

## ■ (Im-)personal Intensities in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*\*

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### Abstract

In this essay, I will explore (im-)personal intensity as the affirmative mode of being depicted in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. This (im-)personal type of existence features affirmativity to the extent that it immerses beings in intensity through the double fight against personal subjectivity and impersonal chaos. To clarify the importance of this kind of being for the understanding of *Lighthouse*, I will first review several readings approaching the novel in light of personality and/or impersonality and address their limitations. Then, I will turn to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's writings on art and elaborate the nature of the being of (im-)personal intensity. With the Deleuzian/Guattarian aesthetics, I will examine the three main characters, or, in Deleuze and Guattari's term, "Figures," of *Lighthouse*—namely, Mrs. Ramsay, Lily Briscoe, and Mr. Ramsay—and analyze how each constitutes itself as an (im-)personal intensity and thereby has his or her being affirmed. To conclude this essay, I will interpret the middle and second section of the novel—known as "Time Passes"—as another (im-)personal being. Based upon this, I will also deal with the (im-)personality of *Lighthouse* in itself, the distinction of the novel from Woolf's other works also pertaining to the issue of the (im-)personal, and its positive influence upon Woolf herself.

**Keywords:** Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, Deleuze and Guattari, (im-)personal, intensity

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### Degrees of (Im-)personality

Critic Lisa Low observes that Virginia Woolf demonstrates a “lifelong” enthusiasm for the issue of “impersonality” in her works (260), which has disturbed scholars like Elaine Showalter and Tuzyline Jita Allan (Low 257). For those “identity feminists,” Low adds, Woolf’s concentration upon the impersonal is “problematic” because it endorses “the self-effacement” of women and their personality/subjectivity, denying them an important tool for fighting against patriarchy (260). However, the reception focused upon the personal is no less limited: it evaluates characters too much according to their subjective position and personal identity, e.g., as a father/mother or husband/wife. An example is Susan Dick’s interpretation of *To the Lighthouse*: for her, the elision of the first names of Mr. Ramsay and Mrs. Ramsay in the novel simply illustrates “[t]heir function” as “representational figures” or “as ‘symbols of marriage, husband and wife’” (60). The problem underlying this criticism is: the “impersonal thing” Woolf in her diary expected her fifth novel and particularly its “Time Passes” section to “contain” (*Diary* 36) will remain obscured.

Fortunately, the significance of this “impersonal thing” is captured by others. In opposition to scholars like Showalter and Allan, Low argues that Woolf attempts “to remove art from the merely personal” (260). Leanna Lostoski holds that *Lighthouse*, mainly through its “Time Passes” part, appeals to the “recognition of the nonhuman other” (69) and “a decentering of the human in favor of . . . the vitality of [nonhuman] matter” (71). Critics preferring the impersonal over the personal also include those approaching the novel from a Deleuzian/Guattarian perspective. Beatrice Monaco maintains that *Lighthouse* shows “a distinctive narrative autonomy aside from human activity,” with its narration centered upon the nonhuman “dynamic of ‘forces, densities, intensities’” (20). For Derek Ryan, “Where Woolf’s exploration of subjectivity and sexual difference in *Lighthouse* is concerned, Deleuze and Guattari elucidate their relation to a materiality that transcends the embodied human subject to include nonhuman objects and environments” (76). Chih-chien Hsieh resorts to the Deleuzian/Guattarian notion of sensation and takes it to designate “an impersonal field of forces” that exceeds “any individual feeling or subjective perception” (514) and permeates both Woolf and Mrs. Ramsay with “an intensity of impersonal affect that usurps the perceiving subject” (522).

These criticisms unanimously celebrate impersonality for its promised freedom from the shackles of human, personal norms and organizations, identified as the Oedipal (Ryan 78-79), the subjective/the molar (Hsieh 514-15), or the anthropocentric (Lostoski 70). Yet, they also over-binarize the relation between personality and impersonality and fail to consider their in-between. Luckily, the intermediate

milieu amounting to neither the personal nor the impersonal is noticed by scholars still adopting the rhetoric of the personal, though in a non-derogatory way. For instance, Jack F. Stewart reduces the “personality” of the characters of *Lighthouse* to “a complex of sense perceptions” or “color[s],” viewing them as the site where “each character” can “overflow individual boundaries” (439). Also following the philosophy of Deleuze, Claire Colebrook remarks that the novel pivots upon “the intensity of experience [that] is impersonal” (69) and regards such an experience as more “individuating” than “individual” (70). Ann Banfield deals with the same kind of entity with a different trope, relating what is human/personal to the pole of order and what is nonhuman/impersonal to that of chaos. Her phrases like a “pattern in chaos” (340) plus “a reduction of the ego” (341) as what characterizes *Lighthouse* mark her own version of nonpersonal personality extracted from the novel.

At issue in these readings is no more a purely personal or impersonal type of existence; the treatment of characters as colors, selves, or a pattern without an ego instead illuminates what I call the (im-)personal. The (im-)personal is not equivalent to the personal in that it, as the impersonal does, dissolves the boundary of the human, personal subject and what relates to it, including its consciousness, emotions, and perceptions. Nor does (im-)personality equal impersonality because it still preserves a certain degree of personality, though not of the human kind, which hinders its complete identification with the impersonal. The (im-)personal should be conceived to both comprise and exceed the personal and the impersonal. Or, it can be understood to designate, to follow Low’s words, the “‘personality’ [that] improves upon impersonality” (268): the personality maintaining the impersonal/nonhuman *and* transcending the utterly personal/human while remaining irreducible to both.

Hence, against Woolf’s claim, I argue that what *Lighthouse* presents is not so much the impersonal thing as the (im-)personal one—specifically the (im-)personal intensity, the (im-)personal form of being imbued with intensity and affirming the concerned entity. This (im-)personal thing is also articulated in Woolf’s other works, including “Blue and Green,” “Kew Gardens,” and *The Waves*, just to name a few. Yet, here I will focus upon her fifth novel for two reasons. First, only *Lighthouse*, at least to my knowledge, gives a detailed account on how its characters or Figures confront the personal and the impersonal and thereby have their being affirmed. Also, this novel bears, as scholars maintain, a “cathartic” (Bradshaw xvi) or “therapeutic” (Koppen 375) effect upon Woolf, which her works do not appear to have. To better clarify this double distinction of the text, an elucidation of the nature of the being of the (im-)personal intensity, its fight with both personality and impersonality, and its source of affirmation is required. To address these issues, I will turn to Deleuze and Guattari.

## The Being of (Im-)personal Intensity

The writings of Deleuze and Guattari generally stage a war between two ontological conditions: the molar and the molecular. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, they treat the former as what forms an entity in a well-organized shape and assigns to it a rigid identity. What exemplifies this molarized being is the so-called “man”—the personal human subject that bears conscious thoughts, feelings, and perceptions and whose enunciations are supposed to be meaningful. The molar condition is problematic insofar as it negates the living forces of the involved entity and saps its living strength (133-34). The fight against this requires the flight into the depersonalized, molecular counter-condition, where the well-structured border of molarity and what it relates to are dissolved (134). As Deleuze and Guattari put it, the being undergoing molecularization or depersonalization is “all the more alive and teeming once it has blown apart the organism and its organization” (30)—i.e., “blown apart” the personal, molar ontological condition. Only this movement into the molecular will free the molarized entity, reinvigorating and affirming its being.

In *Plateaus*, the being born in the flight of molecularization is named the “molecule” (240), which is not the product of the process of molecularization but both at the same time.<sup>1</sup> The molecule bears no molar personality and constitutes no conscious and meaning-making subject because it exists primarily as “a relation of movement and rest, speed and slowness” and as “a degree of power” or force accompanying the relation of movement/rest (256). Nor does molecularization yield an impersonal entity in that it still involves “a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance” (261). Configured as a relation of speed and a level of force and individuated to a certain degree, the molecule is neither purely personal nor completely impersonal. It rather stands as an in-between, as an intermediate being, a “nonsubjective” subject (Kuo 188), a non-personal person, an individuated nonindividual, or as an (im-)personal being.

It is the (im-)personal mode of being that is filled with intensity. To explain this, I will move on to Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of art as best defined by the creation of (im-)personal chaosmos. In *What Is Philosophy*, they see art as one of the three “disciplines” that both challenge molar, personal “opinions”—the human cognitions, feelings, and perceptions—and confront impersonal chaos

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<sup>1</sup> In *Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari also adopt names like deterritorialization or becoming to denote the process of molecularization and expressions such as body without organs and haecceity to label the produced molecule. Since these terms are generally interchangeable in meaning, I will refer only to molecularization and molecule in my discussion.

(197, 202-03).<sup>2</sup> To fulfill this double function, artworks have to bring forth in themselves a chaosmos: a chaos composed or characteristic of certain degree of consistency and stability so as not to be absolutely chaotic, whilst this “composed chaos” stays a quasi-chaos and thus shows no fixed organization in its form of existence (204). For Deleuze and Guattari, art is distinguished for this combat against rigid order and pure chaos alike, chiefly by producing (im-)personal chaosmos.

In *Philosophy*, this neither-orderly-nor-chaotic thing created in art is also identified as “a being of the sensory” or “a being of sensation” (204), as illustrated by a patch of color(s) in a painting that resemble no human, personal character or by a composite of musical notes in a song that carry no sense. These nonpersonal colors and meaningless sounds given in artworks constitute sensory realities that human beings cannot express or experience without leaving the molar domain and entering the molecular one. They also amount to a “compound of percepts and affects” which “are no longer perceptions” or “feelings” belonging to human subjects (*Philosophy* 164). “Affects are . . . nonhuman becomings of man”; “percepts . . . are nonhuman landscapes of nature” (169). If human-like beings still appear on a canvas or in a story, they should be treated as transforming into some nonpersonal affect or landscape, becoming “part of the compound of sensations” and stopping being anything personal (169). Even if these sensory beings are derived from some human entities, they “no longer owe anything to those who experience or have experienced them” (169); instead, they remain “autonomous” and “independent” by themselves (168). In other words, in artworks, it is no longer human subjects that feel and perceive. Affects are sensing themselves, being both what is sensing and what is sensed; percepts are self-perceiving, being equally the perceiving and the perceived (169). It is through the making of nonhuman sensory beings, of affects and percepts, that art comes to dissolve the personal and the molar.

Notably, to battle against the personal, art must cope with chaotic impersonality as well. In *Philosophy*, Deleuze and Guattari delineate chaos as “a void that is not a nothingness but a *virtual*” which “spring[s] up only to disappear immediately, without consistency or reference, without consequence” (118; emphasis original). In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze relates the same term to “elementary forces,” which are “nonsonorous,” “invisible,” or “insensible,” as exemplified by “time,” “pressure,” “germination,” etc. (48). It is these virtual, elementary forces that enable the movement of molecularization and the disruption of the rigid, molar form of existence. Nonetheless, these forces must be contained and given certain consistency. Otherwise, everything, including the process of molecu-

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<sup>2</sup> I owe to Stephen Zepke the summary of what the term opinion refers to in Deleuze and Guattari. For details, see Zepke 166.

larization and the produced molecule, will “disappear immediately,” being devoured by impersonal chaos and falling into, as Deleuze and Guattari illumine in *Plateaus*, “pure self-destruction whose only outcome is death” (162). The battle against the virtual/chaotic/impersonal thus has to concur with the one against the actual/molar/personal. To realize this, artworks need to “[r]ender visible” or sensible the course of molecularization and its effects upon the molar entities (342). What arises from this operation of making sensible is again the being of sensation—the compound of color(s) or notes and the scale of sensibility (brightness, sonority) it carries—that lies between the personal and the impersonal and exists as the (im-)personal, the molecular, or the possible (*Philosophy* 177).

Yet, it is wrong to therefore believe that the sensory being created in art is equidistant from its two enemies. In *Philosophy*, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the importance for art “to borrow weapons from” impersonal chaos (204). “It is as if the struggle against chaos does not take place without an affinity with the enemy, because another struggle develops and takes more importance—the struggle against opinion” (203). Without the appropriation of the destructive power of chaos, it is impossible to disfigure molar, personal feelings and perceptions and transfigure them into (im-)personal sensations; without the confrontation against chaotic forces, no affects and percepts will emerge in artworks. Borrowing from and struggling against the impersonal turn out to be the same: as Deleuze maintains in *Bacon*, as soon as a “visual sensation confronts the invisible force that conditions it, it releases a force that is capable of vanquishing the invisible force, or even *befriending* it” (52; emphasis added). The (im-)personal being of sensation then constitutes nothing but the entity both resisting and befriending the chaotic, insensible forces, appropriating them to better fight against them.

What allows the (im-)personal sensory being to retain its affinity with *and* distance from the impersonal is the interplay of three elements. In *Bacon*, they are identified as the Figure, the contour, and the field (9) and in *Philosophy* as the flesh, the framework, and the cosmos (178-80). The Figure is the being of sensation born in the process of molecularization (*Bacon* 50); the flesh serves “as the bodily material of the Figure” (20), with its materiality rendering the Figure sensible (*Philosophy* 178-79). The maintenance of the sensibility of the sensory, (im-)personal Figure also relies upon the contour/framework, which operates as its “sides” or borders (179). Without the supporting frame, the Figure will dissolve into the field/cosmos, being barely sensed (179). Lastly, the field or the cosmos embodies, though still not yet equaling, chaos and its invisible forces, incarnating their knock at the door of the framework and enticement of the Figure to dissipate into chaotic void.

The three elements involved in the production of the sensory being or the

Figure are far from being representational; a house or a framework does not have to be drawn on a canvas to work accordingly. What decides the three is rather their function: a bloc of color(s) marks the existence of a Figure or its flesh; a ring or windows isolating the Figure/flesh qualify as its frame; a field of roses or a plain blue sky surrounding and endangering the autonomy of the Figure (and the contour) serves as a field/cosmos (*Bacon* 53; *Philosophy* 180-81). What matters more is their communication. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, even “the most shut-up house [or frame] opens onto a universe” (180). This means that the framework should not be absolutely closed; nor should the Figure and the field remain unconditionally separated. Only the proper exchange between the Figure and the field will enable the former to borrow from the latter the ability to disrupt the rigid molarity of human person and to mold itself as an (im-)personal being of sensation. If the house is simply shut, the Figure will turn into an over-organized person-character. If the house-frame is torn down, the flesh will disappear into the field and lose its sensibility. It is the simultaneous communication and distinction between the Figure and the field as mediated by the supporting frame that protects the existence of the (im-)personal sensation and its appropriation of and confrontation against chaotic, impersonal forces.<sup>3</sup>

Now, it is the (im-)personal being of sensation struggling both against the personal and the impersonal that suggests an affirmed being of intensity. As Deleuze remarks in *Bacon*, the Figure “is an intense and intensive body” and “has only an intensive reality” (39). This holds true in two correlated senses. First, as the (im-)personal molecule crafted in artworks, the sensory being also “deforms” the molar, human beings (50) and suspends their common functions (consciousness, meaning expression, etc.). This echoes Deleuze and Guattari’s argument in *Plateaus* that a molecule acquires its intensity or aliveness through the disruption of the personal organization. Also, this disfiguration pertains to the ambivalent relationship between the Figure and the chaos. Appropriating the destructive power of chaotic forces and combating their total consumption, the Figure not only gains the ability to disfigure the personal. It also inherits from them the dynamicity in being and thus comes to be configured as a “vibration” (39) or “a spasm” (36)—i.e., as a being filled with intensity and momentum. It is thanks to this vibrancy that the existence of the (im-)personal Figure is affirmed.

Remarkably, although Deleuze and Guattari’s exemplification of the making of the (im-)personal reads as mostly pictorial, literary works should be conceived

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<sup>3</sup> By phrases like “impersonal forces” and “(im-)personal intensities,” I do not suggest forces and intensities are opposed. Instead, intensities are forces. Yet, in case of confusion, throughout the essay I will consistently relate forces to the impersonal and intensities to the (im-)personal.

of as carrying the same function. In *Essays Critical and Clinical*, Deleuze observes that “literature . . . exists only when it discovers beneath apparent persons the power of an impersonal” and “when a third person is born in us that strips us of the power to say ‘I’” (3). Reinterpreting this passage, Kailin Yang explicates the third person by “the fourth person singular”—a phrase employed by Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense* to designate the (im-)personal “dissolved self” (141). This reflects that for Deleuze what matters in literary writings is not the third person or the impersonal, which to Yang “still smacks too much of [human, personal] subjectivity and anthropologism” (375), but the (im-)personal, fourth person singular.

Woolf’s *Lighthouse* paints (im-)personal or fourth-person singular Figures with its own words, as demonstrated by Mrs. Ramsay’s, Lily’s, and Mr. Ramsay’s respective fight against the personal and the impersonal and transformation into an (im-)personal intensity as well as by the “Time Passes” section and even the novel itself. In what follows, I will examine these (im-)personalizations one by one.

### **Mrs. Ramsay’s Becoming the (Im-)personal**

The first Figure at issue is Mrs. Ramsay, whose (im-)personalization occurs chiefly in “The Window,” the first section of *Lighthouse*. Notably, in the novel the personal and the impersonal do not so much contradict as resemble each other in their effects, as shown in the third chapter of “The Window.” When Mrs. Ramsay is recalling the unpleasantness brought upon James by Mr. Ramsay’s sarcastic response to her youngest son’s expectation for the trip to the lighthouse, she notices that her husband’s “gruff murmur” which “had taken its place soothingly in the scale of sounds pressing on top of her” has stopped and “this sound” has been replaced with “the monotonous fall of the waves on the beach” (16). The nonhuman sound from the waves has an ambivalent impact upon Mrs. Ramsay: it strikes her as “a measured and soothing tattoo and seemed consolingly to repeat over and over again . . . the words of some old cradle song,” while “at other times” it sounds “like a ghostly roll of drums remorselessly beat[ing] the measure of life,” causing her to “think of the destruction of the island and its engulfment in the sea” (16-17). Afterwards, the phrase “this sound” reappears, though this time it refers to what is “murmured by nature”—by the waves that “suddenly thundered hollow in her ears and made her look up with an impulse of terror” (17). The appearance of the same phrase “this sound” twice with different referents in the same chapter marks the similarity between the human and natural sounds in *Lighthouse*: both bear a soothing power, but they will abruptly change into something with the opposite value—the waves into the “ghostly roll” bearing a “destructive nature” and Mr. Ramsay’s voice into



a “caustic saying” (16)—and negate its target alike. The sudden transvaluation typical of both highlights the danger of abandonment to either; for an entity to maintain its force of being, it must fight against both and transfigure into an (im-)personal intensity.

This is what Mrs. Ramsays fulfills in “The Window.” Although Mrs. Ramsay “often felt she was nothing but a sponge sopped full of human emotions” (29), she does escape from the personal terrain from time to time. In responding to Mr. Ramsay’s importunity for sympathy, Mrs. Ramsay “seemed to raise herself with an effort, and at once to pour erect into the air a rain of energy, a column of spray, looking at the same time animated and alive as if all her energies were being fused into force, burning and illuminating” (33). Here her acts of “raising herself with an effort” and pushing “erect into the air a rain of energy” imply that she has turned into something similar and thus ceased being a human character when encountering her husband’s demand. The fluidity and brightness featuring Mrs. Ramsay’s activity of pouring and what she turns into further illumine her transformation from a molar, well-organized person into an intensive, nonpersonal entity. Mr. Ramsay’s emotional extortion does not overwhelm her; she preserves herself against it by converting into an “animated and alive” being or “force” that is “burning and illuminating,” namely, into a being imbued with vibrancy and the sensibility of brightness.

If Mrs. Ramsay is capable of such a metamorphosis, it is because she is inherently configured so. When William Bankes, a friend of the Ramsays, looks at the “stir among the unfinished walls” of some hotel under construction, he immediately thinks of Mrs. Ramsay, observing that “there was something incongruous to be worked into the harmony of her face” and that “one must remember the quivering thing, the living thing . . . and work it into the picture” of “her beauty” (27). Here the “stir” and “unfinishedness” attest to the impossibility of creating the picture—Mrs. Ramsay’s being—with an organized form. The underlying “incongruous” and “quivering” qualities demonstrate her existence by nature as “some latent desire” defying the “harmony” or “royalty of form” (27) that may be ascribed to “her beauty.” If beauty and harmony are but terms denoting the molar condition, the “living thing” or “latent desire” characterizing Mrs. Ramsay then signposts her innate configuration as something nonpersonal.

Yet, Mrs. Ramsay has to be careful in case she over-abandons herself to the nonhuman arena. In the eleventh chapter of “The Window,” when Mrs. Ramsay is knitting alone and pondering over the importance of “be[ing] silent and alone,” she holds that “[n]ot as oneself did one find rest ever” (53). “[I]n her experience,” she gains serenity mostly “as a wedge of darkness”: only “this core of darkness could go anywhere, for no one saw it” and in this sprawling invisibility “[t]here was freedom, there was peace, there was . . . a resting on a platform of stability” (53). But

the “stability” offered by darkness will become disturbing if one stays there for too long: “Losing personality,” as Mrs. Ramsay sees it, “one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir” (53). Here this “stir” recalls the one attributed to her by Bankes, with this linkage suggesting that its loss, along with that of personality, marks her submergence within impersonal void. This explains why later in the same chapter, when Mrs. Ramsay “looked out to meet that stroke of the Lighthouse” and “became the thing she looked at—that light” (53), she does not over-indulge in impersonalizing herself. Whereas impersonal, elementary forces, be they identified with light or darkness, enable the “purifying out of existence . . . any lie” or anything detrimental (53), she should simply borrow from them the required arsenal without pouring herself too much into them.

As mentioned, the double struggle against the personal and the impersonal pivots upon the resort to the (im-)personal. This is exactly what Mrs. Ramsay performs: she soon withdraws herself “out of solitude,” however “reluctantly,” mostly “by laying hold of . . . some sound, some sight” (54). Insofar as, according to Mrs. Ramsay, silence and solitude pave way for dissipation into the impersonality of pure darkness, the fight should commence with leaving the two conditions, mainly by holding onto some entity of sensation, specifically to “some sound” or “sight.” The significance of the (im-)personal sensory being is also exemplified by the use Mrs. Ramsay makes of her green Cashmere shawl: she “tossed” this greenish entity “over the edge of the frame” of a picture hung in the house (27) and “wound it round the skull, round and round and round” in the nursery room (93). The two cases reflect nothing but the simultaneous struggle against the personal and the impersonal undertaken through the (im-)personal. On the one hand, the green shawl covers the picture frame and tones down the formal organization the latter suggests, appropriating this frame as its own support that maintains itself as a being of sensation. On the other hand, the craftwork shields the skull and neutralizes the destructive power of elementary forces the latter symbolizes. It is the (im-)personality borne by this greenish object of sensation that elucidates why Mrs. Ramsay also “folded the green shawl about her shoulders” (55) after her decision to withdraw from solitude and darkness: this object does not merely protect her against the threat of personality and impersonality; it also serves as her avatar, implying her transfiguration into an (im-)personal being at the same time.

Mrs. Ramsay’s (im-)personalization continues in the dinner scene in the antepenultimate chapter of “The Window.” When she is viewing “the dish of fruit” on the table, “[h]er eyes” are “going in and out among the curves and shadows of the fruit, among the rich purples of the lowland grapes, . . . putting a yellow against a purple, a curved shape against a round shape”; “every time she did it, she felt more and more serene” (88). With her “eyes” moving into and out of “a yellow

against a purple, a curved shape against a round shape,” Mrs. Ramsay’s “I” is also gliding “in and out” of the state of being an (im-)personal percept, which leads her to become “more and more serene” and affirms her being. After the dinner, Mrs. Ramsay “looked at the window in which the candle flames burnt brighter now that the panes were black, and looking at that outside the voices came to her very strangely, as if they were voices at a service in a cathedral, for she did not listen to the words. . . . She waited. Her husband spoke. He was repeating something, and she knew it was poetry from the rhythm and the ring of exultation, and melancholy in his voice” (89). That the window reflects “the candle flames” suggests that it is shut at this moment; that its “panes were black” implies that the reflection contains—both includes and limits—the impersonal forces of darkness as well. Being closed and transparent, the window now works as the frame mediating between the Figure and impersonal chaos. It opens the house to darkness, enabling the communication between the inside and the outside of the house; it also separates the two, dialing down the deadly power of impersonal forces and preventing their total penetration into the interior. Thanks to this mediating function, the elementary forces of light are compromised: they now change into “candle flames” flickering in the panes, i.e., into blurry and burning sensations whose brightness is not so much diminished as underscored (they “burnt brighter”). More significantly, the proper exchange between the inside and the outside enabled by the window-framework further nurtures Mrs. Ramsay’s becoming the (im-)personal: she now no more “listen[s] to the words”—to the linguistic sense belonging to the molar domain—but instead attends to “voices”—to poetic sounds or melodic sensations. Corresponding to the candle flames burning bright in the panes, Mrs. Ramsay is leaving the arena of the personal and flying into that of the (im-)personal as well.

However, besides enabling Mrs. Ramsay’s (im-)personalization, the window also discloses the limited degree of (im-)personality she enacts. It is no coincidence that in the novel Mrs. Ramsay appears frequently by the window but seldom outside the house. The limitation of her (im-)personality is also proved by her vision of the “community of feeling”: a way of co-being in which its members are so closely bonded that “the walls of partition” separating them “become so thin” and they turn into “one stream” or one communal entity (92). If, with the “community of feeling” compared to a running “stream,” Mrs. Ramsay’s utopia can be said to be grounded in the terrain of the nonhuman, it is sabotaged by her own method of realization: she believes that for Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle—two guests of the Ramsays—to “carry [her vision] on when she was dead” (92), they should first be made into “the Rayleys” (92)—into two beings confined to the molar institution of marriage that fixes them in gendered subjective positions known as husband

and wife. The vehicle of comparison in her vision is no less problematic. Although the image of the stream suggests fluidity and ongoing vitality, it also recalls impersonal forces, which devour and confuse everything. This imagery exposes the other side of Mrs. Ramsay: as she mulls to herself, she “had a sense of being past everything, through everything, out of everything” (68). This shows that at times Mrs. Ramsay herself becomes an embodiment of the lethality of elementary forces, penetrating and consuming everything.

Either way, Mrs. Ramsay should be understood to similarly constitute a threat to the (im-)personal, with her (im-)personality viewed as a limited or flawed one. A second Figure is thus required to undertake and better fulfill the movement of (im-)personalization. It will not suffice for Mrs. McNab, a housekeeper of the Ramsays’ summer house, “to open all windows” (106) or for Mrs. Bast, another housekeeper, to stretch herself “out of the window” (115). It rather takes someone who steps outside the house and exceeds what it represents while still maintaining the communication between the inside and outside of the house, between (im-)personal sensations and impersonal forces. This someone is Lily Briscoe, who paints on the lawn outside the Ramsay house in both “The Window” and “The Lighthouse.”

### Lily’s Making (Im-)personal Sensations

Lily is another key Figure engaged in the confrontation against both the personal and the impersonal in *Lighthouse*. Her way of fighting with the two is by producing (im-)personal sensations on her canvas, which ultimately transfigures her into an (im)personal intensity and affirms her being. To do so, she has to negotiate with both Mr. Ramsay and Mrs. Ramsay. After Mrs. Ramsay’s death in “Time Passes,” in “The Lighthouse” Mr. Ramsay treats Lily as a substitute and asks her to sympathize with him, this way fixing her in the subjective, molar position of the wife supposed to console him the husband. Mr. Ramsay’s endless imploring for pity also turns him into something like elementary, chaotic forces—into some “pressure” (125) or “enormous flood” (126) that overwhelms her: “Every time he approached,” as the painter observes, “ruin approached, chaos approached” (123). Meanwhile, Mrs. Ramsay has also become part of impersonal forces in “The Lighthouse”: she appears, as Lily sees it, as a “[g]host, air, [or] nothingness” (146) that is likewise intimidating. It is these two sources of impersonality that lead her to view the Ramsays’ summer house as permeated with “unrelated passions” (123) or forces that consume everything and need containment.

To do so, Lily unhesitatingly resorts to what she is expert at. “A brush,” she assumes, is “the one dependable thing in a world of strife, ruin, chaos” (124). Only

the art of painting will enable her to create (im-)personal sensations against what imperils her being. This battle also takes the form of one kind of force set against another: her painting is meant to achieve the “balance between two opposite forces”—between her “picture” and the impersonal “Mr. Ramsay”/Mrs. Ramsay (158)—with the desired “balance” designating the (im-)personal intensities produced as a result.

To create (im-)personal sensations, Lily first emphasizes the interplay of colors and shapes in her painting. In “The Window,” she tries to vitalize colors and recast them as running intensities: “scraping her palette of all those mounds of blue and green which seemed to her like clods with no life in them now,” “she vowed” that “she would inspire them, force them to move, flow” (42). She also “saw the color burning on a framework of steel” as “the light of a butterfly’s wing lying upon the arches of a cathedral” (42). These ideas clearly indicate (im-)personality as the core of her aesthetics. On her canvas, colors should not merely flow and “burn” bright as “light” but must be rendered in a fashion different from how Mr. Paunceforte—who in *Lighthouse*, as its editor David Bradshaw notes, represents Impressionism in pictorial art (175n “pink women”)—“would have seen it” (42): i.e., being so “thinned and faded” (42) that they lose brightness and are about to dissipate at any time. For Lily, colors rather require shapes as frameworks that hold them together and preserve them. Hence, “the shapes” cannot be “etherealized” (42); they have to persist in a picture and function as supports or “arches” that maintain the colored sensations and prevent them from dissolution into impersonal chaos.

The same aesthetic vision reappears when the painter once again picks up her paintbrush ten years later. In “The Lighthouse,” she envisions that “[b]eautiful and bright [colors] should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent,” with “one color melting into another like the colors on a butterfly’s wing; but beneath the fabric must be clamped together with bolts of iron” (141). To Lily, what should emerge on her canvas is still the being of sensation, though one with a greater (im-)personality: colors have to be made “feathery,” “evanescent,” and thus capable of “melting” into one another and further breaking down molarity in form; “bolts of iron” or shapes should be maintained so that these “feathery and evanescent” sensations of colors will not fall into total invisibility. Calling equal attention to the sensory colors and the supporting frames, her aesthetics again echoes the vision of the (im-)personal Figure.

Planning to generate (im-)personal sensations, the painter already has no interest in drawing according to the logic of “likeness” or representationalism when starting painting in “The Window” (45). Her focus is instead upon “the relations of masses” (45)—upon those of color patches—including “how to connect this mass on the right hand with that on the left hand” (46). The fruit of this idea is (im-)

personal intensities. In “The Window,” Lily reinvents Mrs. Ramsay and James as a bloc of sensations: as “a purple shadow” that replaces their representation as personal characters (45). In “The Lighthouse,” she plans to yield something similar: “There was the wall; the hedge; the tree” she intends to integrate into her picture, but they have to be first transfigured into “masses” (123), with “the mass of the hedge” presented as a “green cave of blues and browns” (130). Substituting the “purple shadow” for the personal Mrs. Ramsay and James and the “green cave of blues and browns” for “the mass of the hedge,” the painter is still seeking to bring onto her painting (im-)personal beings of sensation in place of characters and things depicted in the molar form.

However, Lily still needs to be careful; for several times she is about to slip back into the zone of molarity. For instance, when she is considering “how to connect this mass on the right hand with that on the left hand” in “The Window,” she is also thinking of “break[ing] the vacancy in the foreground by an object (James perhaps)” and of keeping “the unity of the whole” at the same time (46). In the dinner scene, the painter believes that she “shall put the tree further in the middle” so as to “avoid that awkward space”—the blank in the foreground (70). A decade later, she “hoped nobody would open the window or come out of the house” (133), again because she expects the “unity of the whole” not to be disturbed. It is the inclination toward fixedness in shape and wholeness in design that reveals the looming danger. Both the combat with the personal and the making of the (im-)personal will fail if Lily insists upon producing entities of the molar form (James, the tree) and maintaining “the unity of the whole” in her picture.

To evade the trap of personality and molarity, the painter must adhere to creating (im-)personal sensations on her canvas. In “The Lighthouse,” her way of making these sensory beings lies in drawing “lines” that are dynamically “cutting across, slicing down” (130). Nevertheless, to generate these (im-)personal lines of intensity, Lily again needs to borrow weapons from chaotic, impersonal forces; this means that she has to negotiate with them as well, so as to appropriate their disfiguring capacity. Her first negotiation with impersonal forces is the attempt to come to terms with a shadow—not the purple shadow painted by herself but the one cast by the ghostly Mrs. Ramsay through some window of the Ramsay house. As narrated in the antepenultimate chapter of *Lighthouse*, “[s]uddenly the window at which” Lily “was looking was whitened by some light stuff behind it”; “somebody had come into the drawing-room” (164). At first, she hopes that this anonymous someone will “sit still” inside instead of “floundering out to talk to her” and interfering with her creation and design (164). Yet, “a miracle” occurs: this someone

settled by some stroke of luck so as to throw an odd-shaped triangular shadow over the step. It altered the composition of the picture a little. It was interesting. It might be useful. . . . The problem might be solved after all. Ah, but what had happened? Some wave of white went over the window pane. The air must have stirred some flounce in the room. . . .

"Mrs. Ramsay!" "Mrs. Ramsay!" she cried. . . . (164-65)

Lily identifies this someone as Mrs. Ramsay, who now exists as "some light stuff" or "air . . . in the room," i.e., as an embodiment of nonhuman forces. And it is the recognition of this someone or Mrs. Ramsay as an impersonal entity that prepares the painter for the ultimate success in confronting the molar and the personal: she is no more troubled by the cracking of "the composition of the picture" or "the unity of the whole," as caused here by the ghostly someone and the shadow it casts "over the step" or outside the house. Rather, Lily is open to them insofar as they "might be useful" in resolving "[t]he problem" of design. More importantly, this openness allows the proper communication between the Figure and elementary forces, as attested by the event that "[s]ome wave of white went over the window pane." In "The Window," the pane reflecting the candle flames and containing darkness enables and echoes Mrs. Ramsay's (im-)personalization; in "The Lighthouse," the window pane functions similarly and serves as a metaphor for the painter's canvas, with the white wave flashing over it presaging the triumph and the (im-)personal intensities she will bring forth in the end.

Yet, before this, Lily needs to deal with another impersonal force: Mr. Ramsay. As she asks at the end of the antepenultimate chapter of *Lighthouse*, "Where was that boat now? Mr. Ramsay?" "She wanted him" (165). This boat refers to the one taken by Mr. Ramsay, Cam, and James in their shared journey to the lighthouse. Four pages later, at the very beginning of the last chapter of the novel, the painter supposes that Mr. Ramsay and the boat "must have reached it" in that "the Lighthouse had become almost invisible, had melted away into a blue haze, and the effort of looking at it and the effort of thinking of him landing there, which both seemed to be one and the same effort, had stretched her body and mind to the utmost" (169). For Lily, the boat, Mr. Ramsay, and the lighthouse, corresponding to how she intends colors to be employed on her canvas, have melted into one another and come to mark the border of imperceptibility and impersonality. She has to go to that extreme, "stretch[ing] her body and mind to the utmost"; only then can she expose herself to impersonal forces and borrow from them the arsenal to dissolve the personal, though she also needs to keep distance from them in case of being consumed by them.

It is not until the last paragraph of *Lighthouse* that the painter's effort and fight against both the personal and the impersonal prove effective. As shown by

the narration, “[w]ith a sudden intensity, . . . she drew a line there, in the center” (170). Painting this line “with a sudden intensity” in the center or foreground of her painting in place of some molar entity or colored masses, Lily yields her final (im-)personal sensation. It is useless to “put the tree further in the middle” because “the mass of the trees was too heavy” (158) to become a truly (im-)personal intensity. Since “the line of the wall wanted breaking” (158), only a line running in the middle will crumble the weight of molarity still haunting the masses of the wall or the tree and replace them with an (im-)personal line of intensity, without this entity—insomuch as it constitutes an intensity—dissipating into chaos. With the production of the intensive line, the painter can be argued to finally reach the “razor edge of balance” sought between her picture and Mr. Ramsay/Mrs. Ramsay.

What merits attention is that in creating these (im-)personal colors and the intensive line, Lily transfigures into an intensity as well. When “she began precariously dipping among the blues and umbers, moving her brush hither and thither” (131), “her hand quivered with life” and “she lost consciousness of . . . her name and her personality” (132), which points to her flight from the molar domain into the (im-)personal one. At the end of *Lighthouse*, the painter’s (im-)personalization recurs. As said, picturing in mind Mr. Ramsay’s blending into imperceptibility, she extends “her body and mind to the utmost” and “drew a line there, in the center” remarkably “with a sudden intensity.” As synecdochically suggested by the state of her hand and her fashion of drawing, Lily now likewise throbs “with life” and animation, transforming into a vibrant Figure or an (im-)personal, intensive being.

The painter’s becoming-(im-)personal is also the message delivered by the final sentence of *Lighthouse*: as she sees it, “I have had my vision” (170). Here the “I” and “my” do not index her relapse into personality; insofar as they remain at best “in extreme fatigue” (170), the operation of the molar arena should be viewed to have ceased. Or, the two terms also work as the framework that preserves her figural being against the perturbation of impersonal forces, with her own being and “vision” melting into each other at the same time. In either case, as *Lighthouse* comes to its end, Lily herself has turned into an (im-)personal entity. It is this transfiguration into an intensity and percept that testifies her success in the struggle with both the personal and the impersonal and affirms her being.

### To the Lighthouse

The last Figure of concern is Mr. Ramsay, whose (im-)personalization occurs mainly in the expedition to the lighthouse in “The Lighthouse.” The journey shared by him, Cam, and James occurs simultaneously with Lily’s painting activity



in time and alternatively with it in narration, highlighting its importance respecting (im-)personal transformation. Similar to the painter's resumption of her painting, the trip is also meant to complete what has remained unfinished for a decade. Of greater significance is the fruit it likewise yields: the becoming-(im-)personal of all three Ramsays during the journey. Yet, here I will focus solely upon Mr. Ramsay for two reasons. For one thing, it is he who endorses the (im-)personalization of his daughter and son. It is Mr. Ramsay who makes Cam feel "safe" and gives her the degree of security or consistency that allows her to go free in imagination (154) and appropriate the impersonal forces of the sea water splashing about without being consumed by them (156). It is again Mr. Ramsay who leads James to hold that "There is no God" (169) and thus not to slip into the molar zone after his success in "keeping [the boat] very steady" and "driving" it "before a gale" (166)—i.e., in taming elementary forces such as those of wind. For another, in *Lighthouse*, Mr. Ramsay is usually described as demanding and intimidating. This may cause him to be oversimplified either as an epitome of patriarchy—the molar institution that coerces beings into fixed gendered subjectivities and saps their living strength—or as an avatar of impersonal forces that drain the vitality of living entities. In either case, Mr. Ramsay's (im-)personal transformation is ignored; my purpose here is to highlight his transfiguration. Since his (im-)personalization concurs with his daughter's and his son's, I will begin with their metamorphoses happening together.

What first enables the three Ramsays' transfiguration in the trip is the change of their location. The journey takes place over the sea and between two patches of land, with this intermediary position and movement from land to sea triggering their flight from the molar into the molecular. Leaving the place of fixity in shape without submerging into one of absolute amorphousness, the three Ramsays are stepping into the zone situated between the personal and the impersonal. Paralleling the shift is the mutation regarding how they feel: "Yes, the breeze" blowing at the sailing vessel "was freshening" (136), which predicts their rebirth. Both Cam and James "had a sense of escape and exaltation" and get thrilled "with the speed and the change," while "the breeze bred in Mr. Ramsay too the same excitement," inciting him to shout out "aloud" the poetic line, "We perished, each alone" (136).

What merits attention in the verse is its theme of solitude and death, which recalls the threat of impersonality faced by Mrs. Ramsay in "The Window." In the expedition, the same lethal, impersonal forces are incarnated by the wind propelling the boat and the splashing sea water ready to devour the Ramsays at any time. Meanwhile, the menace of molarity looms. Sometime during the trip, the natural power driving the boat forward—"[t]he rush of the water"—has "ceased" and the vessel has "[come] to a stop" (150). "The Lighthouse became immovable," "the line of the distant shore became fixed," and "the waves breaking and flapping against the

side of the boat” sound “as if” the Ramsays “were anchored in the harbor” (150), with words like “immovable,” “fixed,” and “anchored” equally implying the reemergence of the personal. “[T]he sail” at which James looks therefore “had become to him like a person”; “everyone seemed to come very close together and to feel each other’s presence” as a person, “which they had forgotten” (150) during their journey and conversion into the (im-)personal. Both their trip and sea change are seemingly to end up as a fiasco.

Again, a miracle happens. About three pages after the crisis, the wind blows again and the vessel “woke and shot through the waves” (153). “The relief was extraordinary” since the Ramsays “all seemed to fall away from each other” (153)—from the presence of each as a person—and to restore their own (im-)personalization. Notably, before this Mr. Ramsay has already found a way of constituting himself as an (im-)personal intensity against the threat of the personal. When the vessel comes to a halt and the enforced stagnancy disturbs its passengers, Mr. Ramsay “went on reading with his legs curled under him” (150) and does not appear to be troubled at all. Later, after the trip resumes, he is observed to “read . . . as if he were . . . pushing his way up and up a single narrow path; and sometimes he went fast and straight, and broke his way through the bramble, and sometimes it seemed a branch struck at him, a bramble blinded him, but he was not going to let himself be beaten by that; on he went, tossing over page after page” (156). Here the spotlight should be cast upon the vibrancy displayed by Mr. Ramsay: he travels from one page to another “fast and straight,” transfiguring himself into a speedy line of intensity that moves forward unhesitatingly. An impediment embodying the threat of personality, such as “a branch” or “a bramble,” appears from time to time, but this never stops him. Rather, Mr. Ramsay keeps advancing persistently and intensively, to the same extent that he insists upon the expedition to the lighthouse in “The Lighthouse” (123). Being attentive in reading, he changes himself into an intensive being, into an (im-)personal Figure.

In the penultimate chapter of *Lighthouse*, the (im-)personality characterizing Mr. Ramsay is further shown by Cam and James’s description of him when the journey is reaching its end: “He sat and looked at the island and he might be thinking, We perished, each alone, or he might be thinking, I have reached it. I have found it; but he said nothing” (169). What the either-or conjecture shared by Cam and James reveals is the intermediate state assumed by their father. His mode of being is reducible neither to the molar, complete form suggested by the perfect tense in phrases like “I have reached” or “I have found” nor to impersonal forces related to the word “perish.” The indeterminacy as to what Mr. Ramsay has in mind illumines his in-betweenness; he dwells in the middle zone of (im-)personality and stands away from both personality and impersonality.

Accompanying Mrs. Ramsay's (im-)personalization is a vibrant form of existence that affirms his being. This is exhibited by what Cam and James see when they are landing: their father "rose and stood in the bow of the boat, very straight and tall, for all the world, James thought, as if he were saying, 'There is no God,' and Cam thought, as if he were leaping into space" (169). The fashion in which Mr. Ramsay moves is striking: denying in gesture the existence of God, he refuses the trap of molarity; "leaping into space," he transfigures into a dynamic and intensive being. Mr. Ramsay's transformation finds another expression in his actual jump: "he sprang, lightly like a young man . . . on to the rock" (169), with his agility expressing nothing but the fact that he now takes a vigorous and intensive form of existence.

It should be noted that the final landing does not presage Mr. Ramsay's return to molarity. If his action "like a young man" implies his preservation of a certain degree of personality, it should be regarded, to borrow from Low's words, to have "improve[d] upon impersonality" and transfigured into an (im-)personality. This is metonymically suggested by the rocks onto which Mr. Ramsay springs and the lighthouse into which he and his children will eventually enter: "There" the lighthouse "loomed up . . . and one could see the waves breaking in white splinters like smashed glass upon the rocks. One could see lines and creases in the rocks. One could see the windows clearly; a dab of white on one of them, and a little tuft of green on the rock" (165). The pattern of the "smashed glass" and "lines and creases" left by the sea water upon the rocks disclose their absorption of the energy of the elementary, pelagic forces and operation as these forces' substitute on land; "a little tuft of green" appears on one of these rocks, indexing their conversion into beings of sensations. One window of the lighthouse is spotted with "a dab of white"; an unidentified "man had come out and looked at" the Ramsays "through a glass" (165). Both conditions suggest that the window is now open and will function similarly as the one allowing the communication between the inside and the outside—a structure that has enabled Mrs. Ramsay's and Lily's transformation and will thus promise the sustenance of Mr. Ramsay's (im-)personality.

### **"Time Passes"**

To conclude, I will address the (im-)personalization attained by "Time Passes," the distinction of *Lighthouse* from other works by Woolf, and the affirmative effect of the novel upon her. In the story, one transfiguration seems more removed from the personal and more proximate to the impersonal than others. Stepping outside the Ramsay house in creating (im-)personal sensations, Lily displays greater (im-)personality than Mrs. Ramsay, who remains mostly within the house. Mr. Ramsay

“almost knocked [Lily’s] easel over” (18), which predicts that he will push further the degree of (im-)personality in the journey to the lighthouse. However, in the novel, Mr. Ramsay’s transfiguration does not mark the greatest one; its narration does. What illustrates this is “Time Passes,” the middle and perhaps the most important section of the text.

As mentioned, in her diary Woolf expected the second part of *Lighthouse* to “contain” the “impersonal thing”; in fact, she also planned this section “to give an empty house, no people’s characters, the passage of time, all eyeless & featureless with nothing to cling to” (*Diary* 76). This is basically what “Time Passes” accomplishes: it does present a world where human subjects and what they do or experience retreat to the background; what stands in the foreground is by contrast nonhuman beings: “a bird sings, a cock crows, or a faint green quickens . . . in the hollow of the wave. Night, however, succeeds to night” (*Lighthouse* 104). Nonetheless, in correspondence to my argument that *Lighthouse* should be taken to accent the (im-)personal rather than the impersonal thing, the nonhuman world depicted in this section should be regarded to pivot upon (im-)personality instead of pure impersonality.

To explain this, I will first re-stress the affinity between the human and the nonhuman, an idea brought up in my reading of Mrs. Ramsay. It is naïve to believe that in either *Lighthouse* or “Time Passes” the personal and the impersonal are diametrically opposed. Besides their shared destructive effects, their resemblance is also proved by the fact the impersonal beings are from time to time personalized and treated as personal characters: for instance, in “Time Passes” “Nature” is described as a “she” that “saw [man’s] misery” (110) and “the wind” as someone who “sent its spies about the [Ramsay] house again” (108). These impersonations of the impersonal beings recall Yang’s argument that the third person or the impersonal may still be tainted too much with “[human, personal] subjectivity and anthropologism”; they thus do not qualify as characters that should be, according to what Woolf put in her diary, “no people’s” and “eyeless”—i.e., “I-less.” (Briggs 76).

Yet, it is misleading to believe that “Time Passes” offers no truly nonpersonal person. It creates one by realizing the aforesaid notion of the fourth person singular. As Yang explains, the fourth person singular concerns not so much “an ‘I,’ ‘you,’ or ‘he/she’” as “a pure event-eye that is looking at life” reflecting no “self-consciousness” and “a point of viewing or a point of hearing in place of a subjective or objective perspective” (373). The same idea can be found in “Time Passes”: “Listening (had there been anyone to listen) from the upper rooms of the empty house only gigantic chaos streaked with lightning could have been heard tumbling and tossing, as the winds and waves disported themselves . . .” (110). What merits attention here is the contrast between the pure event of listening and the imper-

sonated impersonal forces. Unlike the “winds and waves” that “disported themselves” and behave as if they were human beings, the activity of listening constitutes a pure event of perceiving without any consciously perceiving subject. An “anyone” is referred to, but the subjunctive mood of the “had there been” annuls the possibility of “say[ing] ‘This is he’ or ‘This is she’” (103), viz., of speaking of a personal character. Nor does the mentioned “gigantic chaos” mark the prevalence of impersonal void: insofar as it “could have been heard,” this chaos will be contained in and by this nonpersonal listening and transformed into something purely, non-consciously perceived—into an (im-)personal percept. The pure event of listening involving no conscious subject and limiting chaos signals the vision of the (im-)personal fourth person singular fostered in “Time Passes.”

If the above-quoted passage does not really exemplify the idea of the pure activity of perceiving owing to the subjunctive “could have been” it includes, the section itself “Time Passes” does. What makes this section truly eyeless/I-less is much less the impersonal beings it depicts than the pure percept it produces and it is. Whilst no narrator—either an omniscient or unreliable one—can be identified in “Time Passes,” to assert, as Eric Auerbach does, that the stream of consciousness applied therein succeeds in “obscuring and even obliterating the impression of an objective reality completely known to the author” or the narrator (535) is still missing the point. In “Time Passes,” what the technical device achieves is not a mixture of “numerous subjective impressions received by various [human and nonhuman] individuals” (536) as if they are seen by some transcendental narrator or author. Rather, without an “eye” and a consciously observing and speaking “I,” this section constitutes a pure event of looking and listening or an (im-)personal percept, with the narrative comprising and composed of these “subjective impressions” or perspectives amounting to both what is perceiving and what is perceived. There is no narrator but the narration itself, no person watching and hearing but the (im-)personal fourth person singular or pure event of perceiving.

The same understanding applies to *Lighthouse*. With no overarching narrator identifiable throughout the novel, the text has to be treated as a pure act of perceiving recounting what is experienced by the beings it sketches. A sentence showing what Lily sees—“The jacmanna was bright violet; the wall staring white” (19)—best epitomizes this. No conscious perceiving I is perceptible in the sentence, with the perceived turning into an independent, (im-)personal percept. In the same vein, *Lighthouse* equals a picture without a painter behind it and, to borrow from the words of Bernard in Woolf’s *The Waves*, “the world seen without a self” (171).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> I owe to Banfield for the attention to Bernard’s phrase in *The Waves* and to the idea that a sentence without a human subject reflects a nonpersonal perception or the “empty landscapes” (Banfield 317).

Although several human beings and their conscious thoughts, feelings, or perceptions remain in *Lighthouse*, their molarity is neutralized inasmuch as they are contained inside the pure viewing and listening by some nonpersonal narrator. This fourth personal singular, on the other hand, hinders chaos from prevailing in the novel; the narration as such constitutes an autonomous percept, a pure vision, or, to adopt the description of Mrs. McNab and Mrs. Bast in “Time Passes,” “something not highly conscious” but still operating as “a force working” that defends against impersonal forces such as “the pool of Time” (114). In this regard, as a pure event of narrating and perceiving, *Lighthouse* not only delineates the (im-)personalization of its key figures; it in itself is an (im-)personal being, a process and product of struggling against both the personal and the impersonal, and a “crystal of intensity” that stands “remote from” what is “known” and “familiar”—molar, human personhood—but “would render the possessor secure”—protecting those experiencing, be it writing or reading, the novel from slipping into utter impersonality (108).

Now it is perhaps possible to better distinguish *Lighthouse* from other works by Woolf, especially from those said to share the concern with the (im-)personal thing. “Blue and Green” purely presents the various tones of the blue and green color and shows no perceiving subject; it is thus equivalent to an independent, (im-)personal percept. Nonetheless, the short piece stages merely the result of (im-)personalization rather than the movement from the personal to the (im-)personal, which is by contrast depicted in *Lighthouse*. “Kew Gardens” sketches the dissolution of four couples into “layer after layer of green-blue vapour” (*Shorter Fiction* 95) without a narrator watching beyond and hence turns into a pure vision by a fourth person singular. But the story simply depicts these couples’ fusion into the colorful vapor “one after another” (95) and, unlike *Lighthouse*, does not articulate the difference in degree of their transformations. Woolf’s *The Waves* alternates between the (im-)personal percepts given in its interludes, which are pure perceptions of nonhuman landscapes, and those presented in its nine chapters, in which an unidentifiable narrator or a pure narration describes the transfiguration of its characters into nonhuman forces and sensations. Yet, throughout this novel, both the first person singular pronoun “I” and death wish abound. This design creates a too drastic shift among personality, impersonality, and (im-)personality and therefore a too violent confrontation among them. As a result, it carries no sense of the stability, serenity, and affirmativity found in *Lighthouse*.<sup>5</sup>

There is another factor that makes *Lighthouse* outstanding among Woolf’s works:

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<sup>5</sup> The similarities and differences between Woolf’s *Lighthouse* and other works in terms of (im-)personality are for sure worth deeper discussion. Yet, given the limit in scope, here I compare them only briefly.

its healing and affirming effect. Woolf herself admitted this at least twice in her life. One time in her diary: "I used to think of [my father] and mother daily; but writing *The Lighthouse*, laid them [to rest] in my mind" (208). The other time in her autobiographical "A Sketch of the Past": "I rubbed out a good deal of the force of my mother's memory" and "of [my father's]" primarily "by writing about [them] in *To the Lighthouse*" (*Moments* 108). Resembling how Mr. Ramsay and Mrs. Ramsay overwhelm others in the novel, Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen, disturbed her with his molarity—with his "godlike . . . standing in the family" (111), whereas her mother, Julia Stephen, haunted her as an impersonal force—as "one of the invisible presences" (80). What enables *Lighthouse* to exercise a curative effect upon Woolf is, I suggest, that by creating its (im-)personal figures and rendering its narration a pure event of perceiving she becomes an (im-)personal being of sensation as well. As said in my review of the nature of (im-)personal intensity, a human subject cannot experience—either produce or appreciate—a being of sensation without himself/herself transforming into something similar. This is what Woolf undergoes in writing her fifth novel: as she puts it in "Sketch," "I made up, as I sometimes make up my books, *To the Lighthouse*; in a great, apparently involuntary rush" (81). This "rush" recalls the intensity characteristic of Lily when she is giving the final touch to her painting and of Mr. Ramsay when he is reading and landing. True, this "rush" also happens to Woolf when she is writing other works, and in a sense all her literary writing can be said to feature a pure vision or narration and to transform her into an (im-)personal being. However, only *Lighthouse* gives her a sense of stability: as she writes again in her diary, "one stable moment vanquishes chaos" and "this I said in *The Lighthouse*" (141), with this "say[ing]" referring to her formulation of not only Mrs. Ramsay, Lily, Mr. Ramsay, "Time Passes," and *Lighthouse* but also herself as an (im-)personal entity.

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## 吳爾芙小說《燈塔行》中的非非人強度

### 摘要

本文企圖探索小說家吳爾芙作品《燈塔行》所呈現的肯定性生命樣態，本文稱為非非人強度（(im-)personal intensity）。該生命樣態之所以具有肯定性（affirmativity），是因為浸淫於其中的存在體，得以同時與人稱主體與非人稱混沌同時相抗衡，進而使其生命充滿強度。爲了要釐清非非人強度概念對於理解《燈塔行》的重要性，本文會先討論以人稱及非人稱觀點閱讀該小說的文獻，並試著指出這些閱讀方法的侷限。接著，本文將回顧德勒茲與瓜塔里的美學哲思，藉此勾勒非非人強度生命型態的基本特質。根據此一生命樣態構想，本文將探討《燈塔行》的三名主要角色—或是德勒茲與瓜塔里所謂的「形象」（Figure）—即藍西夫人、畫家莉莉與藍西先生，在小說中如何各自化身爲某一非非人強度，使其生命從而充滿能量與肯定特性。最後，本文將討論《燈塔行》的第二部分〈時光流逝〉如何亦作爲某種非非人強度存在體，並兼論小說本身的非非人特性、該小說與吳爾芙其他與非非人相關作品的差異，以及小說對於作家的正面效應。

**關鍵字：**吳爾芙、《燈塔行》、德勒茲與瓜塔里、非非人、強度

