

POLITICS AND MODERNITY: HANNAH ARENDT, VIRGINIA WOOLF,
WILLIAM FAULKNER



NAGEHAN YANAR

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BY

NAGEHAN YANAR

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PLAGIARISM

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Nagehan Yanar

ABSTRACT

The present dissertation weaves together literature with political theory, creating a conversation between Hannah Arendt, Virginia Woolf, and William Faulkner. Drawing upon Arendt's critique of modernity, this study lays bare affinities between Arendt and Woolf, with a keen interest in their reflections on modernity, tradition, and history. By setting out to examine such parallels, it also analyzes their common arguments about violence and totalitarianism that illuminate their understanding of politics as well as the role of narrative in the twentieth century. In what follows, this dissertation scrutinizes Arendt's conceptions of the public and the private sphere and then applies these terms to Woolf's novel *To The Lighthouse*. I shall first consider Mrs Ramsay's *worldlessness*, exploring the power of narrative in linking the private and the public, and then turn to Arendt's notion of privacy to propose a countervailing argument for her *loneliness*. This argument will unearth that the household sphere is not only the *space of worldlessness* but also the *shelter of togetherness*. The dissertation also contends that Arendt's account of nature resonates in Woolf's novel. In the rest of the study, my purpose is to argue the meaning of the political for Faulkner and to pursue the traces of the possibility of action and freedom in his novel *The Sound and the Fury*. Focusing on the characters' commitment to the past and their struggle in a capitalist society, this dissertation proposes rethinking Arendt's concepts of the social, labor, loneliness, forgiveness, and freedom in the context of Faulkner's novel.

Keywords: politics, public sphere, private sphere, narrative, history, modernity

ÖZET

Bu tez Hannah Arendt, Virginia Woolf ve William Faulkner arasında bir diyalog kurarak edebiyatı siyaset teorisiyle bir araya getirir. Arendt'in modernite eleştirisinden yararlanarak bu çalışma, Arendt ve Woolf arasındaki benzerlikleri, modernite, gelenek ve tarih üzerine düşüncelerine odaklanarak açığa çıkarır. Bu tür paralellikleri belirtirken, siyaset anlayışlarını ve anlatının yirminci yüzyıldaki rolünü aydınlatan şiddet ve totalitarizm konusunda ortak argümanlarını da açıklamaktadır. Ardından bu tez, Arendt'in özel ve kamusal alan kavramlarını inceler ve bu terimleri Woolf'un *To The Lighthouse (Deniz Feneri)* romanına uygular. Öncelikle özel ile kamusal arasında bağlantı kurmada anlatının gücünü keşfederek Mrs Ramsay'in *dünyasızlığını* ele alacağım ve sonra yalnızlığını telafi eden bir argüman sunmak amacıyla Arendt'in mahremiyet kavramına başvuracağım. Bu argüman, hane alanının sadece *dünyasızlık alanı* değil, aynı zamanda *birlikteliğin sığınağı* olduğunu açığa çıkaracaktır. Tez ayrıca Arendt'in doğa tanımının Woolf'un romanında yankılandığını öne sürer. Çalışmanın geri kalanında amacım, Faulkner için politik olanın anlamını tartışmak ve *The Sound and the Fury (Ses ve Öfke)* romanında özgürlüğün ve eylemin izlerini aramaktır. Bu tez, karakterlerin geçmişe olan bağlılığına ve kapitalist bir toplumda mücadelelerine odaklanarak, Arendt'in toplumsal olan, emek, yalnızlık, bağışlama ve özgürlük kavramlarını Faulkner'ın romanı bağlamında yeniden düşünmeyi önerir.

Anahtar kelimeler: siyaset, kamusal alan, özel alan, anlatı, tarih, modernite

To my family,

For their unconditional love



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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Thinking with Arendt

Virginia Woolf, in her diary, proclaims that there is polarization and priority of “I” rather than “We” in the political sphere by giving a clue of her diagnosis of politics without knowing that her sharp critique will overlap with Hannah Arendt years later: “Politics now a mere ‘I told you so ... You did. I didn’t.’ I shall cease to read the papers. Sink at last into contemplation” (Woolf, 1915, pp.304-305). In a similar vein to Woolf, William Faulkner voices his critique of inauthentic politics, reflecting on the barrenness of spontaneous action and human freedom in the fragile basis of the political realm: “Politics is merely one more of the clumsy methods to make and hold good that condition in which all man shall be free” (Faulkner, 2004, p.87). Then, what is politics? The straightforward answer to the first question of the present dissertation, considering Faulkner and Woolf, will entail turning to Hannah Arendt, one of the prominent political theorists of all time.

Arendt’s *oeuvre* sustains its relevance and timelessness in the contemporary world par excellence. Arendt’s political theory is interwoven with her reflection on *the human condition* in the twentieth century, with a keen interest in the emergence of totalitarian regimes, social and political justice, human rights, active citizenship, and the Jewish question. The unprecedented and unexpected political turmoils in her age, such as totalitarianism and fascism, are the indispensable core of Arendt’s political thought. Although Arendt’s writings on public and social issues are coherent and relevant for the twenty-first century, her political theory does *not prescribe* an array of suggestions about ideal state or society but *describes* human activities directly associated with politics,

namely, labor, work, and action. Thus, the flexibility and feasibility of her thoughts are the motivation of the present research project. With a palpable desire to weave together literature with political theory from a transdisciplinary perspective, this dissertation aims to establish a critical conversation between Hannah Arendt, Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner.

After creating a political dialogue between Woolf and Arendt in the second chapter, this dissertation raises particular questions about two groundbreaking modernist novels from the lens of Arendt. In *To The Lighthouse*, how would Woolf use the Arendtian conceptions of the public and the private sphere? To what extent can Mrs Ramsay annihilate the boundaries between the public and the private? What is the critical role of narrative in linking the public and the private sphere? How does Woolf differentiate nature from the common world in the Arendtian sense? More than that, how would Woolf epitomize the fragmented historiography in her narrative? In what follows, I will focus on another prominent modernist living on a different continent, William Faulkner. In the rest of the dissertation explored Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, I hope to pose these specific questions: Is there a form of authentic politics in Faulkner? Why is the world of the novel dominated by labor? What does the social mean for Faulkner? Given that the obsession with the past eradicates authentic action, is there a role of the faculty of forgiving to remedy the burden of the past in his novel?

First and foremost, thinking with Arendt entails examining and comprehending her revolutionary notion of politics. Along with an abiding *amor mundi*, the love of the world, Arendt's account of politics sheds new light on the meaning of *being-with-others*

in the public sphere.¹ Politics, for Arendt, does not correspond to personal benefits, polarization, homogenization of individuals, or resentment of other's differences and distinctions. Her understanding of politics is bereft of reducing people to sameness. It thereby signals to embrace otherness of the Other considering common interests and offers a space of dialogue and freedom, through which the individual can confirm the particularity of the self: "While all aspects of the human condition are somehow related to politics, this plurality is specifically *the* condition ... of all political life" (Arendt, 1998, p.7). As George Kateb puts it: "Politics is essentially what some do to others, rather than – as with Arendt – what all do together. She even holds that ruling is antithetical to authentic politics" (2006, p.132). Given that politics amounts to dealing with common concerns, deliberation, and exchanging thoughts in togetherness, Arendt's scope of politics exiles the practice of violence from the public sphere, and, to a significant extent, it offers a space of authentic or spontaneous action and human freedom altogether.

Arendt offers two remedies for the irreversibility and unpredictability of experiences and stories initiated by action: The faculty of forgiving and the faculty of promising. Forgiveness compensates for the irreversibility of what has already happened in the past, whereas promising reduces the possibility of adverse experiences in the unforeseen future (Arendt, 1998, p.237). The reflections on politics and the theory of action demand a question of the definition of *the world* simultaneously. "I really believe that," Arendt says, "you can only act in concert and I really believe that you can only think by yourself" (Arendt & Hill, 1979, p.305). What, then, is Arendt's notion of *the world*?

¹ At this point, Arendt writes that: "Politics arises in what lies between men and is established as relationships" See (2005, p.95).

The straightforward answer to this question would be that: The world, the public sphere, is “a space of appearance” in which the individual unearths the self through deeds and words, namely, the manifestation of the particularity of the self in plurality. At the same time, the individual achieves a sense of objective reality. In this world, Arendt (1998) claims that “action has the closest connection with the human condition of natality” (p.9). In *The Human Condition*, Arendt (1998) directly affiliates action with her notion of natality, for “the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something new, that is, of acting” (p.9). Through natality, the individual is thrown into the world where her story is forged by her own actions and by being exposed to the actions of others. In Arendt’s remark: “Since action is the political activity par excellence, natality, and not mortality, may be the central category of political, as distinguished from metaphysical, thought” (1998, p.9). Action, labor, and work stand for *vita activa* as the fundamental activities in the public sphere. For Arendt, “the biological processes of human body,” such as growth and decay, are closely related to *labor* activity (1998, p.7). Her notion of *work* is associated with establishing the shared world, “an ‘artificial’ world of things,” created by the human hand —the exact opposite of nature or earth (Arendt, 1998, p.7). The world, to Arendt, offers unpredictable stories, memories, the web of human relationships, and a variety of perspectives coming from many-sidedness. In this way, Arendt prefers “poetizing the world, or poetically thinking it through,” in Michael Janover’s nicely words (2011, p.26).

Margaret Canovan argues that Arendt does not directly define the public as political; however, “she does tend to assume that the link between publicity and the

disclosure of reality in its fullness must also be a link between reality and free politics” (Canovan, 1994, p.113). In this regard, the space of appearance, political realm, “can also be understood as the space of truth” (Brennan & Malpas, 2011, p.40). Language exerts a profound role in Arendt’s understanding of the construction of the self in this realm since the individual can situate himself or herself in the public sphere with the aid of language:

In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world, while their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in the unique shape of the body and sound of the voice (Arendt, 1998, p.179).

Her diagnosis of *worldlessness* unfolds the falsity of romantic inwardness (*innerlichkeit*), which relegates the individual to a space of mood, and this relegation shatters the objective reality of the world and of the self. The shelter of the inwardness in the private sphere devalues the importance of different perspectives and the capacity to act. Arendt (1998) argues that:

To live an entirely private life means above all to be deprived of things essential to a truly human life: to be deprived of the reality that comes from being seen and heard by others, to be deprived of an ‘objective’ relationship with them that comes from being related to and separated from them through the intermediary of a common world of things, to be deprived of the possibility of achieving something more permanent than life itself (p.58).

Furthermore, Arendt’s differentiation between the modern age and the modern world demonstrates that the modern age begins in the seventeenth century and comes to an end at the beginning of the twentieth century, whereas the modern world, which

signals to her age, is initiated “with the first atomic explosions” (Arendt, 1998, p.6). The banishment of the modern subject to space of inwardness finds a root in the Cartesian doubt in the modern age. In *Between Past and Future*, Arendt (1961) maintains that: “The spiritual homelessness of modern man finds its first expressions in this Cartesian perplexity and the Pascalian answer” (p.38). In that case, Arendt’s arguments can be considered “an analysis of the de-worlding of the public world in the modern age” (Villa, 1995, p.189). Arendt’s critique of modernity in the twentieth century exhibits a panorama of Western societies by comprehending the flaws of the modernity process. She also attempts to give provocative responses to the falsity of some promises, such as homogenization of individuals, that is, social equality —the opposition to the confirmation of distinctions and differences in the public sphere.

Modernity signifies the erosion of human rights, the emergence of totalitarian regimes, the rise of the social and of mass society, the glorification of labor with the capitalist economy. Drawing a line between political equality and social equality, Arendt argues against the victory of equality in society, which dispels differences of people in the public world. In this sense, her critique of social equality is related to her sheer objection to eradicating nuances —a call for embracing otherness. Arendt also opposes the pure and unhistorical approach to being, and her hankering to save the life from the barrenness of abstract human nature and of human rights demonstrates her insistence on “unmetaphysical” arguments. As Zeynep Direk (2020) brilliantly puts it:

It is worth noting that her strategy is a good example of what we may call a ‘phenomenology of crisis.’ She makes a brilliant application in the political realm, of the originally Heideggerian phenomenological insight that something is best

seen (in its being) in a situation in which there is a failure in its proper functioning(p.181).

Arendt's discussions of loneliness and the loss of confirmation of the self —the latter is only possible with the presence of others in the shared world —are closely related to her critiques of totalitarianism and the rise of mass society in the twentieth century. One of the hallmarks of totalitarianism is that it assails particularity of people, culminating in the destruction of individuality, for “the totalitarian assault upon human nature is an attempt to create something closer to nature than human beings ought to be, and to destroy the specifically human qualities that distinguish human beings from animals, namely their individuality and their capacity to initiate action and thought” (Canovan, 1994, p.25). Focusing on the destructive consequences of totalitarianism and concentration camps, Arendt identifies modernity as an irrevocable break with tradition, through which we could no longer evaluate the present. In this regard, Arendt endows narrative with an unwavering ground to unearth the self in modernity. For Arendt, the self is disclosed in narrative by returning to “pearls” of the past, memories, and experiences shared with other people. With the aid of narrative, writing on the past is a rebirth into the modern present, spotlighting the question of *who*. As Nancy Fraser observes, “Seeking to inhabit the space ‘between past and future’, she self-consciously cultivated a way of thinking that was both historicizing and present-focused” (2004, p.2).

After this brief introduction to Arendt's thought, thinking with Arendt about the *human condition* in the twentieth century will lead us to the two greatest novelists, whose works are politically and historically loaded, pondering similar questions raised by Arendt: Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner. Given that reflecting on the *human*

condition demands the embracement of diversity, namely, what Arendt describes as plurality for authentic politics, I will set my lens not only on a country, England, but also on a different continent, America, to involve the powerful and provocative voice of Faulkner.²

The second chapter, *Modernity, Totalitarianism, Violence: Arendt and Woolf*, explores their engagement with the political perplexities in the twentieth century. What is politics for Woolf? What does the break with tradition mean in terms of historiography or narrative for Woolf and Arendt? To what extent can Woolf share resemblances with Arendt in her arguments about totalitarianism and violence? These questions will require examining the definition of politics and of modernity for them. I will draw attention to two prevailing but misleading readings of Arendt and Woolf: Arendt was an anti-modernist, and Woolf was an aloof intellectual toward public issues. However, in this chapter, I am interested in Arendt's modernist tendencies rather than why Arendt *must not* be called an anti-modernist. *Reading Arendt against Arendt* would be barren to see how her thoughts are robust responses to the problem of violence, propaganda and total domination. In a similar fashion, I will focus on Woolf's political mind that exhibits her involvement in the public sphere. To my interpretation, for Woolf, the artist is a political animal, *zoon politikon*, considering Arendt's interpretation of Aristotle's remark. As such, Melba-Cuddy Keane's famous phrase for Woolf, "a democratic highbrow" (2003, p.13), will find a new path in a constellation with Arendt.

² It is striking to note that Woolf, in her diary, writes that: "Nobody could produce a great work in America. One sweats all day and the dirt sticks to one's face. The nights are as hot as the days. Nobody sleeps" (1915, p.221). Woolf, in 1937, mentions Faulkner: "By the way, I have been sharply abused in Scrutiny who, L. says, calls me a cheat in *The Waves* and *The Tears* most intelligently (and highly) praised by F. Faulkner in America—and that's all" (1915, p.283).

Judith Allen points out a short but inspirational comparison between Woolf and Arendt on the ground that they share a particular affinity in their common emphasis on the acceptance of nuances and divisions among humans to prevent patriotism that leads to war (Allen, 2010, p.102). On this account, Allen quotes from Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, "for whoever is not included is excluded, whoever is not with me is against me, so the world loses all the nuance and pluralistic aspects that [they assume] have become too confusing for the masses" (cited in Allen, 2010, p.102). In the second chapter, I will develop Allen's perspective, which offers a more profound comparison between Arendt and Woolf, with a focus on their arguments about the practice of violence, the neglect of the world, total domination, the role of propaganda. In what follows, I will consider their *love of the public sphere* that offers a space of authentic action and freedom to women and men. These are the parallel points between Woolf and Arendt, I shall argue, in the second chapter.

Many critics explore Woolf's notions of history and modernity. Angeliki Spiropoulou, drawing on Woolf's critiques of causality, progress, and linearity in chronology, explores her understanding of history in a linkage with Walter Benjamin (2010, p.6). Liesl M. Olson, as a paradigm of Woolf's vision of fragmented history, argues Woolf's commitment to ordinary and daily experiences (2003, p.44). In the second chapter, what differentiates my perspective from the works written of Woolf's discussions of history and modernity will be that I claim that Woolf's reflections on the gap between the past and the present, the break with tradition, in modernity demonstrate the potential similarities with Arendt's notions of history and fragmented historiography, or narrative. I shall argue Woolf's understanding of the past, history, historiography, and

of modernity from the perspective of Arendt. Then, Woolf's and Arendt's historical consciousness will take us to their discussions of violence and totalitarianism. I will explore that both exclude the practice of violence from the public sphere, where Arendt highlights as the political realm and that they embrace plurality for the space of authentic action. Given that the artist's involvement in the public sphere is inevitable amongst political turmoils, narrative, for Arendt and Woolf, forges the common world.

Considering their potential affinities, how could we evaluate Arendt's and Woolf's critical reflections on the *human condition* and politics in the twentieth century? By pondering this primary question, I will focus on Woolf's political writings and her essays on the emergence of modernism: *Three Guineas*, *Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid*, *The Leaning Tower*, *The Artist and The Politics*, *Modern Fiction*, *How It Strikes A Contemporary*, and *The Sketch of the Past*.

Woolf, like Arendt, was very much aware of what it meant to live under totalitarianism. Woolf, as Arendt did, used her intellectual power and diligence bravely to criticize her age's irreversible and unpredictable political events. Woolf was a sharp critic of fascism, the modern wars, and human rights by excluding violence from the space of the political realm. As we shall see, Woolf proposes what I will call the *weaponization of thought* rather than violence. In addition to their similarities, the difference between Arendt and Woolf is that Woolf's critique of fascism is intimately related to her analysis of fascism situated in the household sphere, namely, patriarchal structure. As I will discuss in the second chapter, their different standpoints will bring them together in another point: The household is a space where the possibility of political action is eradicated. For the third chapter, this point will require exploring the conceptions of the

public and the private sphere in Woolf's outstanding novel *To The Lighthouse* from the perspective of Arendt.

The third chapter, *The Public and the Private Sphere: To The Lighthouse*, examines the Arendtian conceptions of the public and the private sphere and applies these concepts to *To The Lighthouse*, which, amongst Woolf's novels, is the most sweeping one that initiates a discussion of these terms. Recent scholarship offers rich and wide-ranging interpretations of the novel, with a focus on psychoanalytic criticism, literary impressionism, and autobiographical details. However, I will draw attention to the widespread feminist reading of *To The Lighthouse*. According to this standard reading of the novel, particularly of the life of Mrs Ramsay, the household sphere is one of the fundamental reasons for Mrs Ramsay's deprivation of a diligent and creative personality, resulting in her banishment to "nothingness." More than that, for this prevailing interpretation, Mrs Ramsay, an absolute *negative* figure, solely practices the expectations of her Victorian marriage. Anna Snaith considers the historical definitions of the public and the private sphere proposed by theorists, including Hannah Arendt, "limited relevance" and "erasing gender" for Woolf's writings (2003, p.8). Although Woolf confirms the decline of the public world due to World War II, as seen in Arendt's lament for *the decline of the public sphere*, the Arendtian lens for Woolf's *oeuvre* is "too generalized" perspective (Snaith, 2003, p.8). From Snaith's verdict, we can conclude that Arendt's declaration of the decline of the public sphere prevents us from tracing these concepts in Woolf's writings. Another critic Jane de Gay claims that Woolf's portrait of Mrs Ramsay epitomizes Victorian womanhood, a portrayal of passive femininity criticized by Woolf in her lecture *Professions for Women* (2006, p.102). De Gay's

argument is that: "Mrs Ramsay's status as the angel or ghost: although she is alive in this section of the novel, there is a suggestion that she has no existence of her own when she is not the object of someone else's thoughts or vision. Reduced to a symbol, she is absent" (2006, p.108). "Angel in the House" hinges on the *negative* understanding of the household sphere where a woman is barred from nurturing her mind and personality. Another common refrain of Woolf is based on the assumption that Woolf is solely interested in her characters' inner world or consciousness. Most famously, Erich Auerbach maintains that: "The ideas arising in consciousness are not tied to the present of the exterior occurrence which releases them" (1974, p.541). In that case, for Woolf, the inner world takes priority over the outer world; thus, the latter loses its objective and informative significance over the former.

However, that is not the whole story for Woolf and for *To The Lighthouse*. In the third chapter, I will argue the *positive* meaning of the household sphere in the novel. From the lens of Arendt, I shall claim that the home in the novel is not only the *space of worldlessness* but also the *shelter of togetherness*. Indeed, my argument carries one more purpose: The positive portrayal of the household sphere also aims to respond to the claims that Arendt is utterly indifferent to private life and that she devalues the family life and its intimacy, canonizing only the public sphere (Wolin, 2015, pp.64-65). As Anna Snaith considered, one might ask to what degree Arendt's gender blind thoughts positively interpret the private sphere for women. Arendt's famous for her indifference to feminism has been well established;³ however, her notion of privacy is valuable and

³ For the heated discussion about Arendt's indifference to feminism, see Elisabeth Young Bruehl's *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (1977, p.273), also see Benhabib's *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (2003, p.2).

deserves attention, which poses more extensive questions.⁴ As Mary Diez observes, Arendt's thoughts do not emphasize the duality between the powerful and the powerless or the repressed and the victor: "Arendt thus never explicitly confirms the patriarchal hegemony or the power relations regarding the male and female in society though she never set pen to paper directly her thoughts in a systematic way" (Dietz, 1991, p.239).

In her biography of Rahel Varnhagen, Arendt sheds light on the inwardness of Rahel, with a particular focus on Rahel's apolitical persona, resulting in "worldlessness," the deprivation of the world (Benhabib, 2003, p.11). It is penned in the 1930s as Arendt's Habilitationsschrift, and the book documents Rahel's Jewish identity, her pariah position in society, the question of assimilation, and identity transformation in the nineteenth century. Arendt's critical approach to Rahel's transformation and Seyla Benhabib's penetrating analysis of what Arendt has in mind of Rahel's life, in her book *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, have guided me to find my interpretation of the life of Mrs Ramsay. Benhabib (2003) remarks:

Romantic introspection leads one to lose a sense of reality by losing the boundaries between the private and the public, the intimate and the shared.

Romantic introspection compounds the "worldlessness" from which Rabel Varnhagen suffers to the very end. The category of the "world" is the missing link between the "worldless" reality of Rahel Levin Varnhagen and her

⁴ In Jerome Kohn's remark: "The spirit of revolution is fully realised in the world when men and women in action have reached, in Arendt's words, 'the point of no return,' that is, when it is no longer possible to turn back, like a clock that can be reset" (2018, p.13).

contemporaries, and Hannah Arendt's own search for a recovery of the "public world" through authentic political action in her political philosophy(p.11).

In a similar vein to Rahel, the apolitical persona of Mrs Ramsay, I will claim, overlaps with Arendt's definition of *worldlessness* in the sense that she is deprived of political action in the private sphere. In this regard, I will focus on the role of narrative to *deconstruct* the boundaries between the public and the private sphere and then examine the function of narrative in linking the inner and the outer world. However, my primary purpose is to propose a countervailing argument for Mrs Ramsay's *worldlessness*, which aims to take the novel out of the scope of the standard feminist reading. For this purpose, the third chapter scrutinizes Arendt's notion of privacy to illuminate how the dinner party scene represents the intimacy of private property and the common world created by Mrs Ramsay, where the characters create a community around a table —as a positive exemplification of the domestic sphere. In response to Auerbach, I will argue how the outer world exerts an informative and profound role in Mrs Ramsay's romantic introspection, through which she can partake in public issues, through which she can find a political voice. The public sphere preserves its presence in the private world as such. In what follows, in this chapter, I will discuss the scenes where Mrs Ramsay's apolitical but creative persona craves a political voice for public issues. These points are the primary proofs that Woolf's concern in the novel is not only her character's mind or consciousness but also social and public matters of the history of the present by offering a political reading of the novel. Thus, they demonstrate the critical arguments that Erich Auerbach, Anna Snaith, and Jane de Gay have failed to notice in their critiques. As I will argue, Mrs Ramsay's inner world is interwoven with the common world *par excellence*.

In particular, the third chapter is *not* a prevailing feminist reading of *To The Lighthouse* but a *political reading* of the novel. Mrs Ramsay's powerful, provocative, and late-discovered political voice cannot be separated from the turmoils of the public sphere where Arendt signals as the political arena. Woolf invites the reader to think politically by merging the private with the public. In what follows, the arguments on the political and historical consciousness of Mrs Ramsay will entail a discussion of Woolf's representation of the fragmented historiography in a linkage with Arendt. I will also examine how Woolf's portrayal of nature is akin to Arendt's notion of nature, which is the exact opposite of her definition of the public sphere. My following argument will be that Arendt's differentiation between the world and the earth or nature is apparent in the second section of the novel, *Time Passes*. The third chapter concludes that Woolf shares a resemblance with Arendt in emphasizing her objection to pseudo-reality in language; in this way, Woolf believes in taking responsibility for the public sphere through narrative.

In the fourth chapter, *Between Past and Present: The Sound and the Fury*, I will shift from England to a different continent for one of the greatest modernists, William Faulkner. Reflecting on Arendt's notions of the public and the private sphere, politics, modernity in the previous chapters will necessitate examining her critique of labor and the rise of the social. Besides, Arendt's theory of action will raise new questions regarding forgiving and promising in the last chapter of the dissertation. Considerably and widely, many critics focus on Faulkner's commitment to the past after the Civil War, historical, political, and cultural background of the South. Amongst them, Richard H. King's stimulating essay, "*A Fable*": *Faulkner's Political Novel?*, has provoked my ideas on the relationship between Arendt and Faulkner. In his essay, King provides a

comprehensive dialogue between Arendt and Faulkner, with a keen interest in Arendt's notion of politics and Faulkner's *A Fable*. King and I agree on the conclusion that although Faulkner's narrative documents public issues, he cannot accommodate politics in the Arendtian sense and that his failure is the unavoidable consequence of the political perplexities of the South where the decline of the public realm is observed. What differentiates my perspective from King's will be that I argue the past's and labor's power in annihilating authentic action and freedom, their role in eradicating the political realm, and the power of forgiving and of promising for the irreversible and unpredictable actions in the context of Faulkner's magnum opus *The Sound and The Fury*. To understand the characters' obsession with the past, Jason Compson's struggle with the glorification of labor in a consumer society, the condition of plurality and sociability as a result of modernity, Quentin Compson's pariah position, and the decline of the family in the novel, Arendt sets the agenda of the fourth chapter with her concepts of labor, the social, loneliness, and freedom. I will also examine the meaning of politics, the political, for Faulkner in a linkage with Arendt. No novelist in twentieth-century American literature can be involved in Arendt's world more than Faulkner, whose novel considers similar concerns and questions raised by her.

I shall claim that what lies at the basis of Quentin's inability to initiate something new, namely, what Arendt describes as *natality*, is intimately related to his deep engagement with the past. This obsession with the past illuminates how the possibilities of freedom and action fail. The redemption for wrongdoings and mistakes cannot be possible for Quentin since his sister Caddy's promiscuity and her abandonment of home leave irreversible marks on the Compson family, culminating in Quentin's obsession with

her sexuality and the “honour” of the family. At this point, Quentin’s struggle with Caddy’s absence will lead us to consider Arendt’s solution for the irreversible and unpredictable actions, namely, the faculty of forgiving and the faculty of promising. I shall claim that Quentin is deprived of these faculties. In this regard, I will call Faulkner’s characters *the refugees of the past* in the sense that they are exiled to a new world where they lose their values and traditions, resulting in being *stateless and worldless* metaphorically.

Reflecting on Woolf and Faulkner in the context of Arendt is meaningful today, for it provides a conversation across time and a meeting of perspectives as well as new interpretations of the modernist novels. The political issues they consider are not isolated incidents in their age; thus, we can find rich and wide-ranging meanings on their horizon to make sense of contemporary society. Their thought-provoking and illuminating ideas about violence, the public and the private sphere, labor, the act of forgiving, and totalitarianism can offer fresh perspectives to ponder the *human condition* in the twenty-first century. Thinking with Arendt, in consultation with Faulkner and Woolf, summons us to grasp their time and our time in thought. The contemporary interpretations of the fictions through the lens of Arendt thereby aim to raise specific questions that transcend the historical context in which the novels are penned. For this purpose, the present dissertation attempts to merge literature with political theory. It invites scholars to reflect on Woolf and Faulkner from a new perspective along with one of the greatest theorists of all time, Hannah Arendt.

CHAPTER 2

Modernity, Totalitarianism, Violence: Arendt and Woolf

The present chapter initiates a political conversation between Hannah Arendt and Virginia Woolf regarding their reflections on modernity, history, narrative, totalitarianism, and violence. Arendt and Woolf lay bare affinities about their reception of modernity in the twentieth century. This chapter examines Woolf's political writings and early essays on modernism. In a similar line to Arendt, Woolf, situating herself in the gap between the past and the present, shares similarities with Arendt in pointing out the loss of linearity and continuity in history in the twentieth century. Considering these parallels, I shall respond to a widespread reading of Arendt as an "anti-modernist" and of Woolf as aloof "highbrow-intellectual." The consensus of fragmented historiography will also demonstrate that Woolf's understanding of such a term is closely bound up with her notion of narrative. Then, tracing their arguments on modernism, history, and narrative will require discussing Arendt's and Woolf's reflections on violence and totalitarianism from the zone of politics. My analysis in the rest of the chapter proposes a common ground between Arendt and Woolf for their common critiques of violence. Like Arendt, Woolf believes that violence eradicates distinctions, plurality, and human nature; thus, both argue that with the practice of violence in the political realm, the possibilities of spontaneous action and human freedom cease altogether.

Though Woolf and Arendt belong to different horizons of inquiry —literature and political theory— the overlap in how they render modernity in the twentieth century unearths remarkable bonds. Arendt's understanding of modernity was shaped by the

unprecedented political perplexities in her age. Most importantly, Arendt's approach both comprehends the flaws of modernity and attempts to give straightforward responses to the dilemmas of modernity. As well argued in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, the hallmarks of modernity are totalitarian regimes, such as Nazism and Stalinism, the loss of the possibilities of human freedom and spontaneous action in the public sphere, the rise of the violence and mass society, and the privilege of private interests rather than common concerns. To Arendt, modernity demands the triumph of equality, resulting in the obliteration of the distinctions in society. As Margaret Canovan (2006), one of the outstanding Arendt scholars, observes: "Ideological logicity replaced free thought, inducing people to strip themselves of individuality until they were part of a single impersonal *movement* of total domination" (p.28). Arendt points out the irreversible break with tradition due to the calamities in the twentieth century, though she underlines that the past is not a burden. It means that the valuable segments of the past can illuminate the current situation (Arendt, 1961, p.10). In this regard, Arendt quotes Faulkner: "The past is never dead, it is not even past" (cited in Arendt, 1961, p.10). As I will argue, Arendt's arguments of the past, the lacuna between the past and the present, and her discussions on totalitarianism and violence resonate in Woolf's treatment of modernity.

Before returning to Woolf's vision of modernity and to these two thinkers' crossing points, my initial purpose is to draw attention to a misleading reading of Arendt's conception of modernity. Some critics have contended that Arendt's diagnosis of modernity, along with her deep admiration for the Greek polis, was a "nostalgia" or, to

put it in Jürgen Habermas's words, "unimaginable for any modern society" (1977, p.15).¹ As a political theorist, committed to her time's public issues, Arendt's reflections on the *human condition*, human rights (considering anti-semitism and totalitarian regimes), and social and political justice could suffice to situate her as a modernist. Whatever the case, for Arendt (2005), "those who argue for a return to tradition cannot and do not want to escape the modern climate" (p.434). In setting out to see what is missing in a reading of Arendt as a "nostalgic" thinker, it is essential to emphasize that Arendt's struggle to save the past from oblivion allows us to apprehend the modern world from a fresh perspective *per se*.² I will venture to call Arendt's method a "tunnelling process,"³ drawing the terminology from Woolf, as a way of burrowing into the ruins of history to lay open new caves that connect the "pearls" of the past with the modern present. To cast light on the "treasures" of the past provides new insights into modern times as such. Thus, Arendt does not aim to establish a bridge to sustain continuity between the past and the present but to redeem the past's valuable fragments from being forgotten (D'Entreves, 1993, p.31). In *The Life of The Mind*, Arendt (1981) writes: "What has been lost is the continuity of the past as it seemed to be handed down from generation to generation, developing in the process its own consistency" (p.212). In this regard, it was not that she

¹ There are many scholars intensively standing against this widespread reading of Arendt. Richard J. Bernstein's comment, in his *Why Read Hannah Arendt Now*, is illuminating: "The starting point for her thinking about politics was neither the Greeks nor the Romans, but her personal experience" See Bernstein (2018, p.60). Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's biography of Hannah Arendt, *For Love of the World*, casts light on Arendt's engagement with political and cultural matters in her time and her concern with the Jewish Question. Seyla Benhabib, in *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, brilliantly challenges the standard interpretation of Arendt as "a political philosopher of nostalgia." Maurizio d'Entreves's analysis, in *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, also saves Arendt from reading as an "antiquarian exercise."

² At this point, Arendt quotes Tocqueville: "Since the past has ceased to throw its light upon the future, the mind of man wanders in obscurity" (cited in Arendt, 1961, p.77).

³ Woolf had something more specific and more character-driven in mind when she described her writing method as "tunnelling"— it was the pasts of her characters.

wanted to save the tradition but to reflect on the present from a new perspective altogether. After the loss of linearity in history, the present cannot be immune from the past or *was*. Arendt does not describe the *treasures* of the past “as a burden man has to shoulder and of whose dead weight the living can or even must get rid in their march into the future” (1961, p.10), but as something that is relevant to the modern present. As Maurizio d’Entrèves (1993) observes:

This exercise in remembrance, without the aid of tradition, embodying a continuity between past and present now irrevocably lost, is compared by Arendt to the activity of the pearl diver who brings to the surface the pearls and corals hidden in the depths of the sea(p.31).

For Arendt, modernity means the collapse of the bridge between the past and the present, the loss of the public sphere as a space of political realm, the failure for authentic action, and the emergence of totalitarian regimes; besides, human plurality is replaced with social equality. However, in modernity, despite the deprivation of tradition, the past continues to resonate. Arendt was indebted to Walter Benjamin in emphasizing that the break in tradition and in “the authority” was now “irreparable”, yet the past's hidden meanings must be preserved from oblivion (Arendt, 1970, p.193). “Her response to this dilemma was the same as Walter Benjamin’s: to break the chain of narrative continuity, to shatter chronology as the natural structure of narrative, to stress fragmentariness, historical dead ends, failures, and ruptures” (Benhabib, 2003, p.88). As Arendt (1961) maintains in the following:

The end of a tradition does not necessarily mean that traditional concepts have lost their power over the minds of men. On the contrary, it sometimes seems that

this power of well-worn notions and categories becomes more tyrannical as the tradition loses its living force and as the memory of its beginning recedes; it may even reveal its full coercive force only after its end has come and men no longer even rebel against it(p.26).

As it could be understood in the quoted passage, the rupture from tradition is irreversible, though Arendt is alert in confirming the effects and validity of the past in the present. After shortly providing background information, I shall argue that Woolf's standpoint on the issue of modernity resembles Arendt's, particularly through her emphasis on the loss of linearity in history. Having pointed out the rise of modernity, Woolf, in *Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown*, published in 1924, declared: "About December, 1910, human character changed" (1966, p.2). Woolf emphasizes the break with Victorian traditions, the past, the emergence of new social patterns, behaviours, lifestyles, and new developments in culture, literature, women rights. Woolf and Arendt focus on writers who lose the bond with their predecessors and who stand in the lacuna between the past and the present. For Arendt, "literature provides a particularly powerful medium for reflection on the relation between absence and presence, the 'then' and the 'now' " (Young–Ah Gottlieb, 2007, p. viii). In *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt (1981) turns to Franz Kafka's collection of aphorisms entitled "HE" to think about "where the thinking ego" is (p.111). To Arendt, when the self focuses on the thinking process, the inner time emerges. We need a certain distance to put ourselves in the clash between the past and the future: "This battleground for Kafka," Arendt writes, "is the metaphor for man's home on earth" (1981, p.205). When the mind is situated in-between the future and the past, a battle initiates to create *the present*; however, Arendt considers the present the

most “futile” and “slippery” of tenses. When we conceive of “Now,” it is already passed. Now “is no more than the clash of a past, which is no more, with a future, which is approaching and not yet there” (Arendt, 1981, p.205). Arendt’s assessment was that every new generation, who fell into an “infinite future” and “infinite past,” was forced to find its own “path of thought” (1981, p.209). By aiming to exceed the boundaries between her past and future, or her predecessors and successors, a writer, belonging to the new generation, can “create timeless works with which to transcend their own finiteness” (Arendt, 1981, p.211).

In *How It Strikes A Contemporary*, Woolf shares a common perspective with Arendt, emphasizing the clash between the past and the future, and this perspective allows us to see how Woolf situates herself in a similar battleground.⁴ Inspired by T.S. Eliot, “Woolf certainly shared Eliot’s interest in past literature, but for her, as for other women writers, the relationship was complicated by the values inscribed in the canon” (Whitworth, 2010, p.110). Woolf’s notion of modernity was inseparable from the existence of her predecessors. As she declared in her essay:

We are sharply cut off from our predecessors. A shift in the scale — the sudden slip of masses held in position for ages — has shaken the fabric from top to bottom, alienated us from the past and made us perhaps too vividly conscious of the present (Woolf, 2002, p.135).

Although literary modernism in England is ostensibly a break with the past, the burden of the past remains in the present. On this account, in her essay *The Leaning*

⁴ According to Ann Banfield, “Virginia Woolf began her writing experiments with a form arguably the modernist genre par excellence: the short story” See Banfield (2003, p.472).

Tower, Woolf concludes that: “Books descend from books as families descend from families. Some descend from Jane Austen; others from Dickens. They resemble their parents, as human children resemble their parents; yet they differ as children differ, and revolt as children revolt” (Woolf, 2015, para. 3). Considering the dead and the living, Woolf (2002) raises this question: “Is there no guidance nowadays for a reader who yields to none in reverence for the dead but is tormented by the suspicion that reverence for the dead is vitally connected with understanding of the living?” (p.132). She laments that her age is barren and that contemporary names and novels cannot be immortal for the next generation because “it is an age of *fragments*” (Woolf, 2002, p.134, my emphasis). Woolf questions the loss of linearity in history and the break with the tradition, speculating about its validity. She summons to respond to this second question: “But can we go to posterity with a sheaf of loose pages, or ask the readers of those days, with the whole of literature before them, to sift our enormous rubbish heaps for our tiny *pearls*?” (2002, p.134, my emphasis). Having confirmed non-linear history, Woolf compared the previous generation with the contemporaries. She stressed the importance of consultations with predecessors. Her admiration of *Kubla Khan*, *Don Juan*, and *Pride and Prejudice* makes this case clear that: “It is a barren and exhausted age, we repeat; we must look back with envy to the past” (Woolf, 2002, p.134). As such, Woolf argues against the autonomy of the contemporary without considering its relation to the past.

On the one hand, Woolf yearned to save the past from oblivion, but on the other hand she valued the emergence of literary modernism. Woolf’s understanding of modernity was firstly unveiled in her early essay *Modern Fiction*, published in 1919, where she discussed the emergence of modernism in the literary sphere. Woolf (2002)

notes that: “For the moderns ‘that,’ the point of interest, lies very likely in the dark places of psychology. At once, therefore, the accent falls a little differently; the emphasis is upon something hitherto ignored; at once a different outline of form becomes necessary, difficult for us to grasp, incomprehensible to our predecessors” (p.86). Having criticized H.G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy, Woolf problematized the plot structure of the previous writers, their “materialist” perspectives in prose, and their concerns of the body, not of the mind. Besides, in *How It Strikes A Contemporary*, Woolf considers the new in the literary sphere: “Modern literature, with all its imperfections, has the same hold on us and the same fascination” (2002, p.135). Ann Banfield (2003) argues that Woolf is under the influence of visual arts in her renovation of the novel, describing modernism as closely bound up with painting (pp. 472-473). In her exhaustive critique of her immediate predecessors, she points out deficiencies of the previous writers. For example, according to Woolf, they neglect to satisfy the senses and the complexity of the self considered by the Modernist writers (Woolf, 2002, p.135). Woolf claims that predecessors are under the influence of conventional realist novels and that they fail to forge a world where they can create original stories that emerge in their imagination (2002, p.136).

Like Arendt, Woolf’s reflection on modernity both aimed to unfold the forgotten aspects of the past and to recover the present as a critique of modernity. In her vision of history, Woolf admired the past but embraced the new as it was. Woolf, who was keenly aware of the transition to modernity, espoused the new and the unexpected in the public and the literary sphere. It is worth emphasizing that Woolf did not offer a “homogenous,” systematic, or “single” definition of how a modernist novel must be, and Woolf, along

with the other modernists such as James Joyce and Dorothy Richardson, preferred to push the limits of the novel (Parsons, 2007, p.15). London and its historical and cultural status exerted a profound role in her imagination. Especially, Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* ushered in "the impressionistic style of modernist narrative" and "the interplay of (modern) metropolitan theme and (modernist) experimental form" (MacKay, 2011, pp. 95-96). She was born into the time when the Victorian period, with all its customs, remained; thus, for Woolf living in the present was inseparable from partaking in the past. As Woolf (1985) explained in her essay *A Sketch of the Past*: "But while we looked into the future, we were completely under the power of the past" (p.147).

If we consider the discussions about the past, history, and the modern present, Woolf's common ground with Arendt demonstrates their reflections on the fragments in history. In *Between Past and Future*, Arendt challenges the traditional understanding of history as something universal and linear, which focuses on chauvinism and victors, and she emphasizes the daily and particular experiences. In her critique of modernity, Arendt thus does not perceive history as a continuum. Instead, her main criticism depends on the idea of progress in history. Her approach is also a rejection of history that depends on causality, an omission of occasional events. In her critique, Arendt (1961) argues that:

What the concept of process implies is that the concrete and the general, the single thing or event and the universal meaning, have parted company. The process, which alone makes meaningful whatever it happens to carry along, has thus acquired a monopoly of universality and significance (p.64).

In a similar fashion, in *Modern Fiction*, Woolf (2002) argues a firm rejection of the idea of process regarding the fragmented narrative, and she observes that: “Some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant who has him in thrall, to provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy, love interest, and an air of probability embalming the whole” (p.84). For Woolf, ordinary life is merged with “trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel” (2002, p.85). Thus, ordinary life and experiences gain particular significance to understand the universal. As Maurice Blanchot (1987) declares, “The everyday ... is a category, a utopia and an Idea, without which one would not know how to get at either the hidden present, or the discoverable future of manifest beings” (p.13). As we shall see in the third chapter, Woolf’s vision of fragmented history resonates in her notion of narrative in her groundbreaking novel *To The Lighthouse*, with a particular focus on the non-linear plot and ordinary individuals.

What I shall emphasize at this point is that, in the wind of Arendt, Woolf’s undermining of the linear chronology and her emphasis on the pearls of the past in narrative overlap with her method of fragmented historiography. As proposed in her *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” (Woolf, 2002, p.85). As the manifestation of her understanding of narrative, Woolf’s non-linear approach views history as heterogeneous, not homogeneous.⁵ For Woolf, life feeling non-linear means that history is the same as such. Her objection to the idea of continuum between two historical periods, the Victorian and

⁵ Alex Zwerdling, in *The Rise of Memoir*, argues that Woolf intends to provide “sequentially if not simultaneously” narration of the past and of memories, a direct interpretation of what she has experienced; however, “This was a tall order, virtually certain to produce discontinuities, but perhaps more interesting than writing the full-dress memoir for which these were to be only the rough notes” See Zwerdling (2017, p.74).

the Modern, is apparent in *How It Strikes A Contemporary*: “It is an age incapable of sustained effort, littered with fragments, and not seriously to be compared with the age that went before” (Woolf, 2002, p.134). In Woolf’s *oeuvre*, the use of fragmented historiography in narrative also necessitates pondering daily experiences and individuals. In Liesl M. Olson’s words, “Woolf’s ambivalence about how the novel should respond to the subjective, reveals a red thread running through literary modernism: despite the desire to get depth, many modernists sought to retain and amplify a world of ordinary experience day things” (2003, p.47). Woolf prefers to think of the particular events and of daily experiences in constellation with the losers of history, for modernity “leads her to criticise official historiography for its exclusionist and silencing effect and simultaneously develops an alternative historiography which would do justice to the oppressed and the defeated, mainly women and other ‘outsiders’ to authority” (Spiropoulou, 2010, p.3). In *Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown*, Woolf draws attention to the defeats and failures in history: “For these reasons, then, we must reconcile ourselves to a season of failures and fragments” (Woolf, 1966, p. 16). In this regard, focusing on the fragments in narrative in relation to history, Louise Westling quotes Woolf: She wants to “achieve a symmetry by means of infinite discords, showing all the traces of the minds [sic] passage through the world; & achieve in the end, some kind of whole made of shivering fragments” (cited in Westling, 1999, p.856).

In *The Sketch of the Past*, Woolf claimed that there were two essential obstacles to writing about the past. The first drawback was that there were many issues to be remembered. The second was that there were many ways of writing what she could remember (Woolf, 1985, p.64). The consciousness sheds a pitiless light on the forgotten,

and the individual can unearth experiences and stories. In this way, she can encounter unexpected experiences anew. As I shall argue in the third chapter in the context of *To The Lighthouse*, Woolf assigned great importance to the disappeared rather than the victors and noble characters. In the Woolfian sense, genealogy documented the singularity of events and opposed the pursuit of origin and the continuum of events, for “she instinctively realized that instability was an essential element in the past she wanted to recapture” (Zwerdling, 2017 p.74). With Arendt, Woolf’s perspective can be likened to Michel Foucault’s remark: “Genealogy is gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scartched over and recopied many times” (1977, p.139). Gabrielle McIntire (2008) declares this similarity between Woolf and Foucault: “Perhaps, following Foucault, we might do well to name her method genealogical history” (p.190). As Arendt diligently argues, narrative is an activity to recollect the treasures of the past in the mind. With the aid of narrative, we can return to pearls of the past, the ordinary deeds, and words, and eventually, we can reveal the stories of the self par excellence.

In the attempt of tracking Arendt’s diagnosis of narrative, her reflection on intimacy in narrative illuminates a new dialogue between herself and Woolf. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt discussed the changing meaning of the term “privacy” in relation to “modern individualism.” Modern privacy allows the individual to create a shelter for the intimate (Arendt, 1998, p.38). The emphasis on the intimate shares a resemblance with narrative of mood, in other words, of the self. For Arendt, the modern age initiated in the West over the sixteenth and seventeenth-century period “brings forth the cult of individuality, the preoccupation and concern with the uniqueness, authenticity,

and psychic harmony of the self” (Benhabib, 1993, p.106). Rousseau and the Romantics put forward the idea of intimacy against “what we would call today the conformism inherent in every society” and against “the leveling demands of the social” (Arendt, 1998, p.39). In that case, Arendt claimed that Rousseau was “the first articulate explorer” of intimacy (1998, p38). However, “for Arendt, the mark of the turn to individuality and intimacy is the accompanying ‘worldlessness’ of these human relations” (Benhabib, 1993, p.106). Indeed, turning to intimacy or modern individuality is the moment of deprivation of togetherness. The rise of the novel, marking from the mid-eighteenth century until almost the last third of the nineteenth, refers to the close relationship between the social and the intimate⁶ (Arendt, 1998, p.39). In a similar vein to Arendt, Woolf, in *A Room of One’s Own*, averred that Rousseau, whose works narrated intimacy and the subjectivity, documented the mood and the mind of the artist for the first time in literary tradition. Woolf (2015) remarks: “Nothing indeed was ever said by the artist himself about his state of mind until the eighteenth century perhaps. Rousseau perhaps began it” (p. 85). According to Woolf, artists in the nineteenth century, as if they were the heir of Rousseau, preferred to reveal their mood in narrative, as Rousseau did in *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* and *Confessions*. Both Woolf and Arendt would agree that Rousseau was an outstanding figure who initiated the pervasive reflection on intimacy. The stress on the inner world in narrative can be associated with Woolf’s use of interior monologues. Michael North (1999) establishes Woolf’s reputation as “the most inward of all modern British writers” (p.81).

⁶ In the fourth chapter, I will discuss Arendt’s notion of the social in the context of Faulkner.

Furthermore, in Woolf's writing on the past, there are three kinds of memories: The subjective memories that shaped the artist, the common memories that altered a generation, and public memories that represented the nation (Gordon, 2016, p.438). As such, Woolf thoroughly blended these memories into her consciousness. For example, the subjective memory was interwoven with the public memory of the British nation about the world wars.⁷ For Woolf, the personal is merged with the shared memory par excellence. However, Woolf's picture of war excludes the direct political messages, heroic stories, patriotism, and bloody scenes not as a rupture from the public issues but as a reaction to the temporariness of heroism and patriotism.⁸ Woolf considered the war a part of the masculine culture—as a representation of patriarchal domination.⁹ In some way, Woolf established an indirect relationship with war through an aesthetic method. As I will argue in the third chapter, the war left behind these facts: A disjunction with the benevolent nature and the lacuna between the past and the present.

Given that history is about fragments and the stories of losers, the discussion of fragmented historiography entails the question of the meaning of politics for Woolf. Woolf's reflections on the early twentieth century's political and historical matters document her position in the political sphere. If dealing with the political problems of society means reflecting on reality, it is relevant to say that Woolf always partakes in the political realm. Her pacifism with anti-war writings, her concerns with fascism and

⁷According to Hilary Newman, during World War I, people in England would create pamphlets about the dark times. Virginia Woolf's sister-in-law and brother-in-law also released war pamphlets in the early period of the war. See Newman (2017, p.16).

⁸Leslie Stephen, the father of Woolf, also stood against the idea of patriotism, which profoundly influenced Woolf's vision. He confessed that the Victorians often condemned him due to his opposition to patriotic ideas.

⁹According to Lydall Gordon, Woolf's approach to war shows her anarchist tendency. When it comes to anarchism, James Martel reads Hannah Arendt as an anarchist thinker. See his essay, "The Ambivalent Anarchism of Hannah Arendt" (2011, pp. 143–157).

totalitarianism, feminist politics, and her understanding of human freedom situate her in the public world par excellence. Her early essays trace her political consciousness, emphasizing the significance of authentic action and her abiding interest in politics. As Angeliki Spiropoulou (2010) argues, “Her historiographical narratives form a topos in which her political thought, and particularly her feminism, are uniquely intertwined with her literary modernism and the condition of modernity itself” (p.1). By focusing on politics, history, and society in Woolf’s writings, Deborah Parsons (2007) discusses the humility of Woolf and emphasizes that Woolf frequently defines herself as “the common reader” and that Woolf hesitates to play an “authoritative” role in her essays and reviews (p.15).

Arendt’s and Woolf’s reflections on political insight underline the essential role of artists in the time of turmoil. On this account, Arendt quoted René Char, emphasizing the lacuna between the past and the present after the loss of tradition in the twentieth century: “Notre heritage n'est precede d'aucun testament” —“Our inheritance was left to us by no testament” — (cited in Arendt, 1961, p.3). As Woolf (2002), in *How It Strikes A Contemporary*, penned in 1923, declared: “Honestly, the shock of the comparison between past and present is at first disconcerting” (p.135). In Arendt’s discussion, Char’s remark signals the palpable influences of the Nazi invasion on intellectuals in Europe (Arendt, 1961, p.3).¹⁰ After this invasion in France, Arendt, in the Preface of *Between*

¹⁰ Hannah Arendt’s deeply concern with literature is a broaden subject. Arendt wrote on Franz Kafka, Hermann Broch, Rilke, Marcel Proust, W.H.Auden, Stefan Zweig, Bertold Brecht, Melville, and Dostoevsky. For her stimulating essays on literature, See *Reflections on Literature and Culture* edited with an introduction by Susannah Young-Ah Gottlieb, 2007, Stanford University Press. “Arendt even seems ready to devote herself to teaching literature” Julia Kristeva writes (2001, p.37). In the following, Kristeva quotes Arendt’s these words: “If I were a literary critic, I [would speak] of the all-important part the sky

Past and Future, maintained that writers dealt with the facts of politics; thus, they somehow narrated political issues in society. Art is intertwined with politics in some way as such. Through literature, writers turned their attention to the public world after political perplexities. However, Arendt emphasized that authors renounced the public sphere in their writings a few years later. She speculated on the non-political perspective of authors and claimed that the artists “thrown back into what they now knew to be the weightless irrelevance of their personal affairs, once more separated from ‘the world of reality’ by an *épaisseur triste*, the ‘sad opaqueness’ of a private life” (Arendt, 1961, p.4). The artists thus separated the public from the private and produced only stories of inwardness.

However, what Arendt (1961) argued, in particular, was that: “In an extreme subjectivism man is ultimately imprisoned in a non-world of meaningless sensations that no reality and no truth can penetrate” (p. 56). Writing about public issues means that the writer breaks the borderline of romantic introspection and that private experiences become visible in the outer world —as a culmination of issues related to the public sphere —in this way, the novel genre becomes an “entirely social art form” (Arendt, 1998, p.39). The close link between action (only performed in plurality) and experience is unveiled as such. According to Arendt, action produces stories and, these stories and experiences could be the product for the writer, for “anything can happen: we are subject to surprise and, indeed, ‘miracle’ is a term to which Arendt commonly resorts when discussing Action” (Honig, 2016, p.310). In modernity, however, with the decline of the

plays in Brecht's poems, and especially in his few, very beautiful love poems” (cited in Kristeva, 2001, pp.37-38).

public realm, people were relegated to the shelter of the inner world, where Arendt described as *worldlessness*.¹¹

Woolf (1952), in her political essay, *The Artist and the Politics*, bluntly declares that the artist “turns from the private lives of his characters to their social surroundings and their political opinions” (p. 180). For that reason, “Art is the first luxury to be discarded in times of stress; the artist is the first of workers to suffer” (Woolf, 1952, p.181). According to Woolf, it means to say that the writer should not create a shelter in which she rescues herself from the public concerns of the age. Woolf does not propose a systematic “philosophy of history;” however, her aesthetic idea in fiction cannot be separated from the historical and social conditions of the present (Spiropoulou, 2010, p.5). For Woolf, the sense of objective reality depends on the power of its appearance in human plurality. As a “democratic highbrow,” in Melba Cuddy-Keane’s remark (2003, p.13), Woolf is closely interested in public concerns of the shared world. In this way, narrative becomes essential in creating the common world: “Literature is no one’s private ground; literature is common ground” (Woolf, 2015, para.37). Given that fact and fiction are intimately tied to each other, Woolf’s writings pose specific questions about politics and the history of the present and merge the private with the public sphere. As Cuddy-Keane (2010) brilliantly puts it:

¹¹ The worldlessness phenomenon was one of the central discussions of Arendt’s early poems: “Weep not for the soft sorrow / When the look of the homeless one / Still courts you shyly. / Sense how the purest story / Still hides everything” (cited in Young-Bruehl, 1977, p.56). After a long-standing love affair with Martin Heidegger, Arendt felt that she had lost her sense of belongingness to this world (Young-Bruehl, 1977, p.57). Arendt had plenty to reflect on introspection and worldlessness. However, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl indicates that Arendt abandoned her reflections on introspection due to its subjectivity and the failure to reveal the truth. See Young-Bruehl (1977, p.58).

Bridging between private and public returns us then to the work of the artist, and the public work art can do. In developing conceptual modelling as political praxis, Woolf's modernist form, with its fluid movement among consciousnesses, its perspectival shifts, and its invitations to textual and readerly self-reflexivity, becomes the means for her specifically literary intervention in the formation of public life(p.242).

If we keep these points in mind, Quentin Bell's critical question, "Was Virginia, as Leonard suggested, 'the least political animal that has ever been since Aristotle invented the definition'?" (cited in Bell, 2001, p.13), finds a response in Woolf's political engagement in her time.¹² Although Woolf did not speak directly about ideologies in her fictions, she espoused her role as a political figure in society: "Her 'reality' focuses on the individual moments of heightened perceptions, although she does not neglect the physical details of daily life or the historical or economic teleology that Marxists believe shape human life" (Schwarz, 1995, p.261). Woolf was a novelist who refused to put herself in a position to voice others' radical ideologies. Her effort to escape from reality somehow ended in encounters with the irreversible and unprecedented events of the twentieth century.¹³ In *The Leaning Tower* from 1940, Woolf compared her generation with the nineteenth-century writers, such as Jane Austen and Walter Scott, whose visions of human life were not altered after the war. Woolf maintained that her generation was not immune from the effects of war (2015, para.4-5). Quentin Bell's

¹² As Hermione Lee stated, "Woolf was never an exclusively literary essayist" and Woolf's aesthetic "debates were always politically charged, and took the form increasingly in the 1930s of polemical essays on war, women, capitalism and politics in art" See Lee (2010, p.95).

¹³ Ironically, in her diary, Woolf points out the *banality of reality* on the other hand: "I daresay it's true, however, that I haven't that "reality" gift. I insubstantise, wilfully to some extent, distrusting reality—its cheapness" See Woolf (1915, p. 57).

biography of Virginia Woolf documents that politics and its psychological and cultural consequences always remain in the middle of Woolf's private life and of her works. Nevertheless, what Bell (1972) underlines is that: "Politics, like philanthropy, seemed to her to attract a bloodless, inhuman kind of person" (s.161). To my interpretation, Woolf's diagnosis of politics is highly different. In the Woolfian sense, being a political writer means that the individual should not remain silent on *the human condition*. As Julia Briggs (2010) nicely observes, "Virginia Woolf's fiction explores the nature of *the human condition*: what makes up our consciousness when we are alone and when we are with others, how we live in time, and to what extent our natures are determined by the accidents of gender, class and historical moment" (p.70, my emphasis). If the subject matter of literature is widely about human life, then it is inevitable for the writer to engage with politics and facts. I will claim that politics for Woolf, like Arendt, is germane to the *human condition*, a focus on common benefits, dialogue, exchanging ideas, and the embracement of nuances in the public world. Her understanding of politics is bereft of banishing people to polarization or to a limited radical ideology space. As such, the artist must leave the protected shelter of the private sphere. Put more sharply, dealing with the *human condition* amounts to the inevitable break with radical subjectivity. I shall claim that these points illuminate Woolf's notion of *authentic politics*.

As stated in *The Artist and Politics*, Woolf established the facts and literature on an unwavering ground: "Every publisher's list, almost every book that is now issues brings proof of the fact" (Woolf, 1952, p.180). In what follows, Woolf raised this particular question: Can society influence a painter or sculptor in his art? Woolf's answer to this question demonstrates that a painter or sculptor "is not concerned with the feelings

of his model but with its form. The rose and the apple have no political views” (Woolf, 1952, p.180). It means to say that only the writer's nature is *political*. For Woolf, the artist is a political animal, *zoon politikon*, namely, what Arendt understands from Aristotle’s definition. At least, in that case, common concerns shatter the artist's ivory tower. In her essay, *The Leaning Tower*, Woolf (2015) observes that: “If politics were ‘real’, the ivory tower was an escape from ‘reality’ ” (para.28). Thus, in her writings, “Woolf’s anti-authoritarian tactics,” in Hermione Lee’s phrase (2010, p.93), invite us to reflect on what we have experienced by observing other people’s experiences. In this way, common sense, in Arendt’s remark, emerges.¹⁴ Experiences could be understood if the individual leaves the radical subjectivity *per se*. In other words, it is about the requirement of being sensitive not only to our inner world but also to others’ world to comprehend what we have experienced. I will call these methods the destruction of *the egoism of the I* in the Woolfian sense.

If we consider that politics demands the question of action, as Arendt argues, Woolf’s sustained engagement with the Women’s Suffrage, the Labour Party, and the Woman Question are worth emphasizing. These activities must be taken into consideration with Woolf’s political consciousness. The Socialism of Leonard Woolf, for instance, played a profound role in Woolf’s attendance at political meetings with her husband and in her observations about the political scenes of London: “In the autumn Virginia became an active member of the Richmond Branch of the Women's Co-

¹⁴ Hermione Lee notes that Woolf’s anti-authoritarian way of writing signals her commitment to “democratic literary community” and “her passionate desire for a shared, common ground of communication between readers and writers has taken some time to be recognized” See Lee (2010, pp.93-94).

operative Guild, and presided once a month at a meeting held in her own house, at which she was responsible for providing the speaker” (Bell, 1972, p.35).

Furthermore, Arendt’s and Woolf’s reflections on violence and totalitarianism deserve attention from the zone of politics. Arendt, who advocates the civil rights and anti-Vietnam war moments throughout her life, in *On Violence*, excludes violence from the space of politics, for violence is “instrumental.” I will take this argument as a starting point to discuss Woolf’s objection to the practice of violence. For Arendt, violence includes “arbitrariness” since the consequences of actions cannot be thoroughly determined by people (Arendt, 1970, p.4). To Arendt, violence somehow paves the way for unpredictability. As Bonnie Honig (2016) argues, “Trying to master events in politics undoes the freedom and contingency that characterize Action and invariably leads, instead, to violence” (p.311). Besides, violence depends on “implements,” whereas power is in constant need of “numbers” (Arendt, 1970, p.42). Though the categories of power and violence are not the same phenomena, Arendt examines violence in a close relationship with power. When violence arrives, power is annihilated altogether. Thus, power and violence are antithetical. In this way, in Richard Bernstein’s words, “She reminds us that as long as natality and the human capacity to act together are not obliterated, the tangible public freedom that is the expression of power can spring forth” (2013, p.186). “The extreme power” is the manifestation of One’s dominance on All, whereas “the extreme violence” is the exact opposite —All against One (Arendt, 1970, p.42).

For Arendt, violence is not correlated with the quest for long-term resolution and revolution. The consequences of violence are beyond people's control in the same way

that action is unpredictable. More than that, violence, as Arendt argues, is in need of tools and weapons. People are deprived of public freedom and of spontaneous action in the moment of violence; thus, violence goes against “act in concert” in the public sphere. The unpredictability of violence overlaps with its irrational side. In this regard, “She thus opposed a tradition of thought—including Marx and Benjamin—that saw in violence, not consent, the original force that brings laws into existence” (Çubukçu, 2020, p.45).¹⁵

Arendt (1970) states that some political purposes can pave the way for justification for violence, and she defines rage and violence as “natural human emotions” (p.64). For example, when people’s sense of justice is hurt, and at once, they come to the realisation that they are not in complete control of what they have experienced, people can deploy violence for their quest for “justice” (Arendt, 1970, p.63). However, Arendt’s emphasis on the short-term result of violence does not propose a persuasive ground to justify the practice of violence at all. What is at stake, in that case, is that: “Violence does not promote causes, neither history nor revolution, neither progress nor reaction; but it can serve to dramatize grievances and bring them to public attention” (Arendt, 1970, p.79).¹⁶

Concerning such points, what establishes a ground for political conversation between Arendt and Woolf is that they share common arguments about non-violence. In a similar line to Arendt, violence, Woolf argues, destroys differences, distinctions, and plurality, where the possibilities of authentic action and freedom cease in the public

¹⁵ Arendt’s reflections on violence include heated criticisms about what she describes as “black violence,” student movements, and the “Negro community” in the United States. In this regard, Ayça Çubukçu, in her article “Of Rebels and Disobedients: Reflections on Arendt, Race, Lawbreaking” examines how Arendt’s discussions on civil disobedience and lawbreaking open a room for “racial way of thinking.”

¹⁶ In Dana Villa’s words, “Her concern was to find ways of revivifying the love of “public happiness,” a love which had animated the revolutionary “men of action” of the eighteenth century” See Villa (2006, p.14).

sphere.¹⁷ Susan Sontag (2004), in her book *Regarding the Pain of Others*, professes: “In June 1938 Virginia Woolf published *Three Guineas*, her brave, unwelcomed reflections on the roots of war” (p.1). Woolf’s sheer objection to political action that commits violence against people is disclosed in her reflections “on the roots of war” and fascism. As Quentin Bell (1972) maintains, “she had already got into trouble with her more conservative friends by lending her name to a Communist inspired anti-Fascist exhibition, and with the Left by her unwillingness to advocate the use of violence” (p.187). Given that the discussions on war and fascism demand thinking about violence, Woolf’s engagement with these unavoidable facts in the twentieth century illuminates her quest for eliminating violence for the love of humanity.

In Three Guineas and Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid, Woolf’s arguments demonstrate her critique of violence as a solution to the political turmoils in the public sphere.¹⁸ With regard to violence, we can consider how Woolf engages with her time’s political perplexities and focuses on fascism and totalitarianism: “Woolf’s surprising participation in what have since become consolatory cultural memories of the war sheds a useful light on the late politics of a writer once thought apolitical and now routinely

¹⁷ How could we evaluate Woolf’s reaction to Anti-Semitism in her time? Reflecting on this question leaves disappointment and puzzlement, especially when we come across Woolf’s unfortunate statements about Jewish people in her diaries and letters. However, my intention is not to call Woolf an “anti-semitic” but to assess this unpleasing fact with her concern with death camps, totalitarianism, and with her hatred of Hitler. To my mind, if we take some remarks from her private life and treat them as if they were the last words of Woolf, this approach would pave the way for turning a blind eye to her entire corpus. As seen in her diaries, Woolf did not have sympathy for Hitler. For the antisemitism arguments about Woolf’s writings, See Heidi Stalla’s essay “Woolf and Anti-Semitism: Is Jacob Jewish.” Stalla offers highly unconventional reading of Woolf’s novel *Jacob’s Room* and puts forward that “If Jacob has a Jewish name it is because he is also Everyman (much as Septimus Smith of *Mrs Dalloway* is both an individual and one of the many casualties of the First World War). Jacob serves as a symbol, a ‘stand-in’ for the many different groups that Woolf deems ‘civilization’s prisoners’ (JR 25)” See Stalla (2012, p.221). Another critic Lara Trubowitz claims that “in Woolf’s work antisemitism is not simply an attitude toward Jews but rather a technique ... as a form of modernist manners” See Trubowitz (2008, p.275).

¹⁸ Sara Core in her book *At the Violet Hour: Modernism and Violence in England and Ireland*, calls Woolf “the great formalists of violence in the twentieth century” See Core (2012, p.37).

presented as a leftwing radical” (MacKay, 2007, p.23). In her *Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid*, Woolf emphasizes the possibility of peace with the power of thoughts. She espouses what I will call the *weaponization of thought* ¹⁹ rather than violence. "We can fight with the mind," Woolf proposes (2009, p.6). If war is inevitable in life, then there must be war only with people's ideas: "Mental fight means thinking against the current, not with it" (Woolf, 2009, p.7). On this account, Jean Mills (2015) argues that: "What she's advocating and participating in is a strategy of what is later coined as 'positive peace,' an emphasis on the analyses of the conditions necessary for peace" (Hussey, M. et al., pp.15-16). Woolf's approach can be considered an invitation to fight with thoughts, not with individuals themselves. As she quotes Blake, "I will not cease from mental fight" (cited in Woolf, 2009, p.7).

In her critique of *Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid*, Judith Allen discusses Woolf's emphasis on "binary oppositions" in her resistance to war. Woolf's way of thinking embraces differences and distinctions in the public sphere. In this sense, Allen points out a linkage between Woolf and Arendt regarding their reflections on nuances and divisions (2010, p.102). Though Woolf's criticisms of war and fascism are indebted to feminist discourse, her thoughts are not an isolated or marginalized way of thinking. Instead, her perspective considers *the love of the world* par excellence. Considering Arendt's and Woolf's reflections on violence and totalitarianism, I will amplify Allen's argument, to whom I sympathize, because it offers a more detailed and illuminating dialogue between two thinkers.

¹⁹ For this formulation, the "weaponization of thought," I am indebted to Banu Bargu's conception of the "weaponization of life" coined in her book *Starve and Immolate: The Politics of Human Weapons*, 2014, Columbia University Press.

Woolf, in *Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid*, argues the significance of otherness of the Other, authentic action, and plurality in the public sphere, stressing the import of various perspectives to prevent people from violence. “To make ideas effective, we must be able to fire them off. We must put them into action,” and then Woolf observes that “women have not a word to say in politics” (Woolf, 2009, p.6). Woolf proclaims that women, for humanity, should take responsibility for eliminating masculine ideals, such as chivalry, manhood, and heroism, that lead to war. With the power of thoughts, “We must create more honourable activities for those who try to conquer in themselves their fighting instinct, their subconscious Hitlerism. We must compensate the man for the loss of his gun” (Woolf, 2009, p.9). For Woolf, if people destroy the prejudice against the distinctions in gender and embrace plurality among humans, dialogue and togetherness will prevail in society. Eventually, people could find a straightforward solution to the problem of violence. In this regard, Woolf invites people to eradicate the distance between “We” and “Them” in the common world. Considering Woolf’s *love of the shared world* with others, Mark Hussey (2012) suggests that Woolf bears a resemblance with Nietzsche, Heidegger, Benjamin, Adorno, Merleau-Ponty, and Derrida in “describing the world to an investigation of its ‘conditions of possibility,’ to ‘formulating an experience of the world, a contact with the world which precedes all thought about the world” (p.20).

To Woolf, when violence arrives, the possibilities of freedom and action are annihilated in the public sphere.²⁰ What Woolf argues is that leaders prefer to use the

²⁰ In her article “Virginia Woolf and the Public Sphere,” Melba Cuddy-Keane examines the conception of the public sphere in Woolf from the perspective of Jürgen Habermas. “Like Habermas, she was an advocate for an ordinary civil sphere in which the voices of all could be engaged in free debate, but her experience as

quest for freedom as a tool to justify violence: “Every day they tell us that we are a free people, fighting to defend freedom” (Woolf, 2009, p.7). However, Woolf laments that: “It is not true that we are free ... If we were free we should be out in the open, dancing, at the play, or sitting at the window talking together” (2009, p.7). Violence exiles people to isolation, where they are deprived of discourse, communication, and of “acting in concert,” in Arendt’s phrase. Woolf asks: “Who is Hitler? What is he? Aggressiveness, tyranny, the insane love of power made manifest, they reply. Destroy that, and you will be free” (2009, p.7). Woolf’s reflections on violence, fascism, and war show that the self is obliterated for the ideals of patriotism. As Marina MacKay (2011) observes, “Her anti-war treatise *Three Guineas* written with the Spanish Civil War ongoing and the Second World War soon to break out, remains the classic statement of feminist anti-nationalism” (p.100).

Given that violence can be justifiable —yet "never will be legitimate"—as Arendt argues, Woolf's outstanding claim in *Three Guineas* is that justifications for war and violence hinge on radical ideologies, patriotism or freedom. As Woolf aptly puts it, radical ideology is a tool for violence, which demolishes rational thinking, and finally, radical milieus lead to the practice of violence in daily life. In this sense, Jean Mills observes that: “Virginia Woolf sought alternatives to Modernism’s war story —the hero’s quest— and the language of imperialism and militarism, which she read as a failure” (p.17). Thus, Woolf appears to be posing a question: When violence is justified for the sake of freedom or patriotism, can violence be legitimate? In any case, Woolf, like

a woman prompted her greater attention to the inequalities consequent on economic circumstance and ideological tradition, and a greater scepticism about the effectiveness of argumentative discourse for negotiating different views” See Cuddy-Keane (2010, p.233).

Arendt, claims that violence cannot pave the way for reformation in law and human rights, and it cannot bring justice to the present.

Woolf and Arendt emphasize that the public sphere animates human freedom, many-sidedness, and spontaneous action for women and men. Without considering the Other, seeking freedom will be responsible for further violence. However, people's banishment to isolation with fascism and violence will force them to be deprived of the web of human relationships. Mary Dietz (1991) signals the importance of the Other in Arendt:

As Arendt implies, then, for the realm of freedom and politics to exist and take on meaning, it needed an "other" - a realm of necessity and privacy against which it could define and assert itself. That this realm of the other and the human practices that distinguish it came to be conceptualised in terms of the female and made the domain of women's lives is something feminist theorists have brought to light in powerful detail(p.239).

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt argues the destruction of otherness of the Other under the cruelty of death camps, war, and totalitarianism, culminating in *worldlessness*. Thus, Arendt's critique of totalitarianism is foregrounded with the *loneliness* phenomenon.²¹ It is essential to emphasize that Arendt's arguments on the unprecedented events do not offer a "metaphysical account of human rights" or an abstract understanding of human rights; on the contrary, "she prefers to offer a political

²¹Zeynep Direk also maintains that Arendt's perspective on human rights is highly different from the prevailing view of the eighteenth century, where these rights are examined with the question of "human nature" —an abstract way of thinking. See Direk's *Ontologies of Sex Philosophy in Sexual Politics* (2020, p.181).

reading by focusing on what happens to human rights when nation states weaken or no longer guarantee human rights to some groups of citizens” (Direk, 2020, p.181). With her political agenda situated in the world, Arendt observes that the victory of equality in society brings justification for violence: “The passion for equality and justice, the longing to transcend narrow and meaningless class lines, to abandon stupid privileges and prejudices” (1973, p.329). However, as a way of killing otherness, war reduces people to “anonymity,” “a number,” and to “a cog” (Arendt, 1973, 329). Considering totalitarian regimes, Arendt (1973) brilliantly draws an analogy between the loss of the self and “suicidal loyalty” (p.387). Under a totalitarian hierarchy, the need for the individual is not because she has a distinctive personality but precisely because the totalitarian regime demands to use the individual “as a function,” as a tool. The regime’s benefits are primary (Arendt, 1973, p.387). This situation demonstrates *the suicide of the self*, for the totalitarian regime aims to destroy differences of people, reducing them into “one individual.” Thus, there is “the blind hostility of the masses against the existing world regardless of its divergences and differences” (Arendt, 1973, p.380).

Having established these shared concerns about violence and totalitarianism, we could return to Woolf’s *Three Guineas*. Woolf is deeply influenced by the photographs from the Spanish Civil War that show the dead bodies and the brutality of violence. In *Three Guineas*, she discusses how to protect humanity from the war along with violence in the time of fascism in Europe. Judith Allen (2010) points out that, in Woolf’s time, “‘Patriotism’, responsible for so much violence – labels, silences and isolates – and ultimately deprives people of freedom” (p.111). Like Arendt, Woolf’s way of thinking is intimately related to the common world’s social, historical, and cultural realities. Woolf

advocates that women —for the love of humanity— should avoid military demonstrations, heroic tales, and radical ideologies of the public world. She remarks:

She will bind herself to take no share in patriotic demonstrations; to assent to no form of national self-praise; to make no part of any clique or audience that encourages war; to absent herself from military displays, tournaments, tattoos, prize-givings and all such ceremonies as encourage the desire to impose “our” civilisation or “our” dominion upon other people(Woolf, 2015, p.229).

Besides, Woolf believes that people can preserve their dignity with their own reason rather than giving in to other people's ideas. Given that many people depend on others' thoughts, the destruction of the authentic self will be irreversible. For Woolf, as the necessity of protecting culture and freedom, an independent spirit is crucial to remove the possibility of propaganda. “Weapon of independent opinion”, Woolf writes, “is still their most powerful weapon” (2015, p.170). As Hermione Lee (2010) argues, *Three Guineas* and *A Room of One's Own* “are intensely interested in breaking down hierarchies, validating ordinary lives and encouraging readers to follow their own judgements” (p.94). Woolf's political consciousness also demonstrates her concerns with the death camps and totalitarianism. According to Woolf, objective reality is blurred when people are forced to survive under total domination, for they are reduced to “worldlessness” and to the loss of autonomy. In this regard, Arendt emphasizes the loss of objective reality under the non-human conditions of totalitarianism and its consequence, loneliness. Quentin Bell (1972), in his biography of Woolf, considers Woolf's thoughts about Nazism:

Virginia, like a great many people in this country, felt that Germany was in the hands of thugs, of people without scruples, decency or pity, and she was horrified, all the more so when she read articles in the British press in which the Führer was extolled as a truly great man, a real leader(p.178).

Arendt's discussions about the loss of the public sphere and the worldlessness phenomenon offer implications that may lead to violence. Woolf discusses the role of education to eliminate the extreme ideologies that may lead to it. In Arendt's diagnosis of the common world, we can find rich and wide-ranging solutions to avoid violence. Loneliness and mass society are the two fundamental phenomena that Arendt argues in her penetrating analysis of totalitarianism: "Under modern circumstances, this deprivation of 'objective' relationships to others and of a reality guaranteed through them has become the mass phenomenon of loneliness" (Arendt, 1998, pp.58-59). Arendt proclaims that people are forced to live in loneliness under the conditions of tyranny and that they lose their chance of being heard and seen. As Zeynep Gambetti puts it, "If the distinctive characteristic of the concentration camp was to reduce man to an existence that was 'nothing but human', it must be because in it the structures that give 'man' the possibility of constructing an artificial life no longer exist" (2011, p.17). Arendt also argues against the homogenization of individuals as a form of violence, for the homogenization aims to obliterate differences of the self. It means to say that the victory of equality reduces people to "one individual." From a different angle, Woolf puts forward that if people receive education in politics, economics, philosophy, and theology, they might grasp the main reasons for war and violence (Woolf, 2015, p.137). Woolf maintains that war cannot produce virtues, as Arendt argues in *The Origins of*

Totalitarianism, considering World War I. More than that, the war kills people's individuality and reduces selfhood to sameness. As such, the war's potential ability is to destroy the distinctiveness of the self, and this destruction shows Arendt's emphasis on *the arbitrariness of violence*. Woolf's and Arendt's reflections on violence allow us to see that violence suspends communication, many-sidedness, and solidarity. The hope for community with the practice of violence "is an illusion for the simple reason that no human relationship is more transitory than this kind of brotherhood" (Arendt, 1970, p.69). In her distinction between force and violence, Arendt argues that the term force is a synonym for violence in daily speech (Arendt, 1970, p.44). On the other hand, Woolf acknowledges that "power breeds competition and anger" (2015, p.18).

In her critique of totalitarianism, Arendt signals a particular relationship between totalitarian propaganda's insistence on scientific assertion and advertising techniques (Arendt, 1973, p.345). Arendt emphasizes the exaggeration in advertisements and the quest for scientific truth in the leaders' statements, and she states that advertisements can be used for propaganda and misinformation. In a similar way, in *Three Guineas*, Woolf argues that the reader must avoid public papers that impose censorship (or "intellectual slavery") as a way of protecting culture in modernity (Woolf, 2015, p.220). Arendt remarks: "Propaganda is indeed part and parcel of 'psychological warfare' " (1973, p.344). Put more sharply, "propaganda, in other words, is one, and possibly the most important, instrument of totalitarianism for dealing with the nontotalitarian world" (Arendt, 1973, p.344). Considering the power of propaganda, Woolf (2015) notes that: "If newspapers were written by people whose sole object in writing was to tell the truth about politics and the truth about art we should not believe in war, and we should believe

in art” (p.219). She also proposes that people should read at least three public papers financed by different institutions because each one will impose a divergent perspective. By doing so, people might distinguish the truth from propaganda or misinformation with their reason:

Not to subscribe to papers that encourage intellectual slavery; not to attend lectures that prostitute culture; for we are agreed that to write at the command of another what you do not want to write is to be enslaved, and to mix culture with personal charm or advertisement is to prostitute culture (Woolf, 2015, p.220).

Furthermore, it is essential to remember that in Woolf’s *oeuvre*, the question of fascism is closely related to the private sphere. The main difference between Arendt and Woolf is that Woolf is interested in fascism in relation to the patriarchal system. Woolf’s critique of fascism in the public sphere cannot be separated from the patriarchal structure between man and woman in the household sphere.²² In *Three Guineas*, Woolf (2015) writes: “It suggests that the public and the private worlds are inseparably connected; that the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other” (p.256). Woolf considers the fascist ideologies of the public sphere inseparable from the tyranny of the private sphere—the patriarchy: “The whole iniquity of dictatorship, whether in Oxford or Cambridge, in Whitehall or Downing Street, against Jews or against women, in England, or in Germany, in Italy or in Spain is now apparent to you” (Woolf, 2015, p.224). At this point, Hermione Lee (2010) observes that: “Woolf’s absorption in

²²Woolf’s political consciousness was accused of a lack of Marxist perspective. “She was persuaded by the charming secretary of the Artists’ International Association in 1936 to write an article for the *Daily Worker*, and was then attacked by the Editor of that paper for her lack of Marxism” See (Bell, 1972, p188).

women's lives and writing, her passion for entering into domestic detail and for recovering hidden histories, her quest for female forebears, has become essential to considerations of her work as an essayist" (p.93). Another critic Merry Pawlowski examines how Woolf's understanding of fascist ideology is intimately related to her discussions of masculinity and patriarchy. For instance, Woolf came across an article, *Praise for Women*, published in the Sunday London Times in September 1936, and this article "captured the spirit of an address by Adolf Hitler to the Nazi Women's League celebrating the participation of German women in the triumph of Nazism" (Pawlowski, 2001, p.1). The German women's involvement in the Nazi movement exhibits that Hitler's regime reduces women to the role of motherhood and to the domestic sphere in which they are destined to be apolitical —the lack of political action in the Arendtian sense: "The Nazis were outspoken proponents of a reactionary gender policy, claiming to save women from politics and to return them to their rightful place, the family – as mothers of the nation" (Pawlowski, 2001, p.23). In that case, Woolf's reflection on fascism hinges on her criticism of women's banishment from public discourse in the period of Hitler's regime. For Woolf, "the nature of her own narrative authority and its relation to the external crisis in social and political authority as she saw it —patriarchy at home and its extreme form abroad, fascism" (Joplin, 1989, p.88). Despite their differences, Woolf, like Arendt, believed that the relegation of the individual, man and woman, to the household sphere culminates in the deprivation of political action.

If the public is a space to observe and experience the other's opinion, the individual might lose this ability in the shelter of inwardness. The public sphere, as Arendt argues, is the shared world in which, through deeds and words, we can reveal the

distinctiveness of the self. For that reason, the public world is crucial to discuss and exchange the collective concerns, as Woolf argues (2015) in *Three Guineas*: “A common interest unites us; it is one world, one life” (p.257). Woolf proclaims that tyranny, in the public and in the private realm, ruins the lives of women and children. Only an awareness of the common world can help people to reconstruct their lives. Otherwise, as Woolf maintains (2015), in *A Room of One’s Own*, the possibility of the destruction of the common means that:

For such will be our ruin if you, in the immensity of your public abstractions forget the private figure, or if we in the intensity of our private emotions forget the public world. Both houses will be ruined, the public and the private, the material and the spiritual, for they are inseparably connected(p. 257).

Woolf’s reflections on the public sphere as a space of acting together and of freedom exhibit her concerns with the shared world. Both Arendt and Woolf argue against patriotism and radical ideologies for *the love of the common world*. “As a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world,” Woolf declares (2015, p.33). Like Arendt, Woolf’s arguments about non-violence, human freedom, and authentic action find their roots in her deep admiration for the public sphere.

So far, I have attempted to discuss Woolf’s and Arendt’s reflections on totalitarianism, violence, history, modernity, and politics. As brilliant modernists of all time, Woolf and Arendt invite people to think of the significance of *being-with-others*, social justice, action, and of the common concerns —the emblem of Arendt’s definition of politics. Both emphasize the priority of the particular and singular experiences to make

sense of the universal. Like Arendt, Woolf, who is politically and historically engaged, weaves her perspective on the modern wars with the darkness of violence. In a similar vein to Arendt, Woolf's emphasis on non-violence implies that violence cannot animate law and human rights reformation. As such, their arguments on freedom, political action, non-violence, and human rights demonstrate their *love of the world*. Thus, the political reading of Woolf requires examining the public and the private sphere in her fiction. The arguments discussed in this chapter will lead us to ponder the reception of these spheres in Woolf's prominent novel *To The Lighthouse*. In the next chapter, my task is to argue the public and the private sphere, the representation of nature as the opposite of the common world, their common arguments about pseudo-reality in language, and narrative in the context of Woolf's novel. Mrs Ramsay's apolitical persona in the novel is closely related to the priority of contemplation over action, which amounts to *the loss of the world*. However, I will also argue how Mrs Ramsay's apolitical persona ceases, and her political voice is born in some scenes par excellence. Considering the public and the private sphere, we will see that Woolf's understanding of narrative, unlike Arendt, makes sense of pain visible to the outer world. For Mrs Ramsay, the quest for freedom in the private sphere is inseparable from seeking freedom in the public sphere *per se*.

CHAPTER 3

The Public and the Private Sphere: *To The Lighthouse*

Hannah Arendt claimed that the sense of pain is bereft of visibility in the public sphere and that pain remains private for individuals (1998, pp.51-52). Arendt's verdict raises a particular question for literary studies. Given that pain cannot be transferred to the common world, what is the pivotal role of narrative in linking the public and the private sphere? In this chapter, I shall first consider Arendt's notions of the public and the private sphere and then apply these concepts to *To The Lighthouse*. Mrs Ramsay's apolitical persona culminates in the loss of the public sphere, which will lead us to ponder Arendt's diagnosis of *worldlessness*. Nevertheless, situating Woolf in a critical dialogue with Arendt's account of privacy, my countervailing argument for Mrs Ramsay's *worldlessness* will be that she assesses a positive meaning to the household sphere. I am suggesting that Mrs Ramsay's ability to envision the common world in the household exhibits that home is not only the *space of worldlessness* but also the *shelter of togetherness*. Her apolitical persona forges a public sphere where she can find a political voice par excellence. Mrs Ramsay's historical consciousness will also take us to examine the fragmented historiography in the novel. In what follows, the public sphere discussion will show how Woolf's presentation of nature is associated with Arendt's treatment of nature. The present chapter concludes that Arendt's objection to pseudo-reality in language resonates in Woolf; in this way, Woolf takes responsibility for the public sphere with the aid of narrative.

For the love of the world, Arendt's commitment to challenging the radical subjectivity in her political theory overlaps with her wish to forge the common world. In this way, her perspective enables us to reflect on the meaning of being-with-others (*inter homines esse*). However, the modern individual is thrown into inwardness in the case of dissolution of the public sphere. The break with many-sidedness amounts to a loss of the opportunity to reveal the uniqueness of the self in the gaze of others.¹ The deprivation of the public sphere in modernity, as Arendt argues, indicates the breakdown in collective deliberation with other people. The term the public sphere, in the Arendtian sense, signifies two interrelating meanings. One of the meanings of the public is "the space of appearance" in which everything is seen and heard by others in plurality (Arendt, 1998, p.50). The realm of appearance determines the sense of objective reality for the subject:

Compared with the reality which comes from being seen and heard, even the greatest forces of intimate life—the passions of the heart, the thoughts of the mind, the delights of the senses —lead an uncertain, shadowy kind of existence unless and until they are transformed, deprivatized and deindividualized, as it were, into a shape to fit them for public appearance(Arendt, 1998, p.50).

As encapsulated by Arendt's notion of the public sphere, people are deeply bound up with others to confirm the uniqueness of the self, which also sheds light on Arendt's account of politics: "No human life, not even the life of the hermit in nature's wilderness, is possible without a world which directly or indirectly testifies to the presence of other

¹ In *The Human Condition*, considering the deprivation of the public sphere and the loss of the common world, Arendt discusses the Greek antiquity. According to Arendt, for the Greeks, a life spent "in the privacy of one's own" (*idion*) was "idiotic." Similarly, the Romans impersonated the idea that a life in the shelter of privacy meant being distanced from the issues of *res publica*. See Arendt (1998, p.38). For Arendt's reflections on the Greeks, see Dana Villa's *Introduction: The Development of Arendt's Political Thought*. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 7-12.

human beings” (Arendt, 1998, p.22). Thus, Arendt invites people to ponder the meaning of politics concerning freedom, togetherness, action, and communication in the public world. Furthermore, “for Hannah Arendt literature, and all art is properly understood and judged in terms of political thought” (Topf, 1978, p.353). Arendt claims that narrative, or “storytelling” in Arendt’s phrase, is pivotal in linking the private and the public sphere; in this way, narrator unearths the deeds and words of the subject, making the inner world visible in the shared world.² Narrative thus merges the private, the subjective with the common. The personal is transferred to the public sphere with the aid of narrative as such (Arendt, 1998, p.50).³ Arendt argues that:

Since our feeling for reality depends utterly upon appearance and therefore upon the existence of a public realm into which things can appear out of the darkness of sheltered existence, even the twilight which illuminates our private and intimate lives is ultimately derived from the much harsher light of the public realm(1998, p.51).

The absence of others thereby annihilates the objective reality, and the confirmation of the uniqueness of the self is hindered.⁴ What does Arendt mean by the

² In *The Human Condition*, Arendt uses the phrase “storytelling” rather than narrative; however, within the scope of this chapter, the term “storytelling” will not be sufficient to show a strong “literary dimension” situated in Woolf’s *To The Lighthouse*. As I will argue, narrative with a solid literary achievement can transmit the private to the public sphere so that the boundaries between these spheres can be “deconstructed.” In the rest of the chapter, I will use the term “narrative.”

³According to Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, Arendt’s grandfather was a successful storyteller who profoundly influenced her understanding of storytelling. He would narrate stories during their ritual walks: “As books and stories became more and more important to her, Hannah Arendt’s emotional need for storytelling, for playing a part, for acting, grew” See Young-Bruehl (1977, p.18).

⁴ Arendt’s emphasis on “being-with-others” can be read as a critical response to the ontology of Martin Heidegger. Her reflections on being-with-others are closely related to her attempt to think of the *human condition*, with a particular focus on the power of communication, action, many-sidedness, and natality. Arendt’s theory, thus, finds its root in *the love of the world*, human plurality, and solidarity. For her heated

term reality? The sense of reality allows the individual to distinguish himself or herself from the rest of people in the world. It is the distinctness of the self that reveals the individual's uniqueness. In this regard, Arendt merges her account of body politics with her theory of action, through which the individual discloses this uniqueness of the self in the public sphere. To Arendt, action in human plurality reveals *not* what one is but *who one is*. As such, body politics presupposes acting and speaking with other people, for togetherness provides a kind of objective reality coming from others' perspectives. It can be interpreted to mean that the sense of reality is beyond one's own romantic introspection and consciousness and that it demands the views of others. As Seyla Benhabib (2003) puts it, "Romantic inwardness displays qualities of mind and feeling that are the exact opposite of those required of political actors and that Arendt highly valued" (p.12). Arendt emphasizes that people are to lose their ability to grasp the objective reality in the case of escaping into the illusion of introspection. The encounter with others in the public realm endows us with different perspectives, culminating in the richness of human relationships —the new and the unforeseen. However, when the individual is not "recognizable" for other people no longer, this situation will be accompanied by the loss of objective reality (Arendt, 1998, p.51). Body politics thus requires the worldly in-between and the web of human relationships. In contextualizing Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse*, Mrs Ramsay's romantic introspection since the beginning of the novel excludes her from being a political individual. Mrs Ramsay affirms her removal from the world and compares herself with Mr Ramsay's public personality: "What she gave the world, in comparison with what he gave"? (Woolf, 2016,

discussions of the philosophies of Heidegger, Husserl, Karl Marx, and Kierkegaard, See her famous essay *What Is Existenz Philosophy* (2019).

p.45). Mrs Ramsay's apolitical persona is intimately bound up with the priority of contemplation, the loss of the common world, namely, *worldlessness* in Arendt's remark. To what extent can Mrs Ramsay break the boundaries between the private and the public sphere? By pondering this question, I shall argue how Woolf's understanding of privacy demonstrates a positive meaning of the household sphere —“the four walls of one's private” in Arendt's words (1998, p.71). On the one hand, Mrs Ramsay is a profound character who craves social recognition, but on the other hand she endows private life with a positive meaning in the space of the household. She attempts to preserve the mystery of her privacy par excellence, and she balances her family life between the outer and the inner world. Her privacy is a state of mind, which is motivated by her intuition *per se*.

Woolf's novel *To The Lighthouse*, published in 1927, is structured around the idyllic summer of the Ramsay family at their home located in Scotland between 1910 and 1920. The novel is divided into three sections: The Window, Time Passes, and The Lighthouse. The first section begins with an indisputable declaration of Mr Ramsay about the family voyage; they will not visit the lighthouse the following day because the weather is unclear. In this section, Woolf portrays the Ramsays' guests at their summer home and describes the characters' dialogues. The second section documents the death of some family members and the passing of ten years after World War I. The third section shows the family members, their late voyage to the lighthouse, and some ordinary experiences. Their meetings with the guests allow us to see Mrs Ramsay's eagerness to communicate with other people. Besides, her imagination tracks down the simplicity of daily experiences. We glimpse the strong intuition of Mrs Ramsay, who is watching

people with her emotional intelligence. She also distances herself completely from other people so that she can situate herself as an outsider.

Mrs Ramsay's moments of self-reflection in the household sphere indicate that the imprisoned subjectivity and its singular experience deprive her of different perspectives that only come from human plurality. What excludes Mrs Ramsay from participating in the public sphere is her commitment to contemplation. Under such a condition, she feels utterly bereft of spontaneous action in the Arendtian sense and throws herself into romantic introspection. In this sense, what Arendt (1974) indicates in her biography of *Rahel Varnhagen* recalls the experiences of Mrs Ramsay:

Introspection accomplishes two feats: it annihilates the actual existing situation by dissolving it in mood, and at the same time it lends everything subjective an aura of objectivity, publicity, extreme interest. In mood, the boundaries between what is intimate and what is public become blurred; intimacies are made public, and public matters can be experienced and expressed only in the realm of the intimate—ultimately, in gossip(p.21).

Mrs Ramsay's worldlessness since the beginning of the novel signals her deprivation of the shared world—suffering from an unencumbered self.⁵ More than that, the fraught riddle of her life is that *worldlessness* exiles her to an isolated consciousness per se. She also loses her freedom as if a totalitarian regime forced her to experience the same loneliness.

⁵ For a detailed discussion about the conception of “unencumbered self,” See Michael J. Sandel’s essay “The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self,” 1984.

In setting out to explore the conceptions of the public and the private sphere in *To The Lighthouse*, it is essential to emphasize that Woolf's notion of narrative is highly different from Arendt's. Before examining their disagreements, I wish to ask: What are the affinities between Woolf and Arendt? Woolf would agree with Arendt that disclosing private experiences and emotions through narrative endows them with a new reality: "The presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves" (Arendt, 1998, p.50). To put it another way, the inner world's flow into a new space of reality, the public realm, enables the writer to comprehend a new perspective. Both Woolf and Arendt value the thinking of the experience itself. Woolf reflects on the meaning of experience considering the memories of her family, whereas "phenomenology teaches Arendt to think about the meaning of experience"⁶ (Direk, 2021, p.154). Through narrative, the interior monologues, the private experiences, and the subjective reality of the characters are transmitted to the outer world, as Woolf does in *To The Lighthouse*.

However, Arendt proclaims an exemption for the sense of pain, for pain lacks the space of appearance and remains private for the individual: "The experience of great bodily pain," Arendt (1998) writes, "is the least communicable of all" (pp.50-51). Her conviction is that pain is deprived of visibility amongst people as a culmination of its subjectivity. Thus, there is a deep lacuna between the inner world and the outer world.⁷ As Arendt (1998) puts it bluntly, "Pain, in other words, truly a borderline experience

⁶ My translation.

⁷ Here, Arendt quotes Rilke and points out his deprivation of the world due to his private pain: "Komm du, du letzter, den ich anerkenne, / heilloser Schmerz im leiblichen Geweb"; and it concludes as follows: "Bin ich es noch, der da unkenntlich brennt? / Erinnerungen reiss ich nicht herein. / O Leben, Leben: Draussensein. / Und ich in Lohe, Niemand, der mich kent." (cited in Arendt, 1998, p.51).

between life as ‘being among men’ (*inter homines esse*) and death, is so subjective and removed from the world of things and men that it cannot assume an appearance at all” (p.51).

Arendt’s exemption for the sense of pain, however, raises some questions for literary studies. Given that pain cannot be transferred to the common world, could the novel, or “the only entirely social art form” in Arendt’s definition (1998, p.39), take responsibility for endowing pain with appearance? What is the role of narrative in linking the public and the private sphere in the common world? I shall argue that narrating private matters that give personal pain and suffering, such as the experiences of war and the death of the beloved ones, expands our awareness that we are not alone in our private affairs. However, if pain is to be treated as “the least communicable of all,” how could we convey and share our defeats, frustrations, and heartbreaks and eventually, how could we come together with the aid of literature? Narrative, not telling only fiction or illusion, in literature is a human activity that illuminates privacy issues brilliantly; thus, narrative makes these experiences visible to other people in the public sphere. Its more profound value resides in the fact that narrative endows the private realm with a new space of reality per se (Arendt, 1998, p.50). As Julia Kristeva (2001) observes, “In her attention to story and the novel, she shows how narration participates in another politics, that of open memory, a renewed and shared memory that she calls the life of a who” (p.43). In this regard, the inner world is revealed in the shared, the common world through narrative par excellence. In what follows, the inner world is unveiled, and what has been experienced is seen and heard by others in plurality. Here, my argument will be that Woolf, in *To The Lighthouse*, examines the romantic inwardness (*Innerlichkeit*) of Mrs Ramsay, painful

experiences due to the war, and the resurgence of the past into the present; thus, she turns to narrative.⁸ Woolf situates herself in-between the past and the present to reflect on her memories. She demonstrates that narrative unearths the subjective feelings aroused from the loss of the loved ones and from the war, whereas Arendt emphasizes that pain loses its visibility amongst others in the public world. Woolf's awareness of the role of narrative in linking the private and the public world is related to this perspective. At least, in this case, Woolf would agree with Arendt that: "Thought itself arises out of incidents of living experience and must remain bound to them as the only guideposts by which to take its bearings" (Arendt, 1961, p.14).

With the portrayal of the apolitical characters, Woolf's political message is that seeking freedom in the private sphere is inseparable from the quest for freedom in the public sphere. In doing so, Woolf abrogates the lacuna between the public and private world in her novel, and somehow she cannot liberate her book from becoming a political text. In that case, I shall emphasize that, unlike the widespread refrain of Woolf, the novelist's concern is not limited to people's consciousness. As Joanne Campbell Tidwell (2008) maintains in her analysis of Woolf:

The subjects she chooses to write about are also politically loaded because she wrote about the private sphere, long associated with women. By writing about women's lives and domestic reactions to the public sphere, she argues that

⁸ Unlike Woolf, Seyla Benhabib's argument about the function of the storytelling in Arendt illuminates highly fascinating point: "My thesis is that the historiography of totalitarianism presented Arendt with extremely difficult methodological dilemmas with normative dimensions, and that in reflecting upon these dilemmas, Arendt developed a conception of political theory as 'storytelling' " See Benhabib (2003, p.87). For Julia Kristeva, Arendt believes in the capacity of narrative to reflect on "the horror and the Shoah" See Kristeva (2001, p.45).

women's lives and interests are worthy of attention and can make for good art, an aesthetic argument grounded in political motivations(p.96).

The second meaning of the public sphere in Arendt's theory is the common world that we share with other people (Arendt, 1998, p.52). The idea of transcendence about the possibility of the immortal world, according to Arendt, makes it possible to create the common world. It is important to remember that this world cannot be constructed only for one generation and for one age. The common world belongs to those who will exist in the future, and it also belongs to people living in the past (Arendt, 1998, p.55). I want to stress a somewhat more particular point about literature that the quest for the immortal world, the common world, led the novelists to produce artworks they could leave behind for the next generation in the twentieth century. Although Arendt claims that "now not anymore," the impulse behind the narrative of the war experiences, the loss of loved ones, and of the sense of pain, as Woolf does, gains particular prominence for the idea of the common world in this century. In this world, through actions and speech, individuals unearth their otherness in the gaze of others. Thus, Arendt's notions of the public and the private sphere entail the question of the possibility of action.

With this background examined, we can return to Woolf's novel. Michael Whitworth (2005) argues that one of the hallmarks of Woolf's approach to fiction is "her apparent lack of interest in incidents, actions" (p.129). In *To The Lighthouse*, the culmination of Mrs Ramsay's inability to overcome the loss of action is related to her deprivation of the public sphere. Self-accusation is one of the fundamental reasons for her failure to act. She is so preoccupied with the past that —where she could not achieve to become a self-sacrificing wife supporting her husband's professional career —the longing

for a better past bears down on her: “When she looked in the glass and saw her hair grey, her cheek sunk, at fifty, she thought, possibly she might have managed things better — her husband; money; his books” (Woolf, 2016, p.8). Besides, Mrs Ramsay’s act of knitting, as a passive way of disclosing the self, I shall propose, is an emblem of her break with action.⁹ The passivity in knitting and reading in a sheer silence offers a criticism of her removal from the common world as such:

For easily though she might have said at some moment of intimacy when stories of great passion, of love foiled, of ambition thwarted came her way how she too had known or felt or been through it herself, she never spoke. She was silent always (Woolf, 2016, p.33).

Mrs Ramsay is so preoccupied with her inner world that she cannot act, for “action, as distinguished from fabrication, is never possible in isolation; to be isolated is to be deprived of the capacity to act” (Arendt, 1998, p.188). However, the self, Arendt argues, is confirmed through deeds and words amongst others. In this way, the individual can achieve the sense of reality of herself and of the world. Mrs Ramsay’s apolitical persona is closely associated with her struggle to find her role in the public world. To respond to this problem, as I will propose, Woolf creates a public sphere, to a certain extent, in which Mrs Ramsay can find a way to participate in public issues of society: “Her horizon seemed to her limitless ... There was freedom, there was peace, there was, most welcome of all, a summoning together, a resting on a platform of stability” (Woolf,

⁹ In a similar line, according to Maud Ellmann, “This tension between knitting and cutting, uniting and dividing, as embodied in the Ramsay parents, resembles the double-sided notion of the omphalos, which implies both connectivity and separation” See Ellmann (2010, p.83).

2016, pp.70-71). She is aware of her lack of connection with the outer world because it is the life that traps her into romantic introspection:

She could be herself, by herself. And that was what now she often felt the need of—to think; well not even to think. To be silent; to be alone. All the being and doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and done shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others (Woolf, 2016, p.70).

Daniel R. Schwarz (1995) claims that Woolf's fiction shows a "quest for meaning" to solve the puzzles and mysteries of life, and this quest is related to her private anxiety and doubt (p.258). Schwarz (1995) argues that Woolf's characters are situated in a position to seek meaning in the world; however, Woolf's demand for meaning in an uncertain world through narrative remains "the act of desperation of a person living on the edge" (p.258). In that case, my standpoint will be that Mrs Ramsay's quest for meaning animates the common world where she can experience new encounters along with new experiences. How does Mrs Ramsay forge her world? To put it another way, in Seyla Benhabib (2003) words: "But 'where' is the world, and 'who' is it composed of?"¹⁰ (p.13). Mrs Ramsay cannot overcome the reality of her isolation in the household, which erects the gap between the public and the private world. On the one hand, she is knitting "the reddish-brown stocking," but on the other hand she reflects on her deprivation of visibility in the outer world.

Woolf situates Mrs Ramsay in a position that she attempts to break the boundaries between the public and the private sphere. Her strong desire to escape into a new space of

¹⁰ I contextualized this question for Mrs Ramsay's life; however, Benhabib raises this question in her brilliant analysis of Rahel Levin Varnhagen's life.

appearance is an aspiration to extend the boundaries of her life and to find her new role beyond the household sphere. Through the web of human relationships, she aspires to become the actor and the object of her experiences. To Mrs Ramsay's mind, "when life sank down for a moment, the range of experience seemed limitless" (Woolf, 2016, p.70). With unexpected actions, her radical subjectivity can be resolved by stories initiated by different people. Thus, as Arendt explores, the subject is not only a doer but also a sufferer. The subject acts, and she is also exposed to the consequences of the other's actions.¹¹ However, the interactions and the web of human relationships cannot provide stability in the common world. This situation is what Arendt means by the term "unpredictable." By developing her political persona, Mrs Ramsay envisions the public world that embraces such unpredictability. In this way, the question of *who I am?* finds its response in the actions of the agent, for action and speech are ways of disclosing the self (Arendt, 1988, p. 178). In a similar fashion, Mrs Ramsay bluntly confirms that: "Not as oneself did one find rest ever, in her experience ... but as a wedge of darkness" (Woolf, 2016, p.71).

Then, what is the role of love in Mrs Ramsay's *worldlessness*? In *The Human Condition*, Arendt argues that love unearths who the loved one is. The lover turns blind to flaws and achievements, namely, what defines the loved one; this kind of love breaks the lover from the world and from its objective reality (Arendt, 1998, p.242). The irrational side of love marks an end of our bond with the world and points out both "apolitical" and "antipolitical" life: "Love, by reason of its passion, destroys the in-between which relates

¹¹ However, in his essay "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self," Michael J. Sandel argues that as far as we keep our distance from our circumstances, we become both the subject and the object of our experiences. See Sandel (1984, p.87).

us to and separates us from others” (Arendt, 1998, p.242). Quentin Bell’s interpretation about the relationship between Leslie Stephen (Mr Ramsay) and Julia Stephen (Mrs Ramsay) documents Arendt’s definition of love: Leslie Stephen “was the heaviest of her burdens” (Bell, 1972, p.38). Leslie’s dedication to Julia resembles Mr Ramsay’s obsession with Mrs Ramsay; more than that, “not for the world would she have spoken to him” (Woolf, 2016, p.35). Mr Ramsay seems to lack self-confidence to lead a life without the presence of Mrs Ramsay. As a keen observer of this situation, for Lily, Mrs Ramsay’s devotion and irrational love are the reasons for her break with the world:

That man, she thought, her anger rising in her, never gave; that man took. She, on the other hand, would be forced to give. Mrs Ramsay had given. Giving, giving, giving, she had died - and had left all this ... Surely she could imitate from recollection the glow, the rhapsody, the self-surrender she had seen on so many women’s face (on Mrs Ramsay’s, for instance) (Woolf, 2016, pp.169-170).

Furthermore, there are secret treasures in Mrs Ramsay's mind, and “they would never be offered openly, never made public” (Woolf, 2016, p.57). Lily raises a particular question concerning the efficiency of love that pledges to reveal these “sacred inscriptions”: “What art was there, known to love or cunning, by which one pressed through into those secret chambers?” (Woolf, 2016, p.57). Discussing the role of love in unifying people and in unearthing their inner world, Lily concludes that love dispels the brightness and mystery of persona. In the novel, the discussion of love poses this specific question: To what extent can the lover recognize the loved one? At this point, Joanne Tidwell (2008) argues that: “In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf questions the extent to which one person can truly know and understand another, even husband and wife, parent and

child” (p.93). However, love is not sufficient to unearth the secret, the unknown, and the undescribed fragments. Lily states towards the end of the novel: “What we call ‘knowing’ people, ‘thinking’ of them, ‘being fond’ of them! Not a word of it was true; she had made it up; but it was what she knew them by all the same” (Woolf, 2016, p. 195). It is the same love, its many-sidedness, that spreads to all world and separates the individual from the others. Love debars us from the objective reality coming from the common world.

As a way of breaking the boundaries between the public and the private sphere, Mrs Ramsay orders an imaginative public world and voices her political perspective. Besides, her remarks about London's chaotic scenes, for example, can be read as harbingers of modernity's perplexities. In that case, she observes that modern life is rigged with pain and poverty: “There were the eternal problems: suffering; death; the poor. There was always a woman dying of cancer even here” (Woolf, 2016, p.67). Considering these realities, “Life: she thought but she did not finish her thought” (Woolf, 2016, p.66). In her inner monologues, she partakes in the common world's political and cultural issues. The distance from the outer world now “may gather come food for thought,” in Arendt words¹²(1971, p. 424). Her hankering for involvement in public matters is not an isolated incident but part of people's struggles in a capitalist society. As Michael North (1999) puts it, “Though Woolf is intensely interested in the interior worlds of her individual characters, those worlds are always connected by various threads to the many others who make up the outer world, so much so that those others become part of the individual self” (p.84). Mrs Ramsay’s quest for a role in modern London documents

¹² In her essay “Thinking and Moral Considerations: A Lecture,” Arendt’s discussion of the ability to think is closely related to her critique of the Eichmann Trial. Arendt refers to the distinction between thinking and knowing and claims that the inability to think is not the result of “stupidity.” The loss of thinking can be observed even in intelligent people: “Wickedness is hardly its cause.” At this point, Arendt poses this question: “What is thinking?” See Arendt (pp.418-419; p. 423).

her awareness of people's differences, namely, what Arendt describes as plurality. Thus, she apprehends class consciousness par excellence: “She had the whole of the other sex under her protection” (Woolf, 2016, p.8). Her horizon, to a great extent, considers the significance of the experience:

Strife, divisions, difference of opinion, prejudices twisted into the very fibre of being, oh that they should begin so early, Mrs Ramsay deplored [...] It seemed to her such nonsense — inventing differences, when people, heaven knows, were different enough without that. The real differences, she thought, standing by the drawing-room window, are enough, quite enough. She had in mind at the moment, rich and poor, high and low...(Woolf, 2016, p.10).

Mrs Ramsay's intuitive self allows her to participate in social and political matters, and she dwells on questions concerning humanity. However, as encapsulated by the passage above, though Woolf ostensibly narrates Mrs Ramsay's subjective world, her character can be considered a portrayal of a woman who wants to throw herself from the household sphere into the shared world. It means to say that the outer world does not disappear in her romantic introspection, for it is the public sphere that illuminates the inner world per se. As James Harker (2011) aptly points out, “If Woolf can be said to turn ‘inward’ to individual experience away from the objective form of realist description, that move is not a rejection of the material world — for Woolf’s accounts of the mind are anti-dualist” (p.8). In this regard, Mrs Ramsay affirms that “the need to get outside oneself into the world shared with others to become aware of and to respond to political reality” (Canovan, 1994, p.9). Although the public sphere protects its aliveness in her consciousness, what prevents Mrs Ramsay from involving in this kind of political reality

is her isolation in romantic introspection. Most importantly, even though she cannot overcome the realization that she is removed from the world, her heated observations about London's modernity process are loaded with political criticism:

[...] A note-book and pencil with which she wrote down in columns carefully ruled for the purpose wages and spendings, employment and unemployment, in the hope that thus she would cease to be a private woman whose charity was half a sop to her own indignation, half a relief to her own curiosity, and become, what with her untrained mind she greatly admired, an investigator, elucidating the social problem(Woolf, 2016, p.11).

The social problem, which stands as an unavoidable fact of London's political and cultural life, is merged with Mrs Ramsay's romantic introspection. Her stream of consciousness recaptures the events in the outer world. The deeper meaning of stream of consciousness, in the novel, resides in the reconstruction of the common world, for Mrs Ramsay does not confine herself to the given world. She does not want to live on the edge of the "given world," but to re-establish this world and its reality with her own hand. Therefore, I would disagree with Jane de Gay's remark: "By representing Mrs Ramsay's 'self' as a core of darkness, Woolf does not realise that self, but permanently defers it, rendering it unknowable" (2006, p.109). As a way of confirming the self and her political voice and as an escape from the darkness of the household to the brightness of the public world, her critical approach to London's modernity process documents that Mrs Ramsay is aware of the objective facts of the world:

No hospital on the whole island" as she puts forward, "it was a disgrace" and "a model diary and a hospital up there –those two things she would have liked to do,

herself. But how? With all these children? When they were older, then perhaps she would have time... (Woolf, 2016, p.65).

According to Ann Ronchetti (2004), Mrs Ramsay's commitment to social welfare and her desire for the community enable her to climb out of her class (p.67). In that case, entering into the lives of others somehow is a way of escaping from *worldlessness*. Here I want to stress a more particular point that Mrs Ramsay's exposure to the common world offers the space of experience. In this way, she can achieve the space of authentic action and freedom. For her, the quest for political action is a quest for the confirmation of the self altogether.

On the other hand, as stated earlier in the chapter, my countervailing argument for Mrs Ramsay's worldlessness will be that she espouses a constructive meaning of privacy in the household sphere. Despite her worldlessness, Mrs Ramsay also exhibits the household sphere's positive meaning. However, the widespread reading of the novel claims that the disadvantages of being situated in the household are presented in conjunction with the portrayal of Victorian womanhood (De Gay, 2006, p.108). According to this reading, Mrs Ramsay's submissive position hinges on an "uncompromising" negative understanding of the household sphere. It is the house that prevents her from nurturing her personality and mind. However, I am suggesting that Mrs Ramsay's sense of privacy in a room along with her guests is the salient manifestation of Arendt's notion of privacy in "the four walls of one's private property" par excellence.¹³

¹³ At this point, considering Arendt's understanding of privacy, "Arendt's concept of the home" is the terminology of Seyla Benhabib. See Benhabib (2003, p.213).

To reflect on the positive meaning of privacy and of the household sphere in the novel, we first must turn to Arendt's famous passage:

The second outstanding non-privative characteristic of privacy is that the four walls of one's private property offer the only reliable hiding place from the common public world, not only from everything that goes on in it but also from its very publicity, from being seen and being heard. A life spent entirely in public, in the presence of others, becomes, as we would say, shallow. While it retains its visibility, it loses the quality of rising into sight from some darker ground which must remain hidden if it is not to lose its depth in a very real, non-subjective sense. The only efficient way to guarantee the darkness of what needs to be hidden against the light of publicity is private property, a privately owned place to hide in (Arendt, 1998, p. 71).

Arendt avers that "the four walls of one's private property" provide a "*hiding place*" that can be considered a sanctuary, for this place allows people to escape from being seen and heard by others. In this way, we can shield ourselves from the perplexities of the common world. It is somehow a transition from the darkness of the public sphere to the brightness of the private sphere "with a shelter, with a place in which to unfold capacities, dreams and memories, to nurture the wounds of the ego" (Benhabib, 1993, p.107). In this "hiding place," we lack the space of appearance; thus, we are deprived of the "eyes" of others. In this place, we can question and articulate our deficiencies, heartbreaks, and even losses. As Seyla Benhabib (1993) makes this case clear for Arendt:

The home also provides that space that protects, nurtures and makes the individual fit to appear in the public realm Hannah Arendt's concept of privacy and some

concerns of contemporary feminist theory on 'a room of one's own' can be made compatible with each other(pp.107-108).¹⁴

In a similar vein to Arendt, Mrs Ramsay takes "her place at the head of the table" with her guests and the family members for a dinner party in the room: "Now all the candles were lit, and the faces on both sides of the table were brought nearer by the candlelight" (Woolf, 2016, p.108). Candles are exemplifications of Arendt's remark: "To act together and in concert" (1998, p.123). Thus, Mrs Ramsay's eagerness to establish communication demonstrates her quest to act together *par excellence*. She expects her guests and her husband, Mr Ramsay, to partake in her desire altogether. This place in the household sphere is safer than the turmoil and the uncertainty of the outer world:

... 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 there, inside the room, seemed to be order and dry land; there, outside, a reflection in which things wavered and vanished, waterily(Woolf, 2016, p.108).

The table both separates and unites them; besides, it offers a place and shields them from the chaos of the public sphere. Thus, "Mrs Ramsay's organization of the dinner party is an expression of her imaginative life: she needs to connect disparate elements, balancing one guest against another" (Whitworth, 2005, p.114). As Arendt (1998) argues:

To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a *table* is located between those who sit around

¹⁴ With "'a room of one's own,'" Benhabib refers to Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*: "Certainly, Arendt's call in this passage for 'a privately owned place to hide in' is not a call to own a condominium or a private house To approach Arendt's meaning, recall here Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*" See Benhabib (1993, p.107).

it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time (p.52, my emphasis).

The table is located between the guests and family members; in this way, the table exemplifies a place to exchange their ideas and feelings —the portrayal of the common world in the novel. Their conversations about literature, politics and daily experience provide various perspectives, unearthing their distinctness and differences as a way of *being-with-others*. Woolf switches from one consciousness to another through a dazzling narrative as such. Furthermore, Mrs Ramsay's attempts to compose the common world represent her desire to enliven friendship and togetherness in the household.¹⁵ As stated in the following:

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 sense cause against that fluidity out there(Woolf, 2016, pp. 108, 109).

In this regard, both Arendt and Woolf are aware of the advantages of privacy for the development of one's own mind and personality.¹⁶ Without a space of privacy, a

¹⁵ Martin Hägglund, in his *Dying For Time: Proust, Woolf, Nabokov*, argues that in the dinner party scene, Mrs Ramsay's attempts to make time permanent come to the fore. The obvious intention of Mrs Ramsay "to halt time" can be observed in the dinner party, as well as in her love for family, friends, and memories. "What Mrs. Ramsay is passionate about is not endurance as eternal being but endurance as living on in time" See Hägglund (2012, p.60).

¹⁶ On the contrary, Richard Wolin, in his *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse*, incorrectly claims that Arendt's conception of the private sphere devalues the import of family life and its intimacy. See Wolin (2015, pp.64-65). Wolin's "limited reading" of Arendt is based on the assumption that Arendt fails to see the significance of the household's positive effect on personality. However, for Arendt, the public sphere finds its root and deeper meaning in the private life, or, in her words, in "the four walls of one's private property." This space of intimacy nurtures and improves personality. Arendt thus confirms that family life exerts a profound role on the individual's mental and personality development par excellence.

home, the value of partaking in the public sphere will reduce, for what gives significance to public life is the presence of privacy.¹ For Arendt, the public sphere, as Seyla Benhabib (1993) emphasizes, “is not a space in any topographical or institutional sense: a town hall or a city square where people do not ‘act in concert’ is not a public space in this Arendtian sense” (p.102). As a paradigm of the public sphere—not a geographical province, institution, and building—the room in the household provides a space for acting together. In this way, Woolf shows that the private sphere can turn into the public sphere, and she exhibits such a sphere's ubiquity in the lives of her ordinary characters. Otherwise, “A life spent entirely in public, in the presence of others,” Arendt (1998) writes, “becomes, as we would say, shallow” (p. 71). Mrs Ramsay’s ability to animate the common world in “the four walls of one’s private property” is essential to see that home is not only the *space of worldlessness* but also the *shelter of togetherness*.

On the one hand, Mrs Ramsay tries to dodge the difficulty of life in the private sphere, but on the other hand she assesses a positive meaning of privacy. Mrs Ramsay’s quest for the possibility of the common world and her political and historical consciousness will lead us to examine the presentation of the fragmented historiography in the novel. Both Woolf and Arendt challenge the traditional understanding of history as something continuous and linear. Woolf prefers to write about the particular experiences and ordinary individuals with a non-linear chronology in her fiction. Both thinkers espouse that fragmented historiography demonstrates the priority of the particular over the general.¹⁷ For this reason, history focuses on the single instances, events, and “the extraordinary” (Arendt, 1961, p.43). Both agree on the break with linear chronology, and

¹⁷ According to Arendt, “process” and “development” in history are parts of the understanding of natural science, biology, and geology in the nineteenth century. To Arendt, these factors ignore the single entities and pursue a linear approach.

they thereby attempt to cast light on the fragments and “pearls” of the past.¹⁸ In this sense, the role of narrative is an act of remembrance of people's deeds and words, “for memory and depth are the same, or rather, depth cannot be reached by man except through remembrance” (Arendt, 1961, p.94). Arendt and Woolf show that history is not about the narrative of victors or winners. Woolf takes a different position in capturing the meaning of history as a means to recognize who has been overshadowed and oppressed. As James Martel (2011) observes, “by accepting a particular view of time and history as constituting reality, we risk ‘becoming a tool of the ruling classes,’ and succumbing to ‘a conformism that is about to overpower [us],’ whether we know it or not” (p.2).

The ordinary experiences, the loss of linearity in the plot, and the emphasis on the facts are closely bound up with Woolf's method of fragmented historiography in the narrative. “Like a philosopher, she invites her reader to imagine ‘an ordinary mind on an ordinary day’ ” (Whitworth, 2005, p.118). As a manifestation of the fragmented historiography, Mr Ramsay, in his inner monologue, says that:

Does the progress of civilisation depend upon great men? Is the lot of the average human being better now than in the time of the Pharaohs? Is the lot of the average human being, however, he asked himself, the criterion by which we judge the measure of civilisation? Possibly not. Possibly the greatest good requires the existence of a slave class ... To avoid it, he would find some way of snubbing the predominance of the arts(Woolf, 2016, p. 48).

¹⁸In her essay on “Walter Benjamin,” in *Men in Dark Times* and in *The Life of the Mind*, for the word “pearls,” Arendt quotes Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: “Full fathom five thy father lies, / Of his bones are coral made, / Those are pearls that were his eyes. / Nothing of him that doth fade / But doth suffer a sea- change / Into something rich and strange” (cited in Arendt, 1970, p.193; in Arendt, 1981, p.212).

Mr Ramsay emphasizes his understanding of history that focuses on the daily experiences of particular people. As Walter Benjamin (1968) puts it, “Not man or men but the struggling, oppressed class itself is the depository of historical knowledge” (p.260).

Concerning these points, Lyndall Gordon maintains that the critical moments of life, for Woolf, are not related to natality, death, or marriage. Instead, her mind considers ordinary events of daily life (2016, p. 21). The first section, *The Window*, examines one day of the Ramsay family in their summer home. The loss of linearity in the narrative of the second section, *Time Passes*, documents the passing of ten years and shows before and after World War I. In the last section, *The Lighthouse*, Woolf narrates how the surviving family members continue their lives in their summer home, and finally, she narrates their voyage to the lighthouse ten years later. In Liesl Olson’s words, “Woolf’s depiction of the everyday emerges as both diverse and ultimately collective. No matter how famous an individual or how remarkable a day may be, there is an ordinariness about every one, and every day, that cannot be escaped” (2003, pp.59-60). However, according to Michael Whitworth’s interpretation of *To The Lighthouse*, the novel’s linearity is related to the thinking process: “Mr Ramsay’s way of thinking is systematic and linear” (Whitworth, 2005, p.116).

Focusing on her family’s idyllic summers at Cornwall, Woolf delves deeply into the moments of fragments, through which she can comprehend the present from a new perspective. As Arendt (1961) argues, “now will the past open up to us with unexpected freshness and tell us things no one has yet had ears to hear” (p.94). Daniel R. Schwarz (1995) also notes that: “The entire novel revolves around a contest between death and life, order and flux, creative imagination and the ‘scraps and fragment’ of ordinary

experience” (p.293). Another critic Pericles Lewis (2000) maintains that the potential affinity between Kant, Descartes, and Woolf is the attention to “the ordinary man” (pp.213-214). These points show how Arendt's notions of narrative and fragmented historiography resonate in Woolf's novel.

With the aid of remembrance in the narrative, Woolf saves ordinary experiences from the danger of being forgotten, making them permanent in the present. On this account, Liesl M. Olson observes that: "Woolf takes the ordinary as her central subject — an ordinary that is not always something else. ‘Ordinary’ (like ‘character’) is a watchword" (2003, p.56). Woolf documents the tragic loss of her beloved mother, her memories, and the unpredictability of World War I. Through narrative, Woolf unearths *who Julia Stephen is*. Storytellers, as Arendt (1998) writes, “tell us more about their subjects, the ‘hero’ in the centre of each story, than any product of human hands ever tells us about the master who produced it” (p.184). For Woolf, the narrative is a way of disclosing the identity of her mother and of father. Their deeds and words have many resonances in Woolf's imagination. In a letter to Woolf, her sister Vanessa Bell admires a rich and wide-ranging disclosure of Julia Stephen's identity in the narrative:

[...] You have given a portrait of mother which is more like her to me than anything I could ever have conceived of as possible. It is almost painful to have her so raised from the dead. You have made one feel the extraordinary beauty of her character, which must be the most difficult thing in the world to do (cited in Bell, 1972, p.128).

Woolf's narrative reveals the facts —as an emblem of denial of fiction or imagination. The memories and the past continue to communicate with the present. In

Angeliki Spiropoulou's remark: "Historical remembrance, an apocatastasis of the oppressed and the defeated alongside a reactivation of unfulfilled or lost potentialities of the past, with a view to understanding and revolutionizing the present" (2010, p.6). The ruptured time between *The Window* and *Time Passes* exemplifies the lacuna between the past and the present. From the perspective of Arendt's fragmented historiography, a historical incident is narrated through the experiences of ordinary people. With this representation of historiography, Woolf recreates, not recapitulates, the conventional time. As Emmanuel Levinas (1989) points out, characters in the artwork are thrown into their own fates, resulting in the representation of them and the manifestation of darkness in narrative; in this way, the artwork unveils the falling into the unpredictability of fate beyond a conventional time (p.139). The novelist cannot reproduce an already-given time. Instead, as Woolf does in *To The Lighthouse*, she endows art with its own time.

With regard to the fragmented historiography in the narrative, I shall argue that Lily Briscoe espouses the significance of everydayness, singular entities, and particularity. We read in parentheses that Lily "was in love with this world" (Woolf, 2016, p.26). In the last section, *The Lighthouse*, Lily continues her painting and recapitulates the past through remembrance. Lily dives into the hidden meanings of the past, and her mind considers the daily events: "How life, from being made up of little separate incidents which one lived one by one" (Woolf, 2016, p.53). More than that, "One wanted, she thought, dipping her brush deliberately, to be on a level with ordinary experience" (Woolf, 2016, p.226). Lily's mind observes that: "What is the meaning of life? That was all—a simple question ... Instead there were little daily miracles; illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark; here was one" (Woolf, 2016,

p.181). Besides, Lily has a critical and political perspective in her dialogues with other people and in her reflections on human relationships. This critical approach provides a political persona in many scenes par excellence. James Martel (2017) makes it clear: “For all her observation of human interactions—albeit at some remove—Lily is more interested in representation per se, in the mechanics of communication, especially through painting” (p.187).¹⁹ As a manifestation of her critical thinking, Lily questions Mrs Ramsay’s dialogues with others, her exaggerated compassion, and her emotional mind. Lily also devalues Mr Ramsay’s philosophical works.

In the rest of the chapter, a trajectory that concerns the loss of the common world and fragmented historiography in the narrative will require examining the representation of nature and its contradiction with the common world in the Arendtian sense. How would Woolf epitomize the opposition between nature and the world in her novel? To raise this question will lead us to the second section, *Time Passes*, where Woolf’s notion of nature resembles Arendt’s. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt points out some noteworthy differences between the earth and the world. For Arendt, the world signifies a sense of togetherness and home that people share as common, whereas the earth is “the limited space for the movement of men and the general condition of organic life” (Arendt, 1998, p.52).²⁰ The earth stands for a natural environment where people survive with other creatures as part of their biological systems. The creatures such as plants and

¹⁹ With a particular focus on Lily Briscoe, James Martel offers a Nietzschean lens for the novel: “I read *To the Lighthouse* as being an exercise in Nietzschean (or Woolfian) disappointment whereby Woolf raises our expectations about the possibility of “real” subjectivity and then, drawing out that hope, dashes it decisively” See Martel (2017, p.175). For Martel, Lily is “the misinterpellated and ultimate protagonist of *To The Lighthouse*” (2017, p.187).

²⁰ According to Margaret Canovan, Martin Heidegger exerted a profound influence on Arendt’s distinction between the earth and the world. For Heidegger, “men ‘dwell’ in the world rather than being in it in the way that water is in a glass” See Canovan (1994, p.106). *Dasein* cannot solely exist on the earth but dwells in an established world.

animals have the already-given world, whereas people might establish and correct their own by exceeding the limits of wild nature (Canovan, 1994, p.106). People are thrown into the earth, and they dwell in "a man-made world." It is a constructed world by the efforts and struggles of people, such as organizations, institutes, and objects (Arendt, 1998, p.52).²¹ Thus, we live in an established world, and, in some way, this world provides shelter for wild nature. People are exposed to various perspectives to determine their distinctness and otherness in the world, for "the world and the people who inhabit it are not the same. The world lies in between people" (Arendt, 1970, p.4).

People, to be sure, always become attuned to nature and live as a part of the natural environment on the earth, "but what Arendt understands by 'the world' as opposed to 'the earth' is highly distinctive, involving a characteristically humanist contrast between the home that men have made for themselves and the natural environment to which they belong as biological creatures" (Canovan, 1994, p.106). As Margaret Canovan (1994) maintains, Arendt leaves aside the Romantic understanding of nature as something stable, restful, and idyllic (p.107). She opposes the general understanding of naturalness as such. In this regard, my argument will be that, in *Time Passes*, Woolf confirms that nature does not represent stabilization and tranquillity, pointing out a sharp contrast between nature and the common world. After the first section of the novel, the Great War upends the objects, such as the clothes of Mrs Ramsay, the books of Mr Ramsay, and other things of the family members that offer a sense of home.²² Woolf puts

²¹ Arendt's discussions of nature and the civilised world are related to her critiques of totalitarianism and Marxism. In this chapter, I will argue Arendt's objection to the Romantic understanding of nature, which provides a dialogue between Arendt and Woolf.

²² Moreover, according to critic Louise Westling, *Time Passes* is a presentation of Woolf's sheer objection to "Victorian humanism" alongside its heroic stories, actions, and "progressive ideology" See Westling (1999, p.860).

in parentheses to elicit what has happened to the family: Mrs Ramsay has passed away; Andrew Ramsay is killed during the war in France; Prue Ramsay dies from a disease related to labour.

As Ann Banfield (2003) proposes, "in 'Time Passes,' the novel's consciousnesses sleep, absent themselves, even die" (p.508). What remains after the Great War is silence, darkness, and emptiness in their abandoned home. "Loveliness reigned and stillness, and together made the shape of loveliness itself, a form from which life had parted" (Woolf, 2016, p.144). The portrayal of the world where some family members lose their lives offers "a strange, remote world" and demonstrates "an experience of abandonment" (Dalsimer, 2001, p.21). However, as a biological process, death gains a different meaning in the common world altogether (Chapman, 2007, p.436). The importance of death in the world comes from the individual's particular self, which arouses different feelings in everyone, such as family members and friends. Considering this point, Anne Chapman (2007) argues that: "For the human individual in the world there is a linear progress from birth to death, but on the earth there is no such linearity, rather 'life goes on.' Death is simply the replacement of one form of life with another" (p.436). The dialectics in the world brings farewells as such. It signifies a discrepancy: On the one side, there is the world where individuals perform their uniqueness; on the other side, there is the earth (nature), where uniqueness and even moral values lose their significance. Nature equalizes all creatures since our biological systems are always in need of a natural environment. People who survive like other biological creatures in nature lose their distinctness, exclusive identities, and even customs.

With the war-associated narrative, Woolf stands against the idea of uplifting and splendid nature praised by the Romantics. According to the Romantic perspective, nature is inspirational and influential for the individual's mind and creativity. Nature inspires, for it guides and teaches humanity.²³ However, in Woolf, the negative portrayal of naturalness due to the tragedies of war documents the dull nature in the post-war period:

Listening (had there been any one 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 like the amorphous bulks of leviathans ... It seemed as if the universe were battling and tumbling, in brute confusion and wanton lust aimlessly by itself ... The stillness and the brightness of the day were as strange as the chaos and tumult of night, with the trees standing there, and the flowers standing there, looking before them, looking up, yet beholding nothing, eyeless, and so terrible(Woolf, 2016, p. 152).

These war-associated lines exhibit that the power of nature is inadequate when it comes to war. The sheer inability of nature to remedy the destructive consequences of war shows a disagreement with nature's healing and reformative side. In *Time Passes*, what reconciles Virginia Woolf with William Wordsworth, an outstanding Romantic, is not the idea of the sublimity of the sea or the brightness of the sky. In Woolf, "as in Wordsworth, the past, memories affect current emotions and attitudes" (Schwarz, 1995, p.306). According to Schwarz (1995), there is neither a benevolent nature nor a "benevolent order" for Woolf at all (p.304). On the contrary, the prosperous nature turns

²³In the opening paragraph of her essay "Solidarity or Singularity? Richard Rorty between Romanticism and Technology," Nancy Fraser argues how romanticism aestheticizes politics and renders it "anti-democratic." "Science, politics, whatever—from the standpoint of the Romantic impulse, every arena of invention would be a branch of literature in an extended sense, just as every significant act would be an aesthetic act and every making a self-making" See Fraser (1989, pp.93-95).

into a barren, dull, and dreadful space with the presence of the war altogether. In this regard, Woolf argues against the traditional meaning of nature, as Arendt does. In the following lines, Daniel R. Schwarz makes this case clear:

Woolf is mocking the visionary romantic voice which proclaims with confidence that ‘good triumphs, happiness prevails, order rules’ (p. 199), or that declares that nature contains ‘some absolute good’ or has ‘a knowledge of the sorrows of mankind’ (p. 199) - and the reader who reads in search of conclusive interpretations of reality from her work (1995, p.304).

As a reminder of Hegelian philosophy, in terms of the historical nature of human life, Woolf espouses the dialectics in life where everything is bound up with changes constantly —the loss of stability. The *human condition* demands thinking of the dialectics in life, namely, the new and the unexpected. The house of the Ramsays is about to be sold; the books and belongings get dusty; the clothes are desolated. The natural beauties, the sea, the sun, and the sky are under sorrow, pain, and chaos with war and deaths. The warships overshadow the brightness of the sea:

The nights now are full of wind and destruction; the trees plunge and bend and their leaves fly helter skelter until the lawn is plastered with them and they lie packed in gutters and choke rain pipes and scatter damp paths. Also the sea tosses itself and breaks itself...(Woolf, 2016, p.143).

Woolf, amidst the ruptures and the victims of the war, poses a question. She questions whether the alleged benevolent nature can endure the consequences of the war: “What power could now prevent the fertility, the insensibility of nature?” (Woolf, 2016,

p.156). In what follows, Woolf raises another question, marking her objection to the general understanding of nature:

Did nature supplement what man advanced? Did she complete what he began?
With equal complacency she saw his misery, condoned his meanness, and
acquiesced his torture. That dream, then, of sharing, completing, finding in
solitude on the beach an answer, was but a reflection in a mirror (Woolf, 2016,
p.150).

Woolf documents the breakdown in values attuned to nature, such as solidarity and benevolence and exhibits the Ramsays' ruined home, the deprivation of the shared world, their family life, and eventually, "the mirror was broken" (Woolf, 2016, p. 151). In Louise Westling words, "This flat denial signals the end of Romantic optimism" (1999, p.863). When it comes to Mr Ramsay and his relationship with nature, as Westling argues, Woolf problematizes Leslie Stephen's interest in Hume's understanding of nature. Mr Ramsay's books are written about "subjects and object and the nature of reality" (Woolf, 2016, p.26), and he is a philosopher whose identity belongs to the public sphere. In Westling's view, "Hume, Leslie Stephen, and Mr. Ramsay work directly in the transcendental Platonic tradition that assumes the separation of mind from body, and human consciousness from physical nature" (1999, p.862). In particular, I shall draw attention to a clear correlation between Mr Ramsay's radical subjectivity and his indifference to nature. Mr Ramsay's lack of interest in nature shows his selfish subjectivity, so his blindness to nature is related to his radical selfhood:

Indeed he seemed to her sometimes made differently from other people, born
blind, deaf, and dumb, to the ordinary things, but to the extraordinary things, with

an eye like an eagle's. His understanding often astonished her. But did he notice the flowers? No. Did he notice the view? No. [...] pretended to admire the flowers (Woolf, 2016, pp.78-79).

Woolf attempts to exhibit how the serenity of nature is simultaneously demolished when the war hits and destroys the in-between.

Given that Woolf puts forward realistic discussions of nature, the past, the private sphere, and the war experiences, these points demand a question concerning her objection to pseudo-reality in language in the narrative. Arendt's article *The Crisis in Culture* in *Between Past and Future* was released in 1961. Nevertheless, there are some crossing points between Woolf and Arendt worthy of attention, considering this essay: The rejection of irresponsibility in language. In her article, Arendt argues that artwork not in nature but in "the man-made world" has permanent durability and immortality, through which it transcends the idea of the finite world (1961, p.209). Arendt (1961) also endows artworks with a particular priority over the other things "since they stay longer in the world than anything else, they are the worldliest of all things" (p.209). It can be interpreted to mean that artwork's durability comes from its power to survive for the next generation (Arendt, 1961, p.209). Artworks should not merely address the present; whatever the case, the artist should not be immune from the future, and she should establish her own art in the zone of immortality.

In addition to these points, art must exclude the priority on entertainment or subjectivity, emphasizing authenticity and reality. Then, art can be regarded as the phenomenon of the public world thoroughly. To the extent the artist can do that, they will not fall into the trap of *philistinism*. With these observations, we can return to *To The*

Lighthouse. Woolf pens a fictional biography, blending fact and imagination in her narrative: “Reading *To the Lighthouse* involves the reader remaining open to both the autobiographical and the fictional at the same time” (Goldman, 2006, p.60). Woolf’s novel is structured around the autobiographical details from the family memories and the war experiences. Quentin Bell (1972), in his biography of Virginia Woolf, claimed that Woolf had more difficulty in animating Julia Stephen (Mrs Ramsay) than the representation of Leslie Stephen (Mr Ramsay) (p.18). Nevertheless, Woolf does not undermine the facts of history in her fiction by focusing on the fragments. According to Pericles Lewis (2000), for Woolf, narrating the multiple perspectives or consciousness shows “a more ‘pluralist’ conception of reality” (p.43). In this regard, it is worth remembering Levinas’s understanding of novel: “The characters of a novel are beings that are shut up, prisoners. Their history is never finished, it still goes on, but makes no headway” (1989, p.139).

Hannah Arendt’s starting point for distinguishing fiction from storytelling is the former’s capacity to annihilate the truth more than the latter. The import of narrative, as Arent points out, is to situate the words into reality par excellence. For Arendt, the significance of narrating the reality culminates in saving actions from oblivion. Stories thereby are visible to the world shared with other people. Arendt problematizes the writer’s break with the world and the omission of reality in literature (De Schutter, 2006, p.218). As Dirk De Schutter (2006) observes, Arendt wants people to become aware of the corruption in language and of the pseudo-reality in literature; besides, her critique demonstrates the particular affinity between herself and Jacques Derrida (p.218). Both Arendt and Derrida would agree that the Romantics epitomize the corruption in language

because they depend on pseudo-reality in their narratives (De Schutter, 2006, 218). The limitless freedom of the Romantics in narrative is an escape from comprehending the world's responsibility. In some way, the pseudo-reality in language amounts to the rejection of responsibility for what has been said. As such, this situation eradicates the commitment to the common world. In Arendt's case, "She relates this freedom to the desire to be original that has obsessed Western culture since romanticism" (De Schutter, 2006, p.219). Arendt thus gives a deep meaning, consistency, responsibility to words rather than randomness and immensity. Her perspective does not mean that she underestimates the power of language. Instead, it exhibits her willingness to take responsibility for the public sphere with the aid of narrative.

Similarly, Virginia Woolf, in *To The Lighthouse*, takes this responsibility by choosing a fragmented but realistic language for the narrative of her memories and of the brutal consequences of World War I. As Daniel R. Schwarz (1995) puts it, "Like Joyce, she felt the gap between word and world; but, even more than Joyce until *Finnegans Wake*, for her the word was often more real than the world" (p.258). Although these two thinkers belong to different horizons of inquiry, politics and literature, Woolf shares a similarity with Arendt in emphasizing the importance of avoiding irresponsibility in language. In this regard, John Whittier-Ferguson argues that: "Woolf understands language, however liable to corruption and forms of misuse, to be the most important possession humans have in their struggle against barbarism" (2011, p.243).

As the common ground of the dialogue between Hannah Arendt and Virginia Woolf, I have attempted to argue their reflections on nature, historiography, the concepts of the public and the private sphere, and the objection to pseudo-reality in language in the

context of *To The Lighthouse*. Woolf invites us in contemporary society to bring private matters into the public realm to demand freedom; in this way, the individual can achieve the confirmation of the self with the aid of various perspectives —as Arendt’s account of politics declares. Woolf implies that the private is inseparable from the public, the common, for the Ramsays’ war experiences, tragic consequences of political turmoils, and their pains are intimately tied to the realities of the twentieth century, the public sphere. On the one hand, Woolf teaches us how to think politically by observing the private world, but on the other hand she offers a positive meaning of the household sphere. Like Arendt, Woolf demonstrates that the private sphere is significant for the validity of the public world. The narrative recaptures the significance of experiences and the sense of pain. As such, Woolf makes her characters’ pain visible to the reader in the public sphere. More than discussed in this chapter, Arendt’s theory of action has a wide-ranging dimension, that is, the problematization of freedom. Furthermore, Arendt considers two remedies for the irreversible and unpredictable actions: Forgiveness and promise. Considering these points of her theory of action in another prominent modernist of his time, William Faulkner, my purpose in the next chapter is to argue the traces of the possibility of authentic action and of freedom in *The Sound and the Fury*, with a focus on labor, loneliness, the faculty of forgiving, and the faculty of promising from the lens of Arendt. This approach will allow us to see the meaning of the social and the political in Faulkner *per se*.

CHAPTER 4

Between Past and Present: *The Sound and The Fury*

Situating William Faulkner in a political conversation with Hannah Arendt, the present chapter explores how the characters' commitment to the irreversible past hinder them from partaking in spontaneous action and freedom in *The Sound and The Fury*. I shall begin this chapter by revisiting the meaning of politics and of freedom in Arendt's thought and then scrutinize what Faulkner has in mind about politics in modernity. My general argument will be that the novel does not offer the space of action for the characters since they fail to bid farewell to the burden of the past and that the novel lacks a sufficiently developed idea of authentic politics. I will take Arendt's differentiation between solitude and loneliness as a standpoint to argue Quentin's predicament of the past in detail, which will take us to discuss the conceptions of forgiveness and promise from the lens of Arendt. Finally, Arendt's notion of the social will clarify how the glorification of labor in the modern market economy annihilates the arena of action for Jason. The present chapter raises particular questions: Why is the world of the novel dominated by labor? How would Faulkner use the words social and political? What does *the rise of the social* mean in the novel?

Thinking with Arendt to understand Faulkner's concern with politics, the political, in his fiction first entails examining Arendt's account of politics. The standard usage of the word politics is related to private concerns, competition among groups, power of some people proceeded by institutions. However, for Arendt, politics means dealing with common interests, deliberation, and exchanging ideas together in the public sphere; thus, Arendt's scope of politics offers a space of authentic action and freedom for individuals.

As Ann Lane (1983) puts it, “Arendt's theory of action teaches that members of a community-even newly emergent in a movement-must be allowed to create their own ways of development” (p.110). In her article *What Is Freedom?*, Arendt contends that the question of politics requires questioning the problem of freedom¹ (1961, p.145). Freedom, Arendt asserts, cannot be apprehended only within the space of thought. The implication is that freedom cannot bear on the dialogue between me and myself *per se* and that it can be comprehended only in human affairs (Arendt, 1961, p.145). Freedom thus cannot be reduced to the realm of the inner world or to “inward domain, the will” (Arendt, 1961, p.145). Put another way, what gives meaning to freedom is being in concert with people in the political realm. It means to say that the experience of freedom demands the web of human relationships and plurality in the common world. The discussion of freedom, Arendt argues, also entails reflection on action: “The question of politics and the fact that man is a being endowed with the gift of action must always be present to our mind when we speak of the problem of freedom” (1961, p.146). As such, the conception of freedom should be considered with the possibility of action in the public world. When freedom is eradicated, the space of political action will be undermined at the same time.

Most importantly, Arendt emphasizes the equal import of the public and the private sphere to make sense of freedom. In either case, if the individual does not conceive of the meaning of freedom in the public world, he or she cannot grasp what “inner freedom” means in the private sphere (Arendt, 1961, p.146). Thus, when body

¹ In her another article, *Introduction into Politics*, Arendt argues that: “The meaning of politics is freedom. Its simpliciry and conclusive force lie not in the fact that it is as old as the question itself-which of course arises out of uncertainty and is inspired by mistrust-but in the existence of politics as such” See (2005, p.108).

politics is constructed in plurality among others, freedom comes to the fore. To put it in Richard Bernstein's words, "public freedom is a *positive* worldly achievement" (2018, p.64).

What, then, is politics for Faulkner? The straightforward response to this question must include what Faulkner means by modernity historically. Over the course of his life, Faulkner was the close spectator of Southern society's historical, cultural, and social transformation and of the growth of America's economic and political power since the nineteenth century. With the rise of the capitalist system and advances in technology, local places turned into capitalist consumer societies. The outbreak and the aftermath of World War I touched deeply upon Faulkner's life, though the political resonance of his entire *oeuvre* came from another war that engulfed his world altogether. The defeat of the Southern society, where Faulkner was a member, in the Civil War left irreversible marks on the lives of people, resulting in the invasion of Blacks and whites, the changes in the market economy, the breakdown in slavery, the loss of aristocratic values, and the emergence of modern values. *The Sound and Fury*, structured around the story of the Southern family from the early twentieth century, documents how the characters from the South, Mississippi, show resistance to accept modernity *per se*. The novel "is the story of the eclipse of the South's landed gentry as a heartfelt tragedy" (Matthews, 2009, p.2). As such, Faulkner's characters are *reluctant modernists*. In John Matthews's poetic remark, *The Sound and the Fury* is "Faulkner's masterpiece about the agony of change and the tragedy of loss" (2009, p.78).

Faulkner's engagement with public issues in his fiction could suffice to place him into the political sphere; however, Faulkner fails to offer a political ethos due to the

obsession with the past in the novel—a failure to embody spontaneous action and freedom in the Arendtian sense. Faulkner’s interest in politics was limited over the course of his life, though, Faulkner, in 1938, noted that: “I most sincerely wish to go on record as being unalterably opposed to Franco and fascism, to all violations of the legal government and outrages against the people of Republican Spain” (p.181). Faulkner never called himself a public intellectual prescribing an array of political suggestions or state ideology in his novels. Given that the examination of politics demands continuing action and freedom, as Arendt proposes, the roots of these concepts are highly contentious in Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*.² The loss of authentic action and of the space of freedom in Faulkner’s novel is not yet to say that he lessens his interest in public concerns and political issues. Like Virginia Woolf, Faulkner did not offer a systematic and coherent prescription of how a political novel must be. If we pin Faulkner down to a category, it can pave the way for failing to notice what a modernist novel can fathom in the broader perspective. Richard King maintains that Faulkner’s political resonance after 1945 was evident; however, American and southern literary tradition would not offer an appropriate vocabulary for a traditional political fiction (1985, p.6). King (1985) succinctly sums up:

This failure to engage the political theme or to take politics seriously derived from a particular conception of southern society and culture in which the public realm was obscured and was expressed in Faulkner’s failure to find the appropriate genre

²Faulkner, in his essay *Albert Camus*, written in 1961, observes that: “Camus said that the only true function of man, born into an absurd world, is to live, be aware of one’s life, one’s revolt, one’s freedom. He said that if the only solution to the human dilemma is death, then we are on the wrong road. The right track is the one that leads to life, to the sunlight. One cannot unceasingly suffer from the cold” See Faulkner (2004, p.111).

or discourse to embody what lies at the heart of the experience of politics? —free action with others in public (p.4).

The problematization of segregation, race, identity fragmentation, obscured moral and cultural values, and the manifestation of Blacks' voices could suffice to situate Faulkner's novel into a political realm.³ As Joel Williamson (1993) writes: "In reality, the South had married the sin of slavery —and race —and all the evils material and spiritual that sprang therefrom" (p.358). The military defeat of the South in the Civil War reduced the power of wealthy aristocratic families, resulting in the break with their roots and values. The Compson household is one of these families. The Compson family loses its privileged in society both economically and politically; thus, the reflection on the war in light of Arendt allows us to see the war not only as a matter of the public sphere but as an issue of the private sphere in Faulkner's fiction. Furthermore, the political resonance illuminates the dissolution of the local spaces, the multiplicity of voices, social and cultural reformations in the post-Civil War era. The Civil War is not a purification for Faulkner. He does not idealise the war; on the contrary, Faulkner profoundly considers what painful consequences lie behind the war experiences and acknowledges that the war is not a matter of discourse of heroic actions, manhood, and victory.⁴ As declared in his Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, what Faulkner felt compelled to ponder were "problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat" (2004, pp.116-117).

³ On the contrary, James Baldwin, in his essay *Faulkner and Desegregation*, penned in *Partisan Review*, sharply proclaimed that: "Where is the evidence of the struggle he has been carrying on there on behalf of Negro?" (1956, p.670). However, according to John T. Matthews, "Minority voices and subjects are not incidental to Faulkner's achievement; they are its foundation" See Matthews (2000, p.73).

⁴ In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt's criticism of "the postwar elite" who idealized the war and who searched glory, heroism, and chivalry in the war deserves attention here. "In the carefully chosen words of Thomas Mann," Arendt writes, "war was 'chastisement' and 'purification'; 'war in itself, rather than victories, inspired the poet' " (cited in Arendt, 1973, p.328).

With the aid of narrative or storytelling in Arendt's phrase, his awareness of the consequences of war evinces the singular and particular stories of ordinary people in daily life: "He always felt like a *natural-born storyteller*, with things to say about *the human condition* that his peculiar part of the world could illustrate" (Matthews, 2009, pp.5-6, my emphasis). As Arendt (1973) puts it: "The novel could deal with the destinies of human beings who were either the victims of necessity or the favourites of luck" (p.141).

In the case of Quentin Compson, my purpose is to take Arendt's differentiation between solitude and loneliness as a basic premise to argue the loss of authentic action and of freedom in the novel. In loneliness, Arendt proclaims, the subject is utterly destitute of action, and the web of human relationships is destroyed. More than that, in loneliness, the possibility of action is eliminated, for the individual is deprived of the space of experience.⁵ Arendt (1973) remarks: "Loneliness is not solitude. Solitude requires being alone whereas loneliness shows itself most sharply in company with others" (p.476). However, when the individual experiences solitude, he "can be together with himself"⁶ (Arendt, 1973, p.476). In solitude, I can talk with myself, or to put it another way, "I am 'by myself'" (Arendt, 1973, p.476). Thus, in solitude, I can find myself under the condition of "the two-in-one," and I can establish "a dialogue between me and myself" (Arendt, 1973, p.476). In loneliness, the individual lacks various perspectives coming from plurality to confirm his otherness. Nevertheless, "For the confirmation of my identity I depend entirely upon other people" (Arendt, 1973, p.476). Loneliness thus is "unbearable" when the individual loses the confirmation of the self in

⁵ From a historical perspective, the Greek philosopher Epictetus was the first person to distinguish between loneliness and solitude. See Arendt (1973, p.476).

⁶ Arendt uses the masculine pronoun in her discussion, I will follow her usage.

the gaze of others. Under such a situation, we lose self-confidence and the possibility of experience, for we are deprived of the affirmation of ourselves in the world: “Isolation is that impasse into which men are driven when the political sphere of their lives, where they act together in the pursuit of a common concern, is destroyed” (Arendt, 1973, p.474). In that case, it is not irrelevant to say that Quentin suffers from *loneliness*, not solitude. As we shall see, for Quentin, loneliness culminates in his deprivation of the act of forgiving in daily life from the lens of Arendt.

In *The Human Condition*, for the irreversibility and the unpredictability of experiences initiated by action, Arendt emphasizes two remedies: The faculty of forgiving and the faculty of promising. Forgiveness reduces the irreversibility of what has already happened in the past and recovers the unguessed actions, whereas “binding oneself through promises” lessens what could be in the unforeseen future (Arendt, 1998, p.237). In the case of forgiveness, the subject will be free of the past, and then he can initiate something new by embracing new possibilities. In the case of tying ourselves with promises, we can bring actions under control in “the ocean of uncertainty” by creating “islands of security” (Arendt, 1998, p.237). Marguerite La Caze (2011), in her penetrating article *The Miraculous Power of Forgiveness and the Promise*, argues how the act of forgiving and promising can constitute a moral code, with a particular focus on Arendt’s thoughts on the relationship between politics and ethics (p.150). Given that “the miraculous potential of action” bears on natality and that its power is closely related to initiating something new *per se*, it carries implications for hope and faith (La Caze, 2011, p.151). Drawing upon Arendt’s *Introduction into Politics*, La Caze explores the importance of “miracles” in Arendt’s understanding of newly occurring things in

immense unpredictability. Arendt, in *Introduction into Politics*, suggests that we should set aside the idea that miracles are solely related to superhuman or supernatural, for miracles are also associated with “the entire framework of our physical existence —the existence of the earth, of organic life on earth, of the human species itself —rests upon a sort of miracle” (Arendt, 2005, p.111). In the light of these lines, political life for Arendt, La Caze argues, can be improved with miracles of action since forgiveness can offer fresh beginnings (p.2011, p.151). Arendt believes that forgiving means accepting that life is full of surprises, wrongdoings, and mistakes. However, aside from political life, I see more merit in Arendt’s notion of forgiveness to reflect on spontaneity in daily life. At this point, I will argue a more specific perspective in linking the past and the present in the context of *The Sound and The Fury*. I wish to ask: What is the power of forgiveness to remedy the past to shed new light on the present in daily life? A potential response to this question can be founded upon the premise that forgiving relieves us of what has been done and that the act of promising reduces the precariousness of future deeds. The faculty of forgiving enables the individual to surmount the past; thus, to a certain extent, it liberates the individual from the burden of the past’s irreversibility, allowing one to embark on fresh experiences —a semblance of *natality*, in Arendt’s phrase. Arendt argues that forgiveness is the exact opposite of vengeance. Furthermore, Arendt bestows a privilege on love in the sense that love has the power of forgiving. Love gives impulse to forgive the actions we are exposed to. As we shall see the answer in the rest of the chapter, does love have such power in Quentin’s life when it comes to the irreversible actions of Caddy?

If the lack of vengeance amounts to peace, tranquillity, and fresh feelings, forgiveness can undo the past. The act of forgiving thus does not aim to hurt others, as Jason does in the novel. Without being able to forgive ourselves or anyone, we will be limited with a single deed that is impossible to retrieve. This situation will always make us the victim of our acts (Arendt, 1998, p.237). It means to say that forgiveness is intimately tied to the conception of freedom. The faculty of forgiving both releases the individual who forgives and releases the individual who is forgiven from the irreversibility of what has been done (Arendt, 1998, p.237). On the other hand, as Arendt argues, we cannot preserve our identity without keeping our promises, culminating in discrepancies and complications that leave the individual in darkness. This darkness can be eradicated with the presence of other people in the public realm by conforming to “the identity between the one who promises and the one who fulfils” (Arendt, 1998, p.237). Concerning these points, Arendt proclaims that forgiving and promising demand the Other. Arendt (1998) proposes:

No one can forgive himself and no one can be bound by a promise made only to himself; forgiving and promising enacted in solitude or isolation remain without reality and can signify no more than a role played before one's self (p.237).

After this background, we can return to Faulkner's novel. For a summary of the story, we can observe that *The Sound and the Fury* is the product of a perplexing period in history. The novel, published in 1929, set in Mississippi, is structured around the breakdown of the aristocratic Compson family. The book consists of four sections: April 7, 1928; June 2, 1910; April 6, 1928; and April 8, 1928. It is initiated with the first-person narrative of Benjy, a son of the Compsons, who is not aware of the past and of his life in

the present.⁷ In their antebellum house, an alcoholic father, Jason Compson, and a class obsessed mother, Caroline Compson, suffer from their children's actions. Caddy gets pregnant, leaves the house, and gets married to someone she does not fall in love with; Quentin commits suicide when he is a student at Harvard; Jason, a bully and anti-semitic, takes his father's role in the household after his death. Quentin and Benjy share a profound love toward Caddy and mourn her absence; this is a tragedy that Benjy, Quentin, and Jason cannot overcome throughout their lives. Quentin, a typical Southern man, feeling guilty about his failure to protect Caddy's "honour," is obsessed with recovering her "purity" and family's dissolution. Jason wreaks revenge on Caddy's daughter, Quentin, preventing her free actions. Amidst modernity, the new social conditions of the South are documented through the experiences of the Southerners. Despite the rupture from their aristocratic values and lifestyles after the Civil War, the Compsons attempt to hold on to their customs. They wish to pursue the traces of their ancestors' moral values, and they live in-between "their concern for what Is and what Ought To Be" (Williamson, 1993, p.359). In an interview that took place in early 1956, Faulkner declared that: "Life is motion ... The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed so that a hundred years later, when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life" (cited in Cowley, 1958, pp.138-139). In this regard, I shall pose this particular question: What is the past's role in eradicating the possibility of spontaneous action and freedom in Faulkner's fiction?

⁷ The novel's title comes from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more. It is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury / Signifying nothing" (cited in Matthews, 2009, p.97). "Think of him as the American Shakespeare," John T. Matthews proposes. See Matthews (2009, p.1).

In setting out to examine Quentin's loneliness, his deprivation of action, and the faculty of forgiving from the perspective of Arendt, I shall argue that what lies behind Quentin's inability to initiate something new is his obsession with the past or *was*. Quentin's attempts to restore the old world where he wishes to find prosperity and tranquillity end in defeat. In a dorm room, Quentin is trapped by his father's old words and by his sister Caddy's memories — as a harbinger of the burden of the past: "Wonder. Go on and wonder" (Faulkner, 1995, p.64). On the second section's opening page, June 2, 1910, the watch's ticking reminds him of his father's and grandfather's memories. Then, the watch is broken in his hand. I will propose that the fragmented crystal is the emblem of his failure of spontaneous action and somehow of his removal from the common world. His mind lies in-between motionlessness: "There was a clock, high up in the sun, and I thought about how, when you don't want to do a thing, your body will try to trick you into doing it" (Faulkner, 1995, p.69). Quentin is very aware of his dismissal from the world, the fluidity of time, and the dialectics in life. Quentin is, however, unable to partake in daily dialogues with other people. In Richard P. Adams's aptly remark: "Each of the Compson brothers, in his own peculiar way, is a static obstacle to the motion of life ... Each of the brothers, like most of Faulkner's other static figures, is in some sense crucified because of his inability to move with the moving world" (1968, p.225). For example, Quentin's friends consider going to the mill and swimming; but, Quentin cannot involve in sustained plans, and he prefers to reflect on memories about Caddy. On his horizon, he cannot embrace new experiences and unpredictability of actions. With an indispensable desire to think about things that are impossible to undo, Quentin wants to overcome Caddy's promiscuity and her failed marriage. His ultimate conviction that he

fails to protect his sister weaves his mind into the burden of memories. Amidst the daily, the flashbacks about Caddy's sexuality that gives a sense of shameful past prevent him from comprehending the present.

Quentin's unbearable riddle in his life is the loss of the common world where he might be the agent of his actions without the trap of the past; however, his struggle results in withdrawal from the shared world. According to Faulkner's understanding of the modernist novel, memory is not a tool for making sense of the present and of the world but a burden inflicted on Quentin (Pothier, 2015, p.189). For Quentin, salvation is impossible due to his antecedents and the rubble of tradition. What stands at the centre of life for Quentin, adopting Harold Bloom's phrase, is *the anxiety of influence*, which amounts to an endless cycle of the struggle between Quentin and the precursors.⁸ Quentin, "a Hamlet-like figure" (Fargnoli, Golay, & Hamblin, 2008, p.283), cannot overcome this anxiety to begin something new and unprecedented, for he is already hunted unconsciously by what has already happened. More than that, he cannot acknowledge that his actions cannot escape from becoming a failure since "Quentin 'learns' from his father the idea that man is an 'accumulation' of the burdens of his ancestors" (Folks, 2008, p.200). Accordingly, the burden of the past dispels the political sphere and authentic action in the novel, and this situation exiles Quentin to the shelter of loneliness, romantic introspection. His condition overlaps with Arendt's critique of *worldlessness* because he creates a shelter for himself, where he loses his connection with others. These points show the failure of freedom in the Arendtian sense *per se*.

⁸ I adopt Bloom's famous phrase at this point. When Bloom coined *the anxiety of influence*, he had a more specific perspective concerning the autonomy, originality, or autonomy of texts. His term questions a text's close relation with other texts written in the past. See Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, Oxford University Press, 1977.

Georg Lukács, in his renowned critique of narration, claimed that:

“Individualization was accomplished almost exclusively through action, through the reactions of characters to events” (1971, p.117). Having drawn the line between actively partaking in events by acting and being only spectators of them, Lukács emphasized the significance of characters' turning out to be agents of their actions in narrative. Then, “We are the audience to events in which the characters take an active part. We ourselves experience these events” (Lukács, 1971, p.116). Jean-Paul Sartre, in his critique of *The Sound and Fury*, proclaims that in Faulkner’s fiction, “The actions themselves, even when seen by those who perform them, burst and scatter on entering the present” (1962, p.85). For John T. Matthews, “Faulkner’s characters cannot act properly until they know who they are; they do not know who they are until they know the mysteries of their ancestry” (2000, p.71), as the culmination of being preoccupied with an endless loop of memories and flashbacks. As a spectator of what has already happened, Quentin cannot shrink away from the burden of the past, resulting in the deprivation of action and freedom. He mourns the past world, outmoded traditions, and bankrupt moral values, which do not exist anymore, attempting to animate the common world where he can be born anew. Whatever the case, as Michael Gorra points out, “It shouldn’t obscure a larger truth: *The Sound and the Fury* is about failure” (2020, p.303).

In his essay *On The Sound and the Fury: Time in the Work of Faulkner*, Sartre emphasized that in Faulkner’s novel, we can not find ourselves in-between the past and the present but only in the mere presence of the present. The main reason is related to the eternal loop of the present in the novel, thus “beyond this present time there is nothing” (Sartre, 1962, p.85). According to Sartre, everything has already happened in the

characters' lives, which this situation shrouds “the silent force of the possible”, in Heidegger’s words (1962, p.92). However, for Sartre, consciousness grasps the future and its possibilities. Consciousness accommodates both what has been experienced in the past and what could be in the future. In Faulkner’s case, Quentin is only trapped by the absolute past; thus, “history bears down on him relentlessly, leaving him no room to maneuver, no space to achieve authenticity as a person” (Singal, 2008, p.86). Given that action is not a state of consciousness, as Arendt argues, Quentin cannot pick out the past from the present. As such, he cannot experience “natality,” in Arendt’s famous phrase, through which he can sustain his new plans in the world. He surrenders himself to frustration as the culmination of his deprivation of “the silent force of the possible,” as Sartre observes.

Nevertheless, he cannot overcome the realisation that he fails to catch up with the flow of daily experiences and the motion of life: “My insides would move, stilling still. Moving sitting still,” he murmurs (Faulkner, 1995, p.74). He reflects on the memories once again: “One minute she was standing in the door. Benjy. Bellowing. Benjamin the child of mine old age bellowing. Caddy! Caddy!” (1995, p.74). He attempts to forge the old world shared with Caddy anew: “*If it could just be a hell beyond that: the clean flame the two of us more than dead. Then you will have only me then only me then the two of us amid the pointing and the horror beyond the clean flame*” (1995, p.98).

According to John T. Matthews, Faulkner documents how privacy is woven together with the shared world par excellence. Though Jason and Quentin ostensibly release themselves from the family, their inner world is woven into the shared history, the common world. The novel casts light on “Faulkner’s lifelong concentration on the

tension between one's private self and one's community, between the individual and history, a person and his or her people" (Matthews, 2009, p.83). Quentin is the one who struggles to create this common world by holding on to the past and traditions. When Quentin deeply understands that it is impossible to recreate this world, he prefers to commit suicide. In this regard, I will describe Faulkner's characters as *the refugees of the past* because they are forced to enter a new world and to lose their cultural values, a sense of being at home, after the Civil War. They are metaphorically *stateless* and *worldless* in the modern South.

In that case, my argument will be that Quentin's escaping into the repetitive past and his deep anger towards Caddy and life exhibit his lack of the faculty of forgiving in the Arendtian sense. For Quentin, what is exceptionally unacceptable is that Caddy never considers the family members due to her insistence on free actions and that she is deprived of common sense. Quentin remarks: "The less you say about Benjy and Father the better when have you ever considered them Caddy ... Don't touch me will you look after Benjy and Father" (Faulkner, 1995, pp. 88-97). His refrain depends on what was done: Caddy's failed marriage and her promiscuity. In the shadow of the bridge, he gives a great deal of attention to their separation: "They don't touch one another, no matter how knotted up they once were, no matter how close they lay once to the bones" (1995, p.97). In what follows, he reiterates this question: "Why must you marry somebody Caddy" (1995, p.102). When Caddy declares her sexual freedom, Quentin cannot endure this fact and begins to cry—a clear manifestation of his lack of forgiveness. On the other hand, since he fails to accommodate the future possibilities, Quentin cannot believe in the power of keeping promises for a secure and predictable future.

To Arendt, forgiveness is an “eminently personal ... Affair in which what was done is forgiven for the sake of who did it” (Arendt, 1998, p.241). It means to say that we forgive someone for *who she is*, not for what she is. My interpretation of this thought in the case of Quentin will be that it is not clear whether his pain results from his failure to forgive himself or from his lack of ability to forgive Caddy. The individual cannot forgive himself in isolation, as Arendt claims. To forgive himself, Quentin is in need of the presence of Caddy, but he is already abandoned by her. This situation is related to a limited perspective when we turn our eyes to our inner world, for we see ourselves from a limited point of view. Others can hold a mirror to us to unveil different perspectives. Thus, “I” cannot utterly respond to *who I am* in loneliness, for “here, as in action and speech generally, we are dependent upon others, to whom we appear in a distinctness which we ourselves are unable to perceive” (Arendt, 1998, p.243). Quentin cannot comprehend the meaning of Caddy’s actions, and he delves into contemplation. He cannot sustain his plans since his actions are interrupted by his romantic introspection. Besides, amongst others, he is the one who puts love into the heart of his life. Given that somehow love prevails over what has been done and overcomes the irreversibility of deeds, as Arendt argues, love loses its function in Quentin’s miserable life. Michael Gorra (2020) makes this case clear for Quentin:

The only thing worse than the pain it brings would be the idea that he might get over it, that it might no longer hurt and that even his sister was not worth despair. *Was* allows survival, and yet to discard that trauma, to believe one might outlive it—that discounts its importance, dismisses the very wound that has come to constitute the self (p.308).

In Arendt's understanding, love's apolitical side destroys the in-between; however, love has a decisive role in forgiving (1998, pp.242-243). Quentin's love for Caddy is not enough to give him a sense of compassion. For Quentin, the truth behind his shame is not Caddy's ruined life but the honor of his family, for their conservative norms are under threat with Caddy's irreversible deeds. Confessing their patriarchal family structure, the mother declares that: "She not only drags your name in the dirty but corrupts the very air your children breathe" (Faulkner, 1995, p.87). Thus, Quentin's love is an illusion melted with public morality and obsolete traditions. However, when his father gives him the clock, he states that "I give it to you not that you remember time, but that you might forget it now" (Faulkner, 1995, p.63). Forgetting what has been done and its irreversible consequences might heal all wounds. Quentin does not prefer to forget since, for Quentin, forgetting means forgiving what Caddy inflicted on the family *per se*. The deprivation of forgiveness culminates in the break with freedom. Quentin cannot achieve to forgive himself for his failure to protect Caddy's "innocence," and he cannot forgive her irreversible deeds and words. Quentin cannot also contain his anger, as seen in his fight with Dalton Emes, one of the love affairs of Caddy; in this way, Quentin wants to wreak vengeance on him. Since Quentin lacks the faculty of forgiving, he chooses to kill himself in the end. The only action he can complete becomes his suicide as such.

Faulkner's characters are exposed to a transition from nature, the rural, into the modern world (Williamson, 1993, p.358). However, tradition no longer carries a specific meaning in the modern present. In a parallel with Arendt, what Faulkner attempts to preserve is not the tradition but the *pearls* of the past. It is the critical point that Quentin

fails to see because he attempts to re-establish the link between the present and the nation's tradition. He denies making sense of the new and of the absolute rupture from conventions and then leads himself to frustration, bordering on suicide. This dilemma is where Quentin's portrayal as *the refugee of the past* is being unveiled par excellence. He lacks to examine the value of the past within the present conditions. However, it is the present that offers the new and unexpected. As Walter Benjamin observes, "For every image of the past that is not recognised by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably" (1968, p.255).

Furthermore, clarifying the loss of authentic or spontaneous action along with freedom in the novel offers a good survey of Arendt's notion of the social. What does the world of the novel dominated by labor mean in terms of the deprivation of action? Pondering this question, I will first argue the meaning of the social in Arendt and then adopt this concept to my reading of the novel. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt's critique of the modern age and her famous phrase, *the rise of the social*, exert a profound role in her analysis of the *human condition* from the eighteenth century until modern capitalist society.⁹ I will first distinguish Arendt's definition of the social from the normal usage of such a word. For Arendt, the term social can be read as a realm in which people cannot release themselves from consuming and selling, in which people are bereft of

⁹ There are many critical readings of Arendt's understanding of the social. Nancy Fraser sees the social as "multivalent" and "contested," emphasizing that "the social is a switch point for the meeting of heterogeneous contestants associated with a wide range of different publics." See Fraser's *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (2013, pp.64-65). Ayten Gündoğdu proposes a wide-ranging elimination of *reading Arendt against Arendt*, regarding the definition of the social, which allegedly annihilates authentic politics, and she draws attention to human rights as a provoking interpretation of the term. See Gündoğdu's *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights: Hannah Arendt and the Contemporary Struggles of Migrants* (2015, p.66). Within the scope of this chapter, my reading of the social comes close to Seyla Benhabib's interpretation. In Benhabib's analysis, the social means "the growth of a capitalist commodity exchange economy", "mass society," and "sociability." See Benhabib (2003, p.23).

philosophizing about *amor mundi*. With the rise of the social, people are banished to labor activity that defines their identity. Society is a realm in which “the fact of mutual dependence for the sake of life” prevails, and it means that “the activities connected with sheer survival are permitted to appear in public” (Arendt, 1981, p.46). For Arendt, the social is bound up with the development of the capitalist economy, resulting in the victory of labor, which leaves people bereft of political action in the public sphere (1998, p.42). It means to say that when the social reigns, the possibility of action is eradicated. One of the illuminating meanings of the social is “substitution of behavior for action” with the rise of the mass society (Arendt, 1998, p.45). Society demands particular behaviour and attempts to “normalise” people by excluding action that reveals one’s own distinctions (Arendt, 1998, p.40). The last meaning of the social corresponds to “the victory of equality” and to fracturing people’s differences and distinctions, namely, plurality in the public world (Arendt, 1998, p.41). This meaning of the social reduces people to the space of sameness and kills individuality, as well as a wide range of identities. At this point, my argument will be that Faulkner’s portrayal of the social resembles Arendt’s. Before analyzing this term in Faulkner’s novel, it is essential to remember the heated discussions of Arendt’s understanding of the social.

Some critics raised noteworthy objections to Arendt’s treatment of the social. Bhikhu Parekh (1981) claims that Arendt’s arguments on action, labor, and work overlook internal connections (p.184). In doing so, for Arendt, there is a clear distinction between “freedom,” “necessity,” and “truth” (Parekh, 1981, p.184). For Sheldon Wolin (1983), Arendt fails to account for economy as “a structure of power” in society, and she remains “silence about justice” (p.10). In a similar fashion, Hanna Pitkin assumes that

Arendt is bereft of considering unequal distributions that come to the fore with the “market-oriented” global economy. Pitkin (1998) proclaims that:

At the other end of the economic scale are huge numbers of unemployed, underemployed, and landless people, driven by hunger and need to wherever work is available, migrating-whether legally or illegally-in hope of feeding themselves and their dependents, and experiencing a degree of "uprootedness and superfluosness" beyond anything that even the prescient Arendt envisioned (p.259).

However, when we come close to rendering Arendt’s conception of the social, some essential points are worthy of attention. An analysis of society in which life is reduced only to “the one activity [labor] necessary to sustain life” and to biological needs of one’s own and family members, and in which “nothing else assumes public significance” (Arendt, 1998, p.46), signals Arendt’s shrouded emphasis on injustice and system of power over individuals. How could an examination of human life where everything is perpetuated with labor, consumption, and productivity —such as cotton buying and selling, as Jason does in the novel— be immune from an awareness of injustice? If the victory of *labor* corresponds to *action*’s eradication, do we simply ignore the effect of one’s absence on the other? Does this situation reveal the internal connection between labor and action? At this point, Arendt notes that: “A complete victory of society will always produce some sort of ‘communistic fiction,’ whose outstanding political characteristic is that it is indeed ruled by an ‘invisible hand,’ namely, by nobody” (Arendt, 1998, pp.44-45, my emphasis). With “invisible hand,” Arendt contends that obscurity and mystification with the glorification of labor will relegate people to the zone

of survival and to fundamental biological necessities. As Seyla Benhabib (2003) brilliantly puts it, “The anonymous, infinite, multiple crisscrossings of production, exchange, and distribution create, in the words of the young Hegel, ‘an elemental animal-like movement, whose logic is governed by an *‘invisible hand’*”(p.25, my emphasis). After this close reading of Arendt’s treatment of the social, we can acknowledge that Arendt does not turn a blind eye to injustice in the capitalist market economy. Furthermore, Ayten Gündoğdu’s emphasis on *human rights* as the profound meaning of the social can be recalled to raise new questions from the present perspective, for the social “is rather geared toward an analysis of what hinders us in understanding, and acting upon, these rights politically” (Gündoğdu, 2015, p.67). The problematization of injustice and people’s banishment to consumer society “by an invisible hand” pose new questions about human rights and necessitate thinking politically *per se*.

Situating Arendt’s treatment of the social in the context of Faulkner’s novel, we can see that the rise of the cotton market economy goes beyond the South’s border before and after the Civil War, which becomes a milestone in the lives of all Southerners, including the Compson family. In that case, it is essential to emphasize that the antebellum South is also dominated by a labor system called slavery because labor is an activity of poor Black people. Thus, for Faulkner’s fiction, we cannot solely identify the victory of labor with the emergence of modernity or with the post-war period. However, why is the world of the novel dominated by labor? We still have noteworthy points for tracing an answer to this question in the novel. How would Faulkner epitomize the social? In addition to the obsession with the past, I shall argue that the portrayal of consumer society is one of the reasons for Faulkner’s failure to animate free action and

authentic politics in the novel. Especially after the war, there is a dramatic decline in the South's economic power and a steady rise in the Northern capital. Focusing on the Compson family's financial crisis, Faulkner documents the *human condition* in the South. Jason's struggle with the rise of the cotton market is the exemplification of the modernity crisis. Regarding Jason's dilemma, John Matthews, in *William Faulkner: Seeing Through the South*, observes that Jason's concerns about money and the family's economic hardship deter him from falling into an obsession with Caddy's body and sexuality (2009, p.100). According to Matthews, Jason's life is structured around another "self-deception," namely, "the fantasy that the profits to be earned in the market for plantation output had nothing to do with the social violence necessary to produce it" (2009, p.101), as well as the fantasy of wealth without losing his status and culture. Jason cannot escape from the market exchange, which leads us to think about his condition from Karl Marx's perspective: "Commodity fetishism" and "commodification" (Matthews, 2009, p.101). Considering his disdain for Blacks and his problematic relationship with Caddy and his niece based on money, Matthews concludes that Jason is the representation of "capitalist logic" and that "every human relationship is commodified for Jason, as if the age of finance capital has already overtaken the town of Jefferson and Jason is its man of the future" (2009, p.102). In addition to Matthews's penetrating analysis of Jason, I will set my lens to Arendt's understanding of the capitalist economy and the rise of labor, discussing her conception of the social. How would Faulkner use the term social through the painful experiences of Jason due to the modern cotton market?

There is an overlap between the rise of the market economy and the decline of the Compson family. This point demonstrates how these modern changes correspond to the

loss of action in the novel from Arendt's perspective. In many ways, Jason Compson underscores that the cotton exchange in the new South documents injustice: "Cotton is a speculator's crop. They fill the farmer full of hor air and get him to raise a big crop for them to whipsaw on the market, to trim the suckers with" (Faulkner, 1995, p.162). Jason complains about the lack of communication with the North's cotton market, though he pays \$10 to a man for his telegraph communication. To eliminate his family's economic challenges, Jason describes himself as the household head and supports his family financially. More than that, Jason excludes himself from his alcoholic father and from Quentin altogether. "You are my only hope," his mother declares (Faulkner, 1995, p.170). Jason's life boils down to cotton buying and selling: "I can stand on my feet; I don't need any man's mahogany desk to prop me up," Jason says, then, the inevitable facts come to his mind: "So just about the time I got ready to start I'd have to drop everything and run to sell some redneck a dime's worth of nail or something" (Faulkner, 1995, pp.179-180). Thus, the postwar period in the South shows the decline since "economically, labor was plentiful, wages were low, manufactured goods were high, and cash money always scarce enough to make borrowed money very costly" (Williamson, 1993, p.362). Jason is caught up in an economy based on speculation, and he attempts to play the cotton market; however, Jason is also aware of the fact that he is a victim of this market: "I don't want to make a killing; save that suck in the smart gamblers with. I just want an even chance to get my money back" (Faulkner, 1995, p.224). Despite the family's hankering for the outmoded traditions and moral values, Jason's exhaustive critique of modernity exhibits that the new South is not a gilded world. More than that, Jason underlines that it is a period of the *elevation of labor*. Faulkner, "in writing about

their plight, met the plight of the imperialised people of the world, the people whose land had been raped and labor taken to supply raw materials for the factories of the industrial powers” (Williamson, 1993, p.363).

Jason believes that his actions save his family from financial difficulties; however, his intention fails because he cannot find solidarity and proper community to act. Jason’s inability for a coherent action resembles what Arendt describes as the invasion of the public sphere. With the victory of labor, people are deprived of authentic action, through which they can unearth their distinctions in the gaze of others. It is the life that glorifies labor and that makes it necessary to sustain life, where nothing else gains privilege. Jason ostensibly seems to partake in action; however, his activities are not the emblem of freedom. Faulkner demonstrates that the labor activity eradicates the spontaneity in the novel. Furthermore, Faulkner offers a panorama of the new South where everyone aspires to their private needs and benefits —as seen in Jason’s obsession with money and in his desire for a private social position. For example, he steals money supplied by her sister Caddy for her daughter Quentin. However, in the Appendix of the novel, about Jason, Faulkner argues that: “Logical rational contained and even a philosopher in the old stoic tradition” (1990, p.289). We can realize that Jason cannot accommodate common sense by torturing and insulting everyone, including his niece and Blacks. Faulkner’s remark leaves puzzlement when we encounter Jason’s selfish way of thinking and his disdain for his family members. Jason’s actions attempt to flatter his radical subjectivity: “I’ve got a position in this down, and I’m not going to have any member of my family going like a nigger wench. You hear me?” (Faulkner, 1995, p.160). On the other side, Faulkner, in the Appendix, confirms Jason’s radical selfhood: “His mother’s life might continue as nearly

as possible to what it had been; this not because he loved her but (a sane man always) simply because he was afraid of the Negro cook whom he could not even force to leave” (1990, p.290).

That is not the whole story for Jason. He also tends to deploy violence against Quentin (Caddy’s daughter). Jason, a racist, cannot endure Quentin’s freedom: “Every other no-count nigger in town eats in my kitchen” (Faulkner, 1995, p.161). Besides, his removal from the world is closely related to his lack of self-confidence in his relationships with people:

I was a kid then. I believed folks when they said they’d do things. I’ve learned better since. Besides, like I say I guess I don’t need any man’s help to get along I can stand on my feet like always have ... I says well I don’t reckon I’ll ever get far enough from the store to get out of your reach. Somebody’s got to hold on to what little we have left, I reckon (Faulkner, 1995, p.175).

Arendt claims that with the rise of society, “from the shadowy interior of the household,” economic activities engulfed in the private sphere become visible for “the eyes” of others “into the light of the public sphere” (Arendt, 1998, p.38).¹⁰ For Arendt, this situation brings the blurred line between the public and the private sphere. In a similar fashion, the Compson family’s privacy, family issues, moral values (the break with the tradition), and economic activities of the household (with the rise of capitalist the cotton market and of labor) come to light. As Michael Gorra (2020) observes, “In Faulkner’s day the white South littered its public spaces with the mementoes of its own

¹⁰ Seyla Benhabib argues that: “A century ago, Hegel had described this process as the development in the midst of ethical life of a “system of needs” (System der Bedürfnisse), of a domain of economic activity governed by commodity exchange and the pursuit of economic self-interest” See Benhabib’s *Situating the Self Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (1992, p.90).

ruined cause, it deployed a sense of its own suffering and mastered the rhetoric of victimhood and hatred alike. And indeed its people were victims—victims of what they had done to themselves” (p. 312).

As noted above, Arendt, in her critique of the social, points out a critical differentiation between behaviour and action. Arendt assumes that with the triumph of equality, behaviour is substituted for action. Behaviour leads one to *inauthenticity*, whereas action reveals the *authenticity of the self* in the public sphere. In Hanna Pitkin’s words, “Behavior is *action manque*, the failure to act, opportunities for action missed or denied, an abdication of one’s human capacity and responsibility to act” (1998, p. 181, my emphasis). Thus, Arendt’s reflection on the social is intimately tied to parvenu and pariah phrases. The parvenu performs *inauthentic behaviours* imposed by society and sacrifices otherness to be accepted by others, whereas the pariah insists on the *authenticity of differences* along with free actions by objecting to the social recognition.

More precisely, in her account of the social, Arendt maintains that everyone is expected to behave in the same way due to the demand for equality. People are expected to show a single behaviour and opinion as though they were the members of one and only enormous family (Arendt, 1998, p.39). This expectation paves the way for “the transformation of the public space of politics into a psuedospace of interaction in which individuals no longer ‘act’ but ‘merely behave’ as economic producers, consumers and urban city dwellers” (Benhabib, 1992, p.90). However, modernity brings plurality, nuances, and differences. How do Quentin and Jason react to such new changes?

My straightforward response to this question will be that Quentin’s and Jason’s horrors of strangers, different racial and cultural norms coming from the North as

consequences of modernisation show their *sociability resistance*. Rather than partaking in the change, Quentin is trapped by the irrevocable past, where he wishes to restore Caddy's innocence. Instead of adapting himself to the present, Quentin cannot concede the sociability that comes with the modern present as such. Time passes, but Quentin takes no part in life. Daniel Josep Singal (2008) calls Quentin's impulse a "Victorian moral dichotomy," which demonstrates his failure of adaptability to new conditions (p.86). Quentin aspires to nostalgia by holding on to his Victorian values, honor, and manhood; thus, he cannot envision renovation, the new, and unprecedented in his current reality. Put more sharply, he cannot imbibe the modern world where the new forces him to be a *parvenu* as a ticket to social recognition. Quentin, who insists on his Victorian differences, prefers to live on the edge of melancholy and suicide as a *pariah figure* in the novel.¹¹

After the Civil War, Southerners encounter the invasion of newcomers, and they are reduced to colony position. People were suspicious about their roots due to unexpected experiences. According to Walter Benn Michaels, Quentin's indifference towards the new and the novel's emphasis on "blood is blood" unearth what Michael calls "nativist modernism" to signal the commitment to identity—as a way of protecting the breakdown of family ties. Michaels (2007) proposes that in every section of the novel, what is "social" or "arbitrary" is constantly substituted for "natural ones" (p.16). As a paradigm of "nativist modernism," Faulkner's attention to family tragedy is profoundly

¹¹ In his article published in The New York Review of Books on April 7, 2005, J.M. Coetzee proclaimed that Faulkner was a pariah figure in the South in transition to modernity. Faulkner came across a backlash for his condemnation of segregated institutions in the South, and he addressed the white southerners to accept Blacks "as their social equal." However, his political voice was impotent, and "his public statements made him somewhat of a *pariah* in his home town, and had more than a little to do with his decision, after his mother's death in 1960, to quit Mississippi and move to Virginia," Coetzee writes. (my emphasis).

bound up with the idea that the way of establishing a new structure is understood only through blood and family relations in 1920s America—an objection to newcomers and non-Americans. As Michaels (2007) puts it: “*The Sound and the Fury* repeatedly insists that what people and things do or mean is a function of what they are; it insists, that is, on identity as the determining ground of action or significance” (p.12).

Thomas L. Mchaney establishes a linkage between Thomas Mann’s *Buddenbrooks*, centred around the family tragedy, subtitled *The Decline of a Family*, and Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*. With regard to Mann’s novel, Mchaney (2008) observes that the central theme of Faulkner’s novel is the *decline* that occurred in the Compson household economically, physically, and spiritually (p.149).¹² At this point, I will return to Arendt’s definition of *the decline of the family* stemmed from her exhaustive critique of the rise of society. Equality among household members, Arendt argues, is highly different from social equality among people in the public sphere. Arendt (1998) remarks: “The striking coincidence of the rise of society with the decline of the family indicates clearly that what actually took place was the absorption of the family unit into corresponding social groups” (p.40). The rise of society brings the absorption of family within the larger social groups in the modern present. In this sense, Arendt marks *the decline of the family* to point out the annihilation of particularities and singularities. The rise of society alters the meaning of the household sphere as such. “The victory of equality in modernity,” Arendt writes (1998), “has conquered the public realm” (p.41). The possibility of action and speech, all differences, and distinctions are exiled to the

¹² Besides, American journalist Walter Yust in his essay “Of Making Many Books,” penned in 1929, maintains that: “With that for a very literal text, Mr. Faulkner allows an idiot, for the first section of his story, to tell what he sees of the decline and fall of the Compson family of the South, a *family decaying*” See Yust (1995, p.35, emphasis added).

private sphere, for “society expects from each of its members a certain kind of behaviour, imposing innumerable and various rules, all of which tend to ‘normalise’ its members, to make them behave to exclude spontaneous action or outstanding achievement” (Arendt, 1998, p.40). Despite the Compson family’s commitment to the past and the characters’ traditional way of thinking, following the traces of Arendt, I will call these points *the rise of the social* in the novel to mark *the decline of the family* and the glorification of labor due to the cotton market economy.

Faulkner’s modern subjects are narrated as the objects of modernity, not as the agents of their actions. They are not active citizenship models because they cannot animate collective deliberation, discourse and solidarity. There is also a particular difference between Jason and Quentin concerning their understanding of togetherness and the common world. Jason is ashamed of his Compson blood and puts himself in a different position where he is no longer a family member, whereas Quentin attempts to hold on to his ancestors, trying to order the shared world anew. Jason declares that: “I don’t owe anything to anybody that has no more consideration for me” (Faulkner, 1995, p.205). After returning to his family house, “I’m that way in my house. Your house, I mean to say,” Jason says. In what follows, “ ‘It’s yours,’ his mother explains, ‘You are the head of it now’ ” (Faulkner, 1995, p.219). Besides, Quentin feels powerless because he fails to control Caddy’s autonomy and her free actions. In a similar way, Jason deploys psychological violence against Caddy’s daughter, Quentin, to prevent her actions. On the other hand, Jason likens Caddy to the burden of responsibilities by questioning his self-devotion to the family.

For Arendt, modernity means the priority of private concerns rather than the shared interests in the public sphere. Jason's obsession with money exhibits his obsession with his private benefits par excellence. Jason ostensibly considers the family members' well-being; however, his behaviours only consider his interests —a portrayal of modern individualism. Cleanth Brooks (1990) observes that: “Actually, Faulkner's picture of the antebellum South is no gilded dream. It is a solid world, of the earth earthy” (p.270). The new South is a *solid* world, not the *common world*, in the Arendtian sense, in which common sense and acting together prevail. Instead, the glorification of labor and inauthentic politics dominate. Faulkner's subjects thus cannot substitute the loss of the common world for the *love of the world*. Joel Williamson maintains that Faulkner argues against the common idea of “the unflawed South” and that he offers a thorough critique of Southern society. However, “his objective as critic was, of course, not to damn the South but to save it” (Williamson, 1993, p.359). In his critique, Faulkner does not aim to exclude racism and slaveholders in the South. Furthermore, as Arendt does, Faulkner indicates how thoughts are grounded in experiences: “He repeatedly declared that his writing came from ‘imagination, observation, and experience’ He would see or read about something, put himself in the midst of it, and breath it all to life in a story” (Williamson, 1993, p.184). Delving critically into the lives of the Southerners who lost the old world and who are compelled to enter into a new one after the post-war period, Faulkner documents how the local and the particular stories are crucial to comprehend the universal. He thereby takes the local to reflect on the general. In this regard, Faulkner would have been agreed with Walter Benjamin: “Without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror” (1968, p.256).¹³

¹³ Benjamin quotes Nietzsche's *On the Use and Abuse of History*, “We need history, but not the way a

Once for all, Faulkner's break with authentic politics in the novel shows the characters' failure to forget the past and the victory of labor; in this way, the political sphere, the possibility of spontaneous action, and human freedom are annihilated. The characters, relying on the restoration of the past, demonstrate the impoverishment of the faculty of forgiving. Since life is reduced to consumption and production with the priority of biological needs, the obsession with the past and the glorification of labor leave the characters bereft of freedom and action. Faulkner cannot show how the common world can be constructed in the South anew. The construction of this world, as Arendt explains, necessitates an awareness of the future. To create the common world demands an awareness that this world has survived before us and that it will continue to survive after us. However, everything has already happened in the novel; the lack of future possibilities and the commitment to irreversible deeds bear down on the characters to hinder them from forging the common world. Faulkner's characters cannot imagine a secure future, a safe island, for the unpredictability of actions —what Arendt means by the power of promising. As the hallmark of their *worldlessness*, the apolitical subjects are situated in the middle of *the decline of the political realm* and of *the decline of the family*.

spoiled loafer in the garden of knowledge needs it" (cited in Benjamin, 1968, p.260). Besides, Benjamin, on May 7, 1940, in a letter to Theodor Adorno, writes: "Do you know Faulkner? If so, I would like to know what you think of his work. I am currently reading *Light in August*." See *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910-1940* (1994, p.635).

CONCLUSION

Arendt, in *The Human Condition*, proclaims that Faulkner's novel *A Fable* is the greatest of World War I literature because the novel unearths the agent of actions, providing the "who" (Arendt, 1981, p.181). In a short but sharp footnote, Arendt concludes that: "William Faulkner's *A Fable* (1954) surpasses almost all of World War I literature in perceptiveness and clarity because its hero is the Unknown Soldier" (1981, p.181). Then, what would Arendt have said of Woolf's *To The Lighthouse*, which is the brilliant product of World War I? What would Arendt have thought of Woolf's ability to reveal *the who* along with deeds through narrative? I have attempted to give potential answers to these questions in the present dissertation. Seeing Woolf through Arendt necessitates the consideration for their agreements and disagreements in the same breath. Woolf's and Arendt's thoughts sustain their brilliance with their invitation to think of what has been done in the past and of the current situation in the present. After political and social perplexities, violence, and total domination have been experienced, they invite people to reflect on their experiences.¹ For Woolf and Arendt, thinking is about what we are doing. Thinking is about *who we are* rather than what we are.

According to Woolf and Arendt, the authentic political realm allows people to embrace nuances rather than the priority of violence. They would agree that the public is a space to achieve self-recognition and self-confidence without losing one's own distinctions. Woolf's and Arendt's reflections on the unprecedented and unexpected

¹ Elisabeth Young-Bruehl notes that when Arendt used the word totalitarianism, people were unfamiliar with such a word and that Mussolini was the first person to coin it, see Young-Bruehl's book *Why Arendt Matters* (2006, p.10).

events in the twentieth century show the importance of comprehension of our experiences in thought. The narrative takes the role of rethinking events and private pains through remembrance. Woolf turns to narrative to *deconstruct* the boundaries between the public and the private sphere with a powerful literary engagement, whereas Arendt espouses the strict lacuna between these spheres regarding the sense of pain.

Nevertheless, as Arendt argues, narrative preserves deeds and words not only for the present but also for the future generation. On this account, Arendt reminds us of Kafka's fight, which "begins when the course of action has run its course and when the story which was its outcome waits to be completed 'in the minds that inherit and question it' " (1961, pp.7-8). In what follows, Arendt makes a direct reference to Hegel: "The task of the mind is to understand what happened, and this understanding, according to Hegel, is man's way of reconciling himself with reality; its actual end is to be at peace with the world" (1961, p.8). Arendt and Woolf epitomize thinking in the active life rather than in the *vita comtemplativa*. Richard Bernstein (2016) observes that for Arendt, "thinking is a 'weapon,' indeed a primary weapon in the struggle against the oppressive bureaucratic forces of society" (p.278). In a similar line, Woolf espouses thinking as a weapon. Thinking is woven together with remembrance in their understanding of narrative.

On the opening page of *On Revolution*, Arendt observes that: "WARS and revolutions- as though events had only hurried up to fulfil Lenin's early prediction - have thus far determined the physiognomy of the twentieth century" (1990, p.11). Unlike the purpose of revolutions in history, wars, Arendt argues, are rarely committed to searching for freedom. Woolf shares similar concerns about World War II, and her commitment to writing helps her to overcome the sense of pain. In her diary, she describes the war

process as “a desperate illness” (1915, p.332). Political debates between Leonard Woolf and Virginia Woolf demonstrate their intimate dialogues about the cruelty of Hitler's regime, the possibility of painful moments, and potential peace in society in the twentieth century. What eradicates Woolf's solitude is the shared world, and she cannot alienate herself from this world at all. As a source of her public concerns, her diary exhibits that her private anxiety and fears are the salient consequences of the pains of the public sphere. Accordingly, as discussed in the third chapter, pain cannot be separated from the pitfalls of modernity and from the devastating consequences of war that leave irreversible marks on people in the common world. Pain becomes visible when it is imposed by the hand of other people. The private pain becomes the political when the life of the mind is shattered and attacked by others *per se*. For Woolf, being bathed in pain is transmitted to the public world with the aid of narrative. In that case, people assemble to demand social justice and freedom through narrative. Thinking about Woolf with Arendt thus means recognizing her politically.

It is essential to state that, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt's critique of totalitarianism involves many discussions such as terror, mass society, unemployment, modern technology, antisemitism, and ideology. These dimensions of her analysis of totalitarianism have not been discussed within the scope of the present dissertation. I have preferred to keep a limited focus on her discussion of totalitarianism that will allow us to see the similarities that she shares with Woolf: The unlimited power of totalitarian regimes, propaganda, loneliness phenomenon, authentic action, and freedom. Good politics for Woolf and Arendt is about the creation of public life. Arendt emphasizes the emergence of totalitarian movements in Europe following World War I (Arendt, 1973,

p.308). Arendt believes that totalitarian regimes take their power from the masses. The mass society is completely uninterested in the shared interests and politics and depends on private purposes along with universal facts (Arendt, 1973, p.338; pp.316-317). It is worth keeping in mind that Arendt does not blame modernity on the emergence of totalitarianism. Nevertheless, as argued in the second chapter, Arendt is closely interested in how modern technological advances and advertisements support a totalitarian regime's power and propaganda.

The Human Condition has been considered the preliminary of Arendt's political theory. Arendt eschewed being called a philosopher, though her abiding interest in philosophy and its tradition played an essential role in her political theory. In setting out to explore Arendt's perspective on the historical aspect of being that leads us to *The Human Condition*, her critique of the tradition of Western philosophy offers deep insight to figure out her position. Focusing on the roots of *Existenz* philosophy, in her famous essay *What Is Existenz Philosophy*, Arendt criticizes Edmund Husserl, Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, and Karl Marx, whose philosophies greatly influence their time. Arendt, in her critique, emphasizes the significance of historicity. Similarly, in her *oeuvre*, Woolf puts forward that historical perspective is fundamental for considering the public, political, and personal issues in the twentieth century.

Arendt's early critique of the Romantics, which affects her analysis of nature in *The Human Condition*, can be traced back to her biography of Rahel Varnhagen. For Arendt, self-thinking and romantic introspection that the Romantics and Rahel praise are solely based on *vita contemplative*. It is essential to emphasize that *contemplative life* "brings liberation from objects and their reality creates a sphere of pure ideas and a world

which is accessible to any rational being without benefit of knowledge or experience. It brings liberation from the object just as romantic love liberates the lover from the reality of his beloved” (Arendt, 1974, p.9). *Contemplative life* amounts to passivity, whereas choosing and acting mean participating in the *active life*. In Elisabeth Young-Bruehl’s words, “The Romantics escaped from a true, related self into an inauthentic, unrealistic self, unable to face the future because they were lost in introspection and unable to see the past because they were lost in sentimentality” (2006, p. 28). Arendt clarifies that the conditions of the world create new opportunities, stories, and experiences, and somehow, these conditions involve people in the reality of the world.

It is not the human nature but the *human condition* that Arendt considers over the course of her life: “What is man without his history? Product of nature-not personality” (Arendt, 1974, p.4). The individual’s history begins before natality. The individual is thrown into the history that has been already woven. As such, history prevails over being a product of nature. Arendt develops her critique of nature by putting it as the opposite of the common world. Woolf’s vision of nature from the perspective of Arendt offers a philosophical perspective. Both would agree that nature loses its meaning when it comes to the history of the common world and that the products constructed by the hand of people make this world meaningful. It is essential to state that Arendt’s critiques of nature and world alienation have wide-ranging dimensions. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt’s notion of nature is closely related to her discussions of Nazism and Totalitarianism. Total domination, Arendt argues, reduces people to the condition of nature where they lose their connection with the world altogether. Besides, Arendt’s particular differentiation between world alienation and self-alienation is associated with

her critique of Karl Marx (1982, p.254). Arendt's theory of action and her problematization of violence are indebted to her heated criticism of Marx's *Capital*. Arendt criticizes Marx's elevation of violence and of labor and emphasizes Marx's remarks: "Labor created man" and "Violence is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one" (cited in Arendt, 1961, p.21). Arendt situates her objection to violence and her theory of action rather than labor, as the fundamental human activity, within the heart of her political theory.

For Woolf, Faulkner and Arendt, there are two lives: Life of the mind and life in the public sphere. Although Woolf and Faulkner situate their characters in the life of the mind, they cannot be immune from a life in the public sphere. Mrs Ramsay's attempt to create the web of relationships documents a willingness to animate life in the public world. In Faulkner, Jason is situated in a consumer and labor society. On the one hand, Quentin cannot recover outmoded traditions and family values in the private sphere, but on the other hand, he sustains his pariah position in the outer world. The differences and the similarities between Quentin and Mrs Ramsay are apparent. Both are Hamlet-like figures, or *Contemplatives* adopting a close terminology of Arendt, as the manifestation of the deprivation of spontaneous action. Woolf differentiates her character from Faulkner's by endowing Mrs Ramsay with a political voice to turn the domestic sphere into a public sphere. Woolf, more than Faulkner, comes close to envisioning authentic politics in her fiction. Besides, love is apolitical for Mrs Ramsay and for Quentin because love eradicates the connection with the public world; in this way, love destroys the in-between. Love cannot span the act of forgiving for Quentin, while love prevents Mrs Ramsay from finding her political voice at the outset.

Despite her public persona in her political writings, Woolf, like Faulkner, does not speak directly about political ideologies in *To the Lighthouse*. Nevertheless, she shares potential similarities with Faulkner in her critiques of the history of the present, the post-war period, and the position of the modern subjects. The aesthetic presentation of the public issues in Woolf and Faulkner offers new questions about the *human condition* amidst the break with tradition. In Faulkner's case, the invasion of the South by different racial and ethnic minorities is an issue of social recognition, which signals either adaption by accepting new changes or removal from them altogether. Jason's and Quentin's objection to sociability and perspectivism and their hostility to Jews and Blacks document the inevitable consequence of the *decline of the political sphere*. Since authentic politics, or the political realm, demands an awareness of plurality, the unexpected, and the new, Faulkner's fiction cannot animate an authentic political sphere.

Both Woolf and Faulkner examine the dimensions of Arendt's theory of action in their fictions. Woolf documents the power of disclosure, plurality, and remembrance in action, while Faulkner explores action's connection with freedom and the remedies for the irreversible and unprecedented deeds with the aid of forgiving and of promising. Faulkner problematizes how the consideration for the future is crucial to create the common world where we can act with others. He demonstrates how forgiving what has been done is essential to relieving us of the past. Faulkner also observes that the priority of labor to sustain life is inseparable from injustice and from failure to act freely. As a common ground, both novelists exhibit the link between narrative and action; for this purpose, they turn to narrative to focus on the daily experiences of ordinary individuals

by digging into the valuable segments of the past. Most importantly, their perspectives demonstrate that war is not a matter of glorification, victory, or chivalry.

Arendt's notions of forgiveness and promise show that when we forgive someone, we forgive "the who," the agent. Forgiveness, as Arendt argues, stands for natality, which is relevant to the daily conditions of the world along with new beginnings. Quentin's tendency towards vengeance is the ultimate consequence of his *contemplative persona* in the world, for he cannot communicate with others who can help him to transcend from thinking to acting. Quentin is in need of a mirror that Caddy holds to see many dimensions of their shared experiences. Could the individual protect himself from the unpredictability of the future? Could the subject release himself from the past? Arendt's answers to these questions are closely related to her conceptions of promising and forgiving. When the future possibilities are annihilated in consciousness, and when consciousness is stuck only by the past, as Faulkner does in the novel, the deprivation of these capacities will be inevitable. Thus, Faulkner's novel demonstrates that we need a consciousness that considers the future to protect the faculty of promising, for promising can reduce the unwanted risks of future experiences by creating a safe island.

Furthermore, Faulkner and Woolf situate their characters in the middle of the blurred line between the public and the private sphere. Even in their isolation, they are the victims of the outer world because of the consequences of wars, the negative impacts of modernity, the capitalist market economy, and the elevation of labor. Their private pains cannot be considered without the presence of public and political issues. Their fate is intimately bound up with the common history as such. I shall conclude that both Faulkner and Woolf raise the question of *who* in their fictions. *Who am I in my*

loneliness? Quentin and Mrs Ramsay cannot find a straightforward answer to this question. Nevertheless, Mrs Ramsay poses this question in her inner monologues to turn the private sphere into the public, and she forges the public sphere to unveil her political persona. Quentin, a less lucky one, pays the price for his loneliness and for his obsession with the irreversible deeds and words by losing his capacity to forgive. Quentin's *worldlessness* is intimately related to his inability to communicate with other people. He is deprived of the world in the Arendtian sense because Quentin is trapped by inwardness. He cannot evaluate and question new possibilities due to his break with the many-sidedness of the public sphere. Faulkner and Woolf make it clear that the private and the personal are woven together with the public and the political.

Reading Mrs Ramsay from the lens of Arendt as a political character in some scenes spans the discussion of the definition of politics in her mind. The presence of the political realm in her consciousness shows that Mrs Ramsay comprehends the political arena as the product of people's actions; besides, Mrs Ramsay comes to the realization that the social issues related to politics must be considered with the question of freedom. In this regard, Arendt argues that: "The question arises whether politics and freedom are at all compatible, whether freedom does not first begin precisely where politics ends, so that freedom cannot exist wherever politics has not yet found its limit and its end" (2005, pp.108-109). The social problem that Mrs Ramsay ponders in her mind signals that the meaning of politics corresponds to the embodiment of freedom. She is also aware of the fact that freedom demands a connection with others in the common world. As such, Mrs Ramsay assumes that life is woven in-between and that freedom paves the way for new beginnings, which initiate new miracles. These miracles amount to new experiences and

stories forged by human actions (Arendt, 2005, p.113). Through politics, as Arendt indicates, the individual can create her own ends; for this purpose, Mrs Ramsay wishes to become an “investigator” for the public issues considering the poor, working-class, unemployment, class struggle, and divisions in modern London (Woolf, 2016, p.11). Her critique of the social problem is the salient manifestation of her desire to possess her own political means in the public world. The unexpected and unpredictable issues are not the frames of the inner world, for the outer world does not lose its informative significance. It means to say that Woolf both focuses on the inner world of her character and discusses public issues in her fiction. The political reading of the novel from the perspective of Arendt points out that: The outer world does not disappear in the inner world; on the contrary, the latter is dissolved in the former.

Thinking of Mrs Ramsay from the perspective of Arendt also exhibits that Mrs Ramsay is not the portrayal of a submissive or “negative” Victorian woman who is reduced to “nothingness” in the domestic sphere. The home in the novel has two opposite meanings. On the one hand, the home hinders Mrs Ramsay from performing political action in the active life, but on the other hand, the home in some scenes nurtures her individuality and mind as a manifestation of the public sphere. If we consider her political and creative persona, the second dimension of the home argues against the feminist reading of the novel. For example, at the dinner party, the world shows itself to people, and the world lies between the guests and family members to create a community. At the same time, in the private property, for Mrs Ramsay, the language constructs the shared world. Here, the objective reality, to a certain extent, reveals itself. Mrs Ramsay creates the public sphere in her property, and the intimacy of home shows a positive and

constructive side of household life. From the perspective of Arendt, Woolf teaches us that without the private sphere, the family life, and its intimacy in the four walls of the property, life solely under the light of the public sphere could be barren altogether. The individual's power in the public sphere comes from the presence of privacy.

However, Faulkner's characters are not fortunate to build the political realm, though they are situated in the market town. To reflect on the future through the lens of the past shows the characters' resistance to modernity: "Rather than welcome aspirations toward progress, these individuals turn their backs on the future and stiffen themselves against change" (Matthews, 2009, p.78). Quentin cannot comprehend reality on his own since he is trapped by his own perspective. The world and its visibility and objectivity are removed from his senses as such. Given that freedom must be understood as political, as Arendt argues, the political sphere must protect the freedom of individuals. However, in transition to modernity, the new South cannot accommodate such an authentic sphere where people speak and interact in togetherness. The decline of the political arena hinders people from having a higher means. Furthermore, one of the reasons for the decline of the public sphere in the South is the glorification of labor activity, the cotton exchange market, with the rise of the social. Arendt likens labor to "coercion" and claims that: When "a person could free himself from this labor by coercing others to labor for him, that is, by force and domination ... He is coerced by the direct necessity inherent in life itself" (Arendt, 2005, pp.148-149). Life is directed by necessities, not by freedom; thus, the biological necessities and labor activity prevent people from dealing with politics and other purposes in life.

Seeing Woolf and Faulkner from the eyes of Arendt makes it clear that the world bonds people and separates them. Their writings raise crucial questions, inviting us to think politically: The recovery of the public sphere, human interactions, the distinction between the social and the political, the private and the public, the individuality and privacy, the meaning of politics, the common world, total domination, the priority of labor over action, natality, and the role of narrative. The political resonance in their entire *oeuvre* comes from the public issues in their time. Arendt, Faulkner, and Woolf do *not prescribe* how to construct an ideal society or state. Instead, they *invite* us to think about the fundamental human activities directly related to politics.

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