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**Metafiction in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*  
and Graham Swift's *Waterland***

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for a Master Degree in the field of  
English Literature

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

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## Abstract

From an implicit commentary on the writing process to an unmitigated shattering of the illusion of literary realism, metafiction has been used to draw attention to the artificiality of fiction. The aims of this study were to create a sense of how Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Swift's *Waterland* comprise self-referential statements that evoke metafiction. Through a thematic analysis of narrative techniques and characterization, this study undertook these texts as a foundation to explore the growth of metafiction, as well as the diffusion of its implications. The assimilation of the two novels reveals that the existing perception of metafiction has evolved from an early awareness of artificiality in the modern era to another level where fundamental concepts, such as narrative and storytelling in relation to history, are deliberated. *To the Lighthouse* incorporates free indirect discourse highlighting the text's artificiality and emphasizing the process of creativity. *Waterland* thematizes the act of storytelling through exploring the nature of writing and its necessity.

The overall structure of the current study takes the form of an introduction followed by five chapters. The first chapter deals with the biographical background of the two authors. The second chapter examines the theoretical framework of metafiction. Modernism and Postmodernism will be explored in relation to metafiction. The third chapter offers a reading of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* as an explicit and multidimensional exploration of modern metafiction. The fourth chapter is dedicated to analyzing metafiction in Graham Swift's *Waterland*. It deals with fundamental concepts such as narrative and storytelling in relation to history. These analytical procedures in addition to the results obtained are reviewed in the last chapter.

## ملخص (Abstract)

ما وراء القصّ في رواية فيرجينيا وولف "إلى المنارة" و جراهام سويفت "ووترلاند" (أرض المياة)

ما وراء القصّ (الميتافيكشن Metafiction) هو مصطلح يطلق على الروايات التي تشير إلى طابعها الخيالي عن طريق التعليق الضمني أو الصريح على السرد. إن هذا البحث يهدف إلى متابعة تطور نظرية ما وراء القصّ في روايتين إنجليزيّتين هما ؛ إلى المنارة (To the Lighthouse) للكاتبة فيرجينيا وولف و ووترلاند (أرض المياة Waterland) للكاتب جراهام سويفت. وقد تم تحليل النصين كنموذجين لاستخدام ما وراء القصّ في روايات مدرستي الحداثة و ما بعد الحداثة. و تقوم هذه الدراسة على تحليل موضوعي لدور تقنية كل من السرد والتشخيص في إستحضار ما وراء القصّ في كلتا الروايتين.

إن التقريب بين هاتين الروايتين يكشف عن أن التصور الحالي لما وراء القصّ هو نتاج وعي مبكر بألية الإبتداع في عصر الحداثة. و أن هذا التصور قد تطور في عصر ما بعد الحداثة ليشمل مفاهيم أساسية كالسرد و القصّ و علاقتهما بالوعي التاريخي.

رواية "إلى المنارة" توظف الخطاب الحر غير المباشر (free indirect discourse) لتسليط الضوء على خلق النص الأدبي مع التأكيد على عملية الإبداع ؛ فيما تقدم رواية "ووترلاند" عملية القصّ من خلال سبر اغوار الكتابة و ضرورتها.

تتألف هذه الدراسة من مقدمة و خمسة فصول. يتناول الفصل الأول السيرة الذاتية للكاتبين و ابرز أعمالهما الأدبية و النقدية ، بينما يتعرض الفصل الثاني للإطار النظري لما وراء القصّ و علاقته بالحداثة و ما بعد الحداثة. أما الفصل الثالث فيقدم قراءة متعددة الأبعاد لرواية فيرجينيا وولف "إلى المنارة" في إطار المفهوم الحدائي لما وراء القصّ. كما ان الفصل الرابع يحلل ما وراء القصّ في رواية جراهام سويفت "ووترلاند". حيث يتعرض هذا الفصل لكتابة التاريخ كأحد أوجه السرد و القصّ. و يلخص الفصل الأخير منهجية البحث و نتائجها.

## Introduction

Metafiction has become a prominent phenomenon in contemporary literature and has been receiving much critical attention lately. Metafiction is a general umbrella term that refers to novels, or any other form of literature, that exhibits their self-referential nature within a narrative framework. It consists of two parts; “meta” an affix that means beyond and “fiction” which refers to imaginative stories. Metafiction refers to a type of fiction that self-consciously points out its creativity process and artificiality. The novel, as a narrative form, is not only limited to representing narrative events, but it also involves narrative moments in which the act of narrative is depicted and thematized. Metafiction represents a “narrative strategy or a comment on the part of the narrator ... [that] explicitly or implicitly draws attention to the fictionality (fictitiousness or arbitrariness) of the story and the narrative discourse” (Fludernik 156). It foregrounds the fictional nature of literary works and at the same time problematizes the concept of reality in the real world. A further definition is provided by Waugh who describes metafiction, mainly in relation to postmodernism, as “a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality”(2). For Hutcheon, metafiction or what she refers to as “Narcissistic Narrative”, is divided into two forms; overt and covert narcissistic texts. The former is concerned with text that explicitly demonstrates an awareness of its fictional status in the text while the later reveals this process in an implicit manner (7). Furthermore, Werner Wolf developed a typology of metafiction based on three criterions; the form of mediation (level of narration), contextual relation (whether metafictional comments occupy a marginal or central position in the narrative), and content’s value (qtd. in Nünning 16).

Metafiction is a literary phenomenon that has been discussed mainly in relation to postmodernism although it has its roots in many literary works preceding that era. The point of

departure is that with time metafiction has crystallized to comprise new dimensions. In postmodern novels, it reached its full impact. It has obtained an orientation toward problematizing reality, questioning the reliability of representation, in addition to an explicit demonstration of fiction's artificiality. Each novel possesses a self-referential aspect that, in addition to foregrounding the act of narrative and challenging the illusion of realism, it provides an insight into the intellectual and cultural scenes that influence its creation. The present study, therefore, attempts to illustrate and discuss the use of metafiction in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Graham Swift's *Waterland* as representatives of both modern and postmodern employment of metafiction.

### **Research problem**

Although metafiction is typically discussed in relation to contemporary novels, this does not eliminate the possibility of its implementation, though differently, in modern novels. It mainly exposes the novel's method of construction, highlighting factors (whether ideological, psychological, or social) that surround its production. There are some differences between modern and postmodern utilization of metafiction. While the former focuses primarily on revealing the novel's process of creativity, the later expands its function to question the act of narrative and the nature of the novel as a literary genre. These assimilations in metafiction, exemplified in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Graham Swift's *Waterland*, are in line with the development of critical thoughts in each era. It can be said, thus, that metafiction after modernism has undergone an evolution that substantiates the adaptation of new dimensions into its continuum during the postmodern age.

### **Research Scope**

Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Graham Swift's *Waterland* are examined together as representatives of modern and postmodern utilization of metafiction. These novels have been chosen for their exposure of issues related to the nature of fiction and its process of

construction. Their self-referential comments are delivered either in a covert or overt form. Therefore, a number of books and critical essays on metafiction were used to form the theoretical foundation upon which the selected novels are examined.

## **Research Objectives**

This study has five main goals:

1. Evaluating the extent to which the implementation of metafiction varies in modern and postmodern novels
2. Tracing the development of metafiction in contemporary fiction.
3. Exploring how is the act of narrative thematized in modern and postmodern fiction.
4. Providing better insight into the role that metafiction plays in enriching the novels' main themes.
5. Highlighting how metafiction helps in unearthing the hidden agenda and discursive practices in modern and postmodern novels.

## **Research Questions**

The study is motivated by four questions:

- To what extent does the implementation of metafiction vary between modern and postmodern novels?
- How is metafiction implemented in each novel under study?
- How does the use of metafiction enhance themes related to self-referentiality?
- What does the use of metafiction signify regarding the conditions in which the selected novels were written?

## **Research Methodology**

The methodological approach adopted in this study is a mixed methodology; it is both analytical and descriptive in nature. It attempts to establish a general framework through studying narrative as a construct. This allows both novels to be examined using the same criteria. Each analytical chapter begins with a comprehensive investigation of narrative

techniques in order to capture the emergence of metafiction through language. Beside narrative techniques, characterization will be examined in both novels to highlight its role in evoking metafiction. Nevertheless, there are variations between the modern and postmodern employment of metafiction that spring from a shift in its objectives. In the two selected novels, there are two elements that are held parallel to the story-line in order to enact metafiction. Lily's painting in *To the Lighthouse* and Tom's historical account in *Waterland* will be examined thoroughly to testify this shift in the construction and significance of metafiction. These two steps aim at fore fronting the variations between modern and postmodern employment of metafiction and necessitates the application of different critical approaches to the selected novels.

### **Research Limitations**

The major limitation of this study is restricting the number of the analyzed texts to two novels, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Graham Swift's *Waterland*, in which metafiction is addressed as a pivotal concept. Moreover, a discussion of other novels by the same authors will be referred to as far as they support the main argument.

### **Significance of the Research**

This study is part of the growing field of metafiction research. *To the Lighthouse* and *Waterland* are held adjacently to draw attention to how metafiction has developed to accentuate the literary and philosophical concerns that has dominated contemporary literature. This study advances the readers' understanding of metafiction as it provides two models of its utilization in two different eras. However, far too little attention has been paid to examine metafiction in relation to modern novels or alongside contemporary novels. Taking the research scope into consideration, several researches have been dedicated to explore Woolf's views of art and writing, chiefly the ones mentioned in her essays, but few has examined adequately their materialization in her novels. Moreover, most studies on Swift's employment of metafiction

have primarily dealt with it as a form of historiographic metafiction. In addition, there are plenty of scholarly researches done in the field of metafiction in the west, but the number of studies that tackle such concepts in the Arab world are still limited. In Yemen, studies that touch on this subject almost do not exist. The present study hopes to stimulate more researches that go beyond the surface level of literary analysis to embrace the possibilities the study of metafiction can provide. Along these lines, this study will fill in this gap by tracing metafiction in both novels, underlining their thematization of narrative.

### **Definitions of terms**

- **Framing:** it is a narrative technique through which small narratives are incorporated within the main narrative. It governs the organization of the events presented.
- **Free indirect discourse:** a manner of presenting the thoughts or utterances of a fictional character by mixing the character's direct speech with the narrator's indirect report. As a result, the voices of the narrator and the characters are temporarily fused.
- **Grand narrative:** a term coined by Jean Lyotard to refer to ideas, concepts, notions, and beliefs that function to legitimize certain social actions and practices.
- **Historiography:** it is the study of history writing. It is concerned with the factors that influence history writing and how collective historical understanding is formed.
- **Historiographic metafiction:** it refers to historical novels that include metafictional elements. According to Hutcheon, it refers to "those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages" (*Poetics* 5).
- **Metafiction:** in this study, this term will be used to refer to fiction about fiction, i.e., fiction that is self-conscious of its fictional status either through an implicit or explicit commentary on the act of narrative.

- **Meta-language:** a language that describes language. It refers to a linguistic structure that denotes more than its literal meaning whether in literature or any other form of writing.
- **Metanarrative:** while a variety of definitions of the term have been suggested, this study defines it as a narrative that deliberately refers to itself and the elements from which it has been constructed.
- **Modernism:** It is an artistic and cultural movement that took place between end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Modern literature is distinguished by extreme experimentalism as it marks an outbreak of new subjects, forms, concepts, and styles.
- **New-historicism:** a literary theory that comprises two phases that defines the relationship between history and literature. In one hand, it emphasizes the notion that literary works must be interpreted in view of the historical milieu in which they have been composed. On the other hand, it treats history as a text which subject it to interpretation. .
- **Post-impressionism:** it is an art movement that advocates a revolt against impressionism. It explores color, line, and form as well as the emotional response of the artist. It is distinguished by short brushstrokes of broken color.
- **Postmodernism:** a term often applied to the literature and art after World War II that is characterized by questioning all the values and beliefs that construct Western civilization. Nevertheless, it does not signify a total suspension of modern thoughts; it rather interrogates their nature and dependability.
- **Realism:** a mode of writing that attempts at providing an actual image of life that is whole and unified.

- **Self-reflexivity:** This term is applied to literary works that reflect upon their own processes of artful composition.
- **Stream of consciousness:** a literary technique through which the character's thoughts and feelings are delivered in an immediate uninterrupted flow. This results into fragmented and mystified narrative.

### **List of abbreviations**

*TLH*                      *To the Lighthouse*

*WL*                        *Waterland*

## **Chapter One: Virginia Woolf and Graham Swift: Intellectual and Literary Background**

## Virginia Woolf and Graham Swift: Intellectual and Literary Background

An integrated aspect of any literary career is the features that make it stand out among its contemporaries. Describing authors' intellectual and literary backgrounds is directed toward locating their writings at the time of their production. Before examining metafiction in the selected novels, it is necessary to discuss the Intellectual and Literary Background of Virginia Woolf and Graham Swift in the hope of constructing a general view of their works in context.

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) is an English novelist, essayist, biographer, and feminist. She is regarded as one of the prolific writers who had a great influence on the novel as a genre. Woolf's literary career is an inheritance of collective influences that span over the course of her life. That is why some of Woolf's novels are described as highly biographic since she has put down some details of her life on paper. She was born Adeline Virginia Stephen the daughter of Leslie Stephen and Julia Prinsep Stephen. During her childhood, she was raised in an intellectual surrounding that has played a part in shaping her literary sense. She was introduced to literature early in her life due to her father who was an editor of several famous books like *The Dictionary of National Biography* (1882–90) and *The Alpine Journal* (1868–72). While her father's status supported her education, her mother was the source of her unforgettable memories. She was "the creator of that crowded [the] merry world" of Woolf's childhood and the center of it (Woolf, *Moments* 84). Although Woolf has been denied formal education at school, owing to her Victorian upbringing, her excitement to read about languages, literature, and history drove her father to admit her into his big library. Despite the wavering relationship she had with her father, especially after her mother's death, Woolf did later recognize his role in shaping her intellect.

Woolf's writing had started with *Hyde Park Gate News*; a family newspaper that the Stevens children used to write. It contains satirical reports of the family's activities, serial stories, and announcements. Vanessa Stevens (later Vanessa Bell) recalls how her sister has

developed a skill of analyzing people and peering into their relationships and feelings. The newspaper's stories were written by Virginia and her brother Thoby while the illustrations were supplied by her sister Vanessa. Welsch indicates that "this freedom of writing and by extension conversing excited in Virginia a life-long love for irreverent and gossip-riddled conversation. It also signaled her obsessive concern with the response of her audience" (13). Nevertheless, the family tragedy, following the death of Woolf's mother and her half-sister Stella, led to Woolf's first mental breakdown. Her illness has intensified following her father's death in 1904 causing her 'madness' and first attempt to commit suicide. To Woolf, writing was the only outlet she could find; it was practically a treatment for her disrupted and confused mentality.

In an attempt to assist her recovery, Vanessa and Virginia moved to London, Bloomsbury where they lived with their brother Thoby Stevens. In Bloomsbury, Thoby decided to hold a gathering of his Cambridge friends every Thursday. These gatherings became the core of the 'Bloomsbury Group'. The group consists of controversial writers, artists, and thinkers. As a liberal, pacifist, and at times libertine intellectuals, they introduced changes in literature, criticism, and art. They even introduced new approaches to feminism, pacifism, and sexuality. The group included, beside the Stevens, the writer and historian Lytton Strachey, art critics Clive Bell and Roger Fry, the painter Duncan Grant, the novelist E.M. Forster, the economist John Keynes, and the Fabian writer Leonard Woolf whom Virginia married in 1912. The group members shared a common admiration of G. E. Moore's and Bertrand Russell's revolutionary philosophies and a rejection of mimesis in favor of abstract forms.

Parson summarizes the influence Bloomsbury had on Woolf as "ultimately twofold" (8). While the group supported her emotionally after Thoby's death, it also sharpened her views of creativity and formalist aesthetics. They adapted an Avant-garde view of art that is characterized by extreme experimentalism and a tendency to knock down the conventions of Victorian art. The Bloomsbury Group tackled "[q]uestions of inward outward reality, subject

and object, conscious and unconscious, or problems of the relationship between world and art” (Richter 20). These concerns found their way into Woolf’s writing. Her depiction of the characters’ states of consciousness and the moments of transition between them is a good illustration of implementing Moore’s principle of organic unity. A further evidence of Bloomsbury’s impact on Woolf’s writing can be clearly seen in implementing Bell and Fry’s concept of “significant form”<sup>1</sup>. In her depiction of artists in her novels (e.g., *Orlando*, *The Waves*, *To the Lighthouse*), she highlights the struggle these artists encounter to achieve their artistic vision.

It is, thus, no accident that Woolf is considered as one of the renowned modernist literary figures of the twentieth century (Whitworth 111). It must be remembered, however, that her views of modernism differ from the writers of her time like T.S. Eliot, E. M. Forster, or Ezra Pound. Firstly, Woolf is skeptical of modernists’ belief in the progressive evolution of literature. She highlights the inadequacy of literary tradition due to its neglect of the socio-historical circumstances that shaped its canon. Spiropoulou maintains that Woolf adds to “her conception of literary heritage an anthropological dimension” (32) by considering it a record of the experiences of the suppressed in the past. Therefore, she emphasizes the importance of literary tradition; the one created by the masses and not the intellectuals or critics. Secondly, while modernists, like Joyce and Eliot, wrote with a nostalgic, symbolic reference to tradition and the past, Woolf regards the present as the basis for any literary experience for “[i]t is from the notebooks of the present that the masterpieces of the future are made” (*Common Reader Vol. 1* 304). Many modern writers find in the past a model upon which they can express their modern experience; a means of communicating their struggle with modernism. Spiropoulou claims that Woolf’s treatment of the past entails two meanings; interrogating the idealization

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<sup>1</sup> The state of mind behind the work of art that gives it its significance.

of past and casting doubts over the authenticity of contemporary civilization (32). This view explains her approach to literature and writing.

The nature of modern literature has been a recurrent question in many of Woolf's essays. In *Modern Novel (Common Reader Vol.1)*, she distinguishes between Edwardian and Modern novels. To start with, she classifies authors into two categories; materialists and spiritualists. She then criticizes materialist writers (G. H. Wells, Arnold Bennett, and John Galsworthy) for their inadequate depiction of life. They are preoccupied with describing the materialistic aspect of life and overlooking the psychological development of their characters. On the contrary, she praises spiritual novelists, taking James Joyce as an example, who went beyond describing physical objects and ventured to explore the inner working of the mind. As she writes, spiritual writers provide a more effective portrayal of life due to their wide scope that accounts for "body and spirit". The article marks that shift toward depicting "an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives myriad impressions — trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel" (*Common Reader Vol.1* 149). Thus, the key to capturing the essence of life is discarding with literary conventions and rules. The subjectivity of literary experience, then, becomes 'the proper stuff of fiction'. According to Woolf, novelists must be sincere to their inner process in order to capture the "incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday" (154). Lack of plot, unidentified genre, and deviant narrative techniques are characteristics of what is called stream of consciousness; a technique Woolf has adapted in a lot of novels. Woolf concludes with the observation that "everything is the proper stuff of fiction, every feeling, every thought; every quality of brain and spirit" (158). All experiments with literary forms are accepted as far as they are not false or mere pretense. With this statement, she praises literary diversity.

A comprehensible account of modernist writing techniques is provided in *Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown*. It is a lecture given by Woolf to the Cambridge Heretics Society in May 1924

and later published under the title *Character in Fiction*. The essay demonstrates Woolf's view of fiction in response to Arnold Bennett's criticism of Georgian novelists in general and her novel *Jacob's Room* in particular. Bennett suggests that Woolf and her generation are unable to portray characters who "survive in the mind" (113). To establish a counter argument, Woolf in *Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown* invites readers to imagine through her anecdote a passenger, Mrs. Brown, then she lists possible forms of depicting her in fiction. Woolf initially questions, "[w]ho are the judges of reality?" for an English, French, or Russian novelists' perceptions of realism vary. What would Woolf take as realism, other authors will condemn it as fiction (10). So, the criterion of determining literary realism is characterization. Then she illustrates how Edwardian novelists will portray Mrs. Brown in contrast to Georgians. Edwardian novelists will concentrate on describing the details of her surrounding and even create a "Utopia", as in G. H. Will's case, where Mrs. Brown is probably a defect. Others would not have an interest in portraying her because they are "stuffed with information, arrainging civilisation" and consider Mrs. Brown "a broken pot" (13). Mr. Bennett, according to Woolf, will concentrate on the details of Mrs. Bennett's life, income, and villa expecting readers to "deduce the human beings who live there" (18). Woolf reckons these literary tools and convention as unsuitable for modern writers because they are confronted with a need to depict the subjectivity of people's experience of modernism. When Woolf begins her essay by declaring that "on or about December 1910 human character changed"<sup>1</sup>, she proclaims that a major shift has taken place in that year and consequently:

All human relations have shifted—those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when

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<sup>1</sup> Her choice of this date has been subjected to many speculations. Some critics consider it a turning point in modern literature.

human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature (*Mr. Bennet* 5).

Woolf justifies the move toward a more experimental and unconventional writing forms that corresponds to this shock of the new. Literary form has been transformed; even “[g]rammar is violated; syntax disintegrated” in the course of writing (*Mr. Bennet* 21). At the end of her essay, she reveals that Mrs. Brown is an allegory of a modern life that is vague and fragmented. However, the literature written about it marks an era of great English literature.

She also comments on the status of female writers in one of her most celebrated essays; *Room of One's Own*. It is considered a manifesto of the 20th-century feminist literary criticism and theory since it investigates the relationship between women and fiction. The main thesis of this essay is that “[a] woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (*Room* 7). Woolf insists that materialism plays a key role in determining the success and appreciation of any literary figure; she draws on this link to explain the absence of literary feminine writing throughout history. In its broad outline, the essay offers three reasons for that; the absence of financial independence, lack of privacy, and the limited education offered to women. A sum of five hundred pounds a year, Woolf estimates, is what a woman needs to write fiction because “[i]ntellectual freedom depends upon material things...And women have always been poor” (166). This amount of money will liberate women from any patriarchal influence, then they will be able to have their own rooms where they can think and write freely.

In her argument, Woolf contrasts two versions of women representation; in fiction and in history. It is impossible not to see, according to Woolf, that while women are portrayed as important and effective figures in fiction, in history they are either completely absent or insignificant. The difference between these two, Parson clarifies, has a profound implication; it creates a “false image of female identity” that is employed in enforcing patricidal conventions and satisfying male's egoism (84). Even scientific books written in psychology, science, and

biology are concerned with highlighting “the mental, moral and physical inferiority of women” in order to justify male’s superiority (Woolf, *Room* 36). Such conventions established through discourses over decades prevented, or in best cases, limited the number of female literary texts due to the lack of female literary tradition. By way of illustration, Woolf invents the character of Judith Shakespeare, whose talent matches that of her brother William Shakespeare, then invites readers to consider the conditions that have led to the loss of great female writers.

In her survey of female writers in chapter four, she attributes to Aphra Behn the emergence of female writers. She was the one “who earned them the right to speak their minds” establishing her as an early example of writing as a profession for women (*Room* 72). Woolf, then, marks the appearance of several Victorian women novel writers. She highlights their problem with anger and the impact it had on some of them. Woolf praises Jane Austen for writing “without hate, without bitterness, without fear, without protest, without preaching.”(*Room* 74) On the contrary, she criticizes Charlotte Bronte although she appears more talented than Austen. Bronte’s anger of her position as a woman, Woolf comments, “will never get her genius expressed whole and entire” and in consequence “it was tampering with [her] integrity” (76). Woolf suggests androgyny as a solution for this obstacle. A writer, man or woman, should think with the mind of both genders to form a credible image of life. In addition, Woolf links the problem of modern women writers to the lack of a female literary tradition to rely on, even sentences do not serve the need of expression. In novels, women writers found the space to express themselves. This was attributed to the nature of the novel as a young genre that still holds flexible rules of composition, unlike poetry or epic, whose conventions were “hardened and set by the time [they] became writer[s]” (84). It is not until the 20th century that women were given the freedom to write all sort of books and not only novels.

It is insufficient to treat these views without tracing their projection in Woolf's literary works which range from novels, short stories, to biographies. She wrote nine novels; *The Voyage Out* (1915), *Night and Day* (1919), *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando* (1928), *The Waves* (1931), *The Years* (1937), and *Between the Acts* (1941) in addition to a number of short stories and biographies. As it has been said, she did not find in the "materialists" the methods which are capable of materializing her literary perspective. In an analysis of Woolf's style, Marsh found an inconsistency in using a specific narrative technique; in a single work, Woolf would employ "a variety of narrative flavours and techniques which she switches and flows between at will" (14). This diversity of narrative techniques seems to amplify the psychological aspect of characters' actions. She relinquishes the conventions of plot and characterization to dive into the psyche of her characters. Therefore, she used a more experimental, highly aesthetic, and sometimes lyrical style that is often described as vague and fragmented. The impressionist nature of her writing is established via the use of narrative techniques like stream of consciousness and free indirect discourse.

Literary realism, according to Woolf, is psychological. Her novels are primarily concerned with exploring the sub-consciousness and characters' correspondence to different occasions. The prioritization of psychological over physical realism has led to her usage of several narrative techniques that, though partially, succeed in deciphering the inner reality of human beings. Unlike Joyce, the psychological reality Woolf depicts is not merely mental; her writing goes beyond representing characters' egoistic self to "a merging of the self with someone or something outside" (Naremore, *World* 152). So, it is not only characters' mentality, but also their experience with the surrounding are what distinguish Woolf's stream of consciousness. The function of interior monologue and free indirect discourse is obscuring the boundaries between abstract thoughts and concrete environment.

Woolf's application of narrative perspective challenges the view of holistic realism and foregrounds subjectivity. By introducing 'psychological realism', Woolf exposes the relationship between the individual and the society. Her novels negotiate the possibility of maintaining individuality in a chaotic and disrupted age. She raises the question of whether "subjective perception can locate a unifying truth of the subject beyond the sphere of social and economic conflict" (Katz 235). Therefore, the adaptation of multiple perspectives emphasizes personal experience over objective appearance. Furthermore, it presents a distinctive reaction to the social and historical context each character encounters. In *Jacob's Room*, for example, the life of Jacob Flanders is reported by the women he was acquainted with. Over 150 characters, some of them are unnamed, contribute to creating an image of the deceased Jacob through the impressions he had on them (Goldman 50-51). Therefore, Jacob's subjectivity is undermined, since he has an absent role in the novel, giving space for other characters to produce a pluralized subjective description of him. This multiplicity of views weakens the possibility of creating a unified concept of realism. In addition, Woolf challenges the conventions of writing novels by using a poetic form that is simultaneous, repetitive, and rhythmic, and emphasizes subjectivity.

Many of Woolf's novels deal with the link between art and life either through a direct commentary or by means of characterization. On one hand, there are novels that are sought to parody certain genres. *Night and Day*, for example, can be read as a satire on Victorian novels that sentimentalize romance, courtship, and marriage. According to Whitworth, Katharine is aware of "traditional courtship narratives" and conceives herself as a heroine in one of them (155). She considers it a social convention that has to be fulfilled, but she also perceives love and passions as concepts relevant to stories and not to real life. Woolf, thus, creates a novel that, despite its conventional form, is aware of the illusion it creates and the inapplicability of its subject matters. On the other hand, some of Woolf's novels can be labeled as *Künstlerroman*

novels; a type of fiction that traces artists' development. The purpose of these novels is revealing the process of creativity and determining the impact various factors plays in art production. The novels, hence, deliberately draw on issues of the difficulty of expression, class, gender, and politics in relation to art. Ronchitte explains that these novels involve "questions of the artist's relationship to social and sexual life and the surrounding world" (5). *The Voyage Out*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *Between the Acts* are novels that feature artists as main characters. The first novel contains Rachel, a musically talented female, and her growth as an artist and intellectual. *To the Lighthouse* highlights Lily Briscoe's attempt to finish a painting despite the interference of patriarchal authorities. In *Between the Acts*, Miss La Trobe directs the people of the village in a pageant's performance that gives an insight into English history, culture, and foreshadows the Second World War.

In *Three Guineas* Woolf indicates that building empires and war-making are issues raised and fostered by masculinity and to prevent wars and increase pacifism, women must be educated and assigned professions. Almost all of Woolf's novels inherits the question of feminism. Issues of women education, economic empowerment, and profession are tackled in many of her novels and critical essays. For example. *Night and Day* provides an early insight into Woolf's concept of feminism. Katharine, a beautiful and privileged member of a well-known family, is an archetype of the traditional gender role that is contrasted with Mary Datchet who is involved in the women's suffrage movement and has a job. Anticipating her argument in *Room of One's Own*, Woolf conveys Katharine's admiration of Mary's apartment for; a hint of women independence. Hamilton claims that what Woolf tries to communicate is that "when it comes to love, men are the sentimental romantics, and women are the pragmatic realists" (qtd. in Whitworth 155). *To the Lighthouse* goes in the same vine of foregrounding feminism, but this time in relation to the struggle of the female artist. The novel explores how women artists' struggle to create art is doubled up by the shadows patriarchal authorities cast

on their creativity. Another example is introduced in *The Years*, a family saga that features the life of generations of women as they challenge private and public politics. Briggs stresses that “*The Years* records the gradual release of its closely constrained young women into freedom and even self-determination as the Victorian patriarchs... die out” (qtd. in Sellers 78). *The Years* is a novel that traces the transformation in the status of women through ages.

To sum up, Woolf’s fiction and non-fiction have been the subject of many speculations since their publication. Her works were reinvestigated in the light of new critical approaches associated with postmodernism. Although she died in 1941, “[h]er novels and essays became treasures of English literature” (Mills 110). E. M Forster indicated that “she has, among other achievements, made a definite contribution to the novelist’s art” (172). It is much more than the aesthetic pleasure evoked by her novel that carved her name in the history of literature. What gives that special effect to Woolf’s writing through the years is her unique representation of characters, innovative style, and her contribution to the development of modern literary theory. This made her one of the most highly recognized figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In contrast, Graham Swift (1949- ) is regarded by many critics as one of the most distinguished British contemporary fiction writers. Graham Collin Swift was born in south London for a lower-middle class family. His father, Allen Stanly Swift, was a former pilot who had fought in the Second World War, but after its end, he worked at the National Debts Office. To accommodate with post-war life, Allen Swift turned to collecting books, an act that was described by his son as a way of sustaining his sense of security after the war. Although Swift did not witness the events of Second World War, his life was shaped by it. Second World War events will become a recurrent motif in his novels. His mother, Sheila Irene, Swift recalls, constructed the secure, happy, and comfortable atmosphere of his childhood. Swift declares, however, that his upbringing was not typical of a writer; “no one in the family who was in any

way artistic or a potential mentor to a budding writer and yet this is what I became.” In spite of that, Swift has developed a keen interest in literature since childhood.

Academically, he was a distinguished student who has won several scholarship to study at highly esteemed institutions. He entered Queens’s College, Cambridge in 1967. There he published his first short story entitled “Break” in the university journal. After his graduation with a Master degree in English Literature in 1970, he moved to York University to peruse a Ph.D. on “The Role of the City in 19th-Century Literature”. He also met his future wife Candice Rodd while he was preparing for his Ph.D. Nonetheless, Swift inclination to write fiction was overwhelming, so he finally decided on dropping his thesis. He moved to Greece where he worked briefly as a teacher then came back to rent an apartment and live with Rodd. He has taken several temporary jobs to support himself, but by that time, he was also dedicated to becoming a writer. Meanwhile, Swift continued to write short stories for small literary journals and magazines until he published *The Sweet Shop Owner*, his first novel. Swift continued to work, primarily as an English language teacher, but following the success of his novels, he stopped teaching to become a full-time writer.

Graham Swift published ten novels; *The Sweet-Shop Owner* (1980), *Shuttlecock* (1981), *Waterland* (1983), *Out of This World* (1988), *Ever After* (1992), *Last Orders* (1996), *The Light of Day* (2003), *Tomorrow* (2007), *Wish You Were Here* (2011), and *Mothering Sunday: A Romance* (2016). He also wrote three collections of short stories; *Learning to Swim* (1982), *Chemistry* (2008), and *England and Other Stories* in addition to one non-fiction book entitled *Making an Elephant: Writing From Within* in 2008. Swift’s name was widely circulated especially after the success of his novel *Waterland* which was later shortlisted for the prestigious Booker Prize for literature in 1983. He, however, won the Booker Prize in 1996 for his novel *Last Orders*. Swift obtained numerous recognitions; he was elected a fellow of the

Royal Society of Literature in 1984 and received honorary degrees from the University of East Anglia and the University of York.

Throughout his career, Graham Swift adopted remarkable views regarding writing, literary style, literary tradition, the role of the author, and the link between morality and literature. He often speculates critically on the essence of the novel. Although he affirms that writing can be “grim, lonely, miserable, desperate and wretched”, he suggests that it offers “a great sweetness... [and] a great adventure” (qtd. in Marriott). In an interview with *Foyle*, Swift emphasizes that the novel is the only medium in which each word is valuable because it adds “vibrate to things for which most of us don’t have words”. Telling and reading stories, Swift proposes, is an intrinsic impulse in human beings; it offers an outlet of life’s burdens and subsequently strengthen and comfort them. After all, understanding life’s conditions associates the meaning of the novel with the story it depicts.

Swift argues that novels should not be used as a platform of transmitting certain propagandas or points of view. Accordingly, he denies any didactic role for his novels by aligning them with the aim of depicting human experiences. The provocation of readers’ thinking, according to Swift, is the core of successful writing and not the preoccupation with focusing on certain views or idea. Literary voice is a critical concept in relation to Swift’s writing due to his frequent experimentation with it. It is a cornerstone in fiction writing. In an interview with Bernard, Swift explains that, “you might have a character but voice is essential” (219). Therefore, voice should be situated in a way that can increase the reliability and impact of a literary text.

Of further importance is Swift’s narrative style which processes distinctive features that are not less important than the subject matter of his novels. Benson indicates that contemporary writers’ use of the first-person narrative has to do with voice (587). In an interview with Lidia Vianu, Swift justifies his tendency toward using the first-person narrative:

[It] gives you an immediate and intimate access to your character, and in the end implies a certain kind of relationship with the reader too. I want to be ‘with’ my characters, on their level. I don’t want to be superior to them or to pretend to know more than they do (341).

Narrators in Swift’s novels are usually speaking in a monologue-like form that is sometimes addressed to an absent or unidentified listener(s). This echoes what Swift has mentioned in an interview with Bernard; it attempts to communicate with the “inner ear, [the] silent listening” of readers (220). *Tomorrow*, for instance, is narrated from the first-person point of view. It is a novel about Paula, a mother who is remembering and mentally preparing for the confrontation with her children the next day. As she remembers her life, she wonders about the most suitable way of disclosing the secret of her children’s birth for they were conceived by artificial insemination, using an anonymous donor’s sperm. In this case, her husband, Mike, is not their biological father. In this novel, the voice of Paula is unarticulated; the whole narrative takes place in her mind addressing no one particularly. She confesses, “I want you to listen to these things I am telling you and not to hear them at all...” (180). The narrative structure reflects Paula’s fear and anxiety as well as her defensive mood. Critical to the study of Swift’s narrative style is his frequent use of multiple narrators. In *Last Orders*, for instance, there are seven speakers who describe the journey of disposing the ashes of their friend Jack at Margate. Simultaneously, each one of them ponders about his/her life in retrospect. Although Ray’s narrative dominates the story, Vic, Vince, Lenny, Mary, Mandy, and even the deceased Jack have their share of speaking. This form of structuring the novel makes it polyphonic as it introduces various moods and tones. It can be said also that this technique contributes to highlighting the pluralism of human experience.

Since most of Swift's narrators are introduced in the first-person point of view, their linguistic repertoire is noteworthy and sometimes suggestive. Character's speech is often compatible with their social class and level of education. This can be illustrated briefly by comparing the highly sophisticated and academic speech of Tom Crick in *Waterland* to the colloquial low-middle class language of the seven individuals in *Last Orders*. The attempt to capture a vast range of linguistic variation draws attention to the text's functionality in addition to the accurate portrayal of characters. Both characters' cultural and class milieu are exhibited through their language.

It is also unavoidable to highlight the structural features of Swift's novels. Most of the events in Swift's novels are not represented chronologically. Narrators move between present and past events, mainly through memories, disturbing the linear progress of time. The effectiveness of this technique has been exemplified in *The Sweet Shop Owner* where the story crosses different levels of time. William Chapman moves randomly from his present to the time of his daughter's birth, the death of his wife, and the Second World War. Even his race as a school boy is not introduced until chapter 34. Similarly, the narrative of *Waterland* shifts back and forth in time moving between Tom's life by the river Leem, history of the Fens and Atkinsons, and Mary's abduction of a child. His brother suicide is not reported until the last chapter. Malcom states that these shifts "embody a particular vision of the world in which the past weighs heavily on the present" (16). This fragmentation of events assists characters in reconstructing their lives, solving the puzzles of their existence, and understanding their current conditions. It urges readers to join its parts to get a clear image of the plot.

It is necessary, moreover, to call attention to the ellipsis, incomplete utterances, and omissions which are of particular implications in Swift's novels. Malcom indicates that this stylistic de-familiarization undermines the novels' illusion of realism by putting narrators' reliability into question (115). They also help in depicting the psyche of characters. An

evidence of this can be clearly seen in the case of *Out of This World* which epitomizes moments in which language, with all its expressive capacity, fails in moments of characters' breakdown. In this novel, Harry Beech is a photojournalist whose father, the former weapon manufacturer, was assassinated. As part of his job, Harry took photographs of his father's burned car after its bombardment. He later recalls, "I never wished—So help me, I never, not for one moment, wished—" (23). The use of the half articulated ideas and ellipses marks moments in which "the narrative goes dumb". It reflects the trauma, uncertainty, and psychological avoidance of facing reality.

Central to understanding Swift's novels is recognizing their multi-genre nature. In one novel, a mixture of different fictional genres, such as domestic saga, detective story, provincial novel, and historical fiction, can be identified within the narrative frame. An evidence of employing multiple genres can be found in Swift's *Shuttlecock* where psychological, historical, memoir, and detective narrative are mingled. It features Prentis, an officer at the "dead cases" department, who investigates the possibility of his father's treason during the Second World War. The novel includes pieces of Dad's war autobiography that establishes a sense of historical fiction, a detective story involving Prentis investigation of his father's past, and a psychological mood related to Prentis' relationship with his family members as well as his father's insanity symptoms. In general, genre complexity exhibits a panoramic portrayal of contemporary life; it implies men's strive to construct a collective and comprehensive concept of truth. It raises questions regarding many factors that, directly or indirectly, can shape individuals' encounter with the world.

Furthermore, intertextuality<sup>1</sup> has been one of Swift's stylistic markers. In several interviews, Swift displayed an awareness of being influenced by various literary works (e.g.,

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<sup>1</sup> Intertextuality, in its broadest meaning, refers to the relationship any text has with other texts; it could be established by reference to other texts or to the text itself.

Bernard, McGrath). Intertextuality is exemplified clearly in *Ever After* which revolves around Bill Unwin whose life is influenced by his father's suicide and his mother's adultery. From the very beginning, Bill compares himself to Shakespeare's Hamlet, "for a large part of my life... I have imagined myself... as Hamlet" (7), establishing one of the most obvious intertextual commentaries in the novel. Bill's life is similar to that of Hamlet. His father, Colonel Unwin, committed suicide, however, Bill believes that his mother's lover, Sam, killed him in order to marry her. Although Bill and Hamlet have many similarities (they are both hesitant, expressive, and share similar family issues), Bill later discovers Sam's innocence and the truth of his father's suicide for political reasons. Additionally, *Last Orders* gives a good example of intertextuality. The theme and story structure strikingly resembles William Faulkner's novel *As I Lay Dying*; both novels rely on multiple perspectives of narrative and have a similar motif; a journey to the burial site of a dead person. The voyage of the four friends, as they alternatively tell their stories, bears a striking resemblance to Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Chaucer's text refers to past concepts of order and divine blessings after death while the reference to Eliot's poem associates the novel with the pessimistic, distorted, and absurd phase of modernism. The allegory creates a "differentiated and balanced picture of man's existence" in which contemporary life is neither determined by divine rule nor man's experience (Hühn 197). In general, Malcom suggests that intertextuality in Swift's novel "serves to universalize and to dignify particular characters and their fates" (12). The extensive use of intertextuality reinforces metafiction in literary works as well. Correspondingly, Swift's novels carry within their structure metafictional concerns that cross the line between fiction and reality. In the previous example, metafiction is created when the text draws attention to the relationship between fiction and narrative reality. It problematizes the transmission of facts as it weaves them within a fictional narrative. Waugh indicates that the contemporaries' move toward metafiction provides, writers as well as readers, with an

“accurate models for understanding the contemporary experience of the world as construction, an artifice, a web of interdependent semiotic systems”(9). Along these lines, foregrounding the fictionality of literary works leads to problematizing the concept of reality inside and outside a literary work. It also gives rise to moral concerns.

The relationship between morality and literature is a pivot question for many contemporary writers. Swift starts answering it by emphasizing that fiction is not a space for conveying moral messages. After all, a novel is neither a political nor a philosophical act. The moralist aspect, however, is incorporated within the act of writing a novel; when the author “attempts to get inside the experience of others” (Swift, *An Interview* 224). This is attained once the author’s empathy gets him a deeper insight into characters’ attributes. The author can produce a reliable depiction of characters. Swift clarifies in an interview with McGrath that, as an author, he “doesn’t start with preconceptions”; in this way he propitiates the “scheme” of writing over the “intention” of it (20). In an interview with Craps, Swift emphasizes that the moral dimension of a literary work is governed by “empathy, compassion, and preparedness to suspend easy judgment on anyone who features in the story” (649). What Swift appears to be saying is that authentic characterization is a consolidation of creative acts that are guided by authors’ “sympathetic imagination” (650).

In an interview with Catharine Bernard, Swift divides writers into defensive and non-defensive authors, according to their style. Defensive writers’ style is characterized by an extensive dependence on innovative narrative forms. Employing a heavily stylized in fiction gives rise to a strong sense of linguistic self-reflexivity that deliberately aims to hide authors’ “vulnerability” and empathy with characters. Swift clarifies that every text brings about the authority of its writer. On the contrary, ‘openness’ is felt in novels by non-defensive writers who do not try to conceal their sympathy and identification with characters encouraging readers to trust them and carry on reading their works. In his essay “Throwing off Our Inhibition”,

Swift indicates that writers should not rely solely on their renege of experience, but venture to explore the diversity of human experience. He also establishes localness as a key to introducing universal issues once the author is capable of rejuvenating it with originality.

The humanist tradition of English literature, however, bears a great influence on Swift's writing. Swift asserts that tradition provides him with a stable ground to stand on. This grants him confidence and strength while writing. He justifies this in an interview by Bernard indicating that "it is hard to separate literary tradition from language" for they are complementing each other (223). He goes further to explain that the complexity of literary tradition, especially that of the 19th-century, entails a flexibility that facilitates implementing many aspects into contemporary fiction. He agrees with Malcolm Bradbur's claim that new authors draw on the 19th-century literature to stabilize the exoticness of modernists' experimentalism. Swift insists that the purpose of returning to 19th-century novels by contemporary writers is not to highlight its difference from contemporary experience, but to unearth their common themes and reinvestigate them in the light of the new age.

19th-century novelists, Swift claims, were more spontaneous in terms of form. Authors, like Charles Dickens and George Eliot, were not conscious of writing forms. They wrote novels naturally as if they are oblivious to formalist structures. On the contrary, Swift recognizes contemporary writers' awareness of literary construction. In writing novels, he admits a consistent awareness of constructiveness. Nevertheless, he denies being a formalist since he is most concerned with representing feelings. As mentioned in his interview with Bernard, feelings and form are two contradictory concepts because "form is to do with control and discipline, and feeling is to do with liberation and release" (228). Therefore, "form... is governed by feeling, by the shaping and timing of emotion" (Vianu 342). In an interview with Birnbaum, Swift highlights that words are not the main component of writing; "[t]hey are only

there to give something, to transmit something.” Successful form in contemporary novels, thus, is the one which goes unnoticed.

Furthermore, Swift indicates that his cautiousness of the term ‘contemporary fiction’ is due to its paradoxical meaning. Usually, big events stir in writers the urge to offer a correspondence to it through literature. However, Swift clarifies, it is impossible for literature to produce an immediate response to events. The duration it takes for writing a novel is what makes it an unsuitable media to be labeled as ‘contemporary’. Swift indicates that the role of the journalist is to provide statements and immediate responses to events. The purpose of literature, in contrast, is “to take the long view, to show change and evolution, human behavior worked on by time” (Swift, *On Contemporary*). Novel writing invites authors to create distance in order to embrace the changes in the long term. It accounts for the nature and consequences of these events offering a deeper and more mature overview. In the same vein, Swift highlights authors’ role as influential figures in the society. According to Swift, they must not indulge themselves into topics that go beyond their profession for they do not have a political responsibility of leading public opinion.

This is apparently true in the case of history as a controversial concept. History has been investigated by many contemporary writers like Ian MaCwin, Salman Rushdie, and Graham Swift. In a culture that insists on retrieving the essence of history by rejuvenating its roots after the traumatic events of the Second World War, historical facts are treated with doubt and acute scrutiny. Swift’s novels have their share in this common literary interest; they try to answer questions regarding the impact of the past on the present as well as the liaison between personal and public history. History is mostly presented as an entrance to apprehend the complexity of the contemporary condition. This can be illustrated briefly by referring to Swift’s *Waterland* where personal, regional, national, and sometimes international history are intermingled. Endeavoring to grasp the essence of his current dilemma, Tom Crick, the history

teacher, narrates his personal story as it sets at the background of the emergence of the Fenland, Second World War, and the threats of the Cold War. Tom looks in retrospect ‘demanding an explanation of history’, but his effort is faced by the limit of his power of explanation. He conclusively considers history as a “phlegmy” notion that is full of gaps filled only by storytelling. Nevertheless, history or story-like history eliminates the “fear” of contemporary life. It can decipher “causes and effects” although one should acknowledge the limit of its explanatory capacity because historical inquiries are endless. Historical creditability is also considered in *Shuttlecock* where history is delivered as a fabrication since some of its events were omitted. Historical gaps, according to Kaczvinsky, give narrators an opportunity “of escaping truth, of controlling, manipulating, or destroying certain information that may implicate one in the present” (3). Instead of offering a reliable account of his escapements from the Gustavo, the memoir of Printce’s father contains narrative vacuums that could be interpreted as attempts to cover up facts.

Closely related to the theme of history is that of the relationship between parents and children. The conflict between generations seems to obtain a central position in Swift’s writing. In *Shuttlecock*, for instance, the protagonist struggles to cast out the shadow of his father. Prentis tries to get away from the legend of his father’s heroism and assert his power by an extreme exercise of violence toward his wife and two boys. It is not until becoming the head of the dead crimes department and discovering his father’s reality that Prentis is satisfied. Similarly, Henery, the protagonist in *Out of This World*, states, “I didn’t worship my father” (46), the weapon manufacturer, but after photographing his father’s assassination, his relationship with his daughter came to an end. Moreover, *Last Order* offers a variety of parent and children relationships. First, there is Jack and Mary’s relationship with June, their mentally restarted daughter. While Mary insists on visiting her twice a week in the home, Jack denies June’s existence completely. They later adopted the orphan Vince then Mandy, the runaway,

to replace June. Vic, on the contrary, has a good relationship with his sons who agreed on taking after their father's job as an undertaker, but later Vic remembers how his profession was formerly determined by his father. Unlike Vic, Vince refuses to take after Jack's trade as a butcher and he becomes a second-hand cars seller. Lenny and Roy have disastrous bonds with their daughters; the former lost his daughter, Lucy, to become a half-prostitute while the later's daughter has deserted him by traveling to Australia where she lives with her partner. Swift's exploration of the relationships between generations is closely related to the historical and social changes of the age.

Like most of Swift's writings, his novels could be understood in the big frame of warfare. Novels frequently present characters who had a direct or indirect contact with war. The ghosts of the First and Second World Wars constantly haunt Swift's novels due to their status as major historical events. An example of this is *Waterland* where Tom's father is depicted as a traumatized veteran of the First World War. *Shuttlecock* also features Prentis' dad; the spy and a hero of the Second World War. In *Last Orders*, all four travelers have fought on different fronts during the Second World War. On the contrary, Henry Beech's experience with war in *Out of This World* is that of an eyewitness; he was a photographer in the Second World War, Vietnam War, and an indirect receiver of the impact of the First World War on his father's business. *Wish You Were Here* is a recently published novel that examines England's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan wars following 11th of September attacks. A. J. Kirby describes it as "a novel full of yearning for tradition and history. For what England has lost." The novel revolves around Jack who receives news of his brother's death in Iraq. Jack remembers the deceased Tom and their life in the farm as he travels to Oxfordshire where he will receive his brother's body. It is strikingly noticeable that Jack's memory of slaughtering cows after the mad cows epidemic corresponds to the big number of soldiers who have been killed like cattles in exotic places like Iraq and Afghanistan. Jack is left alone to face personal

and national tragedy underlining a “collective psychic wound that is expressed variously in various characters” (D’erasmo). The reason beyond Swift’s insistence on introducing wars as remarkable events in his literary works may be attributed to the intensive and vital impact these historical moments have on people’s perception of the world.

As a whole, this chapter is a brief overview of Woolf’s and Swift’s personal and literary background. It has aimed at fostering a better understanding of their work in context. It has provided a survey of their literary and critical works. It has also discussed the main themes that run through their major works. Combining these elements shows that the two authors have distinctive critical orientations, which cause some of their novels to be treated as manifestations of their views. Although it is still early to draw conclusions from this chapter, it has, nevertheless, shown the influence of the authors’ views on their writing. This chapter lays the foundation for tracing metafiction in relation to some of these themes in the two selected novels.

## **Chapter Two: Metafiction**

## **Metafiction**

Literature is generally perceived as a kind of writing that represents an identical depiction of life, or some aspects of it, by maintaining a reliable relation to the realm of truth. In literature nowadays, it is hard to maintain the most common view of literature as a “mirror” that reflects reality. Making a statement about the nature of truth has become a problematic issue following the emergence of postmodernism and the philosophies associated with it. Writers, consequently, had a firsthand experience with these changes and sought to epitomize them in their works. Metafiction is found to be the suitable tool to serve that purpose. The novel, as a narrative form, is no more confined to representing narrative events from a contemporary point of view. It has grown to involve narrative moments in which the act of narrative is depicted and thematized. Metafiction stands for “a novel which systematically flaunts its own condition of artifice and by so doing probes into the problematic relationship between real-seeming artifice and reality” (Alter X). It foregrounds the fictional nature of literary works and at the same time problematizes the concept of reality in the real world.

The term metafiction is generally applied to fiction that contains a self-critique and an exploration of the possibilities encountered during the act of fiction-making. Michael Boyd claims that metafiction in novels “seeks to examine the act of writing itself, to turn away from the project of representing an imaginary world and to turn inward to examine its own mechanisms” (7). Although metafiction is a common practice in contemporary novels, it is a concept that is difficult to give a precise definition for. This is originated from its orientation with multiple theories of writing and reading literature. Meta-language is the cornerstone to understand metafiction. It refers to a linguistic structure that denotes more than its literal meaning whether in literature or any other form of writing. That is, namely, a language that describes language. Then it is safe to say that criticism is a meta-language that describes literature. Accordingly, literature can be treated as a meta-language that describes philosophy; it demonstrates philosophical ideas while philosophy designates the messages conveyed in literary works. Keeping with this strain, metafiction combines all these aspects to provide an

integrated interpretation of fiction. This is an outcome of its interdisciplinary nature that developed into “a polyvalent problematization of the critical, reflexive, analytical, or playful perspective of that which is narrated reflected upon itself” (Krysinski 186). Therefore, discussing metafiction requires an explicit account of its meanings, functions, and implications.

The main defining characteristic of metafiction, however, is its employment of self-reflexive statements that demonstrate the fiction-making process. A self-conscious narrative is created by linking those statements. G. H. Gass was probably the first to use the term metafiction in his article “Philosophy and the Form of Fiction”. As part of his attempt to parallelize philosophy and fiction, Gass suggests that neither the philosophical nor fictional world possesses a greater reality than the other (4). Although both get to establish a fictional counterpart, a novel may portray a world that demonstrates a specific philosophical view. According to him, metafiction accounts for novels in which “the forms of fiction serve as the material upon which further forms can be imposed” to highlight their assimilation of meta-languages, and as a result, broadens their philosophical scope (17). To put it another way, novelists would transmute scientific and philosophical concepts then incorporate them within the narrative fabric. They would come up with an identifiable experience of the abstract by manipulating the linguistic form of the text.

To clarify the narrative self-consciousness element in fiction, Robert Scholes provides an in-depth analysis of four works of literature in order to trace the effect metafiction has on fiction. He starts by introducing four types of fiction; fiction of ideas, form, existence, and essence, then attaches them to four corresponding critical approaches; formal, structural, behavioral, and philosophical. Then he clarifies that each of these types is affiliated with some aspects of fiction creation (105). In terms of critical approaches, both formal and structural criticism examine how fiction works. While the former is dedicated to studying ideas of fiction, the latter concentrates on the connection between literary works in a specific time zone. On the contrary, behavioral and philosophical criticisms focus on the meaning of fiction. On one hand, behavioral critics approach literary works with definite opinions. Novels are marked “true” if

they are found to be compatible with critics' views, otherwise, works are considered false especially if they emphasize any aspect other than behaviors. On the other hand, philosophical or "critic of consciousness", as Scholes prefers to call them, "looks for the essential values that inhere in the experience of fiction." He concludes that metafiction "collects all the perspectives of criticism into the fictional process itself" (106). In *Fictional Criticism in the Future*, Scholes indicates that "a fiction which, if it is 'about' anything, it is about the possibilities and impossibilities of fiction itself" (qtd. in Christensen 10). He, thus, situates metafiction within the scope of literary criticism; metafiction's self-consciousness stems from directing the readers' attention to the diversity of interpretive approaches proposed by literary works.

However, several practical questions arise in dealing with metafiction. Although it is a term frequently used in the literature, there is no agreement about its definition. Nunning draws attention to the difference between metafiction and metanarrative because they are often attributed to the same literary phenomena. Therefore, it remains necessary to clarify what is meant exactly by each term. Metanarrative thematizes the act or the process of making narrative while metafiction is limited to revealing the artificiality of narrative (*Toward* 16). The subject of metanarrative is restricted to *syuzhet* (the narrative technique) while metafiction focuses on *histoire* (story events)<sup>1</sup>. There are two reasons, Nunning suggests, that have resulted into confusing the two terms. Firstly, metafiction is the term used by most of the Anglo-American critics to describe any self-reflexive utterances. Fludernik elaborates on this point by emphasizing modernists' aversion from any type of authorial intrusion or narrative commentary, because it undermines the illusion of novels' truthfulness (*Commentary* 11). Since metafiction represents a clear violation of this standard, metanarrative was also regarded as a branch of it. Secondly, metanarration is usually equated with Lyotard's "*Grand narrative*" (Nunning, *On Metanarrative* 15). Fludernik locates this misinterpretation in the nature of the English language; in translating the term (metafiction) from German and French, some of its

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<sup>1</sup> *Syuzhet* refers to the linguistic structure of narrative while *histoire* stands for the meaning implied by them. For further reading refer to Scholes' *Fabulation and Metafiction*. University of Illinois Press, 1979.

implications were lost (*Commentary* 12). While the German language has coined terms that stand for several aspects associated with metafiction, English lacks the capacity to convey or find an equivalent to them. For instance, *Metafiktionalität* is the German equivalent of metafiction in English, but in German, it refers to the device of creating metafiction while in English it is to do with the meaning of the text (*Commentary* 12). In addition, Fludernik refers to Nunnig's distinction between the reference of metanarrative statements and their function—that metanarrative may or may not foregrounds narrative's fictional status (18). She concludes that metafiction is a function of metanarrative; a discourse about narrative fictionality which creates *metafictionalitat*<sup>1</sup>.

It becomes essential, then, to formerly identify the position of metafiction within the framework of fiction in order to elucidate its significance. Nunning has cited a coherent typology of metafiction that was later developed by Wolf in 1993. Wolf's categorization of metafiction is based on three formal varieties. First, there is the form of mediation associated with the level of fiction in which metafiction takes place. The second criterion is contextual relations. As its name suggests, it examines metafiction in relation to the whole work; whether metafiction occupies a marginal or central status in the text, the depth of its indulgence with the story, and the intensity of exposing it in the narrative. The third criterion is content value. It comprises three dimensions. It examines whether metafiction refers to the 'fictio or the fictum status' of a passage<sup>2</sup>. It also measures the range of its commentary on the text itself<sup>3</sup>, on literature in general, or on another text. It even creates a discussion on whether the aesthetic subject takes a rather critical view of metafiction or not (Nunning, *On Metanarrative* 101-102). This typology is indicative of metafiction's implementation in almost all genres of fiction, but with variations attributed to their structural and thematic elements.

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<sup>1</sup> The effect of disclosing the artificiality of the text.

<sup>2</sup> The medial nature of a text vs. its reference/non-reference to reality.

<sup>3</sup> Whether it involves a commentary on the entire text or only on parts of it.

Furthermore, it is crucial to understand the meaning of two terms, narrative self-reflexivity, and self-consciousness, before advancing to explore metafiction in context. Despite metafiction's alignment with narrative self-consciousness, self-reflexivity is a term that is frequently used to imply the same meaning (e.g. Genette). Self-reflexivity is associated with narration – narrative discourse- whereas self-consciousness focuses on meaning (the events). Williams maintains that both structural forms are generated by language; however, self-consciousness “implies a superior [ontological] level from which to judge or expose the fiction”, as self-reflexivity remains within the level of linguistic narrative construct (8). Metafiction, accordingly, occurs when a work of fiction “reflect[s] on its own status as fiction and thus refers to all self-reflexive utterances which thematized the fictionality” (Neumann and Nunning 344). This suggests a new perception of metafiction as a self-reflexive discourse commenting on fiction's events. It results into a self-conscious narrative that foregrounds novels' correspondence to reality.

Metafiction is a part of an eternal quest of deciphering the nature of reality; a philosophical idea that has dominated human thinking since time immemorial. To begin with, realism is a mimetic mode of writing that creates an impression of portraying an identical image of life. Mimesis was discussed by Plato and then was thoroughly studied by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. Plato's theory of the mimesis is one of the early philosophies that have sought to detect the link between art and real life. It marks all works of art, including literature, as a fake imitation of the ideal truth, so it must be banned. Aristotle's *Poetics*, on the contrary, took a different approach by describing representation as an innate quality in human beings. Aristotle deals with art as an assist in their learning and strengthening their sense of existence. After all, tragedy is “an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude” (37). Nevertheless, Aristotle indicates that representing reality is problematic; it is more complicated than any system of representation. Therefore, humans are unable to create a totalized representation of life due to their limited perception of truth. Aristotle then advises authors to avoid diegesis; telling stories by a narrator who mediates and comments on

character's thoughts and actions. He proposes that literature (tragedy in his *Poetics*) ought to *show* through mimesis and not *tell* using diegesis. Although this discussion of ancient theories of mimesis may seem irrelevant to our discussion of metafiction, it is, in fact, crucial in understanding contemporary arguments over literary referentiality and approaching today's concept of realism. As Walsh comments, "[t]he concept of mimesis is, if nothing else, a cipher for the purposeful relation between fiction and the real, or the already known" (114). This brief overview implies an early attentiveness toward maintaining the illusion of reality in literary works.

The nineteenth century is renowned as the climax of realism. It started in France then spread to the rest of Europe and the world. Realism held an exceptional status, because literature at that time was representationally oriented. Therefore, realist novels focus on reporting what happens to characters in their environment without casting judgments or giving comments. The novel becomes an "objective representation of contemporary social reality" (Wellek 10). As a reaction against Romanticism, realist novels eliminate any references to myths, transcendentalism, idealization, or prioritization of personal experience. They instead focus on representing the strive of the common man and class conflicts, for instance, from an objective point of view. Characters, thus, become more important than plot or action. Naturalism<sup>1</sup> is also an out spring of realism. It attempts to communicate sociological objectivity by offering a detailed description of the unexplored aspects of the society. It uses empirical scientific methods to transfix reality. Ian Watt's description of the French realism as "essentially an epistemological problem" sheds light on the problem of confirming the truthfulness of literary reference (11). In addition, Brown argues that critical discussions of realism often focuses on listing their common features or tracing their evolution in history, especially in relation to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yet "realism is not an entity a novel can contain or

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<sup>1</sup> Naturalism is a literary movement that prioritizes observation and scientific methods in the fictional portrayal of reality.

possess”, Brown proposes, but “an attribute, a quality, an impression created by the novel.” (226)

This concept of realism was revisited in the modern age. Modernism has become an artistic and cultural movement that had a remarkable impact on Western societies since it signifies a departure from the standards of previous ages. Many critics consider it a reaction against the rules and principles of the Victorian age. Developments in the scientific field that has started with landmark theories (such as, Gregor Mendel’s theory of heredity in 1900, Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, and Albert Einstein’s relativity theory) have changed the intellect of modern man. The industrial revolution, additionally, introduced new technologies that contributed to revolutionizing people’s life. At the same time, several social movements and schools of thoughts, such as Marxism and Feminism, to name some, have emerged. But according to Harpham and Abrams, World War One was the critical stage that had shaken people’s faith in Western civilization (226). The age was dominated by doubt, fear, and ambiguity. These transformations created a chaotic realm that influenced the social, intellectual, and cultural scenes. This massive change demanded a new mode of literary expression that can efficiently embody the moral, cultural, and intellectual dilemmas of the age.

Modern literature is approached as a rejection of many writing conventions associated with the 19<sup>th</sup> century literature. Unlike the realists, modernist writers have dispensed with the objectivity of social realism by replacing it with experimentalism<sup>1</sup> and aesthetic introspections. This shift had its roots in the rapid transformations that took place by the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Modern literature became “a kind of aesthetic heroism, which in the face of the chaos of the modern world... sees art as the only dependable” (Eysteinnsson 2). The modern novel is also marked by extreme experimentalism due to its abandonment of 19<sup>th</sup> century realist tradition. It explores new subjects, forms, concepts, and styles following Ezra Pound’s famous motto “*make it new*”; facing a chaotic world that denies

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<sup>1</sup> Experimentalism is a literary movement that promotes the use of innovative techniques as well as breaking literary conventions.

the possibility of recovering or gripping of a unified reality. The superfluous realist mode created by the 19<sup>th</sup> century novel was considered a mere “illusion”; novels were situated within a totalized structure that appears to foster certain ideologies and obscure others. Therefore, writers found in the unconsciousness a manifestation of modern conditions and a reliable medium of perceiving life.

Nonetheless, modern novels do not suggest a total break from traditional realism. The plot and linearity of narrative events did not undergo a radical change. On the contrary, the methods of representing narrative events were altered to produce an anti-illusionist effect. The hesitation in accepting claims of objective truth has led to prioritizing the character’s psychological subjective experience over a collective human experience. Narrative techniques, like stream of consciousness and free indirect discourse, were cultivated to match these needs. They give writers the opportunity of exploring characters’ psyche for it “let[s] outer reality dissolve into the chaos of real mental life” (Matz 54). As a part of this project, authors moved toward creating impressions rather than concrete images or ideas to highlight certain emotional state or personal experience. Armstrong observes that impressionist writing conveys “an interest in developing representational techniques that would do justice to first-person perceptual experience” (66). These factors collectively contribute to identifying the modern novel orientations.

Wolf explains that modern novels reject traditional mimesis for self-reflexive orientation. A developed sense of anti-illusionism is epitomized in the devaluation of *historie*, intensity of discourse, and metafiction. The depreciation of *historie* takes three forms that capture the “discontinuity, contingency and the loss of meaning” raised by modernism (Wolf, *Illusion* 289). Devaluating *historie* is, then, established through constructing elliptic, inconclusive or ambiguous stories, demolishing the continuity and coherence of narrative, and depicting the typical everyday experience of ordinary characters. Furthermore, the dissimilarity between story and discourse is almost wiped out; the ambiguity of discourse disturbs the realistic illusion by directing reader’s attention toward the making and presentation of narrative.

Metafiction, then, appears when a novel tends to reveal its creativity process either through a narrator who takes the role of the author, or a conversation between a number of characters. Schwarz explains that “the process of writing, of defining the subject, of evaluating character, of searching for truth, becomes part of the novel.” (21) Thus, the boundaries between fact and fiction is blurred; novels “carry on metafictional and epistemological discourses on the fictionality of itself and our concepts of reality.”(Wolf, *Illusion* 295) As objective truth has become an invalid prospect, self-referentiality has found a solid ground on which it has evolved to become one of the defining features of modern literature.

The issue of referentiality arrived at the scene as modern novels attempt to obscure the line between fact and fiction. Although literature is commonly regarded as a medium that holds a mirror to reality, Post-structuralism<sup>1</sup> negated this assumption paving the way for new methodologies to re-analyze literary works. It is no more possible to maintain the structuralists’ claim of a unified system of meaning production, because language is contingent and unstable. Post-structuralism, then, aims at interrogating all texts by deciphering the hegemonic ideologies communicated through literary language. Commenting on the structuralist’s theory of the sign, G. H. Miller explains, assuming that the sign’s reference and meaning are distinguishable, that it is admissible to have reservations regarding literary portrayal of reality. Language, according to Miller, is a string of words that underlines the limitation of its referential and mimetic scope while tolerating its misreading as a “mirroring of reality” (86). As a result, illuminating methods of originating meaning is the remaining approach toward detecting the realities that postmodern novels refer to.

Once modern novels expose their referential bias, they become self-conscious of their constructivity. They create an anti-realistic mode which adds a metafictional dimension to narrative. Modern novel replaces traditional realism with a presumptively “truer” reality;

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<sup>1</sup> A movement in philosophy and literary criticism that began at the end of the 20th Century. It is often seen as a critique of structuralism; it emphasizes the plurality of meaning and illusiveness of concepts that were used in the past to define society, language, literature...etc.

characters' subjective views have become the rubric against which reality is measured. In addition, reality can be only embodied in language, because anything that cannot be transcribed is out of the range of the real. This results into an anti-realistic mode hovering over the narrative framework. This mode can be achieved by combining non-realist subject matters (e.g, dreams and hallucinations) with radically non-realist narrative techniques (e.g, fragmentation and presenting unreliable narrators). Anti-realism is established even while maintaining a traditional realist narrative and presentation techniques; representation, in such cases, is reduced to depicting individuals' inner reality. Furthermore, undermining the role of narrative techniques has led to foregrounding the unreliability of narrative voice.

The ambiguous and fragmented style of modern novels puts into question the validity and reliability of fiction's portrayal of life. This aspect is what generates metafiction in modern fiction (Hutcheon, *Narcissistic* 19). On one hand, narrative structure is significant as far as it enhances the reader's awareness of the text's artificiality. Using language, metafiction creates what Waugh calls a "spatial form" (23). Grasping the text's meaning is delayed until its structure creates a full pattern in which truth dissolves. Signs keep on referring to internal verbal relationships that later construct meaning collectively. This structure of modern novels is similar to how the mind works; it collects various signs to reach a subjectively unified understanding of its surrounding. Modern novels analogously highlight the subjectivity of fictional constructs; they emphasize that "there is no reality before states of mind frame it, process it, make it into stories" (Matz 137). It, thus, depicts how consciousness observes then reproduces reality. A survey of various novels, conducted by Hutcheon, shows that modern metafiction is associated with an implicit authorial commentary on the process of creating fiction, or what she calls a "mimesis of process" (*Narcissistic* 39). These novels foreground the fiction making process. Narrating, thus, turns out to be essential like all the other events in a novel. On the contrary, postmodern metafiction is usually labelled as a "mimesis of product." (38) It interrogates the outcome of the writing process. Understanding Hutcheon's classification proves the need to be explicit about the meaning of postmodernism.

Postmodernism is a loose concept because it is associated with various disciplines like art, architecture, and literature. Hassan claims that there is “no clear consensus about its meaning exists among scholars” (276). This inconsistency is a result of postmodernism’s discrepancy usage; it is sometimes attributed to a period of time and at others to a collection of characteristics which distinguishes what follows a collectively established sense of modernism<sup>1</sup>. For some critics, postmodernism challenges modernism. It rejects the social and cultural norms that took over since the beginning of the 20th century and demolished following the Second World War. Highlighting their conceptual proximity, several critics propose that postmodernism is an extension of modernism or that “modernism evolved into a variety of post-Modernisms” (Sanders 512). Nevertheless, postmodernism endows an intensive skepticism toward universalized theories and concepts. Lyotard identifies narrative as the cornerstone of recognizing postmodernism; he even defines it as an “incredulity toward metanarratives<sup>2</sup>” (XXIV). Since narrative is the medium of knowledge, master narratives or big stories reinforce power structures or social customs. They create a totalized narrative about other narratives revolving around historical meaning, experience, knowledge, social, or cultural phenomena. They generate a universal scheme of truth which defines and explains all smaller and local narratives. By drawing on the concept of metanarrative, Lyotard has been able to show how postmodernism exposes these manipulations by replacing them with 'petits récits' or local narratives and, consequently, celebrating various viewpoints of truth (60). Thus, it is not a surprise for postmodern literature to absorb these narratological complications and feature a self-conscious mixture of earlier artistic styles.

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<sup>1</sup> Umberto Eco suggests that all ages consider themselves modern in relation to previous ones. In that sense, postmodernism is a term that describes changes following what is commonly accepted as “modern” at a specific period.

<sup>2</sup> “Metanarratives” according to Lyotard are grand narratives or big stories that legitimize the subordination of all smaller and local narratives. For example, Marxism is a metanarrative that attempts to attribute all changes in social structure to economic origins. By doing so it dismisses any other theories attempting to explain that phenomenon.

It is, however, unpractical to understand postmodernism without comparing it to modernism. They have in common an unconventional views of realism. Modern novels are haunted by anti-realist elements, as explained earlier, whereas postmodernism took this mode further in practice. Lyotard explains that both movements attempt to represent the unconceivable reality i.e, “the sublime”<sup>1</sup>; modernism assembles the fractures of a distorted reality into a relatively plausible form while postmodern novels declare its incompetence of representation. The essence of Lyotard’s argument is that postmodern authors are philosophers; they do not rely on pre-established rules or any categorical sets because their works attempt to determine them. As a result, writers are engaged in “invent[ing] illusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented” by highlighting the validity of all the customized narratives and refuting the “nostalgia” of the whole (81). So when it comes to metafiction, it basically highlights the web of narratives people live by and simultaneously cross-examines their truthfulness and referential creditability.

Constructing an antirealist mode and evoking metafiction are based on highlighting the literary issue of referentiality. Nicol insists that postmodern fiction fundamentally discards, based on theoretical and aesthetic beliefs, the assumption that “the fictional world [fiction] creates exists in its entirety, is analogous to the real world, and that writing is, consequently, ‘referential’” (24). Then, what do literary works refer to? The nature of referent is critically problematized due to the linguistic aspect of fiction<sup>2</sup> creating a two folded approach to literary referent. Hutcheon calls the first “denial of truth-value” and the second a “granting of special status to the fictive” (*Poetics* 147). On one hand, there is a rejection of any true value of referents. As mentioned earlier, *historie* exists prior to its inscription through *discourse* and at that time only is considered an objective truth. When reality is translated into words, it is colored by the intentions of its recorder. On the other hand, referents are accepted, but with

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<sup>1</sup> Lyotard explains the sublime as a quality established through the subject’s faculties of conceiving and presenting reality. (77)

<sup>2</sup> Language refers to itself indefinitely; it refers to its system rather than definite facts. i.e, linguistic transcription displays linguistic attempts at representation.

specified implications. According to Ferdinand de Saussure, language is constructed from signifiers (words) and signified (concepts); sometimes there is no reference to real objects or events. This, however, does not deny any implied referent that is mentally perceived by the recipient. Postmodern metafiction, thus, explicitly displays fiction's inaccessibility of real referents except through language.

Furthermore, some critics<sup>1</sup> imply that literature refers to itself and not to any extra diegetic elements; i.e. literature is self-referential. Dupuy, however, explains that self-referential literature has two functions; it refers to itself and to self-reference itself. To put it differently, fiction refers to itself as a fictional construct then refers to humans' desire of mimesis (492). What is established then is a "self-mirroring effect" or *mise en abyme*; a novel multiplies its constructive nature until its reference to the external is undermined (503). Dupuy proposes that postmodern fiction dramatizes its violation of referentiality. It does not say anything about its artificiality at first (the text lies and the reader is unaware of this). Next the text highlights its fictitiousness. Finally, the reader becomes aware of the text's fictitiousness as it metaphorically declares "I am lying" turning the text into a "metaphor of its own narration" (505). In sum, postmodern fiction contains an immediate sense of typical representation as it focuses on foregrounding its referential fallacy. This view is supported by De Man who argues that language does not refer to anything beyond its own system of signs. In view of that, all linguistic utterances are manifestations of the artificial relationship language has with reality since any linguistic attempt to describe the world fall in the category of "fiction". Literature, on the contrary, "is the only form of language free from the fallacy of unmediated expression", because it possesses a "self-reflecting mirror-effect" which asserts its departure from the real (De Man 17). Yet Graff objects to this total rejection of mimetic representation in contemporary novels. Since literature is generally perceived as an endeavor to understand the world, it is inaccurate to cast away its remarks on the external world entirely, even if they are biased (Graff 170). These factors may explain the relative correlation between postmodern novels and

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Girard, Barth, Dupuy, and Derrida.

metafiction. Novels clearly foreground their stumbling upon the unarticulated (the ‘real’ which language cannot capture).

As a part of his discussion of Dickens’s *Sketches by Boz*, J. H. Miller indicates that the metonymy of “social reality”, presented by the narrator Boz, turns the novel into an “interpretation” of reality (109). It springs from “fictitious patterns” of writing generated by “highly artificial schemas inherited from the past” (116). In analyzing metafiction, one controversial issue has been the nature of self-referential comments; is metafiction an exclusive feature of postmodernism? What does metafiction signify in relation to the text or literature in general? Umberto Eco regards “postmodernism” as a general term that can be attributed to any literary period following what is commonly accepted, usually by critics, as “modern” (225). One outcome of Eco’s claim is eliminating the exclusivity of metafiction to contemporary fiction. For instance, Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* and Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* are two self-referential novels written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Since literary movements are reactions against past forms, Eco also highlights postmodernists’ inability to destroy the past, because this will lead to silence<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, the past “must be revisited; but with irony, not innocently”(Eco 227). John Barth’s “Literature of Exhaustion” poses a similar inquiry; can postmodern writers produce new works after all forms and topics have already been used by avant-garde modernists? The solution to this dilemma, Barth clarifies, is turning writer’s “difficulty, perhaps the unneccessity, of writing an original work of literature” into a subject for writing fiction (69). The two former theories are extremely useful because they provide an insight into the ironic essence of fictional self-referentiality. Postmodern irony underlines authors’ attempt to introduce the new by acknowledging that everything has been said previously. In the light of these results, fiction is reconsidered. It is restructured to draw attention to its

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<sup>1</sup> When there is no way to invent new narrative techniques, writers will stop writing.

contextualization, ironically creating an internal self-conscious aspect of fiction called romantic irony<sup>1</sup>.

Recent studies on the origin of metafiction crystalize the objectives of metafiction and their link to the diversity of fiction's types. It is very hard to get away from specifying the domain of both modern and postmodern fiction because it gives a glimpse of metafiction's function in each. McHale notices fundamental differences between modern and postmodern fiction via highlighting their distinctive dominants (i.e. concerns). While the dominant of modernist fiction is epistemological<sup>2</sup>, postmodern's dominant is ontological<sup>3</sup>. The former is concerned with questions of knowledge; their presence and perception. "What is there to be known?; Who knows it?; How do they know it, and with what degree of certainty" are some examples of questions raised by modern fiction (McHale 9). On the contrary, postmodernist fiction focuses on the difference between reality and fiction by discussing their constructive nature. Questions usually revolve around "the ontology of the literary text itself or on the ontology of the world which it projects" (10). Accordingly, fiction writing becomes analogous to the construction of reality. Nonetheless, McHale clarifies that both types of fiction endorse ontological and epistemological issues at the same time; modernists prioritize epistemological inquires whereas postmodernists foreground ontological ones (11). This description also communicates a great deal about metafiction since it highlights the domains incorporated into establishing it. Whereas modernist authors transfer the epistemological difficulty of attaining truth (being psychological, or social), postmodernists assert the world's ontological equivocality.

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<sup>1</sup> "A kind of literary self-consciousness in which an author signals his or her freedom from the limits of a given work by puncturing its fictional illusion and exposing its process of composition as a matter of authorial whim." (*Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* 222)

<sup>2</sup> Epistemology is defined as a branch of philosophy that investigates the nature of knowledge itself. It examines the means of acquiring knowledge and the methods of differentiating between truth and opinion.

<sup>3</sup> Ontology is a branch of metaphysics that involves a philosophical study of the nature of existence and reality.

Postmodern metafiction, thus, highlights the incongruity between truth and fiction. A preliminary approach to the discussion of this issue can be achieved through investigating double coding. Hutcheon explains in her *Poetics of Postmodernism* the concept of double coding among many terms relevant to metafiction. Generally, double coding generates paradoxical interpretations due to its inherited multiplicity of meanings. For instance, postmodern novels problematize narrative representation as they evoke it (*Poetics* 40). The plot does not only create a real-like world, but it also deconstructs it via self-reflexive statements. Bearing this in mind, postmodern fiction critically evaluates itself through establishing an unambiguous relationship with metafiction. To better understand this mechanism, Hutcheon describes narrative (with political, social, historical, fictional...etc.) as “human construct in history” (43). This statement can be examined under two headings; history as a fabrication and history’s determination of the masses’ perception of truth.

The notion of history as a construct is thoroughly analyzed by Michel Foucault. Power is the principal determining factor of Foucault's concept of history. According to him, power is confined to a particular group (e.g. rulers, institutions) by maintaining pre-established rules of language and society. As a result, a totalizing ideology is produced to control people’s thoughts and beliefs. The system of ideologies inherited within a historical period is what determines people’s apprehension of truth. A socio-political *discourse* (master narrative) is generated to disguise or omit some aspects of history threatening the theories upon which authorities were founded. History, accordingly, becomes a “subjective knowledge” since it is either modified or abridged by those in power (85). It is no more a genuine record, but a tool to install power structures. Historiographic pre-determinacy is an example of how discourse manipulates people's perception of truth. Although history is commonly perceived as true narrative "discourse", and any attempt to indicate its shortcomings is characterized as fiction. As Foucault puts it, "[e]ach society has its regime of truth, its general politics of truth: that is the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true."(131) Truth is crucially linked with systems of power, because they set the criterion of assessing it. Postmodernism,

however, has challenged this tantalization with a pluralized view of truth that accounts for all forms of marginalized histories.

Before proceeding to examine metafiction, it will be necessary to explain postmodernists' involvement of historiography into fiction. In an attempt to account for the diversity of truth, historiography is a starting point for studying the difference between truth and fiction<sup>1</sup>. To begin with, historiography and literature are both formed by narrative. History, in fact, cannot be perceived except through a text. That is, historiography, the study of historical writing, becomes a representational discourse once an implied or explicit narrator mediates history. It is important to distinguish between the scientific study of history, clear from any philosophical or rhetorical influences, and the literary and philosophical treatment of it. The latter approach is mainly concerned with the impact of these historical events on life. While professional history<sup>2</sup> is perceived to entail historical facts, novels' implementation of the same events is often regarded fictional. Nevertheless, following the spread of structuralism and post-structuralism, almost all the attempts to rely on historical facts have been undermined. As discussed above, history lost its factual reliability as it fell into a heap of illusions. In addition, postmodernism is no more interested in the past unless it contributes to understanding the present. By the same token, novels incorporating historical events are also examined since they are endowed with a historiography form. Along the same lines, postmodern fiction becomes a projection of the era's awareness of representational bias. Historiographic metafiction is a term coined by Linda Hutcheon to account for a form of writing that reflects upon itself as a "human construct in history" (*Poetics* 43). It, primarily interrogates historical truthfulness and asserts narrative multiplicity. It brings to light issues of history's "*referential fallacy*". For the metafiction part, micro narratives (personal histories) has replaced "grand narratives", such as religious and scientific narratives, in an attempt to account for truth pluralism. Hutcheon emphasizes that historiographic metafiction is generated through a narrative presenting

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<sup>1</sup> Fiction in this context refers to the production of imaginative discourses.

<sup>2</sup> The scientific study of history.

multiple points of view or overtly controlling narrators. This raises questions about the creditability of historical “facts” since they are framed within characters’ subjective experiences.

Accordingly, the notion of truth is problematized and called into question. This view is supported by Patricia Waugh who points out that history as well as art are perceived through frames (28). Framing is a literary technique through which the main narrative lays the foundation for contextualizing secondary narratives. In Williams’s view, narrative frames poses a paradoxical status; they are almost invisible to the reader and this simultaneously highlights narrative through an explicit vignette or tableau (100). In addition, frames function differently according to the narrative type to communicate self-referential messages. In composite narrative<sup>1</sup>, frames has a topological function with ontological implications; they mark embedded narratives as fiction, deflating the work’s illusion of realism by depicting the creation and reception of a literary narrative (102). On the contrary, frames in ornamental narratives<sup>2</sup> acquire an ideological function that evokes an epistemological paradox. He argues that frames “catalyze” the presentation of narrative content. They focalize certain messages as they reflect upon their representation of the act of narrative (105). As a general rule, postmodern novels’ frames do not have definite boundaries and they are hardly distinguished. When those frames are intentionally broken, the novel develops a self-conscious mode. In such cases, metafiction “foregrounds framing as a problem, examining frame procedures in the construction of the real world and of novels.” (Waugh 28). Frame breaking is established in three instances; 1) breaking the ontological narrative level when a character includes secondary stories like dreams, visions, or hallucinations, 2) foregrounding the arbitrariness of beginning and ending a narrative, and 3) providing a clear combination of real and fictional personages (Waugh 31). Therefore, “literary fiction becomes a useful model for learning about the

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<sup>1</sup> This term refers to the technique of presenting two or more paradoxical narratives in the same novel.

<sup>2</sup> Ornamental narrative is a kind of narrative that is characterized with an intensive use of poetic devices such as rhyming and sound repetition. Such poetic techniques reshape the narrative and denotes much more possibilities of meaning.

construction of ‘reality’ itself.” (Waugh 3). Frames usually create an illusion of truthfulness, but once they are broken, fiction becomes the means through which reality renderings are recognized, evaluated, and sometimes reconstructed.

From the previous discussion, it can be seen that metafiction highlights the boundaries that distinguishes life from fiction while emphasizing the incredulities they have in common. Metafiction, thus, triggers readers’ cautiousness toward the facts they encounter in real life. For instance, a self-referential comment on a historical event may spark readers’ doubts about the credibility of the official narration of that event. Generally, life is perceived through frames; Waugh notes that frames offer an explicit account of the “organizations of experience” and by analyzing those frames, readers reach the point where they believe that all accounts of truth are mediated (30). There is not a unified truth, but ambiguous fragments of subjectively accepted truth. Goodman clarifies that postmodernism moved "from unique truth and a world fixed and found... to a diversity of right and even conflicting versions or worlds in the making" (qtd. in Hassan 508). It is also worth mentioning that even though metafiction is more explicit in postmodern fiction, it is a literary device encountered in literature since the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In a study conducted by Hutcheon, it was shown that metafiction has two focal points; linguistic and narrative structure as well as the role of the reader (*Narcissistic* 6). The first is divided into two subcategories; linguistic structure and narrative structure. The involvement of the linguistic structure in metafiction is concerned with the novelists’ attempts to highlight the limits and power of language (127). Problematizing the notion of linguistic codes, flaunting the conventions of the sign system, or inventing a de-familiarized linguistic structures are some examples. In addition, narrative structure can be discussed under two broad titles; narrative reference and narrative agents. The first concept has been introduced earlier in this chapter. Narrative agents are two; the narrator(s) and the narratee. Whenever a narrative violates or displays self-awareness of the narrative levels, metafiction is enacted. Genette distinguishes three diegetic levels (narrative levels); extra-diegetic, intra-diegetic, and metadiegetic (later revised into heterodiegetic). To start with, diegetic levels are generally understood to

demonstrate the relationship between the act of narration and diegesis (story). Genette defines it as “any event a narrative recounts is at a diegetic level immediately higher than the level at which the narrating act producing this narrative is placed” (Genette 228). Basically, he is stating that a single work of fiction may contain a variety of acts of narration at different, but related, narrative levels.

Extra-diegetic is the level at which the narrative is delivered by a narrator residing outside the story world (an author). The intra-diegetic or diegetic level is established when the narrative is communicated by a narrator existing in the fictional world. For instance, the main character narrates a story, within the main narrative framework, to audience who are presumptively also characters in the same work. Finally, a story narrated within an intra-diegetic level creates a metadiegetic level. Genette states that metanarrative is a metadiegetic narrative; it is a “narrative within the narrative... the diegesis... designates the universe of the first narrative” (228). Metadiegetic narrative relation with the first level narrative (whether an extra or intra- diegetic) has three functions. The first is explanatory; it is a direct causality relationship that attempts to explain the motives behind a narrative event. The second function is thematic; it either contrasts the two level or establishes an analogy (e.g. *mis en abyme*) which might bear an impact on the readers’ perception of diegesis. Narrational is the third function that emphasizes the act of narrative over its content. Based on the above classification, it is easier now to spot metafiction formation via metalepsis (the shift from one narrative level to the other). Narrators can flaunt the narrative’s illusion of reality when they change their narrative level. Narrators (characters in the narrated world or the author) may interrupt the narrative to comment on its process of writing or to involve himself or herself with the characters’ affairs. In some narrative, authors might abandon their extra-diegetic level to address readers directly or to challenge the assumptions that determine reality. Overall, the shift in narrative levels occurs with conceptual intentions to underscore the relativism of narrative realism.

The second part is concerned with the narratee (or what Hutcheon calls, “the role of the reader”). Metafiction does not only alternate old techniques of writing, it also carries its changes into the role of readers. When Roland Barthes announced the “death of the author” he has declared the birth of the reader. In literary critical theories, the analysis of the reader’s role has become of wide interest. The relationship between the author and the reader is also studied as a part of exploring the boundaries of metafiction. Usually, the reader is either explicitly addressed by the narrator or implicitly invoked when the text is not a “strict dialogue or a bare account of actions, and especially those that seem to be explaining something”(Chatman 257). In both cases, when the nature of the reader’s relationship with the author is acknowledged, a self-referential mode is established. Readers become aware of the distinction between fiction and reality because they recognize and evaluate the narrator’s credibility. The affliction of metafiction with the reader is two folded; it problematizes the nature of reference highlighting its impact on the reader. It also utilizes an unconventional fragmented style to raise readers’ awareness of its process of construction (Waugh 22). The text, as a result, reflects an analogy of man’s exercise with language and meaning production. It also attempts to stimulate the reader’s recognition of new codes and open interpretative possibilities (Hutcheon, *Narcissistic* 25). Readers’ role changes as the text becomes less accessible forcing its readers to control, organize, and interpret it. To put it differently, the reader’s role is elevated; s/he becomes a responsible co-creator of the text’s meaning. Stoicheff acknowledges that a metafictional text modifies readers’ way of approaching other texts; it triggers their recognition of “the possibility for new readings that examine what is excluded, and why” (94). Readers realize that neither historical nor literary records are unmediated or ideologically modified.

Roland Barthes in *S/Z* distinguishes classical from modern novels. He observes that fiction, in general, can be divided into two categories; readerly and writerly texts. Readerly texts confine the reader to a passive role. In this sense, the reader is a recipient of a pre-determined meaning, established by the clues and direction provided by the text itself. A readerly text is a complete product with one meaning; it masquerades its fictional status

professing a transparent window onto *reality*. Classical and 19<sup>th</sup> century novels fall within this category. On the contrary, writerly texts are associated with modern and post-modern fiction. They treat readers as co-authors because readers participate in creating the text's multiple meanings. Readers, thus, play a crucial and active role. Writerly texts turn them into writers who explore the diversity of the text's denotations. Postmodern self-conscious fiction is an example of a writerly text; it is anti-realist, conversational, and open for multiplicity of meanings. Therefore, the elements of contemporary literary works engage readers into tracing meanings and then interpreting it in relation to their personal experiences.

A detailed examination of the readers' role in self-referential fiction is carried out by Linda Hutcheon in her book *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*. She insists that readers, through metafiction, develop an awareness of fictitious writing as an equally important event to the ones introduced in narrative. Usually, those metafictional comments disturb the reader's absorption into the text and interrupts the linear relationship between the real world and the world of fiction. This results into breaking the illusion of immediacy which directs the reader's attention to the text's fictionality. Metafiction disposes with the notion of a totalized authorial control. It consults the reader to create an infinite pool of interpretations which undermines any attempt to account for a unified version of truth. The reader's active role corresponds to the mission of the postmodern fiction in stimulating various interpretations. It also reflects the age's celebration of a pluralist reality.

Hutcheon also proposes a typology of readers' role based on her categorization of self-referential novels into overt and covert narcissistic texts<sup>1</sup>. First of all, the reader is given an implicit function within the text because the reader is guided by the elements of narrative situation<sup>2</sup>. An overt narcissist text would integrate the reader into the text; it will make him/her aware of the act of reading (*Narcissistic* 28). The reader will be taught the principles of

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<sup>1</sup> Overt and covert narcissistic texts are two categories that go under each of the linguistic and diegetic self-reflexive texts. They are concerned with the readers' role within fiction.

<sup>2</sup> Narrative voice and focalization.

dispersing narrative codes. They learn how books ought to be read. This will lead into thematizing the role and activities of the readers because they are explicitly demonstrated through narrative. Covert narcissist texts are bound to disturb the conventional habits of reading to attract readers' attention to their artificiality. It teaches them how to interpret texts indirectly (*Narcissistic* 32). These texts are structurally and diegetically de-familiarized in order to get readers into a firsthand experience of decoding it. Thus, the reader is freed from any pre-acquired rules and patterns of thoughts. Readers are forced to revise their concepts of art as well as life to elicit the messages implied. Although covert texts involve the same act of allegorizing the reader's role in overt text, it is, instead, internalized and "actualized" (put into practice). First, the act of reading is introduced as a creative process shared with the author. Second, the text is made vague and incoherent to prompt readers into "interpreting, ordering, and imagining" (*Narcissistic* 84). Hutcheon elaborates on this point claiming that fiction contains a self-criticism of itself and its process. The reader, thus, becomes, like the author, a critic of the reading process. Metafiction is actualized because the process of self-referentiality is put into practice whether on the writing or reading level.

In relation to the selected novels, metafiction is established through similar means. In his analysis of *To the Lighthouse*, Auerbach contends that the narrative technique used is free indirect discourse. He highlights the multiplicity of voices that results into undermining the assumption of a direct access to reality in fiction. He describes it as "a challenge to the reader's will to interpretive synthesis" (549). This thesis takes Auerbach's observations a step further by interpreting the use of free indirect discourse as an attempt to create heteroglossias with self-referential implications. Initially, they trigger readers' awareness of the lack of unity and simultaneously highlight the process of writing the novel itself, which eventually evoke a metafictional mode. Beja's article, "Matches Struck in the Dark: Virginia Woolf's Moments of Vision", offers a closer view of the role of narrative technique in emphasizing the novel's writing mechanism. He inspects the projection of moments of being, or moments of inspiration, in many of Woolf's fictional works. Lily's painting in *To the Lighthouse* was taken as an

allegory of Woolf's attempt to write the novel. He emphasizes that "Lily is acutely aware of the frustration of trying to translate moments of intensity into worthwhile art" and that is the same feeling encountered by Woolf while writing the novel (149). Along these lines, Lily's commentaries on her painting process will be taken in this thesis as metafictional statements that highlight the process of creativity.

Metafiction in *Waterland* has been the subject to many speculations especially its categorization as a historical novel. Butler has investigated the nature of historical novels and their role in underlining the process of constructing historical discourse. *Waterland* is taken as an example of incorporating fiction in writing history. He concludes that historiographic metafiction foregrounds the process of history writing. A similar argument is developed in this thesis, but from a different perspective. Since historiography is affiliated with fiction writing, the process of writing fiction and its relation to real life can be also explored through historical novels. Therefore, Swift's novel does not only evaluate history writing, but also fiction writing. Furthermore, Irish indicates that the reader plays an important role in foregrounding the novel's artificiality. He proposes that the *Waterland* by "digressing from its main narrative, and undercutting the narratability of the history" it raises the reader's awareness of literary artificiality (932). In the current study, these moments of reader's realization of artificiality are treated as an outcome of metafiction; they aim at initiating a reconceptualization of the significance of reality representation in fiction.

To conclude, the influence of postmodern metafiction has proven the novel to be a much more complex literary genre than it seemed to be in the past decades. Accordingly, modern texts could be re-evaluated in accordance with its theories. Although theories and classifications of metafiction's meaning, functions, and implications are mainly associated with postmodernism, its application has extended to include literature of previous eras. As part of the postmodern pluralist project, metafiction makes way for approaching new questions that account for meaning multiplicity and literary creativity. In the following chapters, Virginia

Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Graham Swift's *Waterland* will be examined in the light of these principles.

## **Chapter Three: Metafiction in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse***

## Metafiction in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*

The past few decades have seen a growing interest in literary self-referentiality. Many old literary works are currently analyzed. Due to the complexity of modern novels, as well as their resemblance to contemporary literary works, many of them were critically reinvestigated using new theoretical approaches. Virginia Woolf's novels are among the works that have been re-examined from new perspectives. Aiken describes Woolf as "a bold and original experimenter with the technique of novel-writing" and in *To the Lighthouse* she has succeeded in capturing the "depth of poetic understanding, a vitality... [which] indicates a final triumph of technique" (207). Looking at this novel through new theoretical lenses leads to highlighting elements of metafiction within it. *To the Lighthouse* can be read as a prototype of modernists' early employment of literary metafiction. The novel offers a compressed statement about its fictional status as it projects Woolf's notion of literary process of creativity. As a psychological novel, it leaves much to the reader to sort out as it reflects on its own conditions of production. At the heart of it, *To the Lighthouse* lays bare the factors against which it has been composed through narrative techniques, characterization, and allegory.

*To the Lighthouse* consists of three parts that differ in themes and scope. Part one, *The Window*, is a one day description of the Ramsays' holiday with their guests. It is set sometime before the First World War broke out. It starts with the Ramsays' discussion of the possibility of going to the lighthouse; while Mrs. Ramsay reinforces her son's wish to go to the lighthouse, Mr. Ramsay insists that the weather will not be suitable for the journey. The voyage to the lighthouse is the central issue that provokes characters' thoughts and memories throughout the novel. In addition to the Ramsays, their guests' roles range from main to marginal in the narrative. There is Charles Tansely (a scholar and apprentice of Mr. Ramsay), Lily Briscoe (a painter), William Bankes (a scientist), Augustus Carmichael (a poet), and Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle (a couple that gets married following Mrs. Ramsey's demands). These characters

deliberations on that days' events and their views of each other occupies the majority of this part. For instance, Mrs. Ramsey's reflections on her husband, children, and the dinner party at the end of the day are all communicated explicitly with limited reference to the physical setting. Similarly, Mr. Ramsey's procrastinations over his role as a philosophical scholar and Lily's on her painting of Mrs. Ramsey are among the most important sections presented in this part.

While the first part is the longest, the second, *Time Passes*, is the shortest despite its coverage of a longer time span. The Ramsays' house remains inhabited for ten years. This part shows nature's transformation of the house in the absence of its inhabitants. The sudden death of Mrs. Ramsey, her daughter Prue in childbirth, and Andrew Ramsay in the First World War are revealed abruptly as justifications for the house's desolation and neglect. Mrs. McNab with Mrs. Bast and her son re-opened the house after ten years. They start to clean it upon receiving a letter informing them of the Ramsays and their guests' visit. The part ends with the arrival of Lily and Carmichael. Part three, *The Lighthouse*, also focuses on a one day events after ten years of Mrs. Ramsay's death. Mr. Ramsay, accompanied by his son and daughter, James and Cam, leave to the lighthouse. Lily Briscoe is left with Carmichael to finish the painting she has started ten years ago. Characters come to accept Mrs. Ramsey's death; Mr. Ramsey with visiting the lighthouse, James and Cam by coming to terms with their father, and Lily by achieving her vision and finishing the painting.

Although the novel's summary entails a clear depiction of characters' life, the events occurring in the narrative are a few. Rachel Tylor does not exaggerate when she describes *To the Lighthouse* as a novel in which "[n]othing happens, and everything happens" (199). As a psychological novel, any discussion of metafiction requires an examination of characterization and narrative style. A broader perspective of representation has been adopted by Woolf; events are reinforced by exploring characters' psyche. One way in which this approach is realized is by giving a picture of characters' innermost thoughts and impressions then integrating them

within the narrative frame. *To the Lighthouse* reflects the author's artistic experimentation with narrative techniques to meet this objective. It should be obvious, even from reading the first few pages, that a variety of narrative techniques are concurrently employed. Their diversity creates a narrative ambiguity that gives floor to developing metafiction. When it comes to classifying Woolf's narrative techniques, critics hold various views. In general, there are three forms of narrative techniques employed interchangeably in this novel; interior monologue, stream of consciousness, and free indirect discourse. In any discussion of Woolf's narrative techniques, one controversial issue has been the utilization of these terms because there is no conscience on their functional boundaries.

Foregrounding the fictionality of narrative is often conveyed through narrative strategies. They determine the relationship between the author, narrator, and the reader. Since metafiction is established through an authorial commentary (or sometimes narrator's commentary) on narrative, it is crucial to identify the narrative voice. In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf, like many of her contemporaries, was interested in the question of narrative form. Her experimentalism with narrative style was packed up by distinctive views of narrative form and aesthetic design. In her novels, Woolf escapes the fatalism of describing pure consciousness for the sake of intensifying formalist aesthetic through employing a combination of narrative techniques. Although each of her novels expands on a different thematic spectrum, they all operate within the same realm of narratological complexity. In this novel, Woolf uses three narrative techniques. The shift among these techniques assists in creating metafiction.

Moments in which characters' inner thoughts are communicated without being heard by other characters are called interior monologues<sup>1</sup>. There are two sub-categories for it; direct and indirect interior monologue. An interior monologue is created once character's thoughts

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<sup>1</sup> Interior monologue is technique of representing character's thoughts and impressions as if they are directly delivered without being mediated by a narrator.

are mediated by the narrator using third person voice. This form of narrative is signaled in context or by different stylistic markers (e.g., “she thought/said/wondered”),

When she looked in the glass and saw her hair grey, her cheek sunk, at fifty, *she thought*, possibly she might have managed things better- her husband; money; his books. But for her own part she would never for a single second regret her decision, evade difficulties, or slur over duties (*TLH* 41 emphasis added).

This extract features two internalized conflicting forces; regret and reassurance. Mrs. Ramsey seems to resist doubts of her inefficient role within the assigned social structure. Although these thoughts seem to be communicated by an omniscient narrator, the indirect interior monologue obviously traces them to Mrs. Ramsay’s consciousness. She, internally, reconsiders her life in retrospect which opens a window into Mrs. Ramsay’s mind. The narrative voice, thus, provides a clear reportage of her thoughts. This revelation, however, can be brought into question. Although it gives an impression of immediacy, the use of the third person voice rises doubts regarding its creditability. Mrs. Ramsay thoughts are parodied as the narrator provides another image of her through the daughters’ eyes; “a queen’s raising from the mud to wash a beggar’s dirty foot” (*TLH* 41). This metaphor challenges Mrs. Ramsey’s narrative and sows the seeds of unreliability.

For the most part, Woolf is known for her reliance on interior monologue as a trademark narrative technique. Her eccentric implementation of it has stirred scholarly debates over the true nature of her narrative techniques. Due to their loose definitions, interior monologue is often mixed with stream of consciousness technique<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, Woolf’s employment of stream of consciousness has occupied critical analysis. There is no agreement between critics about Woolf’s utilization of stream of consciousness. This mix-up between the terms can be

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<sup>1</sup> Stream of consciousness is a narrative technique that is used to communicate character’s perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and memories. It is a prominent method of depicting mental processes.

traced to their similar function of depicting character's psyche. Nevertheless, there are two views that attempt at distinguishing the two. On one hand, Humphrey argues that stream of consciousness is the subject presented by the technique of interior monologue (33-34). In other words, it is an outcome of an extreme experimentation with interior monologue that results into violating all syntactic rules. On the other hand, Lorda contends that stream of consciousness is the main category from which interior monologue has sprang (257). It turns interior monologue into one mode of stream of consciousness that takes place between reporting and a total break from mediation. A third group has maintained that interior monologue is not a new narrative technique since it has been used in literary tradition for decades; especially in 19<sup>th</sup> century novels. Its role, however, has been modified (Cohn, *Narrated* 107). It has acquired new perspective by way of mediating character's sub-consciousness. It entails both; its well-known usage as an indirect interior monologue and its most experimental version, the direct interior monologue (i.e. stream of consciousness).

It is insufficient, however, to approach *To the Lighthouse* as a purely stream of consciousness novel. Initially, stream of consciousness is a term associated with the most abstract depiction of character's thoughts. The text, if this term is applied, would focus on direct communication of emotions and impressions. First, interior monologue is mingled with extraneous half articulated ideas. Second, the stream of consciousness mode creates a text that is cohesively and coherently distorted. As mentioned earlier, Woolf criticizes writers whose only concern is recording characters' stream of thoughts; they produce an "egoistic" character oriented narrative. Therefore, she deplores the tendency of solely conveying character's psych because novels ought to depict reality; a self that embraces what is within itself and beyond. In addition, Woolf emphasizes that stream of consciousness technique disintegrates the link between the character and the author.

These views, however, do not prove that Woolf did not make use of stream of consciousness in her novels; signifying the debate over the terms' definitions. Naremore suggests that Woolf's style moves between "conscious and unconscious, personal and impersonal, individual and collective". This turns the narrative voice into "the voice of everyone and no one" (qtd. in Cuddy-Keane 75). The alteration between the two techniques, namely indirect interior monologue and stream of consciousness, has been demonstrated in James Ramsay's resentment of his father's behaviors. "Had there been an axe handy, a poker, or any weapon that would have gashed a hole in his father's breast and killed him, there and then, James would have sized it" (*TLH* 37). In this extract appears a direct statement of what comes in James's mind which establishes a sense of narratological immediacy. In the same sentence, the narrative voice moves from a private line of thinking into an indirect interior monologue that links up these deliberations to the narrative fabric.

Representing character's thoughts underpinned by the increasingly complex nature of narrator's delineation of them in the third person is known as free indirect discourse. Most critics agree that Woolf is a formidable example of using free indirect discourse. Due to the unfavorable attitude toward stream of consciousness, she implemented free indirect discourse<sup>1</sup> as an approach to generate a comprehensible image of human perception. As its name endows, free indirect discourse involves two phases. It is indirect because character's thoughts are framed by a narrator and free because the reported elements are not subordinated to a verb. It represents characters' prospects as if they are communicated by the characters themselves. After that, it interweaves them within an authorial reported speech.

Woolf adapted this technique in eight of her novels due to the wide variety of its denotative functions. Fludernik in *The Fictions of Language and The Languages of Fiction*

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<sup>1</sup> Free indirect discourse/speech is a broad multi-dimensional notion that will be discussed only in order to highlight metafiction in the current novel.

lists three main functions that seem compatible with Woolf's view of the novel. Free indirect discourse creates an illusion of presenting character's consciousness immediately without eliminating authorial presence. Among the common aspects of Woolf's novels is an author that signals her awareness of agents. Moreover, free indirect discourse can be used to evoke romantic irony which underlines the dissonance between meaning and experience. It exposes the representational façade by fostering an illusion of telling the truth then disclosing its artificiality by emphasizing authorial mediation. Free indirect discourse is also used to structure a detailed portrayal of characters' emotions and thoughts. Cohn labels free indirect discourse as a "narrated monologue" since the narrator "renders character's thoughts into his own idiom while maintaining the third person reference and the basic sense of narration" (*Transparent* 100). It compromises between reporting an interior monologue and preserving a sense of reference.

Another significant point is that free indirect discourse endows a dual voice (double meaning). Initially, it transfers character's thoughts from a subjective point of view. After that, it integrates these thoughts within the narrative. This forms a dual perspective where characters (and the narrator) describe his/her way of coming to terms with their surroundings. For example, the voice of Mrs. Ramsay and the narrator merge as the former describes herself in solitude; "there was always this sense of unlimited resources ... our apparitions, the things you know us by, are simply childish. Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep; but now and again we rise to the surface" (*TLH* 123). What is referred to in this extract is the subconsciousness; the "core of darkness" that holds unexplored contents. Acknowledging its depth, the authorial voice endeavors to depict character's thoughts by going beyond describing their apparitional forms are indicated. The use of the pronoun "we" instead of "I" suggests a congruence between Mrs. Ramsay and the narrator's acknowledgment of a partial psychotic

depiction. Due to this ambiguous grammatical structure, statements like this can be considered authorial comments that mark the text as metafictional.

Having established the relationship of free indirect discourse to metafiction, it is important to highlight the effect generated by these statements. Generally, free indirect discourse is an outcome of what Genette calls “internal focalization” (189). In other words, the narrative is mediated from the characters’ point of view. When characters take the role of the intra-diegetic narrator, they can cast authorial judgments on elements under their idiosyncratic focus. Cohn explains that narrated monologues force the narrator into a sympathetic or ironic attitude because “they cast the language of subjective mind into the grammar of objective narrator” (*Transparent* 117). This includes expressing remarks on narrative events or other characters; the character’s voice and the narrator’s voice become indistinguishable. Pascal indicates that free indirect discourse creates a dual voice that through vocabulary, sentence structure, and intonation subtly fuses the two voices of the character and the narrator (qtd. in Bray 40). Consequently, a dialectical structure is formed to enhance the work’s metafictional mode.

Introducing two opposed ideologies embedded within several characters creates a contrastive mode of narrative. For instance, the walk Mr. Ramsay and his wife take in part one illustrates this point. During the walk Mrs. Ramsay notices that the flowers has grown in the garden. Mr. Ramsay “did not look at the flowers, which his wife was considering, but at a spot about a foot or so above them” and at last declares “[t]hese flowers seemed creditable.” He is interested in abstract philosophical ideas only; “something red, something brown” is all that he recognized (*TLH* 129). Mrs. Ramsay mocks this view: he was “born blind, deaf, and dumb, to the ordinary things, but to the extraordinary things, with an eye like an eagle’s” (*TLH* 134). Since most of the reported speech is attributed to Mr. Ramsay, Mrs. Ramsay’s commentaries on them accentuate the narrator’s point of view. Two ideologies are contrasted; Mr. Ramsay’s

abstraction and Mrs. Ramsay visual aesthetic (with an implicit praise for the later). Through free indirect discourse, a heteroglossia is created through character's narrativization of each other characters and narrative techniques and them is submerged under a bigger one associated with literary representative style.

First, there is a character-narrator's commentary on other characters. In this case an intra-diegetic narrator takes the role of "narrativiz[ing] other characters" (Edmondson 19). Since free indirect discourse allots two voices, statements portraying characters can be understood as an evaluation of them and the values they represent. All characters, thus, are narrativized from an authorial point of view. Furthermore, any ironic remarks take in the ideas attributed to the portrayed characters. As a result, a dialogue is formed when several points of view are contrasted then anchored to social, political, or cultural concepts.

Second, framing, as a narrative technique, is put into practice via characters' designations of each other. This, consequently, points out the exclusiveness of subjective points of view. *To the Lighthouse* lacks an omniscient narrator who provides an objective account of characters or events occurring in the novel. On the contrary, the novel's content is transmitted by a narrator whose "quasi-objective perspective merges with those of the novel's characters." (Parkes 39) The author becomes a ghost penetrating character's thoughts. This produces jumbled account of a shared event or situation. An instance of this is Lily's conversation with Mr. Bankes over Mr. Ramsay's personality. Upon saying "think of his work", Lily recalls the kitchen table symbolizing (and at the same time mocking) Mr. Ramsay's philosophy while Mr. Bankes recalls his "definite contribution to philosophy" (*TLH* 65-66). Similarly, "both of them looked at the dunes" (*TLH* 61), Lily identifies an intensive sense of incompleteness while Mr. Bankes reexamines his friendship with Mr. Ramsay.

An interrogative mode is established once contrastive voices are exposed as they are commenting on an object of joint attention. This emphasis is of a dialogical nature; it frames

the act of framing performed by the characters featured in it. The process of creativity is established within social, political, and philosophical dialogisms. Thus, art's ability to describe modernity as well as its reflection on art status during that age is highlighted. Literary representation style is part of this heteroglossia. Through an extensive employment of free indirect discourse, Woolf distinguishes public from private voices operating in the novel. An example of this is Mrs. Ramsay's declaration during her walk with Tansley, "'Let us all go to the circus.'" No. He could not say it right. He could not feel it right. But why not? she wondered." (TLH 48) The first part of this quotation can be attributed to an anonymous narrator who extradiegetically attempts to describe Tansley's reaction to the offer. It can be also attributed intradiegetically to Mrs. Ramsay. She tries to understand the motivation beyond his attitude. Mrs. Ramsey takes the place of a public voice whose aim is to give an objective account of other characters. As a public speaker, she directs reader's orientation, but these attempts are overshadowed by her private views. She is suddenly found pondering on private matters. For instance, she describes Lily as an independent artist, then she follows her description by an account of Lily's inadequacy in reference to institutional marriage. Snaith indicates that:

If Woolf's narrators may be said to speak with a public voice, then a character's internal thoughts might be said to constitute a private voice. In the sense that a narrator orders and moves the narrative focus, he or she is a public speaker: one who describes and presents for the benefit of others. (*Strategies* 143)

The narrative, thus, becomes a mixture of two voices in which acknowledging the presence of one does not eliminate the existence of the other. However, it is difficult to overlook the ambiguity created by lack of narrative cohesiveness. For the most part, ambiguity created by an indefinite narrative voice can be regarded as part of the chaotic vagueness of modernism. It can be also interpreted as a tool to evoke a sense of narrative self-refrentiality.

The shift from private to public voices, and vice versa, enacts Woolf's concept of modern narrative technique. In her critical essay, *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*, Woolf criticizes Edwardians for the lack of depth in their characterization; character's personalized views were often omitted or mediated to maintain a sense of objectivity. In addition, she also condemns modernists for their heavy reliance on portraying character's psyche via what she calls an "intolerable egotism" (4). It detaches characters from their surroundings (narrative setting). Readers are left confused as they are faced with a flux of names and images reported directly by a private voice. In the light of these claims, Woolf's usage of free indirect discourse does not only generate a portrayal of characters' private thoughts, but it also anchors them within narrative events. *To the Lighthouse*, thus, maintains a link between both public and private voices, as it simultaneously mocks omniscient and stream of consciousness narratives. This confrontation between the voices can be taken as a call for modern novelists to revisit their views of realism. To sum up, the shift between public and private voices is the means by which this novel aims at elucidating the correlation between external and internal realism. It raises new questions regarding the factuality and fictionality of both realms.

Approaching narrative from this new perspective, however, does not imply a total rejection of all previous forms of writing. It, instead, promotes their incorporation as far as they are modified to suit the new objectives of modern novels. It is more practical then to observe the renovation in modern fiction as one of "anxiety and resistance" rather than "challenge and rejection" (Tobin 139). This creates a hazy line between depicting an external reality and internal reality. For classical and 19<sup>th</sup> century novels, a reorientation of the world of objects was demanded besides providing a limited bearing through character's thoughts. On the contrary, modern novels emphasize their reliance on subjective private reality. External reality is, thus, submerged in the stream of internal mental reality. As Snaith puts it, the movement from private to public voices, and vice versa, reflects modernist concerns over the relationship

between the inner and outer (135). An ordinary experience of everyday life is rendered to allude to the subjectivity of representing external reality. Beside the vagueness surrounding this shift between the two, readers struggle to constitute a full picture of what they read. Through this process, readers realize the forces directing their attention toward narrative dynamics and heteroglossical elements.

Part of the novel's heteroglossia is the dialogue between the objective fact and subjective truth. The novel employs inter-subjective voices, which lead up to contrasting various points of view regarding an object of common observation. Tobin indicates that an external item could be the subject of joint attentions by many characters (186). As the narrative proceeds, a number of characters redefine the same object in accordance with their subjective criterion. This process foregrounds the debate between a variety of world views; one that rely on scientific empirical facts and another that holds the individuals' beliefs as the only truth.

For instance, the lighthouse is featured as a subject of joint attention in the first part of the novel. It is the central object against which all characters' traits are illuminated. Its assessment bears the shadow of their true nature. The characters' attitudes toward the journey is the key to understand these characters' traits. As Plato puts it, all we see on the cave's wall is a shadow of truth. Only philosophers can perceive facts. Neither materialism, symbolized by Mr. Ramsay, nor Mrs. Ramsay's transcendentalism can reach truth. Only an androgynous approach, projected through Lily, was capable of capturing reality. Its figurative meaning as a symbol of guidance and change is also emphasized. An example of this is in this extract, "[t]here wasn't the slightest possible chance that they could go to the Lighthouse tomorrow, Mr. Ramsay snapped out irascibly. How did he know? she asked. The wind often changed" (*TLH* 77). Since a fact is an outcome of a collective agreement on something to be true, the tension surrounding the journey to the lighthouse condemns reality as an outcome of an epistemological quest. Mrs. Ramsay stands for subjective truth and maintains a metanarrative

that challenges Mr. Ramsay's grand narrative. Both views are equally valid, but the former's way of imposing himself is what causes the reader to question them. At the end of part one, Mrs. Ramsay is the one who triumphs. Her acknowledgement of the weather's instability is what gives creditability to Mr. Ramsay's views. In the absence of opposing ideas, facts are established. The novel underlines this etiological question throughout the narrative to enhance the metafictional mode revolving around the boundaries between facts and fiction. When Mrs. Ramsay describes her husband's attitude as a form of bad behavior, an authorial tone can be traced. Due to the delay and absence of pronouns, readers are left to figure out the voice's identity. It also makes them aware of intersubjectivity in action.

Through narrative technique, the novel exposes the illusion of the omniscient narrator. The Victorian attempts at objectivity are deflated as the novel introduces many narrative voices. Moreover, traditional claims of offering an authentic characterization is undermined once the reader's beliefs are taken as products of the characters' impressions of each other. For instance, Mrs. Ramsay is not bluntly exposed to the reader by a narrator. She is rather recognized through an accumulation of the characters' perceptions of her. While Mr. Ramsay emphasizes her irrationality, Lily admires her social creativity, and Carmichael criticizes her domineering personality. The contradictory observations adopted by some characters places the reader into a more active role of composing a totalized image of her. This frustration is intentionally created to intensify reader's awareness of the author's endeavor to capture reality and maintain authenticity. Lily and Bankes contemplation of the moving waves is a good example of this. Mr. Bankes tries to think of Mrs. Ramsay's beauty while Lily emphasizes that she is in fact in love with it all. This example shows the futility of creating a unified picture of the world for there are always different views and ideas to be admitted. The problem of achieving a unified vision reflects the dubious state between the author and the reader at the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the emergence of new pluralist subjective realities.

The confrontation of different perspectives sheds light on metafiction's concerns with the question of realism. Mr. Ramsay's theory of "subjects and objects and the nature of reality" is the starting point for highlighting the intellectual gap created by the discrepancy of perceiving life (*TLH* 65). G. H. Moore's philosophical ideas about truth has an undeniable influence on this novel; his philosophy is embodied in Mr. Ramsay's belief of tangible "uncompromising truth". Moore's claim that "the sensible qualities which we perceive as being in certain places, really exist in the places in which we perceive them to be . . .?" (qtd. in Steinberg 167) corresponds to Mr. Ramsay's allegory of the "kitchen table . . . when you're not there" (*TLH* 65). Mr. Ramsay, thus, stands for a materialist philosophy that had dominated the Victorian and the Edwardian era. Besides the domestic image implied by this statement, reducing the epistemological question of reality's essence to a kitchen table is ironic. This can be read as a remark on Edwardian writers who describe a house then expect readers to induce who is living there. They sacrifice subjective experience for the sake of plausible objectivity.

On the contrary, there are two characters confuting Mr. Ramsay's notion of reality. First there is Mrs. Ramsay who intuitively realizes the possibility of balancing subjects and objects in relation to reality. She proposes that anything is true as far as it stimulates the beholders aesthetically. A unity, for example, is formed between Mrs. Ramsay and physical elements. She identifies herself with the stroke of the lighthouse until "she became the thing she looked at--that light" (*TLH* 124). This sensation implies a suspension of boundaries between subjects and objects of observation. She also comments on the transcendental mode created through these objects; "[i]t was odd, she thought, how if one was alone, one leant to inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers; felt they expressed one; felt they became one; felt they knew one, in a sense were one" (*TLH* 124). Mrs. Ramsay's moments of being can be described as a mode of romantic writing; this unity with her surrounding alludes to romantic poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge. This unity, however, shreds against modern currents associated with loss of

religious belief and desolation of modernist identity. This does not only point out romantic literature's fusion of subjects and objects and its reverence of subjectivity, but it also problematizes its implementation as a mode of transmitting reality. Mr. Ramsay's romantic moments of being lose their meaning eventually. The dinner party is a form of social art conducted by Mrs. Ramsay. It did have a powerful impression on those who attended. Nevertheless, its impression fades away as they leave because "it changed, it shaped itself differently; it had become... already the past" (*TLH* 195). The dinner party, despite its aesthetic value, lacks the permanency to mitigate against the flux of experiences faced by modernists.

Lily Briscoe is the second figure who challenges both representational approaches. Unlike Mr. Ramsay's idealization of objects and Mrs. Ramsay's prioritization of the subject, Lily embodies a modern form of truth that compromises both in order to achieve a creditable representative form. Her painting is the medium through which she synthesizes subjects and objects. Initially, Lily admits the limitation of art's capacity to capture truth. She restricts its main goal to connecting the "mass on the right hand with that on the left" (*TLH* 109-110). Lily concedes the absurdity of accomplishing an unmediated perception of objects. She rhetorically asks "for how could one express in words these emotions of the body?" (*TLH* 288). The lack in this fraction is renovated through her attempts to give a full account of it. Therefore, her representation of reality is compatible with the modern condition. Neither the outcome of a subjective perception of truth nor an object oriented approach to reality are efficient means of reciprocating reality. Emphasizing the process through which reality is obtained proves to be the most reliable interpretation of the real.

Beja explains that comprehending the nature of reality is a matter of an epistemological quest that cannot be performed away from subjective influences. When the nature of reality is perceived intuitively, a private bond is established between the speaker and the object; it renders it into a form of subjective reality (144). That is to say, confirming that one thing is

this or that is difficult, because it has already been transformed. Add to that objects' complexity “for nothing was simply one thing” (*TLH* 300) but a constellation of phases that are tackled differently. The conflict between them foregrounds the limitation of narrative frames. It self-reflects the act of framing. In this novel, frames takes two forms; a frame proposed by a character and a sociocultural frame. Handley clarifies that framing “create[s] a dialogue among various frames of judgment or perception, Woolf aims to deconstruct traditional and presumptively natural or universally determined frames, be they social or aesthetic” (17). As explained earlier, characters frame each other and through this demonstration of framing, the mechanism of selective representation and selective report of reality is exposed. Experience cannot be fully depicted since it has multiple perspectives. It is impossible to include them all and that is why frames are used. The second form of frames is sociocultural. Some characters are depicted within pre-established social frames. For instance, Mrs. Ramsay has the potentials to become an artist since she experiences many moments of beings. However, she is framed by patriarchal ideology. Mrs. Ramsay “could feel [Mr. Ramsay’s] mind like a raised hand shadowing her mind” (*TLH* 211). Her artistic freedom is hindered; it is limited to the domestic sphere. On the contrary, Lily rejects being framed by the society’s code of marriage. Her painting is an act of persistence against the gender role's ideologies. Despite Tasnley’s undermining of women’s ability to produce creative works, Lily was capable of finishing her painting. Although these exertions appear to be limited to exposing the imposition of patriarchal ideologies, they contribute to creating a metafictional level featuring female artists’ struggle to reach their vision.

The conflict between these campaigns highlights the dissimilarity between the philosophical and artistic approach to reality. Both methods stand for a more or less reliable way of creating a solid version of the real. In this novel, philosophy is depicted as a remote way of achieving reality. The mode of philosophical endeavor is ironically embodied in Mr.

Ramsay. Since the nature of reality is the subject of his studies, his attempts to decipher the essence of life is mocked. He follows a scientific ordinal methodology that marginalizes any form of human sensation. The novel mocks these approaches by highlighting their futility. So, when Lily comments “[i]t was a splendid mind. For if thought is like the keyboard of a piano... or like the alphabet is ranged in twenty-six letters all in order, then his splendid mind had no sort of difficulty” (*TLH* 80). The narrative tone becomes ironic. In fact, life does not have an organized form like piano keys or the alphabet; modern life is disrupted and drowned in chaos. Mr. Ramsay’s method proves insufficient; he reached ‘Q’, but was unable to move to ‘R’ or even dream of reaching ‘Z’.

Connotatively, these three letters denote metafictional meanings. ‘Q’ can be interpreted as a ‘questions’. Philosophers are capable of posing all sorts of questions about life, but there always remains the question “what is R?” (*TLH* 80). ‘R’ might stand for the ‘responses’ that cannot be obtained easily during the modern age. It is also a symbol of unreasonable ‘reality’. For Mr. Ramsay, the passage between ‘Q’ and ‘R’ is the verge between his inquiries about the self and his inability to understand himself. Human psyche is not ordered like piano keys. Its complexity proves intellect to be an inappropriate tool to learn about it. Mr. Ramsey admits that all his academic researchers are forms of “talking nonsense”. It is simply “a disguise... the refuge of a man afraid to own his own feelings, who could not say, This is what I like--this is what I am” (*TLH* 97). Therefore, a total understanding of the self, symbolized by ‘Z’, is proved beyond reach. Although a philosophical or scientific approach to life seems ‘heroic’ and suitable to discover external reality, it is unproductive when it comes to internal reality.

On the contrary, art is introduced as the link between inner reality and outer reality. Unlike Mr. Ramsay, who persists to impose order, artists (represented by Lily Briscoe and Carmichael) follow the disrupted currents of modernism. Art does not try to inflict a definite understanding of life. It rather tries to highlight the process of approaching reality as the closest

point to truth. In this novel, art is depicted as a bold statement that emphasizes the façade of any claims of objectivity; it indirectly promotes the reliability of subjective truth. For instance, Lily Briscoe values her artistic endeavors and bravely challenges any claims of its inadequacy (“[b]ut this is what I see; this is what I see”) (*TLH* 59). Her painting process manifests the mechanism of decoding what the unconsciousness dictates (which was considered the essence of modernism). Lily, however, is torn between taking a personal role that requires emotional involvement and occupying an objective observational role. She indicates, in a self-reflexive voice that alludes to the novel itself, that “[o]ne wanted... to be on a level with ordinary experience, to feel simply that's a chair, that's a table, and yet at the same time, "It's a miracle, it's an ecstasy" (*TLH* 323). Therefore, the connection between internal and external reality cannot be fully established; neither total subjectivity nor objectivity are capable of reclaiming reality. The closest point to truth is moving between them, because it exposes their merits and demerits. Lily's painting becomes a reflection of two types of writers; those who take observers roles by depicting external reality and those who focus on rendering internal reality into a work of art. As a modernist work, Lily's painting embodies a possible solution for this dilemma. It appraises both; the permanency of naturalism and the fluidity of postimpressionism. It takes up a rhythmic pattern where “the pauses were one part of the rhythm and the strokes another” (*TLH* 259). Dualism is the key to solve this disparity. Nevertheless, unity cannot be created between two radically opposed elements. Lily's unity “arises from relations rather than from "oneness" ” (Matro 214). Reality is a dynamic concept that changes overtime and what art is supposed to record is the act of transfixing its epistemological quest.

This turns the novel into a metafictional statement that highlights the process of creativity. It foregrounds artist's strive to attain a solid vision. Two artistic endeavors are featured in this novel. First, Mrs. Ramsay is the social artist. Her major concern is originating perpetual order by strengthening social relationships among the house inhabitants. She tries to

bring about order in the mid of chaos. The dinner party, held at the end of the novel's first part, is her masterpiece. Although Mrs. Ramsay's possesses the power of creating unforgettable moments, she cannot maintain their permanency. The party is a moment of unification between all its attendants, but Mrs. Ramsay is aware that "[i]t could not last", because each one of them has his/her own concerns, thoughts, and ideas (*TLH* 187). They are united physically by the dinner party, but their thoughts remain a constellation of distorted thoughts. Nonetheless, Mrs. Ramsay can turn an ordinary experience into something "like a work of art" (*TLH* 263), but it fades away at last. Mrs. Ramsay's match makings end tragically; her daughter Prue dies in labor and the Rayleys have an unhappy marriage. Similarly, the dinner party was for creating bonds, but its influence did not last. It ended with people wondering over their "oneness". Mrs. Ramsay acknowledges her failure of creating unity by the time she leaves the party. She indicates that by highlighting that "it shaped itself differently; it had become... already the past" (*TLH* 195). Her social art collapses because it did not endure the force of time, but it has the power to inspire future artistic expeditions.

Furthermore, Mrs. Ramsay herself is a source and a subject of art. She is endowed with outstanding beauty that makes her the center of admiration. She becomes a "living work of art, attracting others to her, causing them to want to gaze upon her and get closer to her" (Ronchetti 68). She stands for the ideal form of classical art; she is the "Helen of our days" and the "beauty of the world" (*TLH* 70). She is also the subject of Lily's first painting which, presumptively, aims at recording aspects left untouched by other artists. Despite her cautiousness toward art, Mrs. Ramsay does recognize the qualities of original works of art. During her walk with Tansely in part one, they come across an artist painting on the shore. Her commentary can be taken as an implied form of self- refrentiality that highlights the situation of art during that age. She initially points to the heaviness artistic tradition has on the new generation of artists. Instead of revolutionizing art, they turn to the past following the track of traditional artists with

the hope of being accepted. She notes that “[s]ince Mr. Paunceforte had been there, three years before, all the pictures were like that, she said, green and grey, with lemon-coloured sailing-boats, and pink women on the beach.” Nevertheless, her commentary does not attempt at disgracing past artists who “took the greatest pains; first they mixed their own colours, and then they ground them, and then they put damp cloths to keep them moist” (*TLH* 50). For her, their art was original; an experiment demonstrating a reciprocation of their era. Present artists copy that original form of art produced by mainstream artists like Mr. Paunceforte. Mrs. Ramsay commentary can be also read as a conventionality that opposes any changes in art form and a call to preserve traditional art embodied by Mr. Paunceforte paintings.

While Mrs. Ramsay’s art is of a temporary nature, Lily’s painting is a concrete one. Lily Briscoe’s art falls within the evolutionary movement of post-impressionism. It is an objection to traditional artistic forms and designs. Lily acknowledges her departure from impressionism toward post-impressionism<sup>1</sup>. She is worried whether her art will be received positively in relation to traditional art forms; “the colour could have been thinned and faded; the shapes etherealised; that was how Paunceforte would have seen it” (*TLH* 102). At the same time, she challenges those rules due to their lack of a holistic view of human conditions. They are restricted to depicting the physical appearance that envelops people’s feelings and emotions. Post-impressionism, thus, dismantles these traditional scenes to their formalist elements. Lily, as a postimpressionist artist, “do not seek to imitate form, but to create form, not to imitate life, but to find an equivalent for life” (Koppen 376). Lily ventures to design a form that stands for the essence behind appearance. That is why although her painting attempts to show external

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<sup>1</sup> *Impressionism* is a style of painting that emerged in France between 1870 and 1900. Its chief objective is capturing the shifting effect of light and color rather than exact detail. Post-impressionism is a revolt against impressionism. It explores color, line, and form as well as the emotional response of the artist. It is distinguished by short brushstrokes of broken color.

reality, it does not have the form of one (Harrington 364). Painting is not only a representational medium, but also a formal arrangement of elements into ‘mass’, ‘color’, and ‘line’.

Comparing the previously mentioned forms of art aims at highlighting the shift in art’s objectives and techniques. Traditional art does not account for individuality and keenly attempts to enforce a totalized picture of reality; a concept that is doomed to failure due to the era’s distortion and inconsistency. Post-impressionism challenges these assumptions by seeking permanence in the process of producing art. But the question is, why is this emphasis on Lily’s painting? Lily’s painting can be read as a reflection of artist’s struggle to achieve a vision, the novel’s narrative technique, a manifestation of the process of writing the novel, and a statement about modern literature as well as art in general.

This shows a need to be explicit about the relationship of Lily’s painting self-referentiality to the novel itself. Stewart indicates that Woolf has attempted to find an equivalent for post-impressionism in literature (455). The emphasis on Lily’s painting is a reflection of this orientation. From a stylistic point of view, Beja explains that although Lily is a painter, her commentaries on her struggle to achieve her vision “are sometimes expressed in terms that seem more appropriate to the man of letters” (149). In addition, the extensive usage of free indirect discourse contributes to cultivating metafiction.

A crucial metafictional element in this novel is Lily’s attempts to finish her painting. The first attempt takes place in part one as she tries to depict Mrs. Ramsey reading to her son James. Lily resists all influences on her painting. She compares this act to “struggling against terrific odds” to maintain her vision from intrusive influences. These forces include patriarchal socio-political influences embodied in Mr. Ramsay’s demands of sympathy and Tansley’s opposition to women’s creativity. Mr. Ramsey’s presence is associated with “ruin” and “chaos”. It triggers the association with his ideology of the kitchen table and "he made it impossible for her to do anything" (*TLH* 224). What comes to her mind, thus, is a sense of incompleteness as

she thinks of the relationship between what she represents and reality. Moreover, Tansley sneers at women's creativity, but Lily overcomes his influence once she understood that "it wasn't true to him but for some reason, helpful to him, and that was why he said it?" (*TLH* 157). Both are examples of patriarchal intervention into females' artistic subjectivity. Lily's success in achieving her vision is a recognition of their failure. In addition, Mrs. Ramsay's notion of women traditional role within marital institution can be categorized under these forces. She presents a model of feminine subordination as the angel in the house. She approaches Lily as an object of her matchmaking fist. Lily did not surrender to these forces maintaining "this is what I see, this is what I see" (*TLH* 59). Roberta White explains that, the "commodification of the female image in the service of the marriage market subverts women's art... [she] is transformed from observer to observed, from subject to object" (17). If Lily accepts her traditional role as an Angel, she will be, like Mrs. Ramsay, an object of admiration and a passive inspiration of creativity.

In addition to these social forces, Lily creates an original work of art that is meant to represent her subjective view of life. The act of painting is paralleled to writing the novel itself. The production of paintings highlights the most important elements of literary production. For modernists, creating a suitable form that reflect world change has become of greater concern. Lily exclaims,

She could see it all so clearly, so commandingly, when she looked: it was when she took her brush in hand that the whole thing changed. It was in that moment's flight between the picture and her canvas that the demons set on her who often brought her to the verge of tears and made this passage from conception to work as dreadful as any down a dark passage for a child (*TLH* 59).

This extract can be read from different perspectives. Initially, it highlights artists' attempts to transfer an object of visual observation into a formal work of art. Lily here is an embodiment

of modernists' anxiety over the adequacy of their artistic endeavor. It puts forward the problem of artistic expression. In addition, this novel exposes artists' failure to record subjective impressions. Modern artists were negotiating between the new terms of conducting their art and the fluidity of their age. The core of their art, human psyche, is a problematic entity to be prescribed. This extract reflects on the novel's stumbling on the unarticulated when all narrative techniques fail to register the aesthetic value of an object.

Moreover, the gap between artistic conception and execution is emphasized. For modernist, the age's currents provided them with unlimited sources of inspiration; the critical point, however, is how to give them shape in art. It was the passage between the brush and canvas that is full of formal possibilities to choose from. Lily echoes concerns over the novel's form and function as an analogy for artists' problems with means of expression. According to Harrington, "the novel can be read like the painting and that the painting's meaning is also the novel's" (364). Therefore, Lily's struggle with the form of her painting is a reflection of Woolf's struggle to attain a proper literary form to depict internal reality. Lily's discussion with Bankes forms a conjectural hub that remarks the novel's narrative technique. By adopting post-impressionism, Lily creates an art that deviate from common conceptions. She paints Mrs. Ramsay as a "triangular purple shape" (*TLH* 108) because she was not attempting to imitate but to create balance between appearance and essence. She exposes it "[by] a shadow here and a light there" and for every bright side a dark one (*TLH* 108). It is a call to reconsider objects of artistic production under new lights; that is, to include elements of the psyche. Lily wonders, "[w]hat art was there... by which one pressed through into those secret chambers?" (*TLH* 106) and achieve unity between the mind and physical appearance, between internal and external reality.

The novel also reflects writer's problems of representing the mind into an understandable form of art. It is a challenging task that the novel exemplifies in describing

Lily's stream of thoughts because "to follow her thought was like following a voice which speaks too quickly to be taken down by one's pencil, and the voice was her own voice saying without prompting undeniable, everlasting, contradictory things" (*TLH* 67). The narrator inspects Woolf's process of characterizing Lily. Although the psyche proves to be the soul medium of modernists, achieving an immediate interpretation of characters' thoughts remains a problematic task. Moreover, human consciousness is not of a stabilized nature that directly corresponds to these moments of being; Lily highlights the difficulty of capturing pure reality, because it changes once artists attempt to capture it. The impossible task, thus, is to represent "the thing itself before it has been made anything" (*TLH* 310). The writer's concerns over the creditability of his/her art is repeatedly referred to. Representation becomes an interpretation guided by the author's convictions. This initiates discussions of the location of modern literature in relation to previous literary movements.

The goal of Lily's painting suggests two arguments; traditionalists' insistence on appearance and modernists' concern over inner reality. In the first part, Lily was cautious of her painting form and its unconformity with conventional art; Lily says, "[i]t was bad, it was bad, it was infinitely bad! She could have done it differently of course" (*TLH* 159) if she has followed traditional conducts. Nevertheless, she holds an opinion that a mere imitation of other's painting is no more than a combination of "clods with no life in them" (*TLH* 103). She asserts her dual vision despite its inconformity. She attempts "to connect this mass on the right hand with that on the left... But the danger was that by doing that the unity of the whole might be broken" (*TLH* 110). She is afraid of losing unity of form in favor of achieving a higher level of reality. Her concern in the first part of the novel is of a formalist nature; whether she should move the tree, create balance between masses, or rearrange the painting's elements into a unified order. The aim of her first painting was to establish unity. Lily's commentaries on her painting echoes Roger Fry's concepts of "*significant form*" as well as the link between masses

and elements of visual attraction. Her artistic endeavor in the first part reflects post-impressionist concepts of light, shadow, and colors. The first painting was of James and Mrs. Ramsay. From Mr. Bankes point of view, the mother and her child were represented as a “purple shape”, but Lily explains that “the picture was not of them”, in the form he understood it, but of the truth behind it. Mrs. Ramsay was previously depicted as a “triangular purple shape” (*TLH* 108) and “a wedge-shaped core of darkness” (*TLH* 122). Lily’s painting reiterates these ideas. Lily attempts to find the balance between these formal elements, but as she does so, the unity of the picture is threatened. In the second painting, Lily tries to implement an appropriate design to create unity. For her, unity is knowledge. It is no more the relationship between formalist elements, but the knowledge achieved through them. That means employing new techniques to go beyond superficial implications.

Beauty was not everything. Beauty had this penalty--it came too readily, came too completely. It stilled life--froze it. One forgot the little agitations; the flush, the pallor, some queer distortion, some light or shadow, which made the face unrecognisable for a moment and yet added a quality one saw for ever after (*TLH* 287).

Beauty limits imagination as well as the reader’s view to a predetermined aesthetic form. Beyond the safety of symbolic order, presented by conventional literature, resides the real. It is through defamiliarizing structure that artists can enhance the familiar by offering a better insight into the real. Lily’s painting, however, is not described in details; the narrative voice does not give any information about its shape. This avoidance foregrounds its process of creation as an analogy of the novel’s composition. Caughie explains that Woolf’s discussion of artistic process “is less concerned with what art is or what life is than with how life is narrated” (31). Stewart suggests that the novel is similar to post-impressionistic paintings, because it has

a “symbolic form that mirrors its own “process of construction”” (439). This gives readers an insight into the process of writing this novel.

Metafiction is not only evoked through highlight issues of plot construction. Like any metafictional novel, Lily lays bare the question of initiating art. “*Where to begin?*” is Lily’s statement which reaffirms modern writers’ problem with beginnings. Although problematizing beginnings is a contemporary matter, this reference can be read as either a foreshadowing of postmodernist concerns or an early awareness of the act of framing. The complexity of approaching subjects of artistic endeavor is a result of the unlimited number of possibilities available. As Waugh explains, “[m]odernism aimed at the impossible task of exploring pure consciousness” as it account for characters internal and external concepts (27). Therefore, it seems that the personal desire of artistic production is of unpredictable nature; it is stimulated by its surrounding, but finds no matching artistic form. The inadequacy of traditional literary form to represent subjects of modernist concerns has become a problem. It is not only a matter of creating, but also of finding an appropriate medium of expression that preserves its uniqueness and significance.

Analogously, the novel tries to resolve the problem of language expressiveness; how can a writer depict reality while she/he is restricted by linguistic limits? Some of Lily’s reflections on her paintings can be read as statements regarding the failure of language. In the first part of the novel, Lily weighs the effectiveness of language as a witness of its failure to articulate human’s thoughts. She initially wonders “[h]ow did one judge people, think of them? How did one add up this and that and conclude that it was liking one felt or disliking? And to those words, what meaning attached, after all?” (*TLH* 67). This statement highlights the link between the conflicting nature of thoughts and its impact on depriving language of its meaning. Meaning indeterminacy becomes a side effect of an emotional incongruity associated with subjective perception. The gap between linguistic signs and signifiers has increased in the

modern age which, consequently, stimulated writer's awareness of their medium of expression. Writers became alert to language's submission to "some order, some uniformity" (*TLH* 163). However, these linguistic structures prove unsuitable to sustain the subject's expressive needs. The ineffectiveness of words to communicate what is desired pushes the text to silence. The extensive use of demonstratives in the current novel self-reflects the author's inability to metamorphose language into a medium that carries the essence of human psyche. As Lily indicates, "what can be more formidable than that space? this truth, this reality". Language's capacity to demonstrate truth has faded away; it "fluttered sideways and struck the object inches too low" (*TLH* 259, 288). Language points to truth, but it cannot express it due to its restrained symbolism that does not account for intensive emotions. Lily asks, "how could one express in words these emotions of the body? Express that emptiness there?" (*TLH* 288). Mepham explains that those emotions are intensive to the extent of acquiring a physical shape (54) which can neither be ordered in a perceivable form nor find a linguistic equivalent that accounts for them. The novel poses the question of whether words that acquire different symbolic meanings can still be used to establish a concrete meaning of life. Lily struggles to commit these symbols to a meaningful context; "If only she could put them together, she felt, write them out in some sentence, then she would have got at the truth of things" (*TLH* 242). The use of free indirect discourse in this quote excites the reader's assumption of the voice. The reader ascribes it to Woolf who articulates her concerns over language. Thus, the novel admits its deficiency of representing a truthful image of life due to its medium's limit, i.e., language. Language hampers the artist's desire of expression and limits it to describing his experience of capturing truth.

Closely related to the issue of language is that of fragmented and diffused meaning. Since the consciousness, with its discrepancy and vagueness, is the subject of modern literature, Woolf's novel questions the possibility of representing it via language. It is at moments of being that "she wanted to say not one thing, but everything" but find no corresponding form,

because “[l]ittle words ... broke up the thought and dismembered” (*TLH* 288). In the third part of the novel, Lily sits to finish the painting she has started ten years ago and to her “the whole world seemed to have dissolved... into a pool of thought, a deep basin of reality” (*TLH* 288, 289). As an artist, thoughts are the form of subjective reality available to her, the question however is of how to apply an appropriate design to this experience. So, what is the meaning of those insinuations and how to represent them?

Lily concludes that “vision must be perpetually remade” (*TLH* 293). Relying only on formalistic elements, despite their “power to console”, is not sufficient. This results into an amputated vision that marginalizes some aspects of life. Changing pictorial perspective, and analogously in Woolf’s novel, promises a wider slice of life. Moreover, this change of perspective is motivated by an “instinctive need of distance” that adds an objective mechanism to the subject of creative process. So, when Lily maintains that “so much depends... upon distance” (*TLH* 307), she draws attention to the novel’s narrative voice that tunnels in and out of different characters. This technique parallels Lily’s rhythm of painting where “the pauses were one part of the rhythm and the strokes another, and all were related” (*TLH* 259). It can be also read as an enactment of the shift in narratological perspective implying “that one must be both subjectively involved in and objectively detached from life” (*TLH* 215). Friedman suggests that figuring out creativity process raises questions of future arts (68). It is only after this realization that Lily’s achieves her final vision.

Immortality of art is an issue that haunts this conclusion. Both forms of artwork (Mrs. Ramsay’s party and Lily’s painting) are explicitly depicted. Comparing both sheds light on time’s impact on art. On one hand, there is Mrs. Ramsay’s dinner party which succeeds at achieving unity, but fails to secure its permanency. The unity achieved in the party is of an impressionistic nature that focuses on appearance (form). It ignores those forces that go behind the elements of her artistic work. All the new attendants were ‘composed’ in one artistic form

especially after lighting the candles; they were united physically and not emotionally. The unity in Mrs. Ramsay's party does not go beyond appearance. It does not last "it changed, it shaped itself differently; it had become...already the past" (*TLH* 195). Although it did not survive time, it has an impact on everyone. This dinner becomes an inspiration for Lily who during that dinner resolves her issue regarding the connection of masses. These moments become permanent; not as a form of art, but in memory. After ten years, Lily stands in the same place trying to paint. She remembers how Mrs. Ramsay created unforgettable moments (i.e. moments of beings) that stir artists' desire of production. It triggers the realization that "[i]n the midst of chaos there was shape" (*TLH* 264) generated by "little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark" (*TLH* 263). These moments can be turned into permanent works of art. Art registers those moments and gives them immortality for "nothing stays; all changes; but not words, not paint." There remains Lily's doubts about the future of her art. In the first part, a statement is made of whether her relatively new form of art would be appreciated. She wonders whether her painting will be hanged in an attic and go unnoticed. As her artistic potential improve later in the novel, she understands that neither unity nor permanency is what art strives to preserve, it is "what it attempted, that it "remained forever" (*TLH* 290). Like the novel itself, it does not revolve around solid things that can be explored and understood easily. It is a mixture of diffused and unstable elements, but the process of creating is what grants them immortality.

The novel ends with Lily's achievement of her vision. There are several factors that contribute to this. First, Lily bravely accepts the fate of her painting and the most important element of it: 'what it attempts'. Second, Mr. Ramsay's landing at the lighthouse and the disappearance of his wife's ghost marks the moment when Lily is freed from their influences and "[w]ith a sudden intensity... she drew a line there, in the center. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision"

(*TLH* 333). Lily reaches the peak of her artistic experiment with one line in the middle. This line is of great significance. It can be interpreted as the link between the two forces; reason and emotions. It can be also read as the line between objectivity and subjectivity as well as the collision between external and internal reality. It is the bridge between the “the two masses”. The line, according to Caughie’s postmodernist view, is an “affirmation of one possible form of activity, a gesture that implies not so much the completion of the act as its exhaustion, the crossing out of the current enterprise and the crossing over to a new one” (39). By applying this line, a bridge is formed to cross modernist concerns and arrive at deeper and more complex ones. Ending the novel with convincing Lily’s vision reinforces the analogy between the novel and the painting. The last stroke marks the novel’s end as well as the achievement of order and permanency. It also echoes Woolf’s accomplishment of the novel.

To sum up, metafiction in *To the Lighthouse* is evoked through highlighting major conceptual issues regarding the nature of reality and the reliability of representation. It discusses the disparity between internal and external reality within the framework of literary works. The attempt to capture artist’s reworking of this difference has paved the way to discuss the nature of modern literature and its relation to pervious artistic forms. The analogy established between Lily’s painting and the novel emphasizes with its structure and wide spectrum of themes and images the practice and essence of modern art.

## **Chapter Four: Metafiction in Graham Swift's *Waterland***

## Metafiction in Graham Swift's *Waterland*

It has been often noted that postmodernism cannot be approached apart from the historical and ideological context that surrounds, and sometimes establishes, its foundation. From a literary perspective, critical investigations into the literature of that era have produced an infinite pole of interpretations. This diversity is rooted in two main principles that postmodernity is built upon; the artificiality of theories and the constructiveness of history. At this point, elements used to read literature in the past are now regarded as narratives. This emphasis on narrative creates an association between these claims and the novel as a literary genre. These concerns with narrative are clearly reflected in novels where the relationship between fiction and reality runs as a central theme. These claims are of great significance since they create the foundation of metafiction. Among the many novels which have focused on metafiction as a mean of reflecting a sense of the postmodern condition is Graham Swift's *Waterland*. Metafiction in this novel goes beyond its fundamental task of disclosing the artificiality of fictional accounts of reality. It also exposes elements of manipulating fictional structure to stimulate comments regarding naratological postmodernist concerns. *Waterland* highlights its status as a metafictional novel through narrative structure, symbolism, and motifs. It also uses a number of techniques to establish comments regarding postmodern cautiousness of metanarrative.

*Waterland* is Swift's most celebrated novel. It has received favorable reviews since its publication in 1983. The narrator in this novel is Tom Crick, a history teacher at a school. He delivers a series of lessons that span across decades of history. His desire is to give a final account of history as an outcome of the conditions surrounding Tom's personal and domestic life. Initially, these lessons are the last ones conducted by him due to an administrative decision to "cut back history" from the curriculum. Add to that, the pressure he faces; he is directed to resign voluntarily following his wife's crime. She abducts a baby from a supermarket claiming

that God has told her to do so. Alongside his personal issues is an urge to emphasize the importance of history. He does so upon encountering skepticisms regarding the need of history. These claims are voiced by one of his students, Price. Tom navigates through his lessons into different historical periods in an attempt to find an explanation for his current situation. His account of history involves national, regional, natural, social, and personal histories. He unfolds the history of his ancestors, the Atkinsons and Cricks, as well as their establishment of the Fen. He narrates several incidents, such as the rise of the Atkinson's brewery business and the myth of his grandmother, Sarah Atkinson. The evolution of the Fen is also portrayed along with national and international events (like the two World Wars, the fall of the British Empire). He dwells on landmarks of European history; namely the French Revolution. He also deplores on natural history through full chapters explaining the breeding cycle of the eel and the geography of England's rivers. In addition, Tom goes through his personal history; his early childhood, teenage, and finally his maturity and marriage to Mary Metcalf. In the course of exploring the source of his current tragedies, Tom compares history to fairytales. He questions the creditability of historical records. The novel comprises three time chronicles; the history of the Fens and their founders, Tom's past, and the present of the novel. All these times are navigated by Tom who tries to spot a pattern that can explain how his life has reached its current status.

*Waterland* can be described as a set of interwoven historical narratives delivered by Tom; a history teacher and in essence a historiography practitioner. Throughout the novel, Tom explores grand narratives like the Roman conquest of Britain, the French revolution, the fall of the Bastille, the First and Second World War. Simultaneously, he integrates other personal narratives; stories of his youth and a family saga. By synthesizing his personal history with public history, Tom attempts at making it as plausible as public history. This assimilation enacts a postmodernist approach to narrative. The common way of thinking about narrative is

to have it as an exclusive outcome of literary production. Nevertheless, narrative scope has expanded due to its affiliation with various types of texts (such as science or history). These narratives are tackled with cautiousness based on postmodern standards. Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* has been identified as a major influence on the contemporary understanding of narrative. In this book, Lyotard introduces the term "metanarrative" to describe big stories or grand narratives that enforce certain ideological structures and foster an artificial sense of unification and totality. So, postmodernism is defined as "an incredulity towards metanarrative" (xxiv). He explains that metanarratives are meant to serve a political ideology. Therefore, selectivity and camouflaged partiality are cultivated in representing 'reality'. Postmodernism, conversely, acknowledges this bias by embracing "*petit récit*"; small or local narratives (Lyotard 60). Reality has lost its status as a unified narrative; it is currently approached as a kaleidoscope of distinctive human experiences. Although *petit récits* are not inclusive, they are generated under similar conditions to grand narratives. That is why truth mediated through them is regarded as partial and incomplete. This referential fallacy is foregrounded via metafiction.

In order to decipher the roots of his problems, Tom resorts to tell a story of the past. He even confesses to his students the narrativity of his historical accounts; "he breaks off and starts telling – these stories" (WL 5). This indicates that the correspondence between history and fiction in this novel is not necessarily a simple one. Whereas history is normally represented in a story-like form, stories are usually treated as historical accounts. This inter-relationship is often developed within the novel's narrative fabric where the notion of history is deliberated. According to Cooper, this assimilation suggests a "dialectical opposition... between the conjuring up of fictions and the setting down of facts" (317). On this basis, both history and story are to be seen as analogous manifestations of an intensive encounter with reality. Linda Hutcheon was apparently the first to use the term "historiographic metafiction" to describe

novels that self-consciously underline the representation of history. These novels “both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages... it [evaluates] narrative—be it in literature, history, or theory—that has usually been the major focus of attention” (*Poetics* 5). The novel follows a story like format, which makes the examination of historiography and metafiction surfaces from the very beginning.

The epigraph can be taken as a general starting point for discussing metafiction. It proposes a premises on narrative. The Latin word, *historia*, is defined in the preface as “1. inquiry, investigation, learning. 2. a) a narrative of past events, history. b) any kind of narrative: account, tale, story.” The epigraph encapsulates the relationship between history and fiction. It goes beyond the basic conception of them by embracing their common formalist medium; narrative. Sharing the same medium makes their documentation vulnerable to questioning. It foreshadows the tension surrounding Tom’s treatment of history as a “fairy-tale”. It also emphasizes the similarities surrounding history-writing and story-writing. Decoste is careful to point out that the novel revolves around the tension between “*historia* as narrative and *historia* as inquiry” (379). With this in mind, *Waterland* will be first examined as a historiographic account linked with historiographic metafiction and second as a metafictional statement exploring the nature of fiction and its portrayal of reality.

Predicated on the assumption that truth is partially presented through history, issues of grand historical narratives are revealed from the very beginning. Confronting his students’ rejection of history, Tom gives “the complete and final version” of history (*WL* 8). This announcement raises the audience’s expectations. It fosters an assumption of direct expression of personal experience. Tom, however, starts his account of the Fens by calling it a “fairy-tale” (*WL* 1). By blurring the boundaries between factual and fictional accounts of the past, the creditability of Tom’s narrative is undermined. He starts by laying the foundation for delivering history as “the Grand Narrative, the filler of vacuums, the dispeller of fears of the dark” (*WL*

26). While Tom's announcement withholds the allurements of grand history, he challenges the same concept by describing it as "the fabrication, the diversion, the reality-obscuring drama ...Histrionics" (WL 40). The inflation and deflation of this notion marks the postmodernist struggle to maintain a valid perception of history. So, history is not only accused of being selective but also a made-up story. The loss of historiography in the realm of fiction requires a postmodernist approach to narrative to be cultivated. On the surface, narrative can be understood as an arrangement of events into a progressive sequence, but shifting between different modes and settings sews the seeds of fictiveness. The shift to story-telling is also signaled by Tom's abandonment of the curriculum and insistence on telling stories. Nonetheless, two terms have to be recognized to reach an impartial understanding of narrative; narration and narrativity. The former refers to the act or process of narrating. In the novel, the protagonist uses stories as the main medium of accessing the past, because "after the happening, only the telling of it" (WL 328). This remarks the origin of history and in a broader sense the novel itself. Narrativity denotes the quality or condition of producing narrative as well as its conformity with reality. Add to that a change in tackling narrative. Its analysis is no more restricted to appreciating its grandeur, it has expanded to highlight the hazy line between fact and fiction.

Like literature, and novels in particular, history is approached as a narrative of past events. Historical and fictional narratives have much in common since they are subject to the same system of meaning production; discourse. According to Hayden White, objectivity cannot be attained through historiography due to its affiliation with fictional narrative techniques. Historiography is endowed with literariness due to its utilization of rhetoric and figurative language. White emphasizes that the distinction between historical and literary discourse is based on content rather than form. History is based on "real" events whereas literature is a mediation of "imaginary" events (*Question 2*). He maintains that history is a collection of

meaningless events; once they adapted into a narrative structure, they are endowed with meaning. He elaborates on this issue indicating that

It is a fiction of the historian that the various states of affairs which he constitutes as the beginning, the middle, and the end of a course of development are all "actual" or "real" and that he has merely recorded "what happened" in the transition from the inaugural to the terminal phase (*Historical Text* 208).

This is to say that arranging historical events into a chronological unified plot (despite the temporal vacuums separating them) is a poetic act in which imagination and figurative language are incorporated. Therefore, history is perceived through the same method adapted by authors to illustrate life in fiction; this casts doubt on the truthfulness of these records. White, however, does not suggest a total rejection of historiography. He accepts fictionalization as the unescapable condition of representing historical reality. By rendering history into a narrative, it takes a recognizable and familiar form (*Historical Text* 209). Narration imposes structure on historical events projecting a desire for “coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure” (*Value* 24). Nevertheless, controversy remains regarding narrativity. According to Tom, history is “a lucky dip of meanings. Events elude meaning, but we look for meanings” (*WL* 140). History, once narrativized, is likely to embrace ideological orientations suspecting it of preconception.

The solution to this problem lies in a self-conscious recognition of fictionalization in the creation of historical records and the novel itself. This is basically what *Waterland* aims to accentuate. Tom offers several speculations on the relationship between man and history. He defines man as “the story-telling animal” (*WL* 62) suggesting that the vestige of humanity lies in its ability to create narrative. But grand narratives decay; people lack the fundamentals of understanding the world or their relationship to time. So, when the world descends into a havoc and systems cannot defy confusion, stories are held as the only available remedy. They offer a boundless outlet for people’s emotions and answers to their curiosity. They provide

explanations to unfathomable phenomena that go beyond logic. Stories maintain human's sanity where confusion is professed as the norm. Man "[w]herever he goes he wants to leave behind not a chaotic wake, not an empty space, but the comforting markerbuoys and trail-signs of stories" (WL 63). This desire justifies the tendency to connect disrupted histories and create soothing stories regardless of their conformity with the real. Tom explains that "even if we miss the grand repertoire of history, we yet imitate it in miniature and endorse, in miniature, its longing for presence, for feature, for purpose" (WL 41). Grand history is replaced by small narratives, but this does not advocate a total dispense of history. It acknowledges the role small narratives play in filling the void caused by the falling popularity of grand narratives. Schad suggests that "history ends more than once, or rather is always already ended" (991). That is to say that history ends the moment its objectivity is questioned. Since its events have already occurred, history is marked inaccessible. Moreover, the skepticisms regarding narrativity highlights the interpretive power of fiction.

It can be argued that the novel's concern with historiography is reflected through the historicity of human experience. The novel features a combination of personal and public histories. Confronted with a professional and a domestic crisis, Tom revisits the past to figure out an explanation for his disrupted present. His personal narrative is conceived against major events that allegedly dominate the historical scene. It draws attention to the practice of historiography for "while all historical events are direct experience to someone, to everyone else, they are simply stories" (Lee 45). This assimilation advocates a direct projection of the parallelism in producing fiction and history. Tom's narrative of Glidsy's establishment by his forefathers (the Atkinsons and Cricks) appears initially to be "the complete and final version" of history. The imbrication of literary signs alongside major referents bestows on it a fictive tone. This can be accounted for by the way Tom describes the Fen as a "fairy-tale land"; a land that is "both palpable and unreal" (WL 1, 5). Add to this, Tom's portrayal of its inhabitants, the

Cricks, as people with an excessive knack to tell all kinds of stories. These depictions stimulate cautiousness toward a history springing out of this environment. Furthermore, incorporating fairy-tales provides a flexible framework that attains for the limitations of grand narrative. Cooper recognizes this synthesis as a dialogism between “discursive practices of narrative and historiography, between the conjuring up of fictions and the setting down of facts” (317). This dialogism is crucial to the understanding of the protagonist’s inclination to recite his personal and family history, though surrounded by generic obscurity.

Like his own ancestors, Tom has the desire to tell stories, his story, and history. The assimilation between several narrative modes leads to a profound understanding of the nature of history as well as metafiction. Tom’s lectures are versatile; they encompass a refutation and a defense of history. His students have lost their interest in history regarding it a “fairy-tale” and succumbed to anticipate what seems to be an apocalyptic future. He notices his students’ worries and decide to act upon them. He offers an account of his life blended with those major events. They listened to Tom “the way [they] never listened to the stranger-than-fiction prodigies of the French Revolution” (*WL* 6). Despite his collaboration of fictional and real accounts, his lessons enjoy great popularity because children regard him a victim of history, a man who offers a more convincing form of history; something they can relate to. The French Revolution, the main subject of their history class, is used to stage Tom’s confutation of history’s authenticity. According to the assigned curriculum, the French Revolution is the bearer of freedom, equality, and fraternity to France as well as a major influence on Europe and the world. The novel challenges this ideologically totalized narrative by incorporating elements that were not included in its official record.

The French Revolution has been featured as a metonymy of historiographic bias. For instance, the Fall of the Bastille is believed to be the pivotal conjecture that headways the abolishment of monarchy. Tom interrupts this assumption by proposing a critical approach to

its significance; “let us not overestimate the actual character or the actual achievements of the Fall of the Bastille” (WL 175). In fact, what is achieved is merely a release of seven prisoners “two madmen, four forgers and a hapless roué” (WL 179) whereas two hundreds of the revolutionary forces were killed or wounded. Contrasted to historical records of the Fall of the Bastille, Tom’s revelations declare the deficiency of history and its foregrounding of certain aspects is what attributes it with significance. Iris has it that the French Revolution “points to Crick’s underlying belief that the events that history chooses to privilege are nonevents and fabrications in the face of mundane reality.” (927) History celebrates the significance of the prison’s fall avoiding facts challenging its implication. In addition, the Fall of the Bastille (and the French Revolution in general) has been a notable event that has been represented in several literary works. Charles Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities* is a landmark of literary tradition that has referred to the French Revolution. Dickens’s novel takes a historical event and interweaves it into a novel that amplifies its significance. The novel’s events are based on Carlyle’s *The French Revolution*, which is regard as a creditable historical reference. Therefore, when Swift refers to the same historical event, the nature of historical novels is reconsidered. Literature has a great influence on people and by implementing historical records it facilitates the formation of cultural memory. Both novels highlight these events, but for different objectives. While Dickens’ novel illuminates its textuality, Swift’s novel designates the form of history representation in fiction. This association foregrounds a transformation in the tradition of fiction; a shift from creating literature as a reflection of reality to rendering it into a refutation of how this reality is produced and consumed.

In order to explain Tom’s abandonment of grand history and gain a better insight into how local history works to subvert them, the history of the Fen and its founders, Atkinsons and Cricks, ought to be analyzed. Tom’s narrative of his homeland starts by explaining the formation of the Fen. It was a collection of swamps and lagoons and only through the process

of drainage it was to be formed into a solid land. The Atkinsons came from Norfolk to invest in land reclamation and open the River Leem to transfer products. At that time, the Cricks started working for them. The founding of the Fen stands for the narrative of progress. In other words, it highlights the sequential form of narrative inherited within historiography and traditional (Victorian) fiction. This form of narrative attests to the main premises of *Waterland* that is history is “the reality-obscuring drama” (WL 40). The cooperation between the two families stages two strands of narrative. Tom explains that “[w]hile the Atkinsons made history, the Cricks spun yarns” (WL 17). The chronicle of the Atkinsons corresponds to the writing of traditional history of progress while the Cricks compose stories that lack progress. To both of them, the Fen is a “great flat monotony of reality; the wide empty space of reality”, but they seize to tackle it differently. The Atkinsons undertook the task of transforming it into a prototype of the grand narrative of progress. They transformed the Fen to a cosmopolitan town; they built facilities and led the development of the Fens in an analogy to the rise of Great Britain.

The industrial revolution has enabled Britain to be an unraveled economic power. The economy has transformed the country from an agricultural to industrial one. Railroads were built and canals were opened. The Atkinsons had the aim to create a new world that keeps pace with the status of Great Britain. While this can be best understood as a phase of the history at that time, placing the Atkinsons at the heart of it as producers of history carries further meanings. In Decoste’s view, the Atkinsons “obscure the real by conjuring up universalist narratives which underwrites the active transformation of the Fens to their end, and which enables the recasting of the Fens into the image of their own desire” (386). The essence of Decoste’s argument is that the Atkinsons manipulate the real to fit their vision of progress. Up to a point, this may be true; however, their grand narrative is undermined. Tom offers his comments on the Atkinsons’ accomplishments. He rhetorically asks, “are not all these works,

and others, proof of that great idea that sways [the Atkinsons]; proof that all private interest is subsumed by the National Interest and all private empires do but pay tribute to the Empire of Great Britain?" (WL 93). This is a two folded statement. Firstly, it shows how grand narratives are reluctant to acknowledge the presence of small narratives; they swap them into a "*regime of truth*" created by the system in power; to use Foucault's terms. Secondly, it ironically shows how master narrative of the Great Empire shadows the Atkinson's accomplishments.

The second strand of narrative is ascribed to the Cricks. They have their method of controlling history by transforming it into a story that rejects myths of progress. Tom urges his students to discard thoughts of the "grand metamorphoses of history" and "[c]onsider, instead, the slow and arduous process, the interminable and ambiguous process – the process of human siltation – of land reclamation" (WL 10). Returning to the metaphor of the Fen land as reality, land reclamation symbolizes the second approach to history. Instead of forcing a domineering concept of history; the Cricks' propose a more flexible approach. Like history, lands "are never reclaimed, only being reclaimed" (WL 10). This ambiguity is emphasized by the nature of slit which "neither progress nor decay." Its condition is unpredictable because "it may rise up and turn all your labours to nothing" (WL 13). So, how does this second strain attain historical representation? The emphasis on the process reflects a higher reliance on authenticating history based on an epistemological approach. Berlatsky consents that it is "a progress toward accurately representing the "real" of the past, a progress that can only be achieved through notions of process" (*The Swamps* 273). In other words, he believes reality to be unreachable, but the process of attaining it proves the existence of supreme reality. By focusing on the process of attaining reality, the novel embarks on the deeper problem of story-telling; the counterpart of history-making.

The novel takes this argument further by portraying history as a comforting story, beside being "an ideologically narrow myth" (Berlatsky, *The Swamps* 269). This orientation is

proposed by the Cricks whose “*stories*” originate an alternative level of examining master narratives. To gain a new perspective, narrating the history of the Atkinsons is to be viewed as an enactment of writing. Tom’s lectures provide an examination of how fiction influences history-writing and vice versa. Although Tom is determined to keep to facts, he is sometimes swept by a fictional narrative mode. His historical endeavor illustrates historians’ struggle to stick to facts and “*keep clear of fairy-tales*” (WL 11). This concern is fully developed during the narration of the rise and fall of the Atkinson Empire. The story of Sarah Atkinson (Tom’s great grandmother) is the best projection of this notion. Sarah married Thomas Atkinson, the hire of the family’s brewery business, and she was much younger than him. When Thomas reached his sixties, he started to suspect his young wife. In a fit of jealousy, Thomas struck Sarah causing her a permanent mental damage. The significance of this occurrence resides in the way Tom delivers it to his students. He categorizes it as “an incident ... for which no first-hand account exists yet which is indelibly recorded in innumerable versions in the annals of Gildsey” (WL 76). The mysterious tone of this statement stirs doubts regarding the circumstances surrounding the event. There is no direct access to what happened at that night. In addition, the annals of Glidsey confirms the incident, but with no verification other than *stories* offered at the time of its occurrence. Tom then turns to explore people’s speculations on what caused Sarah’s mental impairment. Was it “the knock against the writing-table”, “the original blow”, or “the moral shock of [the] sudden fury of her husband” (WL 77)? All these questions hang unanswered, but they continue to occupy people’s mind. After her husband’s death and following the success of her sons’ business, people started to view Sarah differently; since “[p]opular opinion learns scarcely anything of Sarah Atkinson, though it knows that she sits constantly in that upper room, surveying the town like a goddess” (WL 83). To fill in this gap of knowledge and “the vacuum” aroused by this enigma, people created myths and stories about her; they regarded her as “a guardian angel” protecting the city. People even attributed

the water flood on the twenty-fifth of October to her death; some people also reported seeing her ghost and others her transformation into a mermaid then diving into the river. They created a myth with the purpose of helping them cope with the inexorable reality of losing Sarah.

But why does Tom carry on incorporating those stories into his narrative although he is determined to stick to facts? Initially, it enacts common concerns with fabricating history. Once facts are invalidated through pluralism, the only method of retaining a glimpse of truth is by highlighting their process of formation. According to Goodman, postmodernism moves from “unique truth and a world fixed and found to a diversity of right and even conflicting versions or worlds in the making” (X). Therefore, the main concern of the novel is reflecting truth as the epistemology of each realm in the making. In other words, postmodern novels do not suggest a clean break from ontological concerns; issues of knowing are highlighted when acts of creating knowledge are identified with creating new worlds. There is no single truth, but a multidimensional truth. Tom emphasizes that a “[r]umour is but rumour... But several rumours, of similar vein, from different sources, cannot be ignored” (WL 102). Pluralism guarantees the presence of facts; even rumors and stories must be taken into consideration. On a deeper level, incorporating those narratives demonstrate how all historical records have fictional elements. Tom takes his argument further in suggesting that:

There are times when we have to disentangle history from fairy-tale. There are times (they come round really quite often) when good dry textbook history takes a plunge into the old swamps of myth and has to be retrieved with empirical fishing lines (86).

Tom takes this to be a logical extension of his foregoing discussion on the nature of history. The mix of fact and fiction is reasserted as a paradox of any historiographic project. Even official records rely on “fairy-tales”, which transforms history into a myth. History, thus, is retrieved from the sense of imaginary narrative by “empirical fishing lines”. History is achieved

through experimenting with narrative forms. The rise of the Atkinsons can be read as a metonymy for history writing. Despite demonstrating how historical records are colored by the interpretive power of those who witness their unfolding and the defects of its medium, the novel does not propose a total refutation of history. It, rather, takes those different interpretations as an evident of some deep truthfulness; that of history-making. On the same vein, this incorporation bolsters the notion of history as a myth. The excessive use of these stories foregrounds the difference between the real and fictional. The myth-maker is usually free to select facts and arrange them into a unified significant whole (story). The problem, however, is founded on the idea that selectivity diminishes the credibility of historical records.

Moreover, accompanying stories to the original annals of Glidsey emphasizes history's partiality. What is expected of historical records is objectivity, but annals record events without sufficient details. These cognitive vacuums are precipitated by the question "*why?*" History is compared to a scientific "*inquiry*" which implies an exploration of cause and effect. It reflects people's need to give meaning to an enigmatic world where events are initially meaningless. Man, as the novel suggests, is "the animal which demands an explanation, the animal which asks Why." Curiosity is the motive behind his inquisitive attempts and desire of narrative. Tom attaches curiosity to love implying that it "begets love. It weds us to the world" (WL 106, 206). Curiosity is a project that traps people in a confusion of explanations offering them no way to progress. This emphasizes process over progress. By associating curiosity with "whywhywhy" the novel propose that the process of creating history can be verified, but the ontology of reality will never be satisfied. It is when people stop asking why that the world comes to an end. That is why Tom compares history to an inquest into causes and roots of problems. It starts "at the point where things go wrong" (WL 106). But this inquest shoves man into a vortex of consecutive questions, which reflects the novel's dispersed structure. This affinity is exemplified through Tom's trace of speculations regarding the execution of Louis XIV:

But why, we ask, did Louis' neck happen to be—?... Because ... And when we have gleaned that reason we will want to know, But why that reason? Because ... And when we have that further reason, But why again—? Because ... Why?... Because ... Why? ... Until, in order to find out why Louis died, it is necessary not only to reanimate in our imaginations his troubled life and times but even to penetrate the generations before him (*WL* 107).

Similarly, Tom dives deep into the history of his ancestors to find explanations driven by his curiosity “our natural and fundamental condition” (*WL* 194). History<sup>1</sup>, thus, is a manifestation of curiosity in action; it “bogs us down in arduous meditations and can lead to the writing of history books.” It is a never satisfied desire of knowledge that neither arrives at solid facts nor finds adequate explanations, because “even if we learnt how, and what and where and when, will we ever know why?” (*WL* 204) After all, man reaches the point where there are no facts to rely on. What is left then are narratives that attempt at quelling curiosity. Landow notes that curiosity is “the force of narrative”. It operates once the “why” remains unanswered. It has a consequence though; curiosity confines people to the past. Curiosity “doesn't want to push ahead... always wants to say, Hey, that's interesting, let's stop awhile, let's take a look-see, let's retrace” (*WL* 194). It establishes the mechanism of historical inquiry that suggests the presence of a cause and effect. Curiosity, however, hinders a straight representation of history and replaces it with inquiries into its nature. In other words, it is incompatible with historical progress. While empires are built, curiosity sets people within the single perspective of process.

Curiosity's relationship to narrative and history is projected through Tom's narration of natural history. A full chapter is dedicated to explore how the enigma of the eels'

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of history has acquired different meanings during the postmodern period. New ideas and approaches have emerged due to applying theories belonging to other disciplines. The study of history is structured by the belief that history is a constructed text authored by historians. It is partial and inconclusive although it promotes itself as a medium of truth.

reproduction circle has been tackled throughout history. Tom contends that “eel can tell us about curiosity – rather more indeed than curiosity can inform us of the eel” (WL 196). This is generally taken as a contrast between natural history and artificial history. Natural history adhere to definite laws of nature. It introduces facts that were found solid by practitioners. A natural event is a fact that cannot be denied, but the way they affect human life is subject to different interpretations. In the field of natural history, historians do not have the chance to go beyond what is agreed upon by scientists. Therefore, in order to validate their observations of the eels, they produce a narrative that explains the way they attained their knowledge. History, on the contrary do not follow any rules since it is concerned with people’s reactions to events. It is colored by people’s inclinations. The novel pinpoints the legitimacy of natural history while challenging the validity of the human history. Tom abandons the syllabus again to explain the way eels have been studied throughout history. He goes into theories over the origin of European eel. It starts with speculations dated back to Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans until the eighteenth century when their reproduction cycle was scientifically studied. In 1904, Johannes Schmidt started his voyages to discover the breeding ground of the eel. He concluded that their origin is in Sargasso Sea. He also postulated the cyclical nature of eels’ lives; they leave the fresh water to swim back to their origin and die. Nevertheless, Schmidt’s discovery is treated as a hypothesis for it is merely the best guess to truth. Reality remains ambiguous for “curiosity begets counter curiosity, knowledge begets skepticism” (WL 202). To put it another way, curiosity remains unfulfilled and even the knowledge acquired through it remains subject to doubt because it is partial. Tom calls his account of the eel’s life a form or natural history “[w]hich doesn't go anywhere. Which cleaves to itself. Which perpetually travels back to where it came from” (WL 205). As mentioned earlier, history is an inquiry stuck with the progress hindering curiosity; a feature shared with natural history. The desire for knowledge remain, because, as the metonymy of natural history suggests, there always lingers mysterious elements

that go beyond the human understanding. The “anonymous eel-existence” evokes curiosity but the real persists transcription. McKinney argues that presenting human versus natural history advocates “the absolutist pretensions of artificial history and the perpetual curiosity of natural history to be an ongoing one” (282). Underlying McKinney’s argument appears to be a belief that both forms of history have curiosity as their driving force and circularity as an inherited nature.

Natural history of the eels is also a metonymy of the circular nature of history. What the novel suggests is that theories of progressive history are myths. All forms of history pertain some similarities to natural history. Nevertheless. Natural history recognizes things for their true meaning. It features “Reality made plain. Reality with no nonsense” (WL 205), because it does not give its practitioner the freedom to interpret. That is why it gets “better of the artificial stuff” which is structured upon people’s “love of life” (WL 207); a force that Tom finds to be “anarchic”. It is biased for it presents “[r]eality cut to size” (WL 206). This view of human history justifies the collapse of revolutionary projects. While eels go back to their origin and die, revolutions advance with agendas of progress shaped in past ideals. They discard the natural element of life; the “unsolved mysteries of mysteries”. Given that “[history] teaches us no shortcuts to Salvation, no recipe for a New World, only the dogged and patient art of making do” (WL 105, 108). It is easy to perceive human history as stories of how revolutions has started with nothing mentioned regarding their inconclusive illusive outcomes.

Then, how do people survive such a fluctuating condition where “[r]eality is uneventfulness, vacancy, flatness. Reality is that nothing happens.” (WL 40)? Reality does not have fixed shape or meaning. It is a “flat land” with no signs or defining features. The significance of it can be attributed to the assumption that reality, before being inscribed in through language, had neither shape nor meaning. Water is a metaphor of this concept of reality. The Fen is a reclaimed land; it is a flat land restored from the water which “makes everything

level, which has no taste nor colour of its own but a liquid form of nothing.” It is “most approximate to nothing” (WL 13). Like water, reality has no shape beyond the one human attributes to. It is constructed like the Fen land; it is made and not found. Similar to water is the concept of postmodern reality. There is an agreement on the existence of reality in its raw form, but due to its ‘flatness’, it remains inaccessible. Tom exemplifies his claim by emphasizing that life in the Fen means “receiv[ing] strong doses of reality” (WL 17). People persists reality through imagination and story-telling. Reality maintains a fluid condition, which eventually creates an illusion of its nonexistence. Reality, however, returns to obliterate all that is established. It draws attention to the lucidity of reality. It attacks to take everything. That is why “[w]hen you labour to subdue it, you have to understand that one day it may rise up and turn all your labours to nothing” (WL 13). Even when people make stories or narrate history, they create an image of reality. There always lingers a possibility of them being refuted or sometimes demolished by the “Here and Now”.

The ambiguity of reality is illuminated upon encountering the “Here and Now”. Humans’ conflation with a series of shocking events, described as “here and now”, presupposes a real that exceeds explanation. What Tom calls ‘Here and Now’ is an emotional upheaval created by traumatic events; it evokes a serious demand for meaning. Janik proposes a different approach to their relationship. He suggests that history and the ‘Here and Now’ are “polarities”; they are complementing each other (85). The ‘Here and Now’ comes in a form of “surprise attacks” that activates people’s need for history. It also adds significance to historical inquiries. The narrator’s doubts regarding the reliability of history shatter upon the fatality of the Here and Now. Tom describes a change of his concept of history after his direct contact with it. He considered history a fair-tale “[u]ntil the Here and Now, gripping me by the arm... informed me that history was no invention but indeed existed” (WL 102). Although the Here and Now suggests a presence of an overwhelming experience, it is in fact not present because it evokes

an instant reference to the past. Life, therefore, “is one-tenth Here and Now, nine-tenths a history lesson” (WL 61) that attempts to provide explanations for the ten percent. Moreover, the importance of history is highlighted when it is contrasted with the immediate present. This justifies Tom’s conclusion that “only animals live entirely in the Here and Now. Only nature knows neither memory nor history” (WL 62). Humans make-up soothing stories; they find consolation in history. The opposite of such tendency is Dick’s reaction to the “Here and Now”. Although Tom describes him as a potato head, Dick represents the knowledge that goes beyond reach due to its ambiguity. Dick never speaks for himself, but he is always represented through Tom. He stands for the unconceivable meaning of life. Dick “splinter[s] the rational discourse in the novel, overwhelming the narration with the radical strangeness of the nonnarrated” (Champion 41). He is an embodiment of the Here and Now since he shares many of its features. He is only concerned with the present; acknowledging no past or future. Once he was told the secrets of his birth (he is an outcome of a relationship between Ernest Atkinson and his daughter Helen), Dick couldn’t comprehend it. Therefore, he commits suicide for he couldn’t get to terms with the *real*.

To satisfy that urgent desire for meaning and explanation and defeat annihilation, people approach the *real* through storytelling. This is where fiction steps in to disentangle the complexity surrounding the contemporary concept of reality although contaminated with a deficiency of meaning. Tom explains that the Fens are deeply associated with stories; storytelling to them is their way to “outwit reality”; being that “great flat monotony of reality; the wide empty space of reality” (WL 17). This belief is materialized in Freddie Parr’s murder. It functions as an allegory for a historical inquiry and the method of constructing reality. Upon examining Freddie’s body, the police concludes that his death was an accident caused by his drunkenness and inability to swim. They constructed a story based on the clues available; he was drunk, fell in the water, and because he cannot swim, he drowned. The burse which Henry

Crick inflicted on the body while getting it out of water, changed the way people apprehend the case. All inspections of murder were neglected. The collective opinion of the officers formed a story that is generally accepted as real. Finding Freddie's body is a traumatic moment in which the 'Here and Now' transfixes Tom. Although the official report affirms Freddie's accidental death, Tom later gathers that he was murdered and not simply drowned. He realizes, years after the incident that "history is a thin garment, easily punctured by a knife blade called Now." (WL 360) In other words, history, as a narrative, is limited in its scope to the present in which it is delivered. This entails an extra meaning to it. The present constantly offers new symbols against which history is understood and analyzed. The discovery of Freddie's body, although not fully represented by Tom, depicts what cannot be conceived into language. Berlatsky notes that the Here and Now are moments of "antinarrative" that "exceed the discourse engendered to contain and explain them" (*The Real* 24). They draw attention to language failure in representing reality.

Furthermore, Freddie's murder is a metonymy for the role of "*peti recite*" in the postmodern period. His death, despite its massive impact on the storyline, is underestimated; "why make a fuss about one drowned boy when over the far horizon and in the sky a war is being fought; when mothers are losing their sons every day..?" Compared to the excitement of big stories, small ones are ignored because "[t]he wide world takes priority." After all, Freddie's death is just an accident that "is not exactly everyday, but not unusual" (WL 33). On the same vein, Freddie's body symbolizes a past which cannot be retrieved. While a land can be reclaimed, life cannot be, and similarly historical validity. Despite the strong labor of Tom's father, he could not make a change. He "labours to refute reality, labours against the law of nature" (33). This can find an explanation in Lacan's theory of the real. The *real*, according to Lacan, is the impossibilities of life and language. So, by realizing the death of Freddie, Tom and his father encounter the *real* and they try to avoid it through their hope of recovering him.

Reality, thus, is humans' helplessness to cope with big events. The moment these events take a linguistic form (translated into narrative), people become to terms with them. Nevertheless, Tom suffers from a trauma following Freddie's death, the *real* reappears in his life in a form of language i.e. stories. A series of shocking events (cutting back on history and Mary's insanity) activates Tom's knack for storytelling. He goes back and forth trying to explain the circumstances surrounding that crime. The "Here and Now" shuffles him to the past, because through stories, adults "unload those most unbelievable yet haunting of fairy-tales, their own lives" (WL 4). It is from early in their life that children observe the act of making stories and experience its effect. Later in their lives, as in Tom's case, it becomes their mechanism of survival; "First it was a story – what our parents told us, at bedtime. Then it becomes real, then it becomes here and now. Then it becomes a story again" (WL 328). This mechanism is paraphrased in a parallel structure to account for the importance of fiction in creating a comprehensible account of life. ("First there is nothing; then there is happening. And after the happening, only the telling of it ") (WL 329). What these examples clearly illustrate is that narrative is a suitable way of handling the absurdity of historical events and a remedy from its fatality.

This sheds light on other motifs of narrative. Beside curiosity, narrative or "Once upon a time..." is recognized as "contagious symptoms of fear" (WL 7). The fear of the unknown is one of narrative's driving forces. The lucidity of events that finds no corresponding articulation creates a vertigo of falling into the emblem of the unknown. When reality exceeds the capacity of explanation, fear is evoked. For that reason, Tom narrates his story, not solely to defend himself, but also to make sense of the nonsense and add meaning to his life. The circular nature of life poses a threat to individualism; it drags people into a repetitive current. The novel promotes this idea. But by emphasizing the circularity of history, Tom highlights the relationship between curiosity and fear. Generations, as history suggests, are bound with

dreams of fixing the world, but they are eventually trapped in an infinite loop of repeated mistakes.

To penetrate this circle, the novel offers history as a remedial course of action. Compiling it is compared to an investigation carried by a detective. By tracing the errors of the past, human might have a chance into a new beginning. Tom's narrative is a detective act for it is an attempt to reveal the causes of his dilemmas. In a chapter entitled "Begin Again", Tom narrates how he took his wife to return the stolen baby. He describes it saying

It's called reconstructing the crime. From last to first. It's an analogy of the historical method; an analogy of how you discover how you've become what you are. If you're lucky you might find out. If you're lucky you might get back to where you can begin again. Revolution (WL 312).

Three elements are highlighted in this description. Initially, historiography is compared to an investigation which, as mentioned earlier, adhere to subjective speculations on the part of the investigator. Although it holds resemblance to fiction, its outcomes are marked reliable to build upon a rational explanations. What is at stake, thus, is a possibility of reasoning reality by identifying the cause of problems. People can react by taking radical approaches to their problems. What they get is a revolution; a new beginning where old errors can be avoided and a new phase toward future is granted. The opposite, however, is what takes place. Tom through his lectures promotes that revolutions blotch "categorical change, transformation – a leap into the future" (WL 137), but they carry the seeds of nostalgia and anarchy. The ideal past is their model; it turns a revolution into a "restoration" project. When a revolution rises, people carry ambition of future. Once they take over, they fail when it comes to running the government. Falling into disorder, they retrieve past ideals and try to revive them. They accept old regimes with their own well. The same happened with the French revolution. It was followed by a horror triggered by the guillotines. Napoleon then was taken as a leader, but he became an emperor

with imperial ambitions. People supported him because they thought of him as a better alternative to disorder. They returned to the beginning holding the torches of the ideal past, a reduction becomes “[a] turning round, a completing of a cycle” (WL 137). So, history is mainly a blue print for the future, but it can be also a way through which later generations can undo the world’s degradation into oblivion. As suggested, “if in becoming like their parents, they’ve struggled not to be like them.... if they’ve tried and so prevented things slipping. If they haven’t let the world get any worse—?” (WL 240) The ellipse at the end of this phrase indicates the uncertainty of such a revolutionary attempt and its effectiveness in diverting the circularity of history.

A further argument can be enlisted from the association between historiography, and respectively narrativity, and detective fiction. Waugh’s study of metafiction identifies detective fiction as a popular fictional form that has been adapted to serve metafictional purposes (82). The use of this form is crucial since it facilitates readers’ understanding of concepts in postmodern novels. Todorov’s theory is most plausible with regard to the relationship between fiction and history. In his essay “The Typology of Detective Fiction,” Todorov highlights the duality of a “whodunit novel” that stands between thriller and suspense. A whodunit “contains not one but two stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation” (44). While the first tells of the incidents leading to the crime, the second pertains how the story is written illuminating “the story of that very book” (45). A comprehensive examination of the novel’s plot features a significant application of Todorov’s argument. What an implementation of a detective mode implies is a glimpse into plot making. Crimes are retraced and then formulated into a unified chain of events. The purpose of connecting them is achieving a solution for a mystery or a clarification for a crime. The reader actively participates in this act, which raises awareness of the novel fictiveness.

The protagonist, Tom, is narrating his life in a detective-like style. Underlying Tom's argument is a need to approach life in retrospect. There appears a belief in the indispensability of a "detective spirit". In order to satisfy the inquisitive appetite, Swift attaches significance to the act of narrating events as well as to the method of revealing them. Mysteries surrounding Tom's life are not revealed in a straight chronological order. As the novel advances, more details unfold. At the end, the connection between Freddie's murder, Dick's suicide, and Mary's theft of a child is exposed. The reader begins to understand Tom's situation. The discovery enacts the "Because ... Why?" congruence. The novel symbolizes the act of its very creation through emphasizing its driving force. It does not only recites facts; it also evaluates them and the method through which they are obtained.

This explanation also accounts for the reader's role. The detective mode governing the novel attaches much importance to the role of the reader in maintaining metafiction. There is neither a straight narration of the events causing Tom's current situation nor an account for the mysteries surrounding many deaths. Evidents and clues are scattered all over the text pushing the reader to adopt a more active role. *Waterland* can be described as a "writerly" text where readers create a meaning for the novel by arranging events into a comprehensible plot. Roland Barthes emphasizes that the goal of postmodern novels "is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text" (*S/Z* 4). In classical novels, the reader completely submits to the author's guidance through the novel. Contemporary novels, on the contrary, throw the reader in a pool of signs and forces the reader to construct a plot. The reader co-authors the text in the absence of a reliable narrator. Readers reshape the novel into their own vision of the world, which creates different interpretations. By engaging the reader into perusing truth, metafiction is developed. Hutcheon concedes that the reader is "now forced to control, to organize, to interpret" the text by actualizing it within an organized experience that retains reality (*Narcissist* 26). The reader's awareness of narrative gaps and his role in filling them

stresses the novel's sense of artificiality. Discussing "writerly" novels addresses the larger matter of narrative form. The events in this novel are not introduced in a chronological order. Swift establishes a multilayered narrative that crosses over different times and settings. The novel takes a form of a jigsaw puzzle; the reader is entrusted with ordering it into a unified coherent whole. Several multi-path narratives are maintained throughout the novel. The reader is lost in a labyrinth of fragmented narratives and encouraged to enlist a meaning out of them.

The reader's role is enforced through the heavy reliance on narrative frames to reconcile for the lack of sequential progress. Framing can be defined as a literary technique that precludes the insertion of secondary stories within the main narrative framework. Usually, these frames go unnoticed by readers since they do not have any literary significance; they only set the scene for incorporating embedded narratives. Derrida clarifies that frames are "half-work and half-outsidethe-work, neither work nor outside-the-work and arising in order to supplement it because of the lack within the work" (122). With contemporary fiction, however, frame narratives are exposed as the procedure of constructing reality. In *Waterland*, frames are not only used to move between various stories presented by Tom, but they also self-reflexively display their role of mediating them. There are numerous examples in which framing is used for self-referential purposes. For instance, in chapter twelve, "About a change of life", the phrase "once upon a time" is used to navigate Mary's story. After each use of this phrase, a phase of Mary's life and her relationship with Tom is highlighted. It moves from depicting her life with her father, her relationship with Tom, her abortion, their arranged marriage, her work in a senior center after they moved to London, and finally her decision to have a child which foreshadows her abduction of one. A further example of framing, is using the phrase "let me tell you" several times throughout the novel. It is usually followed by the name of the next chapter. For example, "About the Fens" (WL 8) or "About the Ouse" (WL 142). This signifies a shift from the present of the narrative to the past. It also serves to deconstruct the mere idea

of narrative continuity and bring to light the intentional use of frames. Higdon proposes that using the preposition “about” to introduce new chapters “foregrounds [the novel’s] search for meanings” (90). It sets this expedition through ages. This introduces the reader to multiple points of view and make him/her confront contextual conditions of meaning production.

In addition, framing demonstrates the selectivity of narrative in representing reality. It reflects the exhaustion of traditional representative forms, as proposed by Roland Barthes. That is by introducing the same narrative from different perspectives, the futility of creating an original form is portrayed. For the most part, frame narrative is used excessively in this novel. William calls this technique a “recurrent frame”. This term refers to the frequent evocation of secondary narratives. Williams suggests that a recurring narrative usually “complicates the very concept of frames.” (123). It begets confusion since it adds layers of narrative with various centers of focalization. Its repetitiveness demolishes the illusion of immediacy. It intensifies readers’ awareness of artificiality as it “foregrounds the process of narrative gathering and focalization” (Williams 124). Metafiction, however, is not solely built on depicting the act of framing. Without considering narrative content, the significance of metafiction remains amputated. Framing, after all, is a technique that can be categorized under the domain of *syuzhet* and it is associated with metanarrative (self-reflexivity). *Histoire*, however, is concerned with the narrated events mediated through *syuzhet*. Both levels deploy metafiction; the former via the narrative’s structural elements and the later on the meaning level. As a result, the novel has multiple closures with each corresponding to a major narrative frame. It first ends with the scene of Tom’s final speech in chapter 49 after his reconciliation with Price. Nonetheless, this ‘ending’ is not final. The chapter is followed by three more chapters in which the circumstances of Dick’s death are narrated. Beside frame-breaking, multiple endings and framing generate metafiction first on the level of *syuzhet*, since it flaunts chronology and reader’s expectation, and second on the level of *historie*, which draws attention to the shift in

the story frame and accordingly the process of meaning production. The last chapter explores Dick's suicide (one of the three murders that lead to other narratives) as the final event in the novel although all the events of the novel are consequences of it. The arbitrariness of beginning and ending a narrative frame is reflected through the narrative structure. The novel begins as if it is cut from an extract preceding it. The novel establishes a sense of incompleteness and fragmentariness. It does not proceed following the events of the first chapter. It rather shifts to the future (the present of the narrative) launching it as the main narrative. An illusion of immediacy is created, then demolished as the narrative shifts to a different time or setting. The shift is carried throughout the novel even after reaching the end of the main narrative. This arrangement of events creates suspense and holds the reader's attention till the end. Although almost all narrative threads are connected, the end should have sized to "stop the asking of a thousand questions" (*WL* 96), the reader understands that "it's not all... Though it's over, that's not the end" (*WL* 314). From Dick's death starts a series of events reported in the previous chapters. Therefore, when Stan Booth says "[s]omeone best explain", the reader is aware of the "full version" as well the circularity of narrative. Readers can give their full understanding of what happened. They have observed how narrative is originated from a demand for explaining shocking incidents.

The same can be applied to the structure of the novel; it takes a form of a detective story that emphasizes deduction and at the same time highlights the production of narrative. Returning to the question of history, which is seen as a solution for people's encounter with unadulterated reality, it appears that even though the epistemology of knowledge can be realized (though with mutability), its ontological status will always remain inexplicable. Tom ironically dismantled all theories concerning the value of history:

I don't care, what you call it – explaining, evading the facts, making up meanings, taking a larger view, putting things into perspective, dodging the here and now, education, history, fairy-tales – it helps to eliminate fear (WL 241).

Tom pins it down to the basic necessity of human beings; eliminating the fear of the unknown. Although historical inquiries are prone with wavering accuracy, the majority of their events maintain a sense of the real. Thus, there are three elements the novel is made of; fear, pity, and curiosity. Tom contends that “if you add to pity and curiosity just a touch of fear ... [then] you have the tangled stuff of which stories are made” (WL 247). They work hand in hand to establish narrative. In its most general sense, the quotes refer to what can be labeled as a general trend in postmodern novels. They comprise a pity upon the loss of metanarratives, which is thought to preserve history. In its absence, the world is set on a fist of fear that results into a loss of fundamentals. This status is symbolized through the feelings of instability which invade people's minds. Swift demonstrates that “every Fen man suffers now and then the illusion that the land he walks over is not there” (WL 13). The fear of losing a “solid ground” dominates Tom's narrative. Therefore, he prefers to stick to facts because “History, if it is to keep on constructing its road into the future, must do so on solid ground” (WL 86), which does not leave a chance of questioning its creditability. These three key elements work together to highlight the importance of stories and their role in representing history.

To sum up, Swift's novel seeks to project the process of making history as a part of the mechanism of writing stories in order to establish the novel's metafictional mode. Both elements reflect the process of creativity. History shows how reality is understood through narrative while stories are influenced by historical events. In *Waterland*, the processes of constructing history and fiction are portrayed adjacently to cast light on the contemporary concept of reality. It also demonstrates their reliance on each other to offer a comprehensible, and sometimes partial, picture of life.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

## Conclusion

Metafiction has been celebrated as a defining feature of contemporary literature. The difference, however, remains in the orientations that delineate the modern and postmodern execution of it. Metafiction does not only expose the process of creativity, but it also reflects the dilemma surrounding its nature. It is a model for a self-referential critical assessment and sometimes a metaphor that encompasses the novel in which it is featured as well as the novel as a literary genre. All of these elements overlap to create a kladescopic overview of the environment surrounding the production of fiction.

This thesis has attempted to compare the use of metafiction in modern and postmodern novels. The current study has focused attention on the techniques used to evoke metafiction, as well as maintaining it throughout narrative structure. It had the aim of fore fronting the role of metafiction in demonstrating the mechanisms governing the production and reception of narrative. It has embarked on the significance of its usage in relation to the conditions surrounding literary production. However, when Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Swift's *Waterland* are examined, the difference between the objectives of employing metafiction is illuminated. The research has put forward a tentative explanation of the part metafiction plays in breaking the illusion of reality and exposing factiousness. The current thesis has gone some way toward understanding the manifestation of metafiction and its objectives. The focus that united the comparison is the concentration on exposing the novel's artificiality. The difference, however, resides in the mechanism through which metafiction is materialized.

*To the Lighthouse* stands for the modernists' emphasis on the importance of narrative techniques. Therefore, it is taken as a medium that foreground the nature of narrative. Woolf's use of free indirect discourse stimulates the reader's awareness of the text's artificiality. It draws attention to the illusive boundaries between the voice of the author and that of the character. The role of the third-person narrative is undermined as multiple voices penetrate the

narrative. Free indirect discourse creates double meaning where the voice can be attributed to both; the narrator and characters. Therefore, a heteroglossia is evoked and interwoven into narrative. Characters' narrativization of each other is one example through which self-refrentiality is established. Moreover, mediating several points of view through free indirect discourse led to juxtaposing different philosophies. As a result, it becomes less plausible to confirm to one view of the world. As the narrative introduces several, and sometimes different, perspectives through an object of joint attention, an air of ambiguity is formed. The text self-reflexively evaluates itself through characters. Metafiction, in this sense, is concerned with the process of constructing a literary work. It highlights the potentiality of selectivity in the author's account of events.

The novel's merging of public and private voices through free indirect discourse is an implicit criticism of other narrative techniques; namely omniscient narrators and stream of consciousness. Moreover, characters play key role in inducing metafiction. They are archetypes that stand for different approaches to creativity. Mrs. Ramsay stands for the Victorian view of art through her social art and admiration of Victorian terms of conducting art. Lily Briscoe, in contrast, presents the new trends in art. She exemplifies a post-impressionist orientation that celebrates the fusion between the materialist and expressionist realms. Her endeavor to complete her painting was set parallel to Woolf's writing of the novel. The challenges that Lily faces were found to be compatible with the incredulities confronted by modernist writers. Therefore, Lily's statements were approached as metafictional statements. They bear a closer insight into the process of creativity. It also indicates that reality is a dynamic concept that changes with time. Although art attempts at capturing reality, the closest part of its identification is the process of its own production. This approach has enabled a better understanding of the role of modernist metafiction. It is dominated by an epistemological orientation. It questions the process of reaching reality and the reliability of language in

transmitting it. At the end, the novel bridges the gap between the necessity of maintaining objectivity and the deficiency of medium (narrative). The line drawn by Lily at the end stands for a unity that springs not from form, but through knowledge.

On the contrary, Swift's *Waterland* promises a further implication of metafiction. The novel's concept of metafiction revolves around two main pivots. First, the novel has been found to thematize the act of storytelling. Tom's accounts of historical events and his family saga were taken as a narrative within the main story-line. As a result, Tom has been regarded as an author that originates self-referentially and comments on the act of writing stories. Several of Tom's comments were taken as an indication of the limitation of narrative's capacity to record reality. Tom mixes fiction and facts in what has been taken as an assimilation that undermines the creditability of narrative. Nevertheless, it is an unavoidable choice since narrative is an accessible medium that can make historical facts coherent and relatable. It is found to be the way of coming to terms with the *real*. Second, historiography was also discussed as an important element that stirs metafictional exploration. Historiography is found to step into the pool of fiction; history is regarded with cautiousness due to the unreliability of the narrator, as well as the inflation/deflation used in discussing it in this novel. By tracing the relationship between fiction and history, the current study has highlighted the theme of storytelling and its necessity. The significance of Tom's lectures is suggested by the intensive comparison between history and fiction. The investigation of this element has reflected a self-conscious awareness of the artificiality of historical records and the novel. It was also shown that the act of creating narrative is associated with a series of "Here and Now" that triggers a desire for explanations to understand reality. Although the relationship of fiction to reality is generally undermined, it is found that *Waterland* introduces it as the only mean by which people can get closer to reality. Therefore, the novel is found to be an embodiment of ontological concerns that have to do with the nature of writing.

Taken together, the two novels and their implementation of metafiction are broadly in line with previous studies of metafiction. They are found to be in accordance with McHale's suggestion of a shift in metafictional emphasis. *To the Lighthouse* has been found to be within McHale's reflection on modernist metafiction and its concern with the question of obtaining knowledge. *Waterland*, on the contrary, has been found to revolve around ontological concerns. These findings are also consistent with Hutcheon's and Waugh's views of metafiction as an element that undermines common perception of reality, and at the same time shatters the illusion of realism in fiction. The aim of analyzing both texts has been to identify how the metafictional elements appearing in the two novels offer a better understanding of writing and receiving fiction. However, a more detailed analysis of these texts will provide a more concise conclusion.

*To the Lighthouse* and *Waterland* were held adjacently to draw attention to how metafiction has developed to accentuate the literary and philosophical concerns dominating contemporary literature. Although these novels have served as excellent illustrations of using metafiction, there are certainly many more novels that can be used to support the thesis's argument. By offering a way into narrative studies, this study aspires to inspire scholars and students of literary criticism to take-up new approaches to studying novels. This study was sparked by an interest in finding the truth lying behind the illusion of literary realism. It has started with a 'why?' that implies 'dissatisfaction' and has reached a 'vision' that connects rather than separates reality and fiction.

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