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Matter of Reality: Significance of Material Objects in
Selected Works of Virginia Woolf

Bakalářská práce

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci na téma 'Matter of Reality: Significance of Material Objects in Selected Works of Virginia Woolf' vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne..... Podpis

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1. Introduction

“...the sooner English fiction turns its back upon them, as politely as may be, and marches, if only into the desert, the better for its soul.”¹, such was the wry comment, once written by Virginia Woolf, the eminent Modernist writer, on the address of a group of Materialist writers active in her times. From this statement, it would not be entirely unreasonable to assume that Mrs. Woolf was not particularly fond of the Materialist literary practice - and one would not be far from the truth. Virginia Woolf wished for the modern literature to be ridden of the constraints of long expired traditions and formulas of the Materialists (as was Mrs. Woolf’s term for the writers, including Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy), whose primary focus was laid on the material aspect of the fictional realm and the mimetic description of the exterior in their writing, in the attempt to secure “reality” and create a sense of life that, in her eyes, tyrannized, imposed themselves and made futile any attempt of authentic artistic expression in the new era.

It will be my aspiration, nevertheless, to prove her relationship with material objects and external context in literature per se was not ultimately an antagonistic one. Although Mrs. Woolf’s affinity was with the literary Spiritualists and her focus on the subjective, the ambiguous and the insubstantial, the key role of substantial objects and external circumstances in her work is indisputable. It was her aim to present life in all its aspects without discrimination, to write about memory and emotion and all these “feathery and evanescent”² things of life and imbedding them in the substantial and factual environment of external and objective reality.

Presently I will explain the above mentioned concepts, provide background information and influences of Woolf’s artistic life. Within the main part I will state my observations, arguments and give accounts of the employment of

¹ Woolf, Virginia. “Modern Fiction.” Edited by Andrew McNeillie. *The Common Reader: First series*, 1st Harvest ed., 1984. ed., Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984, p. 146.

² Woolf, Virginia. *To the Lighthouse*. Penguin Books, 1992, p. 249.

the Materialist narrative strategies and metaphysical concepts in three literary works of Mrs. Virginia Woolf.

I will begin with a short story *The Mark on the Wall* (1917) and continue with a novel titled *To the Lighthouse* (1927). This main (analytical) part shall be divided into two chapters which will examine both literary works, respectively. I will focus on the exteriority, linear chronology and mimetic narrative elements. I will also examine the metaphysical side of Materialism, mainly the significant role of substantial objects within the narrative, which complement and reinforce the theoretical stances of the author concerning the significance of Materialism in literature.

I chose the short story *Mark on the Wall* as the introductory work under my examination, because it renders a clear and concise picture of the author's general theoretical attitudes about the function of external elements within a narrative. It consists of a narration from the point of view of the narrator, who, returning back to this external point of reference, the black spot, prevents her from losing herself in abstraction. From the few pages that this story extends upon one can observe Mrs. Woolf's skill of making use of the static and objective nature of the external occurrences and material objects to effectively create a sense of unity and stability within the narrative - a narrative, which, to a large extent, takes place within the minds of the narrator and utilizes the method of a stream of consciousness, which is, by nature, subjective, disjointed and fragmented.

The second chapter will give accounts of the unifying and stabilizing elements of external objects and events in *To the Lighthouse*, fifth of Virginia Woolf's novels, written in 1927. This book is notable for its experimental conception of time and the employment of the technique of stream of consciousness. Mrs. Ramsay's and Lily's perception of the external reality and their inner experiences are in alignment with Mrs. Woolf's philosophy, in that they see the essence of material objects and look for peace in the contemplation of those objects.

The emphasis in this section will be laid on the distinct ways of perceiving the external reality by the characters and their individual manners of interaction with external reality.

2. Woolf's Influences

2.1. Father's Influence

Virginia Woolf (born Stephen) was born on 25 January 1882, in London, into a privileged Victorian family. Her father, Leslie Stephen, was an eminent scholar of the time, the editor of the Dictionary of National Biography and a respected literary critic. The Stephen household would regularly receive visitors from a wide range of intellectual and artistic circles, so, despite being denied the path of higher education, there never was scarcity of intellectual stimulation for young Virginia. Her father recognized Virginia's potential as a writer quite early on in her life and decided to ensure her an education in history and biography as a necessary theoretic foundation for becoming a successful essayist, critic or even a novelist. The influence of her father's mentoring as well as his temperament is apparent in many of Virginia Woolf's theoretical writings and literary criticisms.³ Woolf's epistemological views as well as the choice of using the dichotomy of Materialists and Spiritualists in the literary context, is without doubt the result of reading Stephen's *An Agnostic's Apology* (1893), a collection of essays, where he contemplates the topics of faith and religion, stressing that the scope of human knowledge is limited and therefore one should always be cautious before accepting anyone's claims on the absolute truth. It is apparent in Woolf's revolutionary and unorthodox approach to writing fiction that she acquired some of her father's rebellious nature and the courage to question authority. Noteworthy influence upon Woolf's criticism had her father's notion that literature is a "particular function of the whole social organism"⁴ and that literary critics should consider the "the spirit of the age"⁵ or the historical environment, in which a given literary work was written. This view also implies that every new era demands new ways of artistic expression and Woolf's primary endeavor

³ Hill, Katherine C. "Virginia Woolf and Leslie Stephen: History and Literary Revolution." *Modern Language Association*, Vol. 96, No. 3 (May, 1981), p. 354.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/461911.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Aac8e5d63ddee6f3cc2bf19508bd5772b>

⁴ Stephen, Leslie. "English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century." *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century*, Duckworth, London, 1904, p. 28.

⁵ Stephen, Leslie. "English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century." *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century*, Duckworth, London, 1904, p. 16.

was to provide those and show the way of aesthetic progress in the Modern age.

2.2. Sister, Vanessa

Virginia did become Leslie Steven's intellectual heir, so to speak, and was arguably the most successful of the Steven children, but she wasn't the only one of them who made their mark in England's artistic scene of the early 20th century. Virginia's elder sister, Vanessa, became one of the pioneering artists of the post-impressionist movement in England. The silent language of visual art intrigued Mrs. Woolf and her sister's innovative style of rendering an image with brisk and bold brush-strokes, saturating her projected vision with vibrant colors and omitting inconsequential details, which do not directly support the expression of the subject's essence, inspired her to assimilate some of the modern visual art elements into her own writing – the result being a poetic and highly sensuous style of writing that focused on representing the fleeting, yet deeply valuable impressions of daily life, where the interior and exterior worlds interpenetrate – all written with lightness and seeming spontaneity of the Impressionist painter's brush stroke. "As a writer, I feel the beauty, which is almost entirely colour, very subtle, very changeable, running over my pen, as if you poured a large jug of champagne over a hairpin."⁶ Woolf speaks with colors and images, although any attempt of translating vision into words, of course, presents obvious difficulties, because image is a spatial medium, whereas writing is inherently temporal. In his work *Spatial Form in Modern Literature (1945)*, Joseph Frank argues that this process is possible by manipulating the temporal aspect of a novel. The sense of spatiality in Woolf's writing is achieved by her complex layering of the narrative structure, for instance, shifting between the description of external events in the here-and-now of the narrative and character's reflections and flashbacks captured with the help of the stream-of-consciousness method.

Another method implemented in her works in order to give a convincing apprehension of solidity, a certain sense of there being several dimensions to

⁶ Woolf, Virginia, and Jan Morris. "Scotland." *Travels with Virginia Woolf, Pimlico*, London, 1997, p. 148.

a scene, subject or a character, are subjective accounts of a single narrative space by multiple characters through the stream-of-consciousness method. In the work Mrs. Dalloway, for instance, the external narrative timing of several character's experience synchronizes through the striking of the Big Ben and thus a certain sense of spatiality is created. Although the text of the book is written in a linear manner, there is often a plurality of action and events within the story that takes place at one given moment. Woolf's unusual work with temporal continuity creates a demand on the reader to view the narrative as a whole thing (similar to a painting) – only possible to be understood once one finishes reading.

Virginia's heightened awareness of everyday objects and significant role they play in her works might have also some correlation with Vanessa's artistic activity, namely her involvement with the Omega Workshops, which was a company inspired by the principles of the 19th century Arts and Crafts movement and their main aim was to create useful art pieces, in other words, connecting the concepts of design and fine art. They produced pieces of furniture, stained glass, ceramics, rugs – all decorated with colorful patterns in the Modernist style. This notion of elevating common objects into something worthy of contemplation and significant beyond its practical use became one of the central concepts in Woolf's writing. Often, solid objects present an opportunity for a Keatsian escape. A character is allowed for a moment to slip away from the chaotic social world governed by time and enter the serene and still realm of things. A perfect example of this phenomenon is the short stories *Solid Objects (1918)* and *Mark on the Wall (1917)*, where material objects offer anchorage - a safe port for character's thoughts. The latter story elaborates on this phenomena as producing a "satisfying sense of reality"⁷. The narrator describes a feeling of deep reverence towards the objects that surround her after being immersed in her inner mental battles: "Here is something definite, something real. Thus, waking from a midnight dream of horror, one hastily turns on the light and lies quiescent, worshipping the chest of drawers, worshipping solidity,

⁷ "The Mark on the Wall." *Internet Archive*. November 30, 2006, p.12. <https://archive.org/details/markonwall00wooluoft/page/6/mode/2up>

worshipping reality, worshipping the impersonal world which is a proof of some existence other than ours.”⁸

⁸ “The Mark on the Wall.” *Internet Archive*. November 30, 2006, p.13.
<https://archive.org/details/markonwall00wooluoft/page/6/mode/2up>

2.3. Roger Fry and (Post-)Impressionism

In her well-known essay concerning the methods of character representations in fiction, titled *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*, Woolf (with a tint of hyperbole) stated that “on or about December 1910 human character changed.”⁹ Although Mrs. Woolf admitted that the year 1910 was in fact arbitrary, the general academic consensus now is that it was an allusion to the scandalous Post-Impressionist Exhibition, which took place in the said year, in London.

What changed, according to Woolf, was the way artists represented character in literature, there was a turn towards a more intimate drawing of this character, focusing on psychology and inner motivations, instead of, say, stating general facts about the character’s social standing or their financial circumstances. Paralelly to the Impressionistic modes of painting a portrait, the fictional character was becoming less defined and solid. The aim of both arts was to express the essence of the object. Their integrity was being achieved, instead, by implementing a multiplicity of perspectives upon the character as well suggesting (as opposed to describing) an existence of a character by means of fragments and fleeting impressions.

The event was curated by Mrs. Woolf’s personal friend and a fellow member of the intellectual club, called Bloomsbury group, Roger Fry. His intention was to expose the British public to the works of French painters, such as Manet, Cézanne, Gauguin or Matisse, who were already well-established artists on the Continent. Some of the most critical voices saw the exhibition as a dangerous subversion to the English tradition of painting or an offence to the good taste, others laughed scornfully and dismissed those paintings as inane scribbles, like a child would make. There were those, Virginia Woolf among them, that welcomed this fresh draft of air in the usually stuffy and oppressive atmosphere of the English galleries. Mrs. Woolf rejoiced that passionate engagement of the critics and public with the art at last brought

⁹ Woolf, Virginia. *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*. London Hogarth Pr, 1924, p.4.

some “life and color”¹⁰ into the on-going artistic discourse. The event was considered to be a manifestation of the rebellious spirit of Modernism – one of the violent raptures, disrupting the foundation of the English Realist tradition. By extension, the exhibition could be seen as a token of the then prevailing sense of liberation of the individuals within the society from the authority of dogmas in matters of politics, class and religion.

The most significant point of departure of the Post-Impressionists from the artistic norm was the abandonment of mimesis, which is the artistic expression as subjugated to the representation of the actual life. In his theoretical work on art, *An Essay in Aesthetics* (1909), Roger Fry argues that the point of the visual art is to render not things, but the individual impressions of the things – the fleeting experiences, colored by emotion and idealized by inner vision.

Virginia Woolf’s entire writing career was dedicated to the search for ways of representing “life” in her books and it was precisely impressionistic methods of representing reality that brought her success in that regard. She was well aware that the description of external elements within the fictional world conveys a certain sense of solidity and stability. Similarly, by providing a straight-forward plot line and a clear argument with an expected resolution, one can’t help but revel in the smooth orderliness and predictability, which brings a feeling of security.

However, she also observed that the more effort one puts into imitating the material world, subduing life into a still order of mimetic tradition, the further one depart from their own vision. If a book is to concern itself with a genuine portrayal of life, the writer has to look within and realize that an individual’s everyday experience consists of “a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel.”¹¹ Parallel to the visual

¹⁰ Woolf, Virginia, and Leonard Woolf. *Collected Essays. Vol. 4.* London Chatto & Windus, 1969, p. 88

¹¹ Woolf, Virginia. “Modern Fiction.” Edited by Andrew McNeillie. *The Common Reader: First series*, 1st Harvest ed., 1984. ed., Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984.

impressionism, Mrs. Woolf's writing employed subjective perceptions, light, color, movement, emotion and suggestion to present her artistic vision.

2.4. Russian Fiction

During the first decade of the 20th century the English public found new appreciation for Russian fiction. Virginia Woolf shared in this excitement of being able to explore an uncharted territory and herself helped translate and print some of the books as well as writing several works of criticism on their address. It is undeniable that Russian fiction came to have an immense impact on the direction that Virginia Woolf's writing took at the beginnings of her career. The clash of the two paradigms of writing fiction provided Mrs. Woolf with the opportunity for a dynamic artistic interaction, which resulted in several of the elements of Russian fiction writing being integrated into her own theoretical and epistemological framework. After being introduced to this Russian phenomenon she wrote in one of her famous essays: "(T)here is no limit to the horizon, and (...) nothing—no 'method', no experiment, even of the wildest—is forbidden, but only falsity and pretence."¹² To encounter such radical and divergent literary current affirmed Mrs. Woolf in her own rebellious endeavors as a writer to defy the stale and unproductive rules of English Realist tradition.

Contemporary Russian writing style as an appealing antidote to the inertia in English fiction. However, her issue there was not with the tools that the British Realists used or the literary principles themselves, for they were appropriate in their time, but in that they were not suitable or sufficient for the demands of the new age. According to Mrs. Woolf it is essential to "keep moving"¹³, to react and adapt to the changing spirit of the times. She fancied the Russian writers to be the superior inspectors of life, skillful in presenting it "...in all its width and depth, with every shade of feeling and subtlety of thought,"¹⁴.

¹² Woolf, Virginia. "Modern Fiction." Edited by Andrew McNeillie. *The Common Reader: First series*, 1st Harvest ed., 1984. ed., Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984, p. 154

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 146.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 146.

Her critique of the English state of affairs (status quo) concerning Materialist literature laid mainly in their rigid subordination to the dogmas of what “good” literature must consist of – those established elements being generally: a straight-forward and logical plot, a clear conflict with a resolution at the end, none or little direct insight into the mind of the characters, attempting rather to prove with only hints and inconclusive evidence in the form of descriptions of the external circumstances that those characters indeed are spirited and alive (the results being often rather unconvincing) Her contemporaries in Russia, on the other hand, readily disregarded those superficial constrictions of plots and conclusions, omitted the seemingly obligatory character establishing passages and lengthy and cumbersome descriptions of the external states and events in favor of an honest exploring the individual experience, be it, external or internal, in its completeness, unedited by the lens of convention and decorum. If they chose to describe the external circumstances, it was not exclusively to function as a mere extension of some abstract notion, but an instance of life, significant and valid in itself, described without pretense or agenda. Their subject was not the mind, but the human soul ¹⁵ and the study of the soul as such transcends age and gender, any political inclinations, social ranking or merit. Woolf was certain that if one dedicated enough time to the exploration of the Russian literary world, one would recognize for themselves how “gaudy, glaring” and “superficial”¹⁶ the traditional elements of English literature in fact are. It were the likes of Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy who cut through the fanciful ripples and erratic waves deeper to the powerful and dark undercurrents of life – there all the wisdom and truth flow and the same richness and depth is readily discernible in the work of Virginia Woolf as well.

¹⁵ Woolf, Virginia. “Modern Fiction.” Edited by Andrew McNeillie. *The Common Reader: First series*, 1st Harvest ed., 1984. ed., Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984, p. 153.

¹⁶ Woolf, Virginia. “Russian Point of View.” Edited by Andrew McNeillie. *The Common Reader: First series*, 1st Harvest ed., 1984. ed., Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984, p. 249.

3. Materialism and Modernism

3.1. Introduction

Artists of any age reflect the social and historical circumstances of their time. Leslie Stephen, Woolf's father, observed that "*the characteristics of a literature correspond to the national characteristics*"¹⁷ and each epoch has its "essential spirit". According to him, when times are hectic and uncertain, the art gives way to more ideal and abstract forms of expression, meanwhile, during periods of political, social and economic stability, the artists tend to conform to the mimetic description of reality and focus more attention to the materialistic aspects of life. Stephen had an immense influence on Woolf's artistic views and instilled in her a passion for change—this passion drove her to the frontlines of an artistic revolution.

The fiction-writing at the end of the 19th century conformed to a mimetic portrayal of reality and was highly referential, the reason being that it wasn't yet influenced by the tumultuous social, political and economic changes that took place at the beginning of the 20th century.

¹⁷ Stephen, Leslie. *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century: Ford Lectures, 1903*, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1904, p. 25.

3.2. Modernism

Around the time when Virginia Woolf began her career as a writer, a massive movement nearing a change of paradigm became apparent in all spheres of social activity. Artists were attempting to capture, interpret and incorporate the state of disintegration and omnipresent sense of crisis into their work, often with the ambition to resolve or at least suggest a way of reconciling with the cultural tumult by the introduction of fresh perspectives, new subjects and unconventional narrative strategies.¹⁸ In her theoretical works¹⁹, Woolf named this new sort of writers, represented by James Joyce, T.S. Eliot or E.M. Forster, the Georgianists. Those were her allies in the cause of Modernism. She praised them for attempting “to come closer to life, and to preserve more sincerely and exactly what interests and moves them, even if to do so they must discard most of the conventions which are commonly observed by the novelist.”²⁰

The principal point of departure of Modernist art in general was, as Roger Fry phrased it, the strife for “autonomy of the aesthetic experience”²¹, which was the result of a growing tendency to disvalue the external and public reality. No longer were the painstaking descriptions of external events and objects a necessary way of securing the element of “truthfulness” in a story, nor did the traditional linear approach to narrative structure hold out against Modern conception of time. As Woolf expressed fittingly in her renowned essay *Modern Fiction*: “Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.”²² The nature of the narrative

¹⁸ Parsons, Deborah L. *Theorists of the modernist novel: James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf*. Rutledge, 1973, p. 11.

¹⁹ Woolf, Virginia. *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*. London Hogarth Pr, 1924, p. 4.

²⁰ Woolf, Virginia. “Modern Fiction.” Edited by Andrew McNeillie. *The Common Reader: First series*, 1st Harvest ed., 1984. ed., Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984, p. 146.

²¹ Levensson, Michael, editor. *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*. 2nd ed, Cambridge University Press. 2011, p. 74.

²² Woolf, Virginia. “Modern Fiction.” Edited by Andrew McNeillie. *The Common Reader: First series*, 1st Harvest ed., 1984. ed., Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984, p. 146.

structure in Modernist novels was more spatial than temporal and somewhat reminded one of a painting in its lack of narrative progression.

What instead attracted the Modern writers, who hungered for something more real and profound, was the inner mental landscape and highly subjective impressions from everyday life of their characters. The author turned within not only to search for the character's individual truth, but for appropriate stylistic choices as well. The general endeavor of Modernist writers was, in Woolf's words, to "record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall"²³, which implies that each subject demands such design that would most authentically represent the reality of it, as opposed to being forced into a prescribed form of literary convention. Among the most popular narrative devices is a stream of consciousness, which provides an insight into the mind of a character and mimics the natural manner of inner thought processes, where syntactic rules and logical continuity give way to fragmentary splinters of ideas and leaps through time via remembering and imagining.

²³ Bachelor, John. *Virginia Woolf. The Major Novels*. Cambridge University Press. 1991, p. 35

3.3. Bennett and Joyce

“Had one eyes, the tying of a bootlace is the reflection of the soul.”

– Arnold Bennett, *The Author’s Craft (1867-1931)*

Woolf, herself, became a leading figure in the Modernist movement. Her methods, nevertheless, tended to border with open aggression. The passionate vision of literature as being ridden of the shabby and ill-fitting coat of old tradition²⁴ made her hard and even unfair towards some of her contemporaries, namely Arnold Bennett, a prolific and well-established writer, which, according to Woolf’s personal dichotomy, belonged to the Materialist writers, who focused on material facts, while omitting direct insight into the psychological reality of their characters.²⁵ Woolf’s essays and commentary portray Mr Bennett essentially as a rigid and materialistic philistine. Her issue with his style was the “enormous labour of proving the solidity, the likeness to life, of the story”²⁶, while ignoring the essential flame of life, which burns beyond the superficial “evidence” of the visible world.

To Bennett, there should not be any restrictions regarding the amount of external details a writer uses to give a character, an idea or, generally, life. According to his theoretical stances, if someone desires to write good fiction, they must “be able to conceive the ideal without losing sight of the fact that it is a human world we live in”²⁷. In other words, life is to be presented only through engagement with the material world, not as “a concourse of abstractions”²⁸.

²⁴ Woolf, Virginia. “Modern Fiction.” Edited by Andrew McNeillie. *The Common Reader: First series*, 1st Harvest ed., 1984. ed., Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984, p. 149.

²⁵ Parsons, Deborah L. *Theorists of the modernist novel : James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf*. Rutledge, 1973. p.47

²⁶ Woolf, Virginia. “Modern Fiction.” Edited by Andrew McNeillie. *The Common Reader: First series*, 1st Harvest ed., 1984. ed., Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984, p. 146.

²⁷ Bennett, Arnold. *The Author’s Craft*, IndyPublish.com, Boston, MA, 2006, p. 51.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 28

Woolf and Bennett were, in reality, not so unlike each other. It is clear that Bennett holds opinions that are quite in tune with those of Woolf. In an article about the state of the novel, Bennett insisted that “(t)he foundation of good fiction is character-creating, and nothing else.(...) If the characters are real, the novel will have a chance; if they are not, oblivion will be its portion.”²⁹ According to Bennett, many of the newest works of fiction lack believable characters. Though they may be cleverly written and detailed, those characters do not have life, so to speak, because they are not treated as individuals, but as members of groups. He criticizes writers for being “so busy with states of society as to half-forget that any society consists of individuals”.³⁰ In a similar vein, Woolf stressed that the principal function of a novel “is to express character—not to preach doctrines, sing songs, or celebrate the glories of the British Empire.”³¹ This conviction that generalization of a character and explicit treatment of social and political matters of the time ought to stay out of fiction, is more or less apparent throughout her literary work, though there are some voices³² that call into question to what degree Woolf’s words correspond with her actions and whether, to some extent, she contradicts herself within some of her works regarding her theoretical stances. All things considered, the view of a novel as being suitable primarily as a medium for the depiction of a full-fleshed character is common to both Bennett and Woolf. Now, as mentioned above, the reality of these convictions as put to practice is less straight-forward.

There seems to be a popular tendency within the intellectual arena to point out and extol Woolf’s masterly treatment of the insubstantial and profound aspects of reality in her fiction, while few appreciate the brilliancy of the solid external frames that she was creating in order to prevent the fluid and intangible images from sinking into a vortex of chaos. Fully aware of the

²⁹ Hynes, Samuel. “The Whole Contention between Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Woolf.” *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Autumn 1967, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 34-44.

³⁰ Majumdar, Robin and Allen McLaurin, editors. *Virginia Woolf. The Critical Heritage*. Routledge. 1975. p. 113

³¹ Goldman, Mark. *The Readers Art: Virginia Woolf as Litarary Critic*. Mouton. 1976, p. 41

³² Bennett, Arnold. “Is The Novel Decaying.” *Things That Have Interested Me*. Chatto & Windus. 1920. p. 191-195

possibilities and limitations of the novel form, Woolf operated with external objects and scenes in such a way as to be allowed to fully delve into the mental life of characters and the direct treatment of their thoughts and impressions. In her diary from the year 1926 Woolf noted: "One can't write directly about the soul. Look at it, it vanishes; but look at the ceiling, at Grizzle, at the cheaper beasts in the Zoo which are exposed to walkers in Regent's Park, and the soul slips in."³³ Material things in her novels serve as an anchor or a catalyst for the character's inner reveries, that is, Woolf was interested not in the material circumstances themselves, but the way these circumstances influence and inspire the individual minds of her characters. Moreover, the mention of external cues about actual narrative chronology and location are suppressed and only occur at places where a certain assurance is needed, a plank in the sea as an offer of rest within the interior stream of thoughts and fast-flowing impressions. Woolf's realization that material cues are crucial to a writer in the endeavor to present an idea gives another reason to believe that, although coming from opposite ends, Woolf's and Bennett's convictions about writing meet in more points than either of them would ever admit.

While working on what was to become one of her best received novels, *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf was recommended by her friend T.S. Eliot to read James Joyce's book called *Ulysses*. There she was given an opportunity to examine a product of Modernist writing, where the author disrupts substantially the connection with the material dimension of reality. In her diary Woolf writes: "The book is diffuse. It is brackish. It is pretentious. It is underbred, not only in the obvious sense, but in the literary sense. A first-rate writer, I mean, respects writing too much to be tricky; startling; doing stunts...."³⁴ Woolf's sharp criticism of Joyce's experiment perhaps suggests her anxiety about what direction her own path of Modernist literature would lead. In her diary from the year she admitted: "I haven't that 'reality' gift. I insubstantise, wilfully

³³ Woolf, Virginia, Andrew McNeillie, et al. "February 1926." *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, e-book, vol. 3, Harcourt Brace, 1985, p. 62.

³⁴ Woolf, Leonard, editor. *A Writer's Diary. Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf*. Harvest Book, Harcourt, Inc. 1954. pg. 48

to some extent, distrusting reality—its cheapness.”³⁵ What became clear to her was that the method of writing exemplified by *Ulysses* keeps the novel “centred in a self, which, in spite of its tremor of susceptibility, never embraces or creates what is outside itself and beyond.”³⁶ and while she admits that the sound of breaking and falling, crashing and destruction of the Georgian reconstruction of literature is necessary, she could not be associated with Joyce’s way of doing it. She realizes that life is in the interaction between the consciousness and the exterior. This idea is echoed in Bennett’s book on writing fiction *Author’s Craft*: “Nevertheless, in the narrow individualistic novels of English literature—and in some of the best—you will find a domestic organism described as though it existed in a vacuum, or in the Sahara, or between Heaven and earth; as though it reacted on nothing and was reacted on by nothing; and as though it could be adequately rendered without reference to anything exterior to itself. How can such novels satisfy a reader who has acquired or wants to acquire the faculty of seeing life?”³⁷

As the central phenomenon of Woolf’s writing and, for that matter, of her epistemological views, could be considered the continuous interaction of a character with their material surroundings, be it an object or scene, and the influence that these external circumstances influence the content of the inner processes. In her essay “*Life is a Solid Substance*”: *Materialism and the Use of Objects in Virginia Woolf’s The Waves*, Madeline Thatcher describes Woolf’s view on material objects thus: Objects “construct the framework for existence but cannot lend meaning to it. Rather, they provide a canvas upon which humans may impose their desires and their dreams, lending meaning to their relationships in ways that can be represented or interpreted by objects.”³⁸

³⁵ Mepham, John. *Virginia Woolf. A Literary Life*. Macmillan. 1991. p. 86

³⁶ Woolf, Virginia. “Modern Fiction.” Edited by Andrew McNeillie. *The Common Reader: First series*, 1st Harvest ed., 1984. ed., Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984, p. 146.

³⁷ Bennett, Arnold. *The Author’s Craft*, IndyPublish.com, Boston, MA, 2006, p. 24.

³⁸ Thatcher, Madeline ““Life is a Solid Substance”: Materialism and the Use of Objects in Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves*.” *Criterion: A Journal of Literary Criticism*, Vol. 9 : Iss. 1, 2016, Article 9. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/criterion/vol9/iss1/9>

Thatcher continues this segment by claiming that “Woolf herself is in fact the materialist”. While there does seem to be a blind spot regarding Woolf’s use of material elements in her fiction, it is not, however, the case, that her writing is materialistic in its essence. It is my endeavor to expand the body of research dedicated to this area and help improve our understanding of Virginia Woolf’s fiction writing.

4. Main Part

As I foreshadowed in the introduction, my ambition for the main part of my thesis is the analysis of the texts with emphasis on the stabilizing and unifying function of external occurrences and material objects within the formal design and the story itself.

4.1. Mark on the Wall

4.1.1. Background and Summary

The short story *Mark on the Wall* is among the very works of fiction that Woolf produced with the emphasis on the stream-of-consciousness style. It could be said that this story stands as an introduction to her literary experimentation.

It was published in 1917 by the Hogarth Press, which was established by Virginia Woolf together with her husband, Leonard Woolf. The story was, in fact, the first publication of the press.³⁹

The story begins with a narrator, who recalls a memory of herself sitting in a chair, smoking, suddenly noticing something out of the ordinary in her room. There is a small black mark located on the wall just above the mantelpiece. This mysterious center of focus is, in fact, a snail, whose snail identity remains unknown up until the very end of the story. The narrator desires to figure out what exactly the round black substance or spot is and so, puzzled and amused, she begins to develop various theories about the identity of the mark and simultaneously allows the mark to pose as a playful provocateur rousing her imagination into activity as well as a safe anchorage for her mental reveries – returning back to this external point of reference, the black spot, prevents her from losing herself in abstraction.

³⁹ Sellers, Susan. *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, Second ed., Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 2010, p. 120.

The first of her fanciful journeys through space and time was the family that lived in her house before her. This contemplation was instigated by the idea that the mark on the wall was, in fact, a nail which had been driven into the wall by the people who owned her house before her. The stream of thoughts interrupts a sudden doubt and subsequent contemplation of the “mystery of life”, “(t)he inaccuracy of thought” and “the rapidity of life, the perpetual waste and repair”⁴⁰.

As her mental reverie continues, the narrator goes deeper and deeper into the abstract areas of experience, contemplating the realm beyond personal consciousness, that is the afterlife. She imagines what life would be like, if we did not have any preconceived notions about things, if we did not give them names. The narrator returns to the mark and begins a new stream of thought after taking another guess at what the mark is. Thus the pattern repeats until the narrator's husband, presumably, interrupts her reveries with a fact that is the true identity of the mark (“Ah, the mark on the wall! It was a snail.”⁴¹)

4.1.2. Analysis

The story is a Modernist work of art par excellence. The external facts, such as the location in space and time of the events, are suppressed. The narrator is not omniscient, because she herself is not able to say for certain which day the event took place (“Perhaps it was the middle of January”⁴²). The author uses the technique of stream of consciousness to represent the flow of thoughts as organically as possible. There is little to no plot—the narrator oscillates between details of external reality and random meditations on various subjects. There are several opinions as to the narrative structure of the story. Linara Bartkuvienė, for example, argues “that the narrative of the story has a circular form – a form which begins and ends with the same or

⁴⁰ “The Mark on the Wall.” *Internet Archive*. November 30, 2006, p.6. p.6. <https://archive.org/details/markonwall00wooluoft/page/6/mode/2up>

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.41

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 5.

similar elements. The story begins with the narrator's noticing of the mark on the wall (...), and so does it end"⁴³. I prefer a view of the narrative structure as resembling a flower—the stable and unmoving center being the mark on the wall and the tender and trembling petals are each of the mental reveries that the narrator has.

The story is in itself Modernist, save for one element, which goes a different direction. There is an emphasis on the importance of the material objects in achieving stability and security. Just like a tree may give solace to a tumultuous and distressed mind by way of contemplating it and venturing on a pleasant mental reverie, it can also serve to a fiction writer as a stabilizing pivot that will hold the narrative from disintegration into fragments of pure abstraction. In this particular case, the stabilizing function rests in the black mark on the wall. The mark also functions as a medium through which a character may access the reality beyond human perception, that is, the realm of objects.

Just as the recounting begins, the narrator, while localizing the event, describes a fireplace wherein some charred coals and dancing flames seemed a "crimson flag flapping from the castle tower"⁴⁴ and "cavalcade of red knights riding up the side of the black rock."⁴⁵ This free association may give the reader a clue as to what goes on in the mind of the narrator. It is possible that the narrator is thinking about the war, which was going on at the time when the event takes place. Suddenly, the narrator notices a black spot on the wall and that gives her a sense of relief by providing a digression from the distressing thoughts relating to battle or war.

The narrator is not able to account for the round black mark, but suspects it could be an old nail for a picture, which the previous owners of the house

⁴³ Bartkuvienė, Linara. "Virginia Woolf's Aesthetics of Modern Fiction: Search for Form in a Short Story "Mark on the Wall"." *Literatūra*, Vol. 47, No. 4, 2005, p. 7-15

⁴⁴ "The Mark on the Wall." Internet Archive. November 30, 2006, p.5.

<https://archive.org/details/markonwall00wooluoft/page/6/mode/2up>

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 5.

might have had put up. Then she goes on thinking about those people and recalls that they had “to leave this house because they wanted to change their style of furniture”⁴⁶. Such an unlikely reason being given for moving out of a house could indicate some sort of metaphorical meaning on the part of the writer, such as the idea of the drastic and total abandonment of the Materialistic and Victorian methods and values.

When the narrator returns from her contemplations back to the mark, a sudden desire seizes her to get up from her armchair and learn what the mark really is. Then she stops herself, for there is not any certainty that she would recognize it even from up close (“The inaccuracy of thought! The ignorance of humanity!”⁴⁷) goes on deeper and deeper into abstraction, until she begins to contemplate the afterlife and what things are before humans consciousness put them in a category and gives them a name (“spaces of light and dark, intersected by thick stalks, and rather higher up perhaps, rose-shaped blots of an indistinct colour—dim pinks and blues.”⁴⁸) Such a way of describing objects as nothing but vague blots of distinct colors reminds one of the mark itself, which would support the thesis, that although material objects and spaces are a vital component in Woolf’s writing, it is not the superficial concepts attributed to them which interests her, but their form, which poses as a screen or mirror, which is able to release inner visions and catalyze streams of thoughts. In his essay *the Artist’s Vision (1919)*, Roger Fry articulates his theory of art relating to objects as such:

The vision with which we regard such objects is quite distinct from the practical vision of our instinctive life. In the practical vision we have no more concern after we have read the label on the object; vision ceases the moment it has served its biological function. But the curiosity vision does contemplate the object disinterestedly; the object ex hypothesi has no significance for actual life; it is a play or

⁴⁶ “The Mark on the Wall.” *Internet Archive*. November 30, 2006, p.6.
<https://archive.org/details/markonwall00wooluoft/page/6/mode/2up>

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 7.

fancy object, and our vision dwells much more consciously and deliberately upon it. We notice to some extent its forms and colours, especially when it is new to us.⁴⁹

From this passage it is clearly discernible that Woolf's views on the said subject were not only in accordance with that of Fry, but that there is evidence of it in her short story *The Mark on the Wall*. The reluctance of the narrator to stand up and learn by close inspection what the vague mark on the wall is, as well as her distaste of learned men and their Almanachs and categories and lust for knowing for a fact supports this claim ("What are our learned men save the descendants of witches and hermits who crouched in caves and in woods brewing herbs, interrogating shrew-mice and writing down the language of the stars?"⁵⁰). To talk herself out of standing up and taking a look at the black mark, the narrator asks herself "What should I gain?—Knowledge? Matter for further speculation?"⁵¹ She assures herself that "nothing is proved, nothing is known"⁵². Human knowledge of things is not satisfactory. Woolf values the creativity and transcendence which springs from the ambiguity and vagueness and so she suspends her desire to account for things and categorize.

To put an end to unpleasant thoughts, the narrator returns the external reality in the token in the form of the mark and promptly ventures on another path into mental abstraction:

(N)ow that I have fixed my eyes upon it, I feel that I have grasped a plank in the sea; I feel a satisfying sense of reality which at once turns the two Archbishops and the Lord High Chancellor to the shadows of shades. Here is something definite, something real. Thus, waking from a midnight dream of horror, one hastily turns on

⁴⁹ Fry, Roger Eliot. "An Essay in Aesthetics." *Vision and Design*, e-book, London, Chatto & Windus, 1920. p.

⁵⁰ "The Mark on the Wall." *Internet Archive*. November 30, 2006, p. 1 [.https://archive.org/details/markonwall00wooluoft/page/6/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/markonwall00wooluoft/page/6/mode/2up)

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 11.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 11.

the light and lies quiescent, worshipping the chest of drawers, worshipping solidity, worshipping reality, worshipping the impersonal world which is a proof of some existence other than ours.⁵³

Narrator likens the material objects to a “plank in the sea”⁵⁴. The representation of material reality as something solid and abstract realm as fluid, such as the sea or a stream. According to her metaphysical view of the world, under the crust of the human world of separate entities there hides a realm of selflessness, where one drifts away on a featureless flux.⁵⁵ In her fiction, Woolf utilizes material elements as the planks on the sea of consciousness. They function as a lighthouse for the reader, to help them navigate the sea of the stream of consciousness, which dominates her fiction.

4.2. To the Lighthouse

4.2.1. Background and Summary

The Modernist novel *To the Lighthouse* was written in 1927. This three-part book employs heavily the stream of consciousness as a technique for the representation of individual character’s inner contemplations and reflections. The story is set in a summer house on the Isle of Skye, where the Ramsay family and their guests spend their holiday. The external duration of the events in the first and third section titled “The Window” and “The Lighthouse”, respectively, is one day each. Between those two sections ten years of narrative time passes. The second and the shortest section, named “Time Passes” represents an impersonal life of things.

As to the storyline of the book, Arnold Bennett summarises it eloquently in his review of the book for the Evening Standard: ‘A group of people plan to sail in

⁵³ “The Mark on the Wall.” *Internet Archive*. November 30, 2006, p. 13. <https://archive.org/details/markonwall00wooluoft/page/6/mode/2up>

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 12.

⁵⁵ Cygan, Philippe. “Unity and Fragmentation in Four Novels by Virginia Woolf.” University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 2010, p. 123.

a small boat to a lighthouse. At the end some of them reach the lighthouse in a small boat. That is the externality of the plot.

4.2.2. Analysis

“I meant *nothing* by *The Lighthouse*. One has to have a central line down the middle of the book to hold the design together.”⁵⁶ Such was Woolf’s reply to Roger Fry’s inquiry as to the meaning of the lighthouse in the book *To the Lighthouse*. The passage from a letter to Fry echoes a theory of art that was endorsed by him: “In a picture this unity is due to a balancing of the attractions of the eye about the central line of the picture. The result of this balance of attractions is that the eye rests willingly within the bounds of the picture.”⁵⁷ As mentioned in the theoretical part, Woolf’s affinity towards visual art is undeniable. Her style of writing is essentially impressionistic, and her treatment of objects resembles that of the impressionist painters. The character of Lily Briscoe embodies the Post-impressionist way of seeing and representing objects in painting. “Then beneath the colour there was the shape. She could see it all so clearly, so commandingly, when she looked”⁵⁸ Lily sees the essence of material objects (and people) as mass, color and line: “(S)he looked at the mass, at the line, at the colour, at Mrs. Ramsay sitting in the window with James”⁵⁹. Mrs. Ramsay, the matriarch and the host, has this ability as well. In a dinner scene, there is an exquisite bowl of fruit placed at the center of the table:

Her eyes had been going in and out among the curves and shadows of the fruit, among the rich purples of the lowland grapes, then over the horny ridge of the shell, putting a yellow against a purple, a curved shape against a round shape, without knowing why she did it, or why, every time she did it, she felt more and more serene⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Woolf, Virginia, et al. “1764: To Roger Fry.” *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, e-book, vol. Volume 3, Amsterdam, Netherlands, Amsterdam University Press, 1975, p. 421.

⁵⁷ Fry, Roger Eliot. “An Essay in Aesthetics.” *Vision and Design*, e-book, London, Chatto & Windus, 1920, p. 21.

⁵⁸ Woolf, Virginia. *To the Lighthouse*. Penguin Books, 1992, p. 30.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.28.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.161.

The freer Mrs. Ramsay is from the intellectual thinking which classifies, the calmer she becomes. In the passage above we can observe the process of shedding the superficial knowledge of things (This is grape, this is banana.) and seeing the essential shape and color (“yellow against a purple, a curved shape against a round shape”⁶¹). Another instance of such phenomena is a scene right after dinner. Mrs. Ramsay leaves the company of family and friends to recalibrate and center herself in reality. She uses her skill of peeling of the layers of learned facts and sediments of connotations to get to the essence of an object and its inner stillness, to identify with it and become clean of all the societal and personal issues and worries:

She felt rather inclined just for a moment, to stand still after all that chatter, and pick out one particular thing; the thing that mattered; to detach it; separate it off; clean it of all the emotions and odds and ends of things, and so hold it before her, and bring it to the tribunal where, ranged about in conclave, sat the judges she had set up to decide these things. Is it good, is it bad, is it right or wrong? Where are we all going to? and so on. So she righted herself after the shock of the event, and quite unconsciously and incongruously, used the branches of the elm trees outside to help her to stabilise her position. Her world was changing: they were still. The event had given her a sense of movement. All must be in order. She must get that right and that right, she thought, insensibly approving of the dignity of the trees' stillness⁶²

The following paragraph exemplifies Woolf's description of material and insubstantial elements in her fiction. The primary quality of material objects and exterior reality is stability and stillness, meanwhile abstractions are of fluid and flowing nature.

⁶¹ Woolf, Virginia. *To the Lighthouse*. Penguin Books, 1992, p.61

⁶² *Ibid*, p.167

(...) for the night was now shut off by panes of glass, which, far from giving any accurate view of the outside world, rippled it so strangely that here, inside the room, seemed to be order and dry land; there, outside, a reflection in which things waved and vanished, waterily. Some change at once went through them all, as if this had really happened, and they were all conscious of making a party together in a hollow, on an island; had their common cause against that fluidity out.⁶³

⁶³ Woolf, Virginia. *To the Lighthouse*. Penguin Books, 1992, p.145

5. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis is to analyze Virginia Woolf's views in incorporating material objects and external occurrences in fictional writing and the role that these material objects have. The conclusion of my analysis is that in both works there is an emphasis on the importance of the material objects in achieving stability and security. They also serve to a fiction writer as a stabilizing pivot that will hold the narrative from disintegration into fragments of pure abstraction. In the theoretical section I provide background to Woolf's writing and her influences. In the main or practical part, I examine the importance of the material objects and external occurrences in the short story *Mark on the Wall* and the novel *To the Lighthouse*.

During her path of evolution as a writer, Woolf realized that she cannot write about the subjective and psychological aspects of reality without grounding the passages in her writing into an objective, external context. These findings are apparent also in the lives of her characters. They seek external elements to escape the perilous seas of their mind. In the short story *Mark on the Wall*, it is the mark itself, which helps the narrator stabilize her mind and ground it in the here-and-now, so that she can venture on mental travels and contemplate abstract concepts without losing herself in pure abstraction. In the novel *To the Lighthouse*, I focused on way the characters, mainly females, see material objects. I found that these characters are able to penetrate through the superficial level of knowledge and see the pure forms of objects. These essential objects bring security and calm to them.

My thesis is necessarily inexhaustive and there are elements, which need further study, for example, Woolf's explicit stances on pure abstraction.

Resumé

V úvodu své práce stručně uvádím hlavní tezi, která říká, že Virginia Woolfová považovala materiální objekty za velmi důležitý element v psaní, jak po stránce struktury, tak v ději. Tímto tvrzením bych ráda osvětlila literární elementy Woolfové, které považuji za upozaděné na úkor její kritiky Materialismu a důraz na nehmotnou stránku reality a vnitřní prožitky postav. V bakalářské práci uvádím informace o struktuře mé práce a obsahu těchto částí. Dále uvádím seznam děl, která budu analyzovat. Těmito díly je krátká povídka *Mark on the Wall*, česky *Skvrna na stěně* a román *To the Lighthouse*, s českým názvem *K Majáku*. a Teoretická část je rozdělena do dvou částí. V první části nazvané *Woolf's Influences* poskytuji kontext života Virginii Woolfové jako spisovatelky.

První část kapitoly *Woolf's Influences* nese název *Father's Influence*, druhá *Sestra Vanessa*, třetí část *Roger Fry and (Post-)Impressionism* a poslední je *Russian Fiction*. Toto pozadí je klíčové pro pochopení myšlení autorky a teoretických postojů, což umožňuje čtenáři lépe porozumět praktické části práce a závěrům, které z ní vyvozují. Mezi její nejvýraznější vlivy patří její otec Leslie Stephen, který ji vychoval v literatuře a literární kritice i filozofii. Další významný vliv na autorčino psaní měla její sestra Vanessa, která byla sama umělkyní. Ta dala Woolfové určitý vhled do teorie výtvarného umění. Dopad výtvarného umění na styl psaní Woolfové byl obrovský. Její přítel Roger Fry ji uvedl do světa postimpresionismu a dal jí užitečný nástroj pro psaní beletrie. Mimořádně inspirativní pro Woolfovo psaní, pokud jde o důraz na nepodstatné a subjektivní, byli ruští spisovatelé.

Ve druhé části teoretické části své práce, nazvané *Materialismus a modernismus*, načrtávám pozadí vztahu Woolfové k jejím současníkům a její místo v modernistické literární revoluci. Představuji také koncept materialismu a Woolfových postojů vůči materialistickým spisovatelům, zejména vůči Arnoldu Bennettovi.

V hlavní části mé diplomové práce, která je rozdělena do dvou kapitol nazvaných: *Mark on the Wall* (Skvrna na zdi) a *To the Lighthouse* (K majáku). Každá z těchto kapitol se dále dělí na Background and summary kde uvádím kontext k analyzovaným literárním dílům a *Analysis*, což je praktická část, kde díla analyzuji a dokládám svá zjištění.

V poslední části mé bakalářské práce, tedy závěru, znova uvádím svou tezi a výsledky analýzy uvedených literárních děl, tedy *Mark on The Wall* a *To the Lighthouse*. V těchto dílech jsem našla důkazy pro své tvrzení, že materiální objekty a vnější realita, jsou pro Virginiu Woolfovou velmi důležité aspekty, její fikce. Tyto elementy dodávají narativní strukturu jejích děl rámeček a stabilitu. V ději děl mají materiální objekty a vnější děje význam pro postavy, které díky interakci s těmito elementy získají stabilitu a klid.

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Annotation:

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Department: Department of English and American Studies

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Abstract:

The aim of this thesis is to analyze Virginia Woolf's views in incorporating material objects and external occurrences in fictional writing and the role that these material objects have. In the theoretical section I provide background to Woolf's writing and her influences. In the main or practical part I examine the importance of the material objects in achieving stability and security and their function as a stabilizing pivot that holds hold the narrative from disintegration into fragments of pure abstraction.

Anotace:

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Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název práce: *Záležitost Reality: Význam materiálních objektů ve vybraných dílech Virginii Woolfové*

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Klíčová slova: materialita, stabilita, fluidita, vědomí, Modernismus, Materialismus, Bennett, Joyce, *Skvrna na zdi*, *K Majáku*, Postimpresionismus

Abstrakt:

Cílem této bakalářské práce je analýza vybraných děl Virginii Woolfové, tedy *Skvrna na Stěně* a *K Majáku* se zaměřením na roli materiálních objektů a vnějších okolností v narativě. V teoretické sekci poskytnu přehled uměleckých a filosofických vlivů Woolfové a v praktické části zkoumám důležitost materiálních objektů pro zajištění stability a jistoty pro postavy jejich děl a také stabilizační a rámovací funkci těchto objektů a vnějších okolností, které zabraňují desintegraci narativy v inkoherentní abstrakci.