

Abstract

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The perspective of iconicity applied to the present study is based on Paul Ricoeur's conception of the iconic and artistically innovative and dynamic function of the poetic metaphor. The thesis focuses on how traditional sources affect the writing process of two formally innovative novels, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and Gerald Murnane's *Inland* (1988). In this context of experimental writing, iconicity, a tradition ultimately derived from the visualization of a sacred person or issue in Byzantine art, interacts, through colour symbolism, with the subtextual use of Virgil's *Aeneid* in *To the Lighthouse* and the Gospel of Matthew in *Inland*. Though differing in terms of their modern and postmodern characteristics, respectively, to transcend experiences in the past both novels testify to the persistence of traditional sources. The act of painting in *To the Lighthouse* is in this context an effort to make the death of a central iconic figure reach present time in an elegiac process; the nameless writer's book in *Inland* has a similar function as an attempt to encapsulate past time in the present by way of apocalypse and parable.

In contrast to the complete closure determined by the framework of elegy and the analogy of painting and writing in *To the Lighthouse*, the iconicity based on the analogy drawn between Jesus' parable about the indefinitely extended growth of the fig-tree and the writing process in *Inland* creates open-endedness at all narrative instances, which leads to a provisional ending of the text.

Keywords: Woolf, Murnane, *To the Lighthouse*, *Inland*, iconicity, poetic metaphor, colour symbolism, elegy, parable, apocalypse, *Aeneid*, Matthew.