293-4) observes, this fear is, ironically, totally groundless: 'the men in the novel certainly assume his contribution is more important than hers, and in fact, think she hinders Mr. Ramsay's career'. Mrs. Ramsay's behaviour according to the norm is very much internalised, because like the other characters she is convinced that Mr. Ramsay's marriage to her was an intellectual sacrifice. Her internalised gender norm tells her to feel less significant than her husband and guilty for the possibility that others could consider the opposite to be true.

Moreover, her performative character is laid bare by the interior monologue after she has put her younger children to bed in "The Window":

... and it was a relief when they went to bed. For now she need not think about anybody. She could be herself, by herself. And that was what now she often felt the need of – to think; well not even to think. To be silent; to be alone. All the

being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others. (TL 69)

When she is on her own, she feels like she can be herself, like she no longer has to perform the role that everyone expects her to perform. Thus, even though she has to a large extent internalised the norm, she is still able to be 'herself', whoever that may be, when she finds herself alone. This discrepancy between what she perceives to be her real identity and the performative role she continuously presents to other people, results in moments of insight and depression: 'She was not good enough to tie his shoe strings, she felt' (TL 38), 'But what have I done with my life? thought Mrs. Ramsay (TL 90), 'She had a sense of being past everything, through everything, out of everything' (TL 91). This woman is clearly a victim of the gender role she has been pushed into from her earliest childhood onwards. She has to give constantly, but this role does not fulfil her with joy: 'So boasting of her capacity to surround and protect, there was scarcely a shell of herself left for her to know herself by; all was so lavished and spent' (TL 44). Even though she does have some ambition in life ('A model dairy and a hospital up here – those two things she would have liked to do, herself' TL 64), she realises very well that endeavours of this kind are not part of her options in life ('But how? With all these children?' *ibid.*). Obviously, this latter sentence illustrates one of the painful discrepancies between the gender norms for men and women (i.e. those that are dominant in the realm of this novel): Mr. Ramsay can combine being a philosopher and an academic with being the father of eight children, while Mrs. Ramsay cannot even dream about the simplest professional endeavours without feeling guilty. Her sense of guilt is the result of the internalised gender norm: her subconscious immediately shifts to her children, the domain in which she *does* play a part, and starts pondering their future – within the same normative gender system. Andrew is defined as good at mathematics and Jasper enjoys shooting birds, while Prue is 'a perfect angel', who will be very beautiful when she grows up (TL 65). One cannot blame Mrs. Ramsay for thinking about her children

in this fashion: she is the product of a long process of gender norms, from which she can no longer free herself.

6. “Time Passes”: WWI and Two Female Servants as Catalysts for a New Beginning

The second part of *To the Lighthouse* is the darkest of all three, both symbolically and metaphorically. The beam of the lighthouse that connects parts 1 and 3 is almost absent in this part: ‘[s]o with the lamps all put out, the moon sunk, and a thin rain drumming on the roof a downpouring of *immense darkness* began’ (TL 137, my emphasis). The whole part contains references to darkness and chaos: ‘only gigantic chaos streaked with lightning could have been heard tumbling and tossing’ (TL 147). Furthermore, this part refers to the deaths of Mrs. Ramsay and two of her children, Prue and Andrew. The reader is informed dryly about all three of these deaths in short sentences between brackets, without any forewarning or sentimentality: ‘[Mr. Ramsay stumbling along a passage stretched his arms out one dark morning, but, Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, he stretched his arms out. They remained empty]’ (TL 140). Mrs. Ramsay’s death can be read as symbolical of the death of the “Angel in the House” after WWI. Moreover, it is hard to consider the way Prue and Andrew died coincidental: Prue followed her mother’s advice, got married but then died in childbirth, while her brother was killed on the battlefield. These two deaths were triggered by gendered activities: Prue could not have died the way Andrew did, and vice versa. Especially the description of Andrew’s death sounds very bitter: ‘[A shell exploded. Twenty or thirty young men were blown up in France, among them Andrew Ramsay, whose death, *mercifully*, was instantaneous]’ (TL 145, my emphasis). How can the death of a talented young man like Andrew for the sake of a bloody war be merciful? One could consider this an instance of pitiless criticism of Woolf’s on the normative gender binary, which became more unstable during and after WWI – and in this novel, after the second part.

From the second part of the novel onwards, two servants, Mrs. McNab and Mrs. Bast, enter the literary scope. Their relevance is mostly limited to the regeneration of the holiday home and, more implicitly, to Lily's development. Emery (1992: 221) considers the following excerpt crucial in this regard:

But there was a force working; something not highly conscious; something that leered, something that lurched; something not inspired to go about its work with dignified ritual or solemn chanting. Mrs. McNab groaned; Mrs. Bast creaked ... they got to work ... some rusty laborious birth seemed to be taking place ... (TL 151-2, my ellipses)

Thus, Mrs. McNab (and to a lesser extent Mrs. Bast) function 'in two apparently contradictory ways: as a natural and therefore dehumanized yet feminine force and as a militarized and therefore human, dehumanizing, and masculine force' (Emery 1992: 226). The combination of feminine and masculine traits in these working class women is enough for Emery (*ibid.*: 222) to conclude that 'the old order, with its rigid sex/gender oppositions, is gone' in the summer house after Mrs. Ramsay's death. However, I do not fully agree with this final statement. After all, in the third and final part of the book, when Mr. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe interact with each other, it becomes obvious that the gender oppositions have not been disposed of: 'That man, she thought, her anger rising in her, never gave; that man took. She, on the other hand would be forced to give' (TL 163). This statement is closely related to Butler's statement (2004: 53) that 'the hierarchical structure of heterosexuality in which men are understood to subordinate women is what produces gender'. Thus, gender oppositions are not absent from the Ramsays' summer house, since Lily still perceives that Mr. Ramsay is in dire need of female sympathy.

7. Lily's Development: From Gender Stability to Gender Subversion

However, the third part of the novel obviously contains a huge shift: Mrs. Ramsay is dead, though not forgotten. Her presence is still tangible for the surviving characters, which is necessary for them to innovate themselves, their identities, their gender perceptions and/or their art. Both Mr. Ramsay and Lily undertake an endeavour that leads them to a certain insight and peace of mind. Thus, in a way, they both reach their lighthouse, as the title of the novel already somewhat suggests.

Lily comes to a point of insight on two levels: she finally finishes the painting that she started eleven years earlier and she ultimately subverts the gender norm to her own desire. Nevertheless, the beginning of the third part suggests that there is nothing but conflict and chaos to come: Mr. Ramsay is still demanding sympathy from a woman, and since Mrs. Ramsay is no longer alive, he turns to Lily for this. However, as I have already mentioned in the section on the relationship between Lily and Mrs. Ramsay, Lily is no longer able to provide the male characters with what they expect from her:

Why, thought Mr. Ramsay, should she look at the sea when I am here? ... Instantly, with the force of some primeval gust (for really he could not restrain himself any longer), there issued from him such a groan that any other woman in the whole world would have done something, said something – all except myself, thought Lily, girding at herself bitterly, *who am not a woman*, but a peevish, ill-tempered, dried-up old maid presumably. (TL 165, my emphasis and ellipsis)

First of all, this excerpt again indicates that the gender distinction, in which the notion of male authority is included, is still very much present. However, Lily's thoughts are indicative of a shift with regard to her perception of her own gender: she does not consider herself a woman, since she does not feel like she belongs to the feminine gender. Thus, she realises that she does not live up to the gender expectations, even if she wanted to, which allows her to neglect Mr. Ramsay's demands and to focus on her art. Butler's statement (2004: 54) seems relevant: 'to have a gender means to have

entered already into a heterosexual relationship of subordination; there appear to be no gendered people who are outside of such relationships'. The words 'dried-up old maid' suggest that the main reason why she does not consider herself a woman, is her lack of a romantic/sexual relationship with a man. Nevertheless, Lily does not perceive herself as a man either, which leads to the conclusion that she has, unwittingly, subverted the norm of femininity: she does not consider herself a woman, because a woman for her is what the gender norm tells her a woman is. She perceives the "Angel in the House" to be the one and only real model for women, so that she decides that she does not belong to this category. However, by refusing to iterate the performative norm without deviations, she innovates and subverts this very norm.

Mrs. Ramsay's death provides Lily with the opportunity to distance herself from her, thus enabling herself to come to terms with both Mrs. Ramsay and herself. When she first arrives back at the summer house, she does not feel anything when thinking about Mrs. Ramsay. However, after meeting Mr. Ramsay again and trying to finish her painting, it is necessary for her to go through the past once more in order to undergo a catharsis and accept the present. She is finally able to let go of her anger towards Mrs. Ramsay, who represented a womanhood with which Lily could never identify and tried to force this on all the women surrounding her:

Mrs. Ramsay had given. Giving, giving, giving, she had died – and had left all this. Really, she was angry with Mrs. Ramsay. With the brush slightly trembling in her fingers she looked at the hedge, the step, the wall. It was all Mrs. Ramsay's doing ... it was all Mrs. Ramsay's fault. She was dead. The step where she used to sit was empty. She was dead. (TL 163-164, my ellipsis)

After this outburst of anger, Lily continues thinking of Mrs. Ramsay, but in a more melancholy fashion: 'she brought together this and that and then this, and so made out of that miserable silliness and spite ... something' (TL 175). She then even starts comparing herself to Mrs. Ramsay and feels grateful to her:

What was the meaning of life? ... The great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead there were little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark; here was one. ... Mrs. Ramsay making of the moment something permanent (as in another sphere Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent) – this was of the nature of a revelation. In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and flowing ... was struck into stability. Life stand still here, Mrs. Ramsay said. ‘Mrs. Ramsay! Mrs. Ramsay!’ she repeated. She owed this revelation to her. (TL 175-176, my ellipses)

These lines are indicative of the type of insight that Lily is gaining by reminiscing about Mrs. Ramsay. Now that Mrs. Ramsay has died, Lily is finally able to consider her a human being and no longer the dominant, yet irresistible, power that she symbolised in the first part of the novel – even though her official role was that of the obedient “Angel in the House”. Lily realises that, no matter what norms Mrs. Ramsay symbolised, she was also a source of inspiration for her: by embodying exactly what Lily did not want to become, Mrs. Ramsay led her to realise who she *did* want to be.

In a sense, Mrs. Ramsay’s death makes Lily feel victorious, because now there is no longer a mother figure hovering over the characters, ordering them what to do and who to be. Lily’s thoughts about the Rayleys, whose marriage is more business-like than romantic, trigger this triumphant feeling:

Mrs. Ramsay has faded and gone, she thought. We can over-ride her wishes, improve away her limited, old-fashioned ideas. ... Life has changed completely. ... For a moment Lily, standing there, with the sun hot on her back, summing up the Rayleys, triumphed over Mrs. Ramsay, who would never know how Paul went to coffee-houses and had a mistress; ... how she stood here painting, had never married, not even William Bankes. (TL 190, my ellipses)

This triumph does not contradict another feeling that presides in Lily when she ponders Mrs. Ramsay: desire. With Mrs. Ramsay gone, and after having come to terms with her own deviations from the feminine stereotype, Lily no longer hates Mrs. Ramsay, since she is no longer a threat to her own identity and accomplishment:

Fifty pairs of eyes were not enough to get round that one woman with, she thought. ... One wanted most some secret sense, fine as air, with which to steal through keyholes and surround her where she sat knitting, talking, sitting silent in the window alone; which took to itself and treasured up like the air which held the smoke of the steamer, her thoughts, her imaginations, her desires. What did the hedge mean to her, what did the garden mean to her, what did it mean to her when a wave broke? (TL 214, my ellipsis)

This desire to know Mrs. Ramsay and to cover her from all possible perspectives, results in a climactic moment of imagination, when Lily brings Mrs. Ramsay back to life:

"Mrs. Ramsay! Mrs. Ramsay!" she cried, feeling the old horror come back – *to want and want and not to have*. ... Mrs. Ramsay – it was part of her perfect goodness to Lily – sat there quite simply, in the chair, flicked her needles to and fro, knitted her reddish-brown stocking, cast her shadow on the step. There she sat. (TL 219, my emphasis and ellipsis)

Lily actually perceives Mrs. Ramsay and sees her sitting in her chair, which appears to be comforting to her. The lines previous to this vision indicate Lily's craving for a mother-daughter relationship with Mrs. Ramsay. Hence, it is safe to state that Lily, who has subverted the norm for herself, no longer feels threatened by Mrs. Ramsay's incorporation of the rigid gender norm. Rather, now that she has made her final decision on who she wants to be, she even feels melancholy about Mrs. Ramsay in her traditional role. Therefore, Woolf does not scold Mrs. Ramsay, but she does reject the rigid gender norm which obliges people to act in a certain way and forbids deviations. In order for Lily to

evolve towards a new type of womanhood, she had to 'renounce the polarized parents as models and reject the system of heterosexual bonding' (DuPlessis 1985: 95). Lily is grateful to Mrs. Ramsay because without her determination to make Lily perform according to the norm, Lily would possibly never have become the person she is in this final part.

8. A Portrait of the Artist: from Insecurity to Insight

Even though my separation of Lily's development in terms of gender and her growth as an artist might seem to suggest that each development takes place independently, this is not the case at all. On the contrary, both developments are intertwined and influenced by Mrs. Ramsay's initial presence and ultimate absence. Originally, Lily is insecure both with regard to the gender norms and to her artistic valour:

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 ... 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 ... [T]here forced themselves upon her other things, her own inadequacy, her insignificance ... (TL 23-24, my ellipses)

Lily is surrounded by the other people in the summer house when these thoughts cross her mind, so that the reader has the impression that 'the thousand forces' which prevent her from painting what she has in mind are the other characters and the norms they represent. At this point in the novel, Mrs. Ramsay is still an all-encompassing force that impedes Lily's artistic progress.

The style of Lily's painting is expressionist rather than realist and is therefore in tune with the Modernist style of the novel. As her conversation with Mr. Bankes clarifies, Lily does not aim for sheer mimesis:

Mr. Bankes tapped the canvas with the bone handle. What did she wish to indicate by the *triangular purple shape*, 'just there?' he asked. It was Mrs. Ramsay reading to James, she said. She knew his objection – that no one could tell it for a human shape. But she had made no attempt at likeness, she said. ... There were other senses, too, in which one might reverence them. ... A light here required a shadow there. (TL 58-59, my emphasis and ellipses)

Strikingly, Lily's rendition of Mrs. Ramsay in the shape of a triangle is echoed by Mrs. Ramsay's vision of herself as a 'wedge-shaped core of darkness' ten pages further into the novel (TL 69). A wedge is a polyhedron, i.e. a geometric object in three dimensions with two triangles and three trapezoid faces (Harris & Stocker 1998: 102). Hence, Mrs. Ramsay and Lily more or less agree on the expressionist outlook of Mrs. Ramsay's personality: a darkish shape with a triangular nature. The dark characteristic seems to refer to Mrs. Ramsay's nature outside of society, when she is herself: since the subconscious, which is often perceived as one's true identity, is regularly symbolised by shadow in Modernist and Postmodernist writing, the dark shape probably indicates Mrs. Ramsay's subconscious. Therefore, it is axiomatic that only Mrs. Ramsay herself and Lily, a perceptive artist who 'sees' and understands more than her companions in the summer house, describe Mrs. Ramsay this way.

As I stated in the beginning of this section, Lily's development with regard to her gender identity is intertwined with her artistic progress. Her main problem with her painting is indicative of this statement:

It was a question, she remembered, how to connect this mass on the right hand with that on the left. She might do it by bringing the line of the branch across so; or break the vacancy in the foreground by an object (James perhaps) so. But the danger was that by doing that the unity of the whole might be broken. (TL 60)

Throughout the novel, she wonders how she can connect the two extremes in her painting, since originally there is a large white space left in the middle of the canvas. This information connects

Lily's painting to her perception of the gender norm: as DuPlessis (1985: 94-95) points out, 'the painting, a vivid formulation of the novel's themes in an imaginary plastic structure, is "about" a mother and child, Mrs. Ramsay and James, or even Lily herself, poised between strong opposing forces representing male and female – Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay'. In other words, Lily tries to find a position between the rigid binary, both in her painting and in society. Therefore, the connection between her gendered and artistic growth becomes more plausible, since it concerns similar developments towards a middle-ground, a synthesis. Already in the first part of the novel she tries to find a solution:

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. In a flash she saw her picture, and thought, Yes, I shall put the tree further in the middle; then I shall avoid that awkward space. That's what I shall do. That's what has been puzzling me. (TL 92)

Her happiness when remembering that she is a painter is indicative of her refusal to follow in Mrs. Ramsay's footsteps, and so is her determination to find a means of filling the empty middle. The fact that she remembers that she, unlike most other women she knows and like the men that surround her, has a professional occupation, suggests that she takes up a position in between the two extremes of femininity and masculinity. Therefore, the switch from her middle ground in gendered terms to her problem with the 'middle ground' in her painting is indicative of the connection between the two processes that are at work.

The long process that Lily undergoes is hinted at in the third part of the novel:

When she had sat there last ten years ago ... [t]here had been a problem about a foreground of a picture. Move the tree to the middle, she had said. She had never finished that picture. It had been knocking about in her mind all these years. She would paint that picture now. ... The question was of some relation between those

masses. She had borne it in her mind all these years. It seemed as if the solution had come to her: she knew now what she wanted to do. (TL 161, my ellipses)

Determined as she may seem in these lines, Lily will still have difficulty finding a solution, because 'she has split her formalist vision from her emotional life' (DuPlessis 1985: 97). As I have mentioned in the previous section, she first has to allow her memories and emotions to surface ('And she began to lay on a red, a grey, and she began to model her way into the hollow there. At the same time, she seemed to be sitting beside Mrs. Ramsay on the beach', TL 186). The images of the past and, more specifically, of Mrs. Ramsay interchange with thoughts about how she can come to a suitable solution for her painting. Gradually, as she continues reminiscing about the past and about the other characters, embedded in their normative roles, she will find the solution that she has been looking for. Therefore, her negative experiences with the normative system have to be remembered before she can find a synthesis on both levels:

Certainly she was losing consciousness of outer things, and her name and her personality and her appearance, and whether Mr. Carmichael was there or not, her mind kept throwing up from its depths, scenes, and names, and sayings, and memories and ideas, like a fountain spurting over that glaring, hideously difficult white space, while she modelled it with greens and blues. Charles Tansley used to say that, she remembered, women can't paint, women can't write. (TL 174)

Only when she has come to terms with Mrs. Ramsay and her own deviation from the gender paradigm, can she finish her project on the final pages of the novel. Furthermore, she seems to need the reassurance that Mr. Ramsay has also succeeded in his endeavour of reaching the lighthouse. This can be explained by the scene that takes place before Mr. Ramsay and his two youngest children set out for their trip: by complimenting Mr. Ramsay on his boots, rather than providing him with the psychological reassurance that he was implicitly asking, Lily finally managed to find a middle ground. Not only has she established a friendship with Mr. Ramsay (which is implausible in a purely

binary and oppositional heterosexual matrix), she also realises that there is no need for her to be an “Angel”.

‘He must have reached it,’ said Lily Briscoe aloud, feeling suddenly completely tired out. ... Ah, but she was relieved. ‘He has landed,’ she said aloud. ‘It is finished.’ ... Quickly, as if she were recalled by something over there, she turned to her canvas. There it was – her picture. Yes, with all its greens and blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something. ... 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 225-226, my ellipses and emphasis)

She has achieved the goal that she consciously strove toward, since she has found a way of connecting the two extremes in her painting. In other words, she has managed to connect the seemingly oppositional extremes on two levels. The line in the painting is therefore a symbol for Lily’s position in the novel: her vision ‘overwhelms all the binary systems on which the novel has been built’ (DuPlessis 1985: 96).

CHAPTER 4 | A NARRATION OF ONE'S OWN: MARGARITA LYMBERAKI'S *STRAW HATS* (ΤΑ ΨΑΘΙΝΑ ΚΑΠΕΛΑ) (1946)

1. Synopsis

Like *To the Lighthouse*, *Straw Hats* consists of three parts. Each part describes a summer in the lives of three sisters, Maria, Infanta and Katerina. Despite the apparent chronological order of the three parts ("The First Summer", "The Second Summer" and "The Third Summer"), the narration often switches between these three successive summers, so that it is not always clear when an event took place. During these summers, the sisters undergo a development from adolescence to maturity, each in their own way. Maria is the oldest sister, who chooses to marry and have children. Infanta, the middle sister, is interested in painting and horseback riding, and abstains from giving in to her suitor Nikitas's proposals. Katerina, the youngest sister and the first-person narrator of the novel, struggles with her identity throughout the story, but ultimately rejects her own suitor David and decides to focus on writing and travelling. *Straw Hats* is set outside of Kifisia, on the outskirts of Athens, but it remains difficult to situate the novel, both chronologically and geographically, in great detail. As Vitti (2003: 516), and others, have observed, *Straw Hats* is set a couple of years before the Second World War, but it is not possible to define the chronological boundaries more specifically.

In "The First Summer", the three sisters live with their divorced mother Anna, their aunt Theresa and their grandfather in the neighbourhood of Kifisia. Anna and Theresa's mother, who is referred to as 'the Polish grandmother' by the novel's characters, eloped with a musician when her children were small. Miltos, the father of Maria, Infanta and Katerina, lives and works in Athens, but they only go to visit him once a week. Aunt Theresa is a painter, who takes Infanta under her wings. In

this first part of the novel, Maria decides to marry Marios, a young man from the neighbourhood, who has been in love with her ever since they were children.

In “The Second Summer”, Maria is pregnant with her first child. The reader catches a glimpse of the diary of Marios’s mother, Laura Parigori. Katerina, who was not in the least interested in boys during the previous summer, falls in love with David and tries tirelessly to catch his attention. Infanta, on the other hand, has trouble convincing Nikitas, a boy with whom she goes horseback riding, that she is not interested in anything more than friendship. Maria gives birth to a boy, Giannis – named after Marios’s father – while Mrs. Parigori, who is still married to *her* Giannis, starts flirting with David, much to Katerina’s anger and frustration.

In “The Third Summer”, mysterious elements are introduced: Katerina follows her mother to an unknown house, and suspects that she is hiding something. Maria, who is pregnant of her second child, and Infanta do not pay attention to their sister’s suspicions, which makes her even more adamant about discovering the truth. Katerina starts visiting the elderly man who inhabits the house that she saw her mother enter, in order to find out what is going on. This man, a story-teller, refuses to enlighten her on the topic, but he does tell her all about his son Andreas, a marine. Like the Polish grandmother, Andreas will never appear as a character in the novel, but each of them will function as an important influence on Katerina’s development. When Katerina finds her mother one night, reading and crying over a bunch of letters, she discovers that ever since her grandmother left her family, she started corresponding with her daughter Anna. These letters were delivered to the old man’s house, which is the reason for Anna’s visits to this old man, who turns out to be a cousin of Katerina’s grandfather. However, since both cousins at one point wanted to seduce ‘the Polish grandmother’, they have not been on speaking terms ever since the grandmother chose Katerina’s grandfather as her husband. Furthermore, this final part also contains an excerpt from Mrs. Parigori’s diary. Towards the end of the novel, David asks the permission of Katerina’s mother to marry her daughter: Anna has no objections, but Katerina does, much to the surprise of the other

characters. After dreaming of Andreas picking her up to join him on his travels, Katerina decides that she wants to travel rather than bind herself to David.

2. The Inheritance of Femininities

As this synopsis suggests, Lymberaki 'presents three alternatives for women' (Hohlfelder 1997: 11): Maria takes up a rather traditional position, whereas Infanta and Katerina are more adventurous, the former deciding to stay single and the latter becoming a traveller-writer. The distinction between the 'types of femininity' that are represented by these sisters is not as rigid as one could derive from this typology. Even though each sister is different from the other two, they also have a lot in common and all three of them go through moments of personal crisis. Since they are all adolescents at the beginning of the novel, they all undergo a development: Maria originally flirts and kisses with several boys of the neighbourhood and even loses her virginity to a young man, before marrying someone else and taking up the position of wife and mother. Infanta does not consciously decide what she expects from Nikitas, i.e. whether she wants him as her friend or as her lover, until the end of the novel. And, finally, Katerina evolves from a young girl who does not understand why her older sister Maria fools around with so many boys, over an adolescent who desperately wants to be loved by David, to a young woman who decides that she wants to travel and write.

Whereas Maria ultimately behaves the way the heteronormative society expects her to, Infanta and, more poignantly, Katerina will deviate from it. As Butler (1999: 23) states,

Inasmuch as "identity" is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, the very notion of "the person" is called into question by the cultural emergence of those "incoherent" or "discontinuous" gendered beings who appear to be persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined.

Maria is often annoyed by Katerina's behaviour and decisions, which can be considered an illustration of Butler's statement. Since Katerina is an 'incoherent gendered being', Maria's own gendered identity is questioned, which is not a pleasant experience for her. Therefore, she repeatedly reproaches Katerina (and sometimes Infanta) for their different lifestyles: '«Στα ερωτικά είστε κι οι δυό πολύ καθυστερημένες», είχε πει πέρσι μιά φορά η Μαρία στην Ινφάντα και σε μένα'¹⁷ (*Τα Ψάθινα Καπέλα* ¹⁸ 138). Hence, Maria is very much embedded in the normative system and, like Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, tries to secure the continuity of gender norms, not only by playing the role of wife and mother herself, but also by attempting to put other women in a similar position. In this respect, she resembles her mother Anna, who is constantly in conflict with Katerina:

Είσαι ανυπόφορη! φώναξε η μητέρα. Ανυπόφορη. Είναι να λυπάται κανείς τον άντρα που θα σε πάρει. Μου 'ρθε τότε όρεξη να γελάσω. Καημένε Δαυΐδ! ... Δεν κρατιόμουνα πια απ' τα γέλια. (ΨΚ 309, my ellipsis)

"You are impossible!" My mother screamed. "Impossible. I pity the man you marry." I then felt like laughing. Poor David! ... I couldn't contain my laughter. (TS 294)

First, this scene illustrates Anna's reaction to Katerina's disobedient behaviour: her daughter's deviation from the conduct that is considered 'proper' for girls frustrates her to a large extent. Therefore, her words of reproach to Katerina reinforce Butler's statement that 'indeed, we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right' (Butler 1999: 178). Furthermore, this scene is very similar to the scene in *To the Lighthouse* where Lily cannot refrain from laughing at Mrs. Ramsay's expectations for her. In both scenes, the maternal figure assumes a married future for the daughter

¹⁷ "'When it comes to love, you two are both retarded,'" Maria told Infanta and me at one point last year' (*Three Summers* 144).

¹⁸ Henceforth, I will use the abbreviation 'ΨΚ' when citing from the Greek novel *Τα Ψάθινα Καπέλα* (*Straw Hats* 1995). The English translations will be taken from *Three Summers*, Karen Van Dyck's English translation of the novel, which will henceforth be abbreviated to 'TS'.

figure, while these daughters already seem to realise that they have other priorities in life and mock the mother by bursting out in laughter.

Strikingly, the different types of 'femininity' are not only incorporated by Maria, Infanta and Katerina, but also by women of previous generations. As I have already mentioned, Maria takes after her mother in that both of them follow the norms of femininity. Infanta spends a lot of time with her aunt Theresa, who feels an inveterate hatred for men ever since she was raped by her ex-fiancé. Therefore, it is not surprising that Infanta ultimately rejects her suitor and decides to remain on her own. Finally, Katerina takes after her mother's mother, 'the Polish grandmother', not only physically, but also in terms of character, pride and stubbornness. Throughout the novel, the resemblance between these two characters is touched upon repeatedly, for example when Katerina is once more annoying her mother with her behaviour:

- Αυτή την ανησυχία σου δεν καταλαβαίνω. Δεν ξέρω από πού την κληρονόμησες. Κι ο πατέρας κι εγώ είμαστε...
- Κι η Πολωνίδα γιαγιά;

Γυρίζει απότομα, τα μάτια της είναι άγρια, δε με κοιτάει όπως η μάνα το παιδί.

- Τολμάς; ...
- Ε, λοιπόν, ναι, φωνάζω. Τη μισείτε όλοι εδώ μέσα. Εγώ όμως την αγαπάω...
- Κατερίνα, έλα κοντά μου... Δεν πρέπει βέβαια κανείς να κρίνει τους γονείς του, μα δεν ήταν καλή μάνα η Πολωνίδα γιαγιά. Έφυγε μ'έναν άντρα ξένο, γύρισε μαζί του τον κόσμο ...
- Ήτανε ελεύθερη όμως, ευτυχισμένη. (ΨΚ 36-37, my ellipses, except for the first and last ones)

"I can't understand that restlessness of yours. Where did you get it from? Both your father and I are..." "What about our Polish grandmother?" She turns abruptly, her eyes fierce; she isn't looking at me the way a mother should. "How dare you!" ... "Yes, so there!" I shouted. "You all hate her. But I love her" ... "Katerina, come

over close ... One shouldn't criticize one's parents, but the Polish grandmother was not a good mother. She went off with a foreign man, gallivanting around the world ... "But she was free, happy." (TS 40-41)

Even though Katerina is still very young and inexperienced at this point, her admiration for her grandmother's stubbornness is already clear. Because the behaviour of each sister mirrors that of an older woman, the novel illustrates Butler's statements on the repetitive nature of performativity and of subversion. In *Gender Trouble*, she states that

[t]he abiding gendered self will then be shown to be structured by repeated acts that seek to approximate the ideal of a substantial ground of identity, but which, in their occasional *discontinuity*, reveal the temporal and contingent groundlessness of this "ground." The possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction. (Butler 1999: 179, original emphasis)

If one considers Maria and her mother Anna subjects who have internalised the gender norms, these characters illustrate how those norms have a repetitive nature. As I have pointed out earlier, this repetitive nature is both the norm's main characteristic and its most central weakness. Therefore, subversion of the norm is possible by means of repetition with slight alterations. Since the Polish grandmother already subverted the norm by eloping with her lover and leaving her family behind, it becomes easier for Katerina to subvert the norm in a similar, albeit less radical way. The same theory can be used with regard to Infanta and aunt Theresa: aunt Theresa's reaction to her rape is to denounce the heterosexual matrix, which provides Infanta with the opportunity to consider such behaviour a possibility. As Butler (1999: 185) remarks,

[i]n a sense, all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; “agency,” then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition. If the rules governing signification not only restrict, but enable the assertion of alternative domains of cultural intelligibility, i.e., new possibilities for gender that contest the rigid codes of hierarchical binarisms, then it is only *within* the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible. (original emphasis)

Hence, Camatsos (2005: 54) is right in stating that Maria, Infanta and Katerina not only ‘represent the various paths available to women at that time’, but that each of them ‘follows in the footsteps of one of her elders’. These female examples enable the construction of the three sisters’ identities: throughout the course of three summers, all three of them develop into an identity that is inspired by one of their foremothers.

3. Male Characters: Voice, Gaze and Absence

For the analysis of the male characters’ importance and function in *Straw Hats*, it is constructive to discuss narration and focalisation first. The narrator of *Straw Hats* is Katerina herself, i.e. the narrator is extradiegetic and homodiegetic. Because Katerina narrates the novel, it is, to a large extent, also focalised by her, which results in her being the central protagonist. Nevertheless, the I-narration also includes other focalisers, which, according to Camatsos, means that Lymberaki attempts ‘to have [her] female narrator enter into an authoritative discourse without applying exclusionary practices against others’ (2005: 41). Seymour Chatman’s terminology to distinguish between two types of *point of view* or focalisation is relevant here: ‘*Slant* refers to a narrator’s attitude and other mental activities related to the telling of the story, whereas the *filter* describes the mental processes and consciousness of the characters within the world of the story’ (qtd. in Camatsos 2005: 42, original emphasis). These shifts in focalisation are not unproblematic, because if Katerina is the narrator, then how can she inform the reader about what another character is

thinking, feeling or remembering? Several critics (such as Farinou-Malamatari 1988: 106-7) have explained this conundrum by stating that the novel is mostly narrated in first person, but that it contains shifts to the third person. However, the shifts are not related to narration, but to focalisation only. Therefore, I find Camatsos's explanation more plausible, since she points towards the duality of Katerina: 'the female narrator exists both as a narrator and as a character in the story' (Camatsos 2005: 42). Katerina *the narrator* is older and more experienced than Katerina *the character*, because she is writing about her own past (as I will analyse further in the section on her growth as a writer). It is not Katerina *the character* who fantasises about the thoughts of the other characters and suggests to the reader what these might be, but Katerina *the narrator* who informs the reader about the mental reality of other characters. Since the trustworthiness of the narration becomes speculative through this technique, it can be considered a fictionalisation principle. In Camatsos's view – and I agree with her – the narrator of *Straw Hats* draws attention to the fact that she is a narrator exactly by means of the emphasis on filter shifts (*ibid.*: 43), because this type of narration is relevant for the definition of *Straw Hats* as a female *Künstlerroman*. Due to the novel's experiments with the boundaries of realist poetics, the narrative instance is an illustration of Modernist poetics.

Even though there are a relatively large number of male characters in the novel, their overall importance is slightly reduced by the small number of male focalisers. Moreover, *Straw Hats* stages very few dominant male characters, as opposed to *To the Lighthouse*. For example, even though Katerina's grandfather is described as the patriarch of the family, he rarely says a word, and his influence seems to be limited to futile details: 'το πατέρι το απαγορεύει ο παππούς: είναι βλαβερό λέει'¹⁹ (ΨΚ 35). This provides the reader with the impression that even though, theoretically speaking, Katerina's grandfather is the dominant figure of the household, his daughter Anna and the housekeeper Rodia are *really* the adults in charge. As Camatsos (2005: 53) observes, the main filter characters (a category which does not include Katerina) are three couples: Maria and her husband

¹⁹ 'Grandfather forbids pepper, he thinks it's bad for the health.' (TS 38)

Marios; Mr. and Mrs. Parigoris, Marios's parents; and Infanta and her suitor Nikitas. Furthermore, Katerina's grandfather, her aunt Theresa and her mother function as filter characters in only one paragraph each. The two most dominant male characters, i.e. David and Mr. Louzis, never focalise throughout the novel; nor do Katerina's father Miltos, her uncle Agisilaos, the old man (her grandfather's cousin), and others. Furthermore, the three sisters are the most prominent focalisers. Consequently, the reader feels more affinity for Katerina and her sisters, the new generation of women, than for the older female generation and the male characters.

Whereas Katerina is constantly arguing with her mother, her relationship with her father is close to inexistent. Since her parents are divorced, she and her sisters only see him on Sundays. Therefore, he is an absent parent. Her grandfather, even though he is physically a constant presence in the house, is psychologically absent too: he rarely participates in the conversations in the house, which makes it impossible for his granddaughters to have a real relationship with him. Hence, the three sisters are surrounded by women and female influences in the house, while most of their friends outside of the house are boys, who become students in the course of the novel – as opposed to the three sisters. This division between the female domestic and the male outside can hardly be taken for granted without considering it criticism on Lymberaki's behalf. Especially the fact that her protagonist Katerina loves to spend time outside and desperately wants to travel around the world is meaningful in this respect: just like her Polish grandmother, Katerina will ultimately repudiate a domestic life.

As in *To the Lighthouse*, *Straw Hats* contains several descriptions of the male gaze on a female subject. However, in this novel the gaze is also reversed, i.e. there are several instances in which the female gaze on a male character is described, e.g. when Maria watches the man she will lose her virginity to a couple of paragraphs later:

Σε μιά γωνιά μες' απ' το φράχτη ένας άντρας γυμνός ίσαμε τη μέση πλενόταν. Με το ένα του χέρι έχυνε νερό από ένα ποτιστήρι και με το άλλο έτριβε το κορμί του δυνατά, σα για να το πονέσει ... Το νερό γλιστρούσε απ' τα μαλλιά του, άφηνε

στους ώμους λίγες χάντρες που γυάλιζαν στον ήλιο, κι έφτανε μέχρι το παντελόνι και το μούσκειο ... φαινόταν η αρχή της μέσης κάπως πιο άσπρη απ' το υπόλοιπο κορμί, κι οι λαγόνες ευκίνητοι, ευαίσθητοι σαν κυνηγιάρικου ζώου. Θα είχε χέρια σκληρά και κορμί τρυφερό, άσπρο εκεί που δεν το 'βλεπε ο ήλιος, σα μωρού. (ΨΚ 64, my ellipses)

In a corner by the wall a young man, naked to the waist, was washing. With one hand he poured water from a watering can and with the other he scrubbed his body vigorously, as if he wanted it to hurt ... The water dripped from his hair, leaving a few beads on his shoulders that glistened in the sun and ran down to his trousers ... The beginning of his waist showed, slightly paler than the rest of his body. His hips were limber like those of a hunted animal. He had strong hands and a gentle body, white in those places the sun never reaches, like a baby's. (TS 70)

Through the reversal of the gaze, the female subject is presented as a sexual being that finds pleasure in watching the half-naked body of a young man. Hence, women in this novel not only function as aesthetic objects, but also as subjects. The fact that Maria is one of the women who reverse the gaze illustrates that she undergoes a development: she has not always been the obedient woman she becomes towards the end of the novel. Even though she has constantly been aware of what society expected of her, she gave herself the time to experience other ways of living first. Her transition is described literally, when Marios asks her for a piece of coal to light his cigarette:

Νιώθει, για πρώτη φορά, πως αυτή, η πιο δυνατή, θα υποταχθεί σ' αυτόν, γιατί θα φέρει μέσα στα σπλάχνα της το βάρος των παιδιών του. Η σκέψη τούτη περνάει σαν αστραπή απ' το μυαλό της την ώρα που τείνει το χέρι με τ' αναμμένο κάρβουνο. Υπάρχει ακόμα μια ελπίδα: να πετάξει την τσιμπίδα απ' την ανοιχτή πόρτα της κουζίνας ... «Αν κάνω ακόμα ένα βήμα, αν του δώσω τη φωτιά, θα γίνω γυναίκα του». (ΨΚ 78, my ellipsis)

For the first time she feels that she, the stronger one, must obey him, because she will carry his children. This thought passes like lightning through her brain as she extends her hand to give him the red hot coal. There is still one last chance, to throw the tongs out the open door of the kitchen ... *If I take this last step, if I give him the coal, I will become his wife.* (TS 86, original emphasis)

In this instance, Maria is aware that she is expected to perform a particular role: her obedience in this specific context will provide Marios with the certainty that she indeed wants to marry him. After the engagement, Marios reminds her that she is free to run away if she does not want to marry him after all. However, at this point Maria has already adapted to the role society wants her to play, so that ending the engagement is not an option.

4. The Maternal Figure: Desire or Contempt?

As in *To the Lighthouse*, the protagonist of *Straw Hats* has a peculiar relationship with the maternal figure: several excerpts show that Katerina craves the love of her mother Anna, which is also the case with Lily Briscoe (who longs for the affection of Mrs. Ramsay, her surrogate mother). At the same time, however, Katerina seems to desire very different things in life – which, once more, reminds one of Lily's position to Mrs. Ramsay. Their problematic relationship is hinted at from the first pages of the novel: Anna's opinion about the Polish grandmother, her mother, seems to be diametrically opposed to Katerina's (even though the reader later finds out that Anna and her mother still correspond through letters). Anna and her sister Theresa have a conversation about Katerina, in which they decide to pay special attention to Katerina because she bears a large resemblance to the Polish grandmother and they want to avoid that she follows in her footsteps. At the same time, Katerina adores her grandmother and tries fervently to find physical resemblances with her, judging from an old photograph.

Even though Katerina overhears the conversation between her mother and her aunt, she also admires her mother and desires her love. Every week, when Anna puts the three sisters in bed herself, Katerina begs for more hugs and more affection. What is more, in the first part of the novel she is drenched after standing in the rain for a while and considers not putting on dry clothes, because being sick might result in more of Anna's attention:

Ίσως, αν αρρώσταινα, η μητέρα μου να μ' αγαπούσε πιο πολύ. Θα μου ανασήκωνε το κεφάλι για να μου δώσει να πιω νερό, θα με παρακαλούσε να φάω, το βράδυ στο σκοτάδι θα μου χάιδευε το μέτωπο. (ΨΚ 73)

Perhaps if I got sick Mother would love me more. She would lift up my head and give me water to drink. She would beg me to eat. At night in the dark she would caress my forehead. (TS 81)

Katerina's opinion about her mother is highly unstable: the novel contains numerous references both to her desire for her mother's attention and to her desire to hurt her.

Στο μικρό διάστημα που περπατήσαμε μόνες με τη μητέρα δεν είπαμε και πολλά. Ένωθα την ανάγκη να την πειράξω, να την κάνω να θυμώσει. Θα 'θελα να δω το χείλι της να τρέμει και τα μάτια της να πετάν φωτιές. Ωστόσο την αγαπούσα περισσότερο παρά ποτέ. (ΨΚ 246)

In the short distance I walked alone with Mother we didn't say much. I wanted to annoy her, to get her angry. I would have liked to see her lips tremble and her eyes flash. On the other hand I loved her more than ever. (TS 235)

In other words, Katerina's position to Anna is very similar to Lily's position to Mrs. Ramsay: both young women desire to have the mother figure, or even to be her, but at the same time renounce her position in society. Katerina finds particular pleasure in breaching the boundaries of what is 'proper' for a girl, because of her mother's reaction:

Στο τραπέζι βρήκε πάλι την ευκαιρία να μου κάνει μια παρατήρηση. Όμως εγώ, απορροφημένη ..., δεν έδωσα και τόση σημασία, δεν είπα τίποτα, κι αυτό τη θύμωσε ακόμα περισσότερο.

- Η αυθάδειά σου δεν έχει όρια πια, φώναξε, και αφήνοντας το φαΐ της στη μέση σηκώθηκε απ' το τραπέζι. ...

Ένωθα μια μέθη, ένα θρίαμβο. (ΨΚ 246, my ellipses)

At the table she found another reason to reprimand me. I, though, totally absorbed ..., didn't notice her. I said nothing, and that made her even angrier.

"Your impudence knows no limits," she cried, and leaving her food unfinished, she left the table. ...

I felt a drunkenness, a sense of triumph. (TS 236)

Strikingly, Katerina perceives her mother from a normative point of view. Even though she herself will ultimately subvert the norm by choosing to become a traveller-writer, she has trouble viewing her mother in different ways than the norm has enforced upon her. Without realising it, Katerina views her mother as the norm urges people to view mothers: as obedient women who are to act merely for the benefit of their children.

Η ιδέα του ταξιδιού της μητέρας μου ήταν ανυπόφορη. Κι εγώ να ταξιδεψα, θα προτιμούσα να μείνει εδώ, να με περιμένει. (ΨΚ 177)

The idea that Mother would travel was unbearable. Even if I were to travel, I wanted her at home waiting for me. (TS 175)

Katerina's mother plays the piano, but originally the reader is informed that she plays coldly, without any emotion, in the same fashion as she performs her mother role:

Παίζει δίχως πάθος. Ομοιόμορφα, συγκρατημένα. Κάτι λείπει απ' το παίξιμό της ... (ΨΚ 59, my ellipsis)

She plays the piano without passion, using the same restrained tone all through a piece. Something is missing from her playing ... (TS 64)

However, there are also instances in which Anna is depicted playing the piano in an entirely different way, when she is alone – or thinks she is. She cannot express her true emotions and show the nature that she considers ‘hers’ when other people are around, but only when she is on her own. This is very similar to Mrs. Ramsay’s thoughts when she finds herself alone. Both women seem to be wearing a harness that they cannot take off in the company of others. In my opinion, this harness is the normative system, which forces them to perform a stereotypical role and does not allow them to deviate from that role. As in *To the Lighthouse*, the reader perceives the maternal figure’s perception of her own persona through the focalisation of the character herself:

Για να ‘ρθει κάποιος προς εσένα, πρέπει να κινήσεις να τον προϋπαντήσεις. Το πρώτο ετούτο βήμα δεν μπόρεσε ποτέ να το κάνει, με κανέναν: ούτε με τον πατέρα της, ούτε με την Τερέζα, ούτε με το Μίλτο, ούτε με τα παιδιά. Κι όταν ακόμα έπαιζε πιάνο μπροστά τους, πρόσεχε οι νότες να ‘ναι καθαρές κι ομοιόμορφες, να μην προδίνουν καμιά υποχώρηση, κανένα πλησίασμα. Όμως, σαν ήταν μόνη, τα δειλινά, και το τελευταίο φως της μέρας έπεφτε στα άσπρα πλήχτρα, ενώ όλο το άλλο δωμάτιο έμενε στη σκιά, ξεχνιόταν, μπορούσε να ξεχαστεί, να κάνει το πρώτο βήμα. Μα, δεν υπήρχε τότε άνθρωπος απέναντί της, που να ‘ρθει προς αυτήν, και το πρώτο βήμα δεν είχε σημασία. (ΨΚ 86-87, my emphases)

For someone to open up to you, you must also open up to them. She was never able to take that first step with anyone, not with Theresa²⁰, not with Miltos, and not with the children. Even when she was playing the piano in front of them she made sure she used the same restrained tone all through the piece so as to not

²⁰ In *Three Summers*, the translation reads ‘aunt Theresa’, but I have altered this because I believe this is a mistake on the translator’s part. First of all, the Greek text does not mention ‘aunt’, only Theresa’s first name. Secondly, these sentences are clearly focalised by Anna, who is Theresa’s sister and therefore would not refer to her as *aunt* Theresa.

give away her feelings. Though *when she was alone* at dusk and the last light of day fell on the white keys while the rest of the room was already dark, *she would forget herself and take the first step*. But then there was never anyone there to respond so her overture meant nothing. (TS 94-95)

Since these lines are focalised by Anna herself (which is already indicated by the reference to 'Anna' rather than 'Mother' in the lines before this excerpt), the reader understands that Anna is aware of her behaviour. The way in which she plays the piano symbolises her general way of life. Her sense of responsibility prevents her from showing her true emotions. However, Katerina accidentally hears her mother play the piano in this free fashion and storms into the room. Katerina is puzzled and impressed and begs to hear more, but Anna's reaction is indicative of her sense of restriction by the norm:

Ωστόσο, ένα απόγεμα είχε ανοίξει απότομα η πόρτα κι η Κατερίνα είχε πέσει στην αγκαλιά της σα σίφουνας. «Πώς το 'παιξες αυτό, μανούλα; ξαναπαιξ' το, ξαναπαιξ' το». Τα μάγουλα της Κατερίνας ήταν κόκκινα και τα μάτια της υγρά. «Ξαναπαιξ' το, μανούλα, έλα». «Δεν έπαιζα εγώ, είχα ανοίξει το ραδιόφωνο», είχε ψιθυρίσει, κι η παγωνιά είχε απλωθεί μέσα της. (ΨΚ 87)

One afternoon Katerina had abruptly opened the door and rushed into her arms in a whirlwind. "How did you play that, Mommy? Play it again. Play it again." Katerina's cheeks were red and her eyes damp. "Play it again, Mommy, come on." "I wasn't playing. It was the radio," she whispered, and the iciness was there again. (TS 95)

Like Mrs. Ramsay, Anna finds psychological freedom in moments of solitude, but unlike her, she uses this freedom to express herself musically. Furthermore, when Katerina stumbles across her mother's secret correspondence with the Polish grandmother, towards the end of the novel, she gains insight in her mother's psyche:

Τί φλογερή ψυχή η μητέρα, και να μην το δείχνει, και να καμώνεται πώς το μόνο ενδιαφέρον της στη ζωή είναι να στρώνει το τραπέζι, με τη μεγαλύτερη προσοχή, και να κάνει μαρμελάδα ... Το μάτι μου πέφτει στις γραμμές που 'γραφε λίγο πριν. Για μένα λέει, για το πώς φέρθηκα, και για το πόσο πόνεσε εκείνη. Αχ, μητέρα, θα με συγχωρέσεις ποτέ; Γιατί να κρύβεσαι, μητέρα, γιατί να κρύβεσαι όλη σου τη ζωή, σαν την Ινφάντα, σαν κι εμένα, σαν όλους μας; *Κρυβόμαστε ο ένας απ' τον άλλον.* ... Έτσι λοιπόν, όλο το πάθος που μαζεύτηκε και πύκνωσε μέσα της, μια κι ατύχησε στο γάμο της κι έζησε δίχως άντρα, η μητέρα το διοχέτευσε σ' αυτά τα γράμματα. (ΨΚ 303-304, my ellipses and emphasis)

What a passionate soul Mother has, and here she never shows it, instead she pretends that her only interest in life is setting the table with the utmost care, and making jam ... My eye falls on the lines she wrote just a minute ago. She is writing about me: how I behaved, and how I hurt her. Oh, Mother, will you ever forgive me? Why must you hide, Mother, why must you hide your whole life long, like Infanta, like me, like all of us? *We are all hiding from each other.* ... So that is it, she poured all the passion that gathered and settled in her when her marriage failed and she had to live alone without a man into these letters. (TS 288)

These lines are important for two reasons: first, Katerina's discovery seems to be some kind of guidance in her search of her own identity. She will ultimately realise that her obsessive love for David is also a form of hiding. Her true nature, that of the narrator, has been hinted at throughout the whole novel, implicitly and explicitly. Secondly, these lines illustrate DuPlessis's statement that the mother in the 20th-century female *Künstlerroman* functions as the muse of her daughter, but not merely in a passive way (DuPlessis 1985: 94). The mother is often an artist herself, albeit a silenced one: she plays the piano, writes letters and engages in other creative activities, but does not have the means to enter a 'dominant art form' (*ibid.*). Therefore, the daughter 'can make prominent the work both have achieved... In these works, the female artist is given a way of looking back and re-

enacting childhood ties, to achieve not the culturally approved ending in heterosexual romance, but rather the re-parenting necessary to her second birth as an artist' (*ibid.*).

5. Katerina's Development: Women in Love with Narration

Due to the repeated focalisation by one of the three sisters, and the narration by Katerina, the female voice is predominant throughout *Straw Hats*. However, this impression is not only established by means of focalisation and narration, but also by the internal narratives in the novel, i.e. the Polish grandmother's letters and Mrs. Parigori's diary entries. Since Katerina, Mrs. Parigori and the Polish grandmother each belong to a different generation, Camatsos (2005: 54) points out that a lineage is created between these three women. She interprets this lineage 'in terms of the evolution of female voices and forms of writing' (*ibid.*). The importance of the grandmother's narrative is emphasised by her physical absence: the novel does not actually stage her, but merely evokes her presence through her letters and through the stories that are told about her. Furthermore, both the grandmother's writings (epistolary form) and those of Mrs. Parigori (diary form) are private (i.e. not meant for publication), while Katerina's is public – since her narrative *is* this novel (*ibid.*). This illustrates the evolution of female writers: Katerina belongs to one of the first generations of Greek women who are actually able to be published. When one takes into consideration Lymberaki's own position in Greek society, as a young female writer, this appears to be a metafictional element.

As Camatsos (*ibid.*: 55) notes, '[b]oth characters, Mrs. Parigoris and the Polish grandmother, shape and influence Katerina's thoughts and actions, and they are a crucial part of her journey towards becoming a writer and finding her own voice'. The influence of both women on Katerina, no matter how different, is indeed of major importance: Katerina's admiration for the grandmother she has never known and her contempt for Mrs. Parigori are equally large. The reason why Katerina dislikes Mrs. Parigori is that she considers her a rival, since Mrs. Parigori starts spending a lot of time

with David in the second summer of the novel. Strikingly, Katerina resembles Mrs. Parigori in more than one way: even though Mrs. Parigori is a married woman, she is rather independent and will not allow anyone to limit her freedom. Furthermore, her diary indicates that she disliked Maria's original behaviour towards boys as much as Katerina did:

Η Μαρία δεν μ' άρεσε διόλου έτσι που την είδα να φέρεται με τ' αγόρια. Πιάνεται με όλους μπράτσο, γελάει προκλητικά, φορούσε ένα φόρεμα χτυπητό που δεν έντυνε το κορμί της, ... Στο Μάριο ούτε σημασία. Ίσως έτσι να 'ναι καλύτερα, και να την ξεχάσει. (ΨΚ 133, my ellipsis)

I don't like the way Maria acts with the boys. She takes them all by the arm, laughs provocatively. She was wearing a showy dress that didn't cover her properly, ... She didn't seem to notice Marios. Perhaps it's better that way. He will forget her.
(TS 140)

This excerpt describes the garden party that took place in the first summer of the novel. The reader has already read Katerina's account of the party, which is remarkably similar with regard to Maria's behaviour. At the party, Marios, who is already infatuated with Maria at this point, and Katerina observe how Maria 'shamelessly' kisses another boy. Katerina tries to comfort Marios, since she understands his devastation:

– Δεν αγαπάει κανέναν, επιμένω. Είναι που λέει πως θέλει να ζήσει. – Να ζήσει; –
Ναι, έχει την ιδέα πως αυτό είναι ζωή. Δεν βλέπεις τις μέλισσες, μου λέει: πετάν από λουλούδι σε λουλούδι, τρυγάν ό,τι καλύτερο. – Τη μισώ, τη μισώ. – Κι εγώ.
(ΨΚ 43)

"She doesn't love anyone," I tell him. "It's just that she wants to live." "To live?"
"Yes, she has this idea that this is what life is about." "Have you ever watched bees?" she says. "They flit from one flower to the next taking the best from each."
"I hate her. I really do." "Me too." (TS 47)

Katerina and Mrs. Parigori are connected by the temporal hatred they feel for Maria, which is caused by Marios's visible pain due to Maria's behaviour. Obviously, their love for David also links these two female characters to each other.

Nonetheless, Katerina also differs from Mrs. Parigori in several respects. Whereas Mrs. Parigori approves of Maria's behaviour as a wife, Katerina does not like it, or at least not to a large extent. Moreover, Mrs. Parigori is not at all enthusiastic about her own daughter Leda's plans to remain unmarried and travel to the United States, while Katerina shares Leda's ambition to make something of her life. Ultimately, no matter how 'free' Mrs. Parigori behaves, she remains tied to her marriage and her children. Strikingly, the last one of Mrs. Parigori's diary entries focuses on an instance of insight with concern to types of femininity:

Χτες βράδυ, όπως είχα αϋπνία, διάβασα ένα ολόκληρο βιβλίο ... Έλεγε λοιπόν το βιβλίο αυτό πως η γυναίκα έχει δύο θελήσεις, αντίθετες: με τη μία θέλει να ελευθερωθεί, με την άλλη να υποταχτεί. Στη Μαρία σάμπως να νίκησε η δεύτερη θέληση. Σε μένα, δεν ξέρω, σα να παλεύουν ακόμα μέσα μου κι οι δυό, σα να μην είναι να νικήσει καμιά, ποτέ. Γι' αυτό κι η ανησυχία μου. (ΨΚ 289-290, my ellipsis)

Last night I had insomnia and I read a whole book ... The book said that woman has two different and contradictory desires, on the one hand to be free and on the other to submit. In Maria, obviously the second has won out. As for me, I'm not sure. It's as if the two sides are still fighting it out and that in the end neither one will win. That must be why I am never content. (TS 274)

First, these lines indicate Mrs. Parigori's perception of her gender role: the book she has read leads her to analyse Maria and herself. Secondly, they foreshadow the following chapters, in which Katerina will have to make this very decision. The fifth chapter of "The Third Summer" follows right after these lines and deals with David's marriage proposal. Katerina will lock herself up in her room for a week of contemplation, after which she will decide whether to 'submit' (by marrying David) or 'to be free' (by writing and travelling). Thirdly, this can be considered another self-reflexive instance:

the novel itself deals with young (and slightly older) women who try to find their way in a heteronormative society, and, in doing so, have to deal with questions of submission and freedom. Since Mrs. Parigori considers herself a woman in whom 'the two sides are still fighting it out' and Katerina is depicted in the following chapters as doing the same thing, the similarity between both women is once again implied. Therefore, it can be argued that Mrs. Parigori functions as an example of what might have become of Katerina if the Polish grandmother, another woman with whom she has a lot in common, had not provided her with a different example.

The connection Polish grandmother – Mrs. Parigori – Katerina is not only established by means of the writings of each and their likenesses, but also through Katerina's obsession with both grown-up women. Throughout the novel, Katerina's interior monologues repeatedly depict her while thinking about her absent grandmother:

Όμως, τη στιγμή που πήγαινα ν' ανοίξω την πόρτα του σπιτιού μας, ακριβώς εκείνη τη στιγμή, περνούσε απ' το Τατόι ο σιδηροδρόμος που πήγαινε στην Ευρώπη... Μ' αυτό είχε φύγει η Πολωνίδα γιαγιά. Στην Αθήνα, στο σταθμό, όλα θα 'χανε πάει καλά: ο μουσικός, βλέποντάς την να 'ρχεται, θα είχε κάνει δύο-τρία βήματα να την προϋπαντήσει, θα 'χε σκύψει, και θα της είχε φιλήσει το χέρι. Την ώρα όμως που πέρασε απ' το Τατόι τί να 'κανε άραγε η Πολωνίδα γιαγιά; Σκυμμένη στο παράθυρο του βαγονιού, ίσως να προσπάθησε να διακρίνει, πέρα απ' την πεδιάδα και το δασάκι που μας χώριζε από τις ραγές, το φωτάκι του σπιτιού μας... Θα 'χε κατεβάσει τότε το βέλο απάνω στα μάτια της, γεμάτη νοσταλγία γι' αυτό που άφηγε και που ήταν κιόλας μακρινό, ιδανικό... Αυτά συλλογιζόμουνα κι άλλα πολλά την ώρα που περνούσε το τραίνο. (ΨΚ 97, first ellipsis is mine)

The minute I opened the gate to our house the train to Europe passed through Tatoi... That was the train the Polish grandmother had left on. In Athens at the station all would have gone smoothly. The musician, seeing her coming, would have taken a few steps toward her, bowed, and kissed her hand. But when the

train passed through Tatoi, what would the Polish grandmother have done? Leaning out the window, perhaps she would have tried to see the lights of our house beyond the meadows and the woods that separated us from the tracks... She would have lowered her veil over her eyes, full of nostalgia for what she was leaving, for what was already distant, inaccessible... That's what I would think about when I heard the train passing, and other things, too. (TS 106-107)

The use of the past imperfective 'συλλογιζόμουν' ('would' in the English translation) in the final sentence of this excerpt suggests that this is not a unique mental image of Katerina's: she frequently imagines her grandmother on the train, leaving her husband and children behind. Whereas her obsession with her grandmother springs from the sympathy she feels, the opposite can be said about her obsession with Mrs. Parigori, which is triggered by the latter's behaviour around David:

Κυρία Παρήγορη, τί ήθελες να τον ερωτευτείς το Δαυΐδ; Δεν έβλεπες πως είχε μάτια ίδια με της μάγισσας και φωνή τόσο αντιπαθητική; ... Κι άρχισα να παρατηρώ την κυρία Παρηγόρη: πώς έτρωγε, πώς μιλούσε, πώς βάδιζε, πώς σήκωνε λίγο το φόρεμα όταν κατέβαινε απ' τ' αμάξι λες κι ήτανε μακρύ, πώς έφερνε το χέρι να διορθώσει τα μαλλιά όταν τύχαινε ο αέρας να χαλάσει τον ελαφρό κυματισμό που κάναν ακριβώς πάνω απ' το μέτωπο και που σταματούσε απότομα από μια φουρκέτα. (ΨΚ 204, my ellipsis)

Mrs. Parigori, why did you go fall in love with David? Can't you see that he has witch's eyes and an annoying voice ... So I began observing Mrs. Parigori, how she ate, how she talked, how she walked, how she lifted her skirt when she got out of the carriage as if it were long, the way she fixed her hair when the wind mussed it up. (TS 199)²¹

Strikingly, on the final page of the novel, Katerina the narrator admits that her imagination may have led her to believe that Mrs. Parigori was in love with David. This reduces the importance of all

²¹ In Greek, the final line reads: 'the way she fixed her hair when the wind mussed up the slight waves in it just above the forehead that ended abruptly in the grasp of a hair pin'.

the previous references to Mrs. Parigori's attraction to David, and thus alters the nature of Katerina's obsession. Whereas the reader is first led to believe that Katerina's rendition of Mrs. Parigori's behaviour is truthful, her ultimate 'confession' reduces it to an instance of imagination. Therefore, her obsessions with the Polish grandmother and Mrs. Parigori are more similar than they originally appeared. The Polish grandmother being absent, the reader accepted that the excerpts about her were mostly based on Katerina's imagination. However, since Mrs. Parigori appears as a character and Katerina describes her behaviour, these statements seemed realistic. From the final page, the reader understands that both obsessions are directly linked to Katerina's imagination. Thus, the attention is once more drawn to Katerina's requirements and skills as a narrator, which is indicative of the Modernist poetics, as I have already pointed out.

Most of the narrative (in the wide sense of the word) voices in the novel are female, even though male voices are hinted at. For example, both Katerina's father Miltos and uncle Agisilaos are referred to as story-tellers, but their voices are silenced. Another female voice that is heard is that of Rodia, the maid at the house of Katerina's family. Katerina has grown up with Rodia's stories about Ikaria, the island where Rodia was born. A striking passage is the following:

... σκεφτόμουνα πως η Ροδιά ήτανε σπουδαίος άνθρωπος, πως είχε αυτό που λέμε προσωπικότητα. Τί κι αν δεν ήξερε να γράφει ή να διαβάζει; ... η Ροδιά ήταν ένας φιλόσοφος. (ΨΚ 153, my ellipses)

... I thought to myself that Rodia was an important person and that she had what people called personality. So what if she did not know how to write or read? ... Rodia was a philosopher. (my own translation²²)

Even though Rodia is not an educated woman, she performs the role of story-teller to perfection. Katerina describes how she changes entirely when telling stories, which indicates that Katerina's estimation in the cited passage is correct: even though telling stories is not what Rodia is supposed

²² In her translation, Karen Van Dyck has omitted a couple of passages, including the one that I cite here. Hence, I have provided my own translation of these lines.

to do, it is a quality that she has nonetheless. Strikingly, Katerina's mother Anna is not at all pleased when she finds Rodia occupied with story-telling rather than with her 'normalised' household tasks. Therefore, Anna functions as a normative force, since she reproaches Rodia, and in other instances her youngest daughter Katerina, for performing a role that does not coincide with the normative expectations of society.

Another instance where Katerina listens to a female narrative is when the seamstress comes to the house to take Maria's measurements and tells the sisters stories about her disastrous love life. Katerina's interior monologue foreshadows her decision to become a writer:

Ταράζομαι σαν ακούω να μιλάν για ανθρώπινες ζωές, για ανθρώπινα γεγονότα.
Και για τα πιο απλά: νιώθω πως έχουν μια σημασία μεγαλύτερη απ' ό,τι συνέβηκαν στ' αλήθεια, μια προέκταση. (ΨΚ 81-82)

I get all excited when I hear people talk about their lives, about things that have happened to them, even the simplest events. I feel that in the telling they have greater significance than they had in real life. (TS 90)

These lines are indicative of the nature of this novel and therefore a metafictional reference: they contain a wink to the reader, whose suspicions that this novel is 'written' by Katerina will be confirmed on the final pages.

A striking passage with regard to literature and stories is when Katerina is listening to one of many conversations between Nikitas and Petros about literature and tries to participate:

Άνοιγα τ' αυτιά μου κι άκουγα, τα λόγια τους μ' αναστάτωναν: ασυναίσθητα όμως προσπαθούσα να τ' ακούω σαν κάτι ξένο από μένα, έτσι που να μένω σε μια δικιά μου ανύπαρκτη εξάλλου φανταστική γραμμή. ... Δεν έγγραφα σαν κι αυτούς. Ωστόσο σκεφτόμουν πώς τα βιβλία που διάβαζα και που γέμιζαν τη ζωή μου δεν μπορούσε να 'ταν γραμμένα σύμφωνα με θεωρίες και κανόνες ... Δοκίμασα να τους το πω μια μέρα:

- Αν άφηνε κανείς τον εαυτό του εντελώς ελεύθερο, άρχισα, μα εντελώς, κι αν...

- Θα 'ρθει η Μαργαρίτα; μ' έκοψε ο Πέτρος. (ΨΚ 99, my ellipses)

I listened carefully. Their ideas worried me. Unconsciously I tried to keep their words at a distance, to hear them as if they were foreign, so that I could still have my way of seeing things. ... I didn't write like they did. I also thought about how the books I read couldn't have been written using their theories and rules ... I attempted to tell them this one day.

"What if writers were free," I began, "completely free, and if..."

"Is Margarita coming?" Petros broke in. (TS 109)

Because the boys' discussion about literature can be interpreted as a trigger for Katerina's own reflections on the same subject, it is remarkable that she tries not to listen to their theories too much, in order to be able to preserve (and materialise) her own opinion. Even though this scene takes place relatively early in the novel, they are already indicative of Katerina's future poetics: the story she wants to write will deviate from the model that is presented by the boys. Whereas the aforementioned stories by female characters have a practical function with regard to Katerina's development as a writer, this excerpt provides a theoretical framework, from which Katerina wants to distance herself. Furthermore, these lines show how Katerina, like Lily in *To the Lighthouse*, is silenced by the male characters around her. As much as the young men enjoy talking about literary theories, they do not consider her opinion worth listening to.

Throughout the whole novel, Katerina's imagination is referred to, by herself and by other characters, such as Maria: 'Συ, παιδί μου, είσαι φαντασιόπληχτη'²³ (ΨΚ 61). Moreover, several parts that are focalised by Katerina are indicative of her wild imagination, such as the excerpt where she tries to picture the Polish grandmother as she left her family behind. Nevertheless, her imagination originally does not find an audience: when she suspects that her mother is hiding something from her children and informs her sisters about these suspicions, they discard her ideas immediately,

²³ 'You, my child, have a wild imagination' (TS 67).

because these seem nonsensical to them and because they do not really care. Furthermore, during the first summer, she makes ‘jewellery’ out of natural elements such as flowers and horsehair, and is very annoyed by her sisters who do not ‘seem to appreciate it enough’:

... ήταν ... σα να μην τ’ άξιζαν, σα να ‘χαν τη βεβαιότητα πώς τα δαχτυλίδια θα μαραίνονταν, κι έτσι μαραίνονταν πριν απ’ την ώρα τους, πώς τα βραχιόλια δεν ήταν παρά αλογότριχες, κι έτσι τα κάναν αλογότριχες ... (ΨΚ 61, my ellipses)

It was as if they weren’t worthy of it, as if they expected the flowers to wilt, so they wilted immediately, or as if they knew the bracelets were only horsehair, and therefore they looked like horsehair ... (TS 14)

These lines are indicative of Katerina’s heightened sense of imagination: she views the world in a different way than her sisters, because her fantasy cannot be suppressed. Therefore, the reader is warned from the very beginning that Katerina is different: her creativity and imagination flow through the pages, so that it is not surprising that she eventually decides to be an artist, rather than choosing for an ordinary life like that of her sister Maria (‘Εσύ ζητάς απ’ τη ζωή πράγματα εξαιρετικά, ψιθυρίζει [η Μαρία]. Εγώ όχι. Γιατί ξέρω πως η καθημερινή ζωή είναι που κρύβει τη μεγαλύτερη δύναμη.’²⁴ [ΨΚ 74]). References to Katerina’s early childhood, by herself and by others, prove that even as a small child she was infatuated with inventing stories.

Furthermore, the novel is full of Katerina’s perceptions and descriptions of nature. Almost every chapter begins with a short description of the season and its consequences for the natural setting. Not only do these descriptions, which are focalised by Katerina, draw attention to her heightened sense of her surroundings and her attentiveness, in several cases they are accompanied by Katerina’s explicit wish to be able to preserve the natural phenomena she enjoys so much:

²⁴ “You expect great things from life,” [Maria] whispers. “Not me. You see, I know that what is really important can be found in the little, everyday things.” (TS 82)

Να μπορέσω ακόμα να πω για τη λαμπρότητα του κόσμου την ώρα που ο ήλιος πριν χαθεί πέφτει στο χορτάρι και πόσο πράσινο είναι το χορτάρι, και για όσα βλέπουμε τα μάτια μου ωραία, που είναι κρίμα να ζουν μόνο όσο τα βλέπουμε τα μάτια μου. (ΨΚ 291)

Also, I want to be able to describe the brilliance of the world just before the sun sets, when it falls on the grass, and how green the grass looks, and all the other beautiful things I've seen, for it's a shame for them to last only as long as I am looking at them. (TS 276)

This excerpt can be read in a metafictional way: Katerina the character wishes to have the ability to describe nature in order to preserve it, which is precisely what Katerina the narrator has been doing throughout the whole novel. Therefore, the narrator not only indicates Katerina's natural tendency to describe the things that surround her and that appear in her imagination, but also suggests to the reader that she will ultimately achieve this goal.

In the middle of the novel, Katerina explicitly tells David about a story that she has in mind. Even though she originally makes up the existence of this story, in order to find out whether he would think it ethical that she open the drawer of her mother's bureau (which contains the letters), this ultimately becomes the basis for the novel itself:

- Γράφω ένα μυθιστόρημα, είπα εντελώς αφηρημένα. Συνήλθα από τα γέλια του Δαυΐδ. Άκουσα τη φωνή μου να ξαναλέει πολύ σοβαρά:

- Ναι, γράφω ένα μυθιστόρημα. ...

Γιατί είχα πει τέτοιο πράγμα; Πώς μου 'ρθε; ... Πρώτα άκουσα τα λόγια μου κι ύστερα ένιωσα το νόημά τους ...

- Το θέμα... μα... η ιστορία ενός γράμματος. Όχι, η ιστορία τριών κοριτσιών. Να, σαν τη Μαρία, την Ινφάντα και μένα. Σαν, όχι πως είμαστε εμείς. (ΨΚ 179-180; first three ellipses are mine)

“I’m writing a novel,” I said absentmindedly. David’s laughter brought me back to earth. I heard myself repeating in a serious tone, “Yes, I am writing a novel.” ...

Why did I say such a thing? Why on earth? ... First I heard the words and then I realized what I’d said. ...

“It’s about... hmm... it’s a story about a letter. No, it’s a story about three girls. Yes, like Maria, Infanta and myself. Like us, not that it’s about us.” (TS 177)

What begins as an excuse that she concocts on the spot, ultimately becomes much more. Whereas multiple metafictional elements are sprinkled throughout the whole novel, this is one of the most explicit references to the fictionality of the novel.

Because this is a female *Künstlerroman*, the artist’s development is influenced by the gender norms, more than is the case in a ‘regular’ (i.e. male) *Künstlerroman*: since women are not expected to become professionals, let alone artists, in the period described in the novel, there are more boundaries to be crossed in order to do so. This is suggested by the presence of the old man, who is writing a novel about the adventures of his son Andreas. Katerina remarks that ‘[ο] τρόπος που γράφει τα πράγματα ο γέροντας είναι βέβαια διαφορετικός’²⁵ (ΨΚ 292). Camatsos analyses the old man as a representation of Katerina’s difficulty to become ‘a female writer in a male-dominated world’, because the success of his endeavour is a ‘constant frustration’ to her (2005: 56). However, the same story that frustrates her also provides her with a source of inspiration: Andreas. Andreas embodies the individual that Katerina wishes to become herself, a writer and traveller, and the protagonist of a narrative (*ibid.*). Furthermore, Andreas is also said to have a vivid imagination: ‘Από μικρός έλεγε ψέματα’²⁶ (ΨΚ 291). Therefore, I would like to argue that Katerina’s final decision not to marry David but to travel instead is inspired by both her grandmother’s and Andreas’s example. Katerina discovers her grandmother’s letters towards the end of the novel, and then dreams about Andreas coming to her house to take her with him. Not only is this dream once more indicative of Katerina’s heightened imagination, it also symbolises the impact of Andreas’s lifestyle on her

²⁵ ‘Certainly the way the old man writes about these things is quite different’ (TS 277)

²⁶ ‘He has lied ever since he was little’ (TS 276)

subconscious. The dream functions as a foreshadowing to the reader: Katerina will indeed prefer travelling over staying, even though she herself does not yet realise it at this stage. The dream is originally presented as reality, which leads the reader to believe that Andreas indeed pays a visit to Katerina's house and promises to take her with him, but leaves without her the next morning. Therefore, one only realises that none of this actually took place by means of the following sentences:

Θα με ξύπνησε φαίνεται το ίδιο μου το κλάμα. Κι ενώ ήξερα πια πως ο Αντρέας δεν είχε φύγει αφού δεν είχε έρθει καν, δεν έπαψα να κλαίω, κι ήταν κάτι πολύ ωραίο, συλλογιζόμουνα το πλάτος του κόσμου κι έκλαιγα.

- Την απόφασή μου την πήρα, είπα της μητέρας μόλις κατέβηκα στην τραπεζαρία.

Δε θα παντρευτώ το Δαυΐδ, θα ξεκινήσω για το γύρο του κόσμου. (ΨΚ 320)

It seems that my own crying woke me. And even though I knew Andreas hadn't left because he had never really come, I couldn't stop crying. It was all so beautiful.

"I've made up my mind," I told Mother as soon as I entered the dining room. "I will not marry David, I'll set off for a tour of the world." (TS 305)

Because these lines remove every suspicion of Andreas's presence as a character in the novel, Katerina is apparently drawn to a fictional image. This can be connected to her conviction that stories have more significance than the actual events: Andreas (and the Polish grandmother, for that matter) has a larger influence on Katerina than the 'real' characters around her. Ultimately, it is Katerina's dream vision about Andreas that leads her to a decision. As Beaton (1999:232) points out, '[w]hat Katerina falls in love with at the end of *Straw Hats* is an ideal constructed by the art of narrative, a character built only out of words'.

As is the case for Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse*, Katerina's development as a woman is intertwined with her artistic growth. In Katerina's case, this connection is related to her central dilemma in the novel: does she want to travel, write and be independent or does she prefer a

domestic life combined with the love of another human being? Both her behaviour towards and thoughts on David are very heterogeneous: since Katerina the narrator frequently informs the reader on her train of thought at the time of action, the young woman's dilemma is clear. Katerina's insecurity about which option she prefers is shown most explicitly in one specific fragment, where she imaginatively addresses the Polish grandmother:

... θα κινήσω κάποτε για το γύρο του κόσμου. Ίσως όμως και να παντρευτώ, και να κλειστώ στο γκριζο σπίτι του Δαυΐδ, που έχει κόκκινα τρούβλα γύρω απ' τα παράθυρα ... Θα κινήσω για το γύρο του κόσμου και θα γνωρίσω τους ανθρώπους που ο γέροντας γράφει στα βιβλία του, ... Θα τον παντρευτώ το Δαυΐδ, τον αγαπώ και θα τον παντρευτώ. (ΨΚ 305-306, my ellipses)

... sometime I'll set out for a tour of the world. And I might even marry, and shut myself up in that gray house of David's with the red bricks around the windows ... I'll go on a tour of the world and I will meet all those people that the old man describes in his books, ... I will marry David, I love him and I will marry him. (TS 290-291)

The protagonist's inner struggle is caused by two major influences in her life: the expectations of her mother and society in general and the opposing example that the Polish grandmother (and to a smaller extent Mrs. Parigori) set for her in gender terms. Ultimately, a third large influence, i.e. the all-encompassing presence of stories, of which the one about Andreas can be considered the most significant, will provide a solution for Katerina's conundrum. In this regard, Katerina's development is very similar to Lily Briscoe's, who experiences a similar inner struggle with regard to Mrs. Ramsay, not knowing whether she loves or hates her. Basically, since loving Mrs. Ramsay symbolises accepting the gendered norm and hating her symbolises rejecting it, her dilemma resembles Katerina's.

The excerpt in which Katerina lies to David about writing a novel provides the reader with a unique insight in the narrative process: the reader is not only allowed to read about the lives of the

three girls, but also to see how the narrator first came up with the idea of writing specifically this novel, and ultimately to read the result and the narrator's personal comment on it in the one-page epilogue:

Κάπως έτσι θα 'γιναν τα πράγματα. Προσπάθησα να τα διηγηθώ με τη σειρά, και να μην πω κανένα ψέμα. Αλλά πάλι, πώς να ξεχωρίσει κανείς αυτά που σ' αλήθεια συμβαίνουν απ' αυτά που νομίζει πως συμβαίνουν; ... Α, ξέχασα, τον Αντρέα δεν τον έχω δει, μόνο στον ύπνο μου τον είδα. Κι η κυρία Παρηγόρη να τον αγάπησε άραγε τον Δαυΐδ ... Σίγουρα όμως τα τρία αυτά καλοκαίρια θα παίξουν κάποιο ρόλο στη ζωή μας. *Και θυμάμαι εκείνη την πρώτη μέρα του πρώτου καλοκαιριού που αγοράσαμε τα μεγάλα μας ψάθινα καπέλα.* (ΨΚ 321, my ellipses and emphasis)

Things must have happened something like that. I have tried to tell it in order without lies. But then again, how is a person to distinguish what really happens from what one thinks is happening? ... Oops, I forgot I've never seen Andreas, only dreamt about him. And did Mrs. Parigori really love David? ... But certainly those three summers will play a role in our lives. *I remember that first day of that first summer when we bought our big straw hats.* (TS 306)

I have included parts of this epilogue for three reasons. First, it is the ultimate metafictional reference to the novel: the reader is addressed in an apostrophe and given some kind of apology for the story (s)he has just read. It is Katerina the narrator who addresses the reader, and makes some final remarks on her story. The addition of this epilogue indicates the success of her endeavour: she has managed to write the novel she had wanted to write ever since she told David that lie, or even before that. Secondly, she draws attention to the relativity of the point of view: she does not pretend to have told the one and only truth, but rather implies that if one of the other characters, such as Infanta, had written about the same three summers, the result would have been an entirely different novel. This theory has already repeatedly been referred to – indirectly – through the use of

perspectivism, and is once more explicitly underlined in the epilogue. She had already drawn attention to this by including and emphasising the filter shifts (cf. also Camatsos 2005: 43). Thirdly, the final sentence of the novel (the one that is italicised in the excerpt) is almost identical to its first sentence (‘Εκείνο το καλοκαίρι αγοράσαμε μεγάλα ψάθινα καπέλα’²⁷, ΨΚ 11), which indicates that the circle is closed: Katerina has achieved her goal.

²⁷ ‘That summer we bought big straw hats.’ (TS 13)

CHAPTER 5 | COMPARATIVE CONCLUSION:

GENRE TROUBLE

I hope that I have been able to show that the maternal figure plays an important role in the novels that I have discussed. Both mothers, Mrs. Ramsay and Anna, are important presences in each novel and conform to the normative system. They attempt to establish this conformity with regard to the younger generation of women as well. However, in doing so, they also enable the 'daughters', Lily and Katerina, to deviate from the norm: because the constraints imposed by the maternal authority provide a potential for subversion, they can be said to function as 'enabling restraints'. The daughters are enabled to repeat the norm in a deviant way because of their artistic talents and ambitions: as Hohlfelder (1997: 24-25) points out, the *Bildungsroman* was initially a paradoxical genre for women, since their only options appeared to be marriage and death. However, the subgenre of the *Künstlerroman* offers a third option, because women can become artists and thus avoid the two options previously mentioned. Hence, the process of resignification takes place on two levels, as I will explain hereafter: the novels appropriate the male genre of the *Künstlerroman*, and their protagonists perform femininity in such a way that their lives acquire new and previously impossible meanings. Strikingly, the alternate endings of marriage or death are still present in *To the Lighthouse*, but with regard to other characters. Marriage also features in *Straw Hats*, since Maria decides to become Marios's wife. Therefore, I would like to argue that the two female artists are able to steer different courses, not only because of their artistic talent and ambitions, but also because the possibility of marriage/death has been extrapolated to other female characters. Hence, these two novels differ essentially from the 19th-century female *Bildungsromane*.

In *Straw Hats* and *To the Lighthouse*, the differences between mother and daughter cause their relationship to be one of tension between love and contempt. Katerina loves her mother passionately, but at the same time attempts to hurt her in more than one instance. Lily desires to

have Mrs. Ramsay, but also deplores her behaviour and tyranny over younger women. In this regard her exclamation on the final pages is striking (see also Viola 2000: 278): “Mrs. Ramsay! Mrs. Ramsay!” she cried, feeling the old horror come back – to want and want and not to have’ (TL 219). These lines indicate Lily’s craving for a mother/daughter relationship with Mrs. Ramsay. The lack of a close relationship with the maternal figure is necessary for the two female protagonists to perform different roles within the normative system.²⁸ Furthermore, as I have explained in my analysis of *Straw Hats*, the art of the daughter functions as a way of giving a voice to the mother. Even though Mrs. Ramsay is strictly speaking not an artist, since she does not play the piano or write letters which capture her ‘true’ self like Anna does, one can easily see how she functions as a creative instance: by means of her meddling she creates new storylines for the other characters, such as Minta Doyle and Paul Rayley, who seem to have nothing in common except for Mrs. Ramsay, their mutual acquaintance. Furthermore, Whitworth (2005: 114) points out that Woolf describes Mrs. Ramsay’s dinner party (in “The Window”) as an artistic composition: ‘the faces on both sides of the table were brought nearer by the candle light, and *composed* ... into a party round the table’ (TL 106, my emphasis and ellipsis). As DuPlessis (1985: 94) states, ‘[t]he daughter artist and the blocked, usually maternal, parent are ... the central characters of twentieth-century women’s *Künstlerromane*’.

Not only the mother figures in these novels are embedded in the normative gender system, but also the male characters perform the roles they are expected to perform. Since there are a large number of male characters in each novel, several of which are focalisers, their impact on the young artists is not to be underestimated. In combination with the mothers’ attempts to have their daughters behave normatively, the presence of the male characters who do not value these young women as artists is originally a burden. In *To the Lighthouse*, this is highlighted most clearly by Charles Tansley’s remark that ‘women can’t read, women can’t write’ (which occurs repeatedly in Lily’s thoughts). In *Straw Hats*, a striking passage in this regard is when Katerina is listening to one of

²⁸ Note that I am not judging the maternal figures in these novels, nor am I insinuating that someone like Anna wants her daughter to be unhappy and wants to push her into a position that is not in balance with her personality. Rather, I am stating that the mother figures in these novels subconsciously perform a normative role and want the daughter to perform this role too, because alternative roles are not accepted by the norm.

many conversations between Nikitas and Petros about literature and tries to participate, but is silenced by them. These lines indicate that, as in *To the Lighthouse*, the male characters refuse to engage in an intellectual conversation with a woman. Furthermore, the lines suggest that Katerina does not feel like the boys' theories apply to her idea of writing. She even tries not to think about these theories too much, lest they influence her own perceptions of writing. Hence, the excerpt can be extrapolated to the novel itself: whereas it uses the model of the *Künstlerroman*, the author has altered the characteristics that did not coincide with her 'way of seeing things'. Moreover, both the boys' theories and the stereotypical model of the *Künstlerroman* are male-oriented and male-inspired, which leads to the female protagonist/author's denouncing/subverting of the model. This argument is also relevant with regard to *To the Lighthouse*, in which Lily finds her own artistic vision, regardless of the normative pressure that she perceives. This subversion of a male genre by female artists is related to their subversion of the gender norm: both the female protagonists and the authors of the novels they feature in repeat the norm in a deviant way, thus subverting it. Whereas the female protagonists seem to do this on a personal level, since they are not part of a wider social movement, the female authors can be argued to subvert the norm on a larger scale, i.e. with regard to a literary genre.

Even though the characters who are themselves embedded in the normative system and try to force it upon everyone else, initially obstruct the young artists' ambitions, they will eventually function as catalysts for their development towards independent and mature female artists. The pressure of society and the individuals it consists of, in Katerina's case combined with an example of a different kind of femininity, results in a subconscious act of subverting the norm. The experiences that both young artists have lived through are imperative for their art: this is most clearly the case for Katerina, who becomes an artist by writing down her past experiences. However, Lily also needs to come to terms with Mrs. Ramsay, the other characters and her previous encounters before she can have her artistic vision:

It was an odd road to be walking, this painting. Out and out one went, further and further, until at last one seemed to be on a narrow plank, perfectly alone, over the sea. *And as she dipped into the blue paint, she dipped too into the past there.* Now Mrs. Ramsay got up, she remembered. (TL 187, my emphasis)

These lines not only indicate the importance of the past, but also the self-reflexive nature of the novel. The first two lines of the excerpt can refer to any type of artistic action: one could easily replace the word 'painting' with the word 'writing', and consider it a reflection of Woolf's about her own creative act. Even though *To the Lighthouse* is slightly less self-reflexive than *Straw Hats*, which is partly due to the different type of art (painting vs. narrating), the focus on a female artist who has a symbolist and Modernist²⁹ vision on art suggests the presence of the female writer of the novel. Furthermore, Lily's thoughts repeatedly show her imagination at work, for example:

And this, Lily thought, taking the green paint on her brush, this making up scenes about them, is what we call 'knowing' people, 'thinking' of them, 'being fond' of them! Not a word of it was true; she had made it up; but it was what she knew them by all the same. She went on tunnelling her way into her picture, into the past. (TL 188)

Straw Hats is more self-reflexive, because of the nature of the story: the narrator tells the reader about her own past and development as an artist. What is more, *Straw Hats* is metafictional in more than one instance, because of the implicit and explicit reflections on writing, narration and the importance of perspective. The latter focus on point of view is also regularly present in *To the Lighthouse*, not surprisingly most often in the parts that are focalised by Lily. Therefore, both novels include the reader in philosophical ponderings about art, its symbolism and the importance of point of view. Because both novels are focalised by several characters of different generations and genders, the focus is drawn to the importance of point of view. This use of perspectivism can be interpreted in a metafictional way, since it illustrates the Modernist theory of subjectivity.

²⁹ This is suggested by several elements, such as the protagonists' realisation of the importance of perspective.

As Butler (2004: 48) points out, '[i]f gender is a norm... it is a form of social power that produces the intelligible field of subjects, and an apparatus by which the gender binary is instituted.' The first part of *To the Lighthouse*, "The Window", is indicative of this social power: the house of the Ramsays functions as a setting for traditional gender roles, for both women and men. Therefore, it is impossible for Lily Briscoe to fully develop as long as Mrs. Ramsay forces this system upon every single member of the group. It is only after her death that Lily is able to productively free herself from the normative harness that Mrs. Ramsay has been trying to force upon her, and to establish a gender identity and an artistic vision of her own. Even though the presence of Katerina's mother is not as all-encompassing as Mrs. Ramsay's in the first part of *To the Lighthouse*, and even though Anna is still alive at the end of *Straw Hats*, the same stratagems are at work in the latter novel. This is the case because the normative force that Anna embodies throughout the novel erodes when Katerina finds her secret correspondence with the Polish grandmother. Her letters and her way of playing the piano when she is on her own suggest that Anna is not merely a normative instance of power, but also a woman with emotions, passions and desires that are not embedded in the norm. Even though Butler considers people intelligible subjects governed by norms which produce their desires, this statement is not contradictory to her theory, since Butler also states that we are never completely captured by these norms. What Katerina recognises upon reading Anna's letters, is precisely the 'psychic excess'³⁰ that is generated by the norm. She understands, then, that the mother is not just an embodiment of the norm (no one ever is), but that there is more to her than that. The following passage from *Giving an Account of Oneself* clarifies this statement:

If the identity we say we are cannot possibly capture us and marks immediately an excess and opacity that falls outside the categories of identity, then any effort "to

³⁰ The notion of 'psychic excess' refers to the 'psychic as that which exceeds the domain of the conscious subject ... It is this excess which erupts within the intervals of those repeated gestures and acts that construct the apparent uniformity of heterosexual positionalities, indeed, which compels the repetition itself, and which guarantees its perpetual failure.' (Butler & Salih 2004: 130) In other words, even though everyone is assigned a certain role by society and its constraints, they always exceed this role. That which is not contained in the norms is what Butler refers to as 'psychic excess'.

give an account of oneself" will have to fail in order to approach being true. As we ask to know the other, or ask that the other say, finally or definitively, who he or she is, it will be important not to expect an answer that will ever satisfy. By not pursuing satisfaction and by letting the question remain open, even enduring, we let the other live, since life might be understood as precisely that which exceeds any account we may try to give of it. (Butler 2005: 42-43)

Hence, Katerina and Lily Briscoe undergo a similar type of development with regard to the maternal figure: both protagonists have to see the maternal figure in a different light (in *To the Lighthouse* this is the result of Mrs. Ramsay's physical absence, in *Straw Hats* of the mother's different persona in her letters and her piano-playing), before they can distance themselves from the norm and become mature artists. Whereas the contempt for the maternal figure (and therefore for the normative gender system) was necessary to trigger the protagonists' rebellion, their acceptance of this very same maternal figure as a human being rather than a normative power is imperative to make their rebellion positively productive rather than obstructive.

I hope that I have provided ample evidence for the argument that these two novels skilfully offer an alternative to the male-oriented *Künstlerroman* (and *Bildungsroman* in general), but also to the 19th-century female *Künstlerroman*. In both novels the protagonist's progress in terms of gender and art is intertwined, because of the specifics of the female role: women were not expected to be artists and therefore their intellectual and artistic growth is unavoidably connected to their departure from the gender norm. Strikingly, both protagonists are influenced by the gender norm and, what is more, need it in order to attempt a subversion of it. Because these protagonists adapt a pre-existent model in order to reach a 'lighthouse' of their own, their endeavour is similar to that of the authors of each novel: Woolf and Lymberaki use an originally male-oriented genre and innovate/subvert it in order to achieve their own goal, namely a story about the growth of a female artist. Other than the 19th-century female *Künstlerroman* (and *Bildungsroman* in general), in which the plot either ends in marriage ('the euphoric pole') or in death ('the dysphoric pole') for the female

protagonist, these novels have a triumphant ending (DuPlessis 1985: 4). Therefore, I would like to argue that the authors and protagonists of the novels that have been discussed achieve a similar ambition: to subvert gender normativity through the creation of a work of art.

Since both novels are amongst the first of their kind in their respective countries, they function as illustrations of the structure and plot of the 20th-century female *Künstlerroman* in general. Whereas *To the Lighthouse* seems to put the gender subversion by the female protagonist on the foreground, *Straw Hats* focuses more on the artistic growth. Nevertheless, as I have already pointed out, the developments remain closely intertwined with each other in both novels. Therefore, Woolf's *Künstlerroman* suggests art as a way for women to subvert the gender norm, while Lymberaki's work inevitably subverts the gender norm in search of an artistic vision. In *To the Lighthouse*, art is depicted as a catalyst for the subversion of gender norms, which is what Lily Briscoe eventually obtains. In *Straw Hats*, on the other hand, Katerina's gender subversion functions as a means for her to become an artist. Because each novel puts a different sort of progression in the foreground, and hence also relegates a different kind of development to the background, the two types of growth are conspicuously interdependent. Even though gender subversion is situated in the background in *Straw Hats* and artistic growth takes up a similar position in *To the Lighthouse*, neither of these novels would have provided a functional and innovative model without the fusion of both types of development.

The comparative analysis of *To the Lighthouse* and *Straw Hats* in this dissertation suggests that the synthesis of these two novels provides a model for the 20th-century female *Künstlerroman*. Each novel centres on a different side of the same innovation, i.e. the successful development of a female artist, in which gender subversion and artistic development are the two central poles. Hence, these literary works arguably contribute to the theoretical framework of the 20th-century female *Künstlerroman* and allow for a better understanding of the origin and emergence of the genre. Both novels certainly seem to function as prototypes of the genre, as it was developed thenceforth, but obviously, further research is necessary in order to establish whether later female *Künstlerromane*

indeed follow the blueprint that this synthesis provides. Either way, both novels are perfect illustrations of the innovation of a pre-existent genre and, as a result, provide a different point of view altogether.

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