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Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory:
Sex, Animal, Life

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Abstract

This thesis explores the various ways in which Woolf's *oeuvre* engages with new theories of materiality, focusing in particular on conceptualisations of sex, animal and life. This entails considering Woolf's work in both textual and extra-textual, human and nonhuman, contexts, and placing her in dialogue with theoretical debates which have marked a shift since the mid-90s from the focus on language and discourse to questions of materiality and ontology. I read Woolf alongside well-known theorists and philosophers including Gilles Deleuze (solo and with Félix Guattari), Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway, and Jacques Derrida, as well as other important contemporary thinkers such as Matthew Calarco, Karen Barad, Jane Bennett, and Eugene Thacker. The most prominent of these throughout is Deleuze who, despite being a key figure of poststructuralism and citing Woolf's writing as exemplary of some of his most famous concepts, has only emerged in recent years (much later than the likes of Lacan, Kristeva and Derrida) as someone demanding serious consideration in dialogue with Woolf. Also prominent is Braidotti, who refers to Woolf as an important influence on her thought and yet has also been understudied by Woolf scholars. After an opening chapter which seeks to extend and complicate the theoretical import of Woolf's own well-known figuration taken from the natural world – 'granite and rainbow' – by considering relevant passages across the span of her writing including *Night and Day* and 'Sketch of the Past', I go on to consider questions concerning: sexual difference in *A Room of One's Own* and *To the Lighthouse* (chapter two); sexuality and desire in *Orlando* (chapter three); human-animal relations in *Flush* (chapter four); and quantum philosophy-physics and posthuman life in *The Waves* (chapter five). Whilst these texts form the basis of each chapter, I also refer throughout to Woolf's other novels, essays, short stories, diaries, letters and autobiographical writing. Focusing on these wide-ranging but interrelated issues, this thesis attempts to open up a broader discussion on what precisely is at stake, and what new perspectives can be offered, in theorising Woolf today. By reading Woolf alongside but also *in*side theoretical writings (and vice versa), my aim is not only to provide a new perspective on Woolf's writings or to demonstrate the ways in which her texts help elucidate the subversive potential (and limitations) in these current theoretical contexts; it is also to explore some of the aesthetic, political, ethical, historical and conceptual links between modernist literature and contemporary theory. More specifically then, and building on the premise reached by poststructuralist and postmodernist criticism that Woolf radically destabilises essential differences based on binary oppositions (Moi, Minow-Pinkney, Bowlby, Caughie), I ask: what precisely are the models of materiality, and indeed subjectivity, made possible by Woolf's texts and by the complex contemporary cultures and theories her writing has so clearly affected?

Contents

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Abbreviations

Works by Virginia Woolf

All references in full on first citation, and abbreviated version thereafter.

BA   *Between the Acts*

CR1   *The Common Reader Vol. I.*

CR2   *The Common Reader Vol. II.*

CSF   *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*

D1-5   *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*

F   *Flush: A Biography*

L1-6   *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*

JR   *Jacob's Room*

MB   *Moments of Being*

MD   *Mrs Dalloway*

ND   *Night and Day*

O   *Orlando: A Biography*

PA   *A Passionate Apprentice*

RO   *A Room of One's Own*

E1-6   *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*

TG   *Three Guineas*

TL   *To the Lighthouse*

VO   *The Voyage Out*

W   *The Waves*

WF   *Women and Fiction: The Manuscript Versions of* A Room of One's Own

Y   *The Years*

Editorial Note:

My own ellipses are in square brackets. All other ellipses are the author's own.

First date of publication given in parenthesis on first mention of text. In footnoted entries and bibliography first date of publication given in square brackets. For translations, date in parenthesis on first mention of text is of publication date in original language, and date in square brackets in footnoted entries and bibliography is of first publication in translation.

Introduction:
Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory

Sketching the Materiality of Theory

> I reach what I might call a philosophy; at any rate it is a constant idea of mine; that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we – I mean all human beings – are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. Hamlet or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself. (MB 85)

When Virginia Woolf, in this famous passage from her posthumously published memoir 'Sketch of the Past' (1976), outlines her 'philosophy' or 'constant idea', she presents us with a 'conception' of life that is entangled in materiality: a 'pattern', 'hidden behind the cotton wool of daily life' (MB 85). It is, as Mark Hussey has recently put it, a form of theorising which is 'grounded' and 'embodied'.[1] In providing a clear example of Woolf herself philosophising or theorising in concrete terms – embedding her thoughts on subjectivity firmly in the material world – this moment in Woolf's writing speaks directly to key issues I will focus on in this thesis concerning theory and materiality (and the materiality of theory).[2] Before going on to outline in more detail the specific ways in which I will explore these issues throughout Woolf's writings, I want to stay with this passage for a moment to highlight some of the particular issues concerning subjectivity and materiality that it raises, especially where critics have placed emphasis on its

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[1] Mark Hussey. 'Virginia Woolf: After Lives.' *Virginia Woolf in Context*, ed. Jane Goldman and Bryony Randall. Cambridge: CUP (In Press). Quoted with permission of the author. Hussey also ends with this quote from 'Sketch of the Past' in *The Singing of the Real World: the Philosophy of Virginia Woolf's Fiction*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1986, p.154.

[2] 'Theory' is of course a contested term, and I primarily use it here as an umbrella term which includes theorists/philosophers from the latter half of the twentieth century to the present day, rather than to make any claims about what does or does not qualify as 'theory' as distinct from, say, 'critical theory' or 'continental philosophy'. My use of theory might therefore be a form of 'transdisciplinary philosophizing', to borrow Peter Osborne's recent phrase. See 'Philosophy After Theory: Transdisciplinarity and the New.' *Theory After 'Theory'*, ed. Jane Elliott and Derek Attridge. New York: Routledge, 2011: 19-33. For a summary of some of the multiple brands of 'theory' in use today, see Susan Stanford Friedman. 'Theory.' *Modernism and Theory: A Critical Debate*, ed. Stephen Ross. London: Routledge, 2009: 237-245.

formulation of human communality through language and art: Lorraine Sim, for example, writes of 'a connective principle' in Woolf's 'pattern' which is revealed through art and society;[3] Emily M. Hinnov claims, more explicitly, that 'Woolf views aesthetics as a vehicle for social action that might bring about humanistic unity. In her search for coherence and interconnectivity, she speaks to the web-like linkage between all of humanity, accessible through our participation in art';[4] Bryony Randall suggests that 'far from being a unified, self-sufficient, self-explanatory temporal unit', Woolf's 'moment of being' is an experience inextricably tied to reading and writing';[5] and Jane Goldman, aligning this passage with a Habermasian 'intersubjectivity' and a Bakhtinian 'social origin' of language, argues that 'Woolf positions herself as part of a community of subjects, accessible through language but with no transcendent position outside it; […] Woolf's insistence that "we are the words" suggests she understands language to be socially constructed and present only in its material utterances.'[6]

Woolf's focus here does indeed appear to be primarily on the question of art and particularly writing ('I make it real by putting it into words') as well as of the human communality behind this writing ('we – I mean all human beings – are connected with this') (MB 85), but I want to consider an additional ontological inflection to this excerpt from 'Sketch of the Past', one which extends the non-transcendent interconnectivity in Woolf's theory of 'philosophy' beyond a concern solely with the human and language or art. That is, the 'philosophy' reached in the above passage hinges on a conceptualisation of the collective pronoun 'we' that expands as the passage continues. In the first instance 'we' is clearly intended as representative of 'all human beings', yet the *connection* Woolf emphasises is one between this human 'we' with the 'pattern' or 'vast mass we call the world': 'We' are not only 'the words', but the 'music' and, crucially, the 'thing itself'. We find, then, a communality that is extended beyond a primarily human concern –

[3] Lorraine Sim. 'Virginia Woolf Tracing Patterns through Plato's Forms.' *Journal of Modern Literature* 28:2 (2005), p.43.

[4] Emily M. Hinnov. '"To give the moment whole": The Nature of Time and Cosmic (Comm)unity in Virginia Woolf's The Waves.' *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World: Selected Papers from the Twentieth International Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Kristin Czarnecki and Carrie Rohman. Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2011, p.218.

[5] Bryony Randall. *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life*. Cambridge: CUP, 2007, p.157-158.

[6] Jane Goldman. *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf: Modernism, Post-Impressionism, and the Politics of the Visual*. Cambridge: CUP, 2001 [1998], p.46-48.

Woolf presents us with an interconnectivity in which boundaries between subjectivity and objectivity become somewhat blurred, and where language is not the only immanent feature (to single out language in this way is precisely to see it as, in some way, transcendent). In other words, we might say here that Woolf is concerned with world-making, not simply a subject-making or word-making. This is further elucidated by the instance of 'shock' created by the embedded flower at St Ives: 'I was looking at the flower bed by the front door; "That is the whole", I said. I was looking at a plant with a spread of leaves; and it seemed suddenly plain that the flower itself was a part of the earth; that a ring enclosed what was the flower; and that was the real flower; part earth; part flower' (MB 84). It may be that it is only through the human act of writing down (and indeed verbalising, as Woolf notes here) an instance such as this that Woolf feels she can 'make it whole' and find 'satisfaction' and 'reason', but the conceptual model of a non-hierarchical, intricately interconnected whole is embedded in the vitality and materiality of the 'dominant' sensation – over her 'passive' self (MB 85) – of the 'real flower' that was 'part earth; part flower' (MB 84). To be sure, both the event of writing and the event of the flower itself are immanent, creative processes.

What is emphasised by Woolf, then, is 'intuition'[7] that is 'given to me, not made by me' which, Goldman notes, 'refers to her idea that there is a pattern behind things, and in telling us the origin of this idea, she suggests that it comes from the pattern itself'.[8] As Woolf herself writes in a letter to Vita Sackville-West on 16th March 1926, '[a] sight, an emotion, creates this wave in the mind, long before it makes words to fit it; and in writing (such is my present belief) one has to recapture this, and set this working (which has nothing apparently to do with words)' (L3 247). And in the two paragraphs following the 'we are' refrain in 'Sketch of the Past', Woolf undercuts the notion of a language as primary event. She at first appears to outline the 'far more necessary' importance of writing over other activities by 'spending the morning writing' rather than, as one example she gives, 'walking'. Following this Woolf states, however, that it was precisely

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[7] Critics have pointed to the Bergsonian resonance in Woolf's use of 'intuition' here. See Randall 2007, p.158 and Laci Mattison. 'The Metaphysics of Flowers in *The Waves*: Virginia Woolf's "Seven-Sided Flower" and Henri Bergson's Intuition.' *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World: Selected Papers from the Twentieth International Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Kristin Czarnecki and Carrie Rohman. Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2011: 71-77.
[8] Goldman 1998, p.47.

whilst on her 'walk yesterday' that she was 'struck' by the realisation 'these moments of being of mine were scaffolding in the background; were the invisible and silent part of my life as a child' (MB 86). She goes on to describe the 'people' who were at the 'foreground' in her childhood, but these people, and therefore this foreground, are merely 'caricatures' (MB 86). What is left in the foreground of the reader's mind is the 'scaffolding', the fact that 'one is living all the time in relation to certain background rods of conceptions' (MB 85). What I am therefore suggesting here, and what I will explore throughout this thesis, is the sense that Woolf's writing is not so much concerned with a 'materiality […] which blots out the light' of being, as Makiko Minow-Pinkney puts it,[9] as it is with illuminating materiality as precisely the possibility of being: the becoming of materiality. Woolf offers a 'collective, contextually sensitive model of subjectivity',[10] and it is one that is also sensitive to the materiality of which the (human) subject is only one part.

The aim of this thesis is to explore, throughout Woolf's *oeuvre*, precisely the kind of issues raised in the above passage concerning materiality in relation to human and nonhuman life. My title, *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory: Sex, Animal, Life*, refers directly to my concern with situating Woolf's theorising in relation to material – human and nonhuman – contexts, and points to three specific aspects of my study: 1) I critically engage with Woolf's writing in the context of contemporary theoretical debates which have marked a shift in the past decade or so from the focus on language and discourse to questions concerning the material, biological, and ontological.[11] The theoretical debates I place Woolf in dialogue with are all concerned with various forms of materialism and immanence rather than abstraction and transcendence – forming part of a turn towards new formulations of materiality in contemporary theory and philosophy.[12] Hitherto understudied by Woolf scholars, two important figures in the emergence of these new materialisms and the two most prominent theorists throughout this thesis – Gilles

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[9] Makiko Minow-Pinkney. *Virginia Woolf & The Problem of the Subject*. Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1987, p.162.
[10] Goldman 1998, p.47.
[11] Martin Hägglund. 'The Arche-Materiality of Time: Deconstruction, Evolution and Speculative Materialism.' *Theory After 'Theory'*, ed. Jane Elliott and Derek Attridge. New York: Routledge, 2011, p.265.
[12] See Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (eds.). *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*. Durham: Duke UP, 2010.

Deleuze and Rosi Braidotti – have been markedly influenced by Woolf's modernist aesthetics and feminist politics, citing her as exemplary of central concepts in their thought. 2) I anchor my theoretical discussion throughout in thematic chapters which themselves involve, both seriously and playfully, some focus on material objects or forms of materiality, for example granites and rainbows in chapter one, paint and grass in chapter two, rings and motor-cars in chapter three, fur and flesh in chapter four, and matter, the very fabric of our material world, in chapter five. It is this form of embedded theorising that leads me to consider Woolf in the context of well-established debates in relation to feminism, sexual difference and sexuality, but also to emphasise the crucial role her writing has already played, and can continue to play, in emerging debates on the question of the animal and posthumanist conceptualisations of life. 3) I seek to unsettle the perceived opposition between historical and contemporary theoretical approaches to Woolf's writings. Whilst the so-called 'turn' (or return) to the archive and historicism in modernist studies[13] coincided with the diminishing influence of postmodernist or postrstructuralist theory (based on the largely misguided premise that this theory was anti-historical and not concerned enough with the material contexts), there are crucial questions concerning materialism in relation to the aforementioned issues of sexuality, animality and posthumanism that are currently being posed in contemporary theory and philosophy and which have still to be fully explored in Woolf's *oeuvre*. Materiality is not only a concern for archivists, and the way we historicise is affected by how we theorise materiality and how theory is materialised.

Working through these three stated concerns, this thesis attempts to open up a broader discussion on what precisely is at stake, and what new perspectives can be offered, in theorising Virginia Woolf today. Focusing on these wide-ranging but interrelated issues, and reading Woolf alongside but also *in*side theoretical writings (and *vice versa*), my aim is therefore not only to provide a new perspective on Woolf's writings or indeed to demonstrate the ways in which Woolf's texts help elucidate the subversive potential (and limitations) in these current theoretical contexts; it is also to explore some of the aesthetic, political, ethical, historical and conceptual links between

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[13] Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker. 'Introduction: Locating the Modern.' *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces*, ed. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker. New York: Routledge, 2005, p.1.

modernist literature and contemporary theory. More specifically then, and building on the premise reached by poststructuralist and postmodernist criticism that Woolf radically destabilises essential differences based on binary oppositions, I will go on to ask: what precisely are the models of materiality, and indeed subjectivity, made possible by Woolf's texts and by the complex contemporary cultures and theories her writing has so clearly affected? In order to further situate my approach within Woolf studies and also this new materialist turn in theory, I will use this introduction to draw out some important threads in Woolf criticism in relation to theory, before turning to a discussion of the stakes involved in reading Woolf in the context of emerging theories of materiality, focusing in particular the recent interest in the relationship between Woolf and Deleuze. I will end this introduction by providing an overview of the five chapters of this thesis.

Woolf, Modernism and Theory

The broader links between the modernist aesthetics, and cultures, that emerged in the first half of the twentieth century and those theoretical debates that proliferated in the second half have recently been emphasised by Stephen Ross in his edited collection, *Modernism and Theory: A Critical Debate* (2009). Ross claims that while scholars returning to the archives over the past fifteen years or so have widened the scope of what we now think of as the new modernist studies, it is unfortunate and somewhat puzzling that this has often coincided with the marginalisation of theory:

> The ironies attending this elision verge on modernist absurdity: theory's challenge to predominant notions of the literary, canon formation, disciplinary formations, high and low culture, progress, civilisation, and imperialism helped make the new modernist studies possible. Also, theory's concern with globalization, imperialism, gender and sex roles, race and racism, reason and superstition, enlightenment and benightedness, sovereignty and slavery, margins and peripheries, and ethical complexities continues, albeit in a different register, modernism's already articulated concerns. Modernism's critique of modernity animated theory's invention of postmodernity, while theory's anti-

foundational stance extended modernism's indeterminacy, linguistic complexity, and reflexivity.[14]

Despite the temporal gap, theory dating from the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s – whether phenomenological, psychoanalytic, poststructuralist or ('third wave') feminist – is, according to Ross, 'integrally bound' to modernism precisely because of shared aesthetic and political concerns but also because its philosophical roots are 'either modernist (e.g. Heidegger, Husserl, Sartre, Wittgenstein) or shared by modernism (e.g. Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard)'.[15] Where our readings of Woolf are concerned we might add Henri Bergson, especially considering that in *Virginia Woolf: A Study* (1935), one of the earliest monographs on her writings, Ruth Gruber suggests that Woolf was 'living in the Bergsonian atmosphere' and was 'too innately creative, too inherently Bergsonian to be called Bergson's imitator.'[16] Indeed, in the years since theory's prominence began to wane in the mid-1990s, a renewed interest in Woolf studies in the theoretical and philosophical roots of modernism has been evident in several important monographs on Woolf. Notable examples include: Gillian Beer's *The Common Ground* (1996), which considers wide-ranging influences on Woolf's writing and includes essays on Darwin, Freud and prehistory, on Hume and Leslie Stephen, and on the advances made in the new physics; Ann Banfield's meticulous study of Woolf in relation to Bertrand Russell's theory of knowledge and Roger Fry's aesthetic theory in *The Phantom Table* (2000);[17] Holly Henry's *Virginia Woolf and the Discourse of Science* (2003) which outlines how advances in astronomy and their popularization in the 1920s and 1930s impacted on Woolf's writing; and Christine Froula's *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde* (2005) which places Woolf in dialogue with Emmanuel Kant, Bertrand Russell, Roger Fry, and Sigmund Freud (among others) in order to situate her at the heart

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[14] Stephen Ross. 'Introduction: the Missing Link.' *Modernism and Theory: A Critical Debate*, ed. Stephen Ross. New York: Routledge, 2009, p.1-2.

[15] Ross 2009, p.2.

[16] Ruth Grubar. *Virginia Woolf: the Will to Create as a Woman*. New York: Carroll and Graf, 2005, p.109. (Originally published as *Virginia Woolf: a Study* in 1935.) For more on Woolf and Bergson see James Hafley. *The Glass Roof: Virginia Woolf as Novelist*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1963; Shiv Kumar. *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel*. London: Blackie & Son, 1962; Mary Ann Gillies. *Henri Bergson and British Modernism*. London: McGill-Queen's UP, 1996, p.107-131.

[17] For a classic study of Woolf's writing and Fry's aesthetic theory see Allen McLauren's *Virginia Woolf: The Echoes Enslaved*. Cambridge: CUP, 1973 [reprinted in 2010].

of European modernist debates about freedom and civilization. More recently, Angeliki Spiropolou's *Virginia Woolf, Modernity and History* (2010) offers the first full-length monograph on Woolf and Walter Benjamin.[18] These illuminating, contextualised readings have been largely focused on theoretical and philosophical debates contemporaneous to when Woolf herself was writing, and reinforce Goldman's recent reflection that '[c]ontextualising Woolf is not simply a historical turn. It entails a simultaneous return to theoretical and critical contexts, in which the processes of historicising and contextualising are always already placed'. In recent years then, theoretical contexts have not necessarily been opposed to historical analyses, and have helped shape the way we engage with Woolf's modernism.[19]

But where the aforementioned studies are primarily concerned with theoretical contexts contemporary to when Woolf herself was writing (sensitive to the risks of decontextualisation), the central tenet of Ross' argument, and a key consideration in this thesis, is that it is also important to re-focus attention on the links between the modernist literature and the theoretical debates of the latter decades of the century. This is itself a matter of contextualisation: the historical, cultural, aesthetic and philosophical links between modernism and theory are strengthened by reading modernism and post-60s theory alongside one another in ways that involve not simply using theory as providing a particular methodology for readings of modernist texts or of modernism providing examples of theoretical concepts; rather modernism and theory might, as Ross puts it, be

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[18] See also Pamela Caughie (ed). *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. New York: Garland, 2000. For a helpful summary of further important interventions in Woolf studies since the mid-1990s see Goldman. *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge: CUP, 2006. In addition to those texts cited above Goldman points to important contextualising scholarship that falls outside my own particular focus in this introduction, but which has nonetheless opened up Woolf's writing to new theoretical contexts, some of which I touch on later in my thesis. For example, readings of Woolf in the context of race and Empire in Jane Marcus' 'Britannia Rules *The Waves*' (1992) and in Kathy J. Phillips' *Virginia Woolf Against Empire* (1994), which sparked interest in Woolf and postcolonial theory; Eileen Barrett's and Patricia Cramer's collection *Virginia Woolf: Lesbian Readings* (1997), which opened up fresh discussion on Woolf and theories of sexuality; the focus on questions of cosmopolitanism and community in Jessica Berman's *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Community* (2001); and important new feminist readings of Woolf's politics and aesthetics in Jane Goldman's *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf* (1998) and Naomi Black's *Virginia Woolf as Feminist* (2004). More recently, we can also add insightful accounts of Woolf and the 'everyday' in Bryony Randall's *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (2007) and Lorraine Sim's *Virginia Woolf: the Patterns of Ordinary Experience* (2010).

[19] Jane Goldman. 'Avant-garde.' *Modernism and Theory: A Critical Debate*, ed. Stephen Ross. New York: Routledge, 2009, p.227.

thought of as 'mutually sustaining aspects of the same project' where '[m]odernist writing thinks theoretically and theory writes modernistically'.[20] The extent to which this is true of all modernist writing, and indeed theory of the kind Ross focuses on, is of course contestable, but I want to take from his argument the emphasis on bringing together, or indeed 'intercepting' (a term that I turn to in my postscript when reflecting on the implications for considering different contexts together) modernism and theory, themselves historical movements and moments, which need not be thought of as a flight from, rather a rethinking of, material contexts. As Fredric Jameson states in his 'Afterword' to the same volume:

> it is a reinvention of the historical situation alone that allows us to grasp the text as a vibrant historical act, and not as a document of the archives. And this is why even those texts which seemed to have become documents in a now distant past, like the one-time masterpieces of the modern, suddenly come alive as living acts and forms of praxis – aesthetic, social, political, psychoanalytic, even ontological – which imperiously solicit our attention.[21]

As a theorist of the modern on her own terms, and someone who prompts us in 'How it Strikes a Contemporary' (1925) to 'scan the horizon; see the past in relation to the future' (CR1 241), Woolf, I argue, provides with her writing the ideal context 'to ask not just what modernism can tell us about theory and what theory can tell us about modernism, but also what the nexus modernism/theory can tell us about the twentieth century's preoccupations, tendencies, triumphs, and failures.'[22]

In Woolf studies, the influence of poststructuralist and postmodernist readings of Woolf in the 1980s and 1990s testifies to the previous links made between modernism and the kind of theory Ross claims is now marginalised. Although I will go on to explain some of the important ways in which my thesis departs from such readings, my approach to Woolf does also build on several key aspects of these studies. I want to draw particular attention to four well-known texts by Toril Moi, Makiko Minow-Pinkney, Rachel

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[20] Ross 2009, p.2.
[21] Fredric Jameson. 'Afterword.' *Modernism and Theory: A Critical Debate*, ed. Stephen Ross. New York: Routledge, 2009, p.248.
[22] Ross 2009, p.15.

Bowlby and Pamela Caughie that provided my own grounding in the critical and creative potential in poststructuralist and postmodernist readings of Woolf. Firstly, the introduction to Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985), though not the first poststructuralist reading of Woolf,[23] is commonly referred to as having provided a turning point in Woolf criticism.[24] Introducing her wide-ranging analysis of Anglo-American and French feminisms, Moi places Woolf as a forerunner of feminist theory, and makes her often-cited assertion that Woolf's modernist aesthetics and feminist politics are not to be seen as mutually exclusive, that her feminist politics are located '*precisely in her textual practice*'.[25] She advocates a Derridean and Kristevan approach to Woolf in order to argue that she creates a deconstructive form of writing that, contrary to the claims of Anglo-American feminist critics such as Elaine Showalter, is sceptical of realist aesthetics and humanist formulations of identity. In particular, Moi claims that Woolf anticipates Kristeva's formulation in 'Women's Time' of a 'third attitude' or stage of feminism which challenges the oppositional conceptualisation of the feminist struggle, and is to be distinguished from – although not an erasure of – the first stage characterised by the demand for '*insertion* into history' and for 'equal footing with men', and the second by the demand for 'recognition of an irreducible identity, without equal in the opposite sex'[26] (a point that I discuss in section 2.1 in relation to Woolf's androgyny).[27]

Having signalled an openness to poststructuralist readings of Woolf, Moi's introduction is then followed by Minow-Pinkney's *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject* (1987), the first book-length study to adopt this approach. Minow-Pinkney provides a more detailed focus on Kristeva and Derrida, and reads with and against Jacques Lacan, in her feminist poststructuralist psychoanalytic account of Woolf's writing which seeks to find a new deconstructive understanding of subjectivity. Echoing

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[23] See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. 'Unmaking and making in *To the Lighthouse.' Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. London: Routledge, 1988 [1980]; Perry Meisel. *The Absent Father: Virginia Woolf and Walter Pater*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1980; and Peggy Kamuf. 'Penelope at Work: Interruptions in *A Room of One's Own.' Novel* 16 (1982), 5-18.

[24] See Pamela L. Caughie. *Virginia Woolf and Postmodernism: Literature in Quest and Question of Itself.* Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1991, p.1. The opening line of Caughie's study emphasises the importance of Moi's intervention by claiming that 'In or about December 1985, Virginia Woolf criticism changed'.

[25] Moi 1995 [1985], p.16.

[26] Julia Kristeva. 'Women's Time.' *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism* (2nd Edition), ed. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl. New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1997 [1981], p.864-865.

[27] See Toril Moi. *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*. London: Routledge, 1995 [1985]: 1-18.

Moi, Minow-Pinkney argues that Woolf's modernist experimental aesthetics can 'best be seen as a feminist subversion of the deepest formal principles – of the very definitions of narrative, writing, the subject – of a patriarchal social order.'[28] She makes particular use of Derrida's concept of *différance*, or the endless deferral of meaning,[29] and his critique of 'phonocentrism',[30] and she focuses on the radical potential of feminist psychoanalytic theorists (especially Kristeva) who

> start from psychoanalysis, but simultaneously go beyond it in deconstructing binary oppositions of presence/absence organised around the phallus as the Signifier (what Cixous terms 'hierarchised oppositions') […] They offer a theoretical understanding of femininity as the term which has been repressed into marginality and silence by the order of representation, thus constituting the very condition for the functioning of the symbolic order.[31]

In another hugely influential study from this period, *Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations* (1988), Rachel Bowlby offers a broadly poststructuralist reading of Woolf's feminism – albeit that she departs from the more technical analysis provided by Minow-Pinkney – to suggest that 'issues of literary representation, historical narrative and sexual difference are inseparable throughout Woolf's work', and Bowlby argues that this is precisely what makes Woolf a feminist writer, one that questions 'the very notion of straightforward directions and known destinations'.[32] In the wake of these feminist poststructuralist and psychoanalytic readings of Woolf, Caughie's *Virginia Woolf and Postmodernism* (1991) takes issue with those who would want to claim Woolf as primarily a modernist or a feminist and focuses on how various strands of postmodernist/poststructuralist theory and literature challenge the motivations and reading strategies with which we approach Woolf's texts. Caughie does not seek to claim Woolf as a postmodernist *avant la lettre*, but to challenge orthodox modernist and

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[28] Minow-Pinkney 1987, p.x. Evidence of this book's continued influence, it has been republished in 2011 with Edinburgh UP.

[29] Minow-Pinkney 1987, p.25.

[30] Minow-Pinkney 1987, p.30-36.

[31] Minow-Pinkney 1987, p.16-17.

[32] See *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1997, p.14-15. It is this later edition of Bowlby's 1988 text with additional essays which I cite from throughout this thesis.

feminist readings of her writings which fail, she claims, to move past various binary oppositions between 'conventional and modern, masculine and feminine, appearance and reality, the external and the essence'.[33]

Reflecting on these poststructuralist and postmodernist approaches to Woolf and to feminism, and acknowledging that self-identifying as either is now considered to be unfashionable (indeed, according to Moi's own recent comments poststructuralist feminism is 'an intellectual tradition that has been fully explored' and that 'the poststructuralist paradigm is now exhausted'),[34] Caughie today maintains that there is still important work to be done concerning the relationship between Woolf's writing and poststructuralist or postmodern theory:

> If I continue to ride that dead horse, it is because I believe that "things may stay true longer than they stay interesting." There remains the need for a feminist intervention informed by the insights of poststructuralist theory that would have us question notions of collective identity or action, end-oriented narratives, or the past as redeemable. Where a notion of progress returns in our history of theory is not in the notion of ends, as if there is a goal to be realized, but in the realization that feminism is what cannot pass, or become passé.[35]

Theory may well have been, to some extent, marginalised over the past fifteen years or so in the expansion of the new modernist studies, but there is little doubt that by opening up readings of Woolf to new critical and theoretical contexts (including fields recognised today as cultural studies, gender studies and queer theory) these postmodernist and poststructuralist readings continue to be important in challenging our assumptions – whether from a theoretical or historical/cultural perspective – about the stability of

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[33] Caughie 1991, p.5. Other critics have argued that a re-classification of Woolf's *oeuvre* as 'postmodern' is justified – for example see Ann Marie Hebert. '"What Does it Mean? How Do You Explain it All?" Virginia Woolf: A Postmodern Modernist.' *Virginia Woolf Miscellanies: Proceedings of the First Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Mark Hussey and Vera Neverow-Turk. New York: Pace UP, 1992: 10-18.

[34] Toril Moi. '"I Am Not a Feminist, But…": How Feminism Became the F-Word.' *PMLA* 121:5 (2006), p.1740; p.1735.

[35] Pamela L. Caughie. 'Time's Exception.' *Modernism and Theory: A Critical Debate*, ed. Stephen Ross. London: Routledge, 2009, p.108. See also Pamela Caughie. 'Poststructuralist and Postmodernist Approaches to Virginia Woolf.' *Palgrave Advances in Virginia Woolf Studies*, ed. Anna Snaith. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007: 143-68.

intentionality, language, meaning and identity. These approaches have helped to illustrate that reading Woolf does not entail a choice between seeing her as only concerned with modernist experimentation or with a feminist literary tradition, but rather that her feminist politics and modernist aesthetics form part of the same project. Moreover, and as I noted at the beginning of this introduction, my approach builds on their radical destabilisation of hierarchical binary oppositions and challenges to essentialism – aspects which have been crucial to the way I have read Woolf from my first encounters with her texts.

However, if these poststructuralist or postmodernist readings of Woolf continue to be important in drawing attention to some of the continuities between modernism and theory, helping us to reassess, as Ross puts it, the 'preoccupations, tendencies, triumphs, and failures' of the twentieth century, then they also lead us, I suggest, to new theoretical concerns and conceptual paradigms which have evolved from these approaches and which impact on how we think about the relationship between modernism and theory at the beginning of the twenty-first. This shift is evident in chapter one of this thesis where I attempt to unsettle a number of binary oppositions usually associated with Woolf's granite/rainbow term, such as fact/fiction, solidity/intangibility and objectivity/subjectivity. But in the process – and this marks a key departure point of my own approach – I also begin to challenge the opposition between materiality/theory, and tthe primacy of language and textuality over materiality, which becomes more significant in my subsequent chapters when I focus on the ways in which Woolf's conceptualisations of sex, animal and life are embedded in questions of embodiment and environment, and in nature as much as culture, in the nonhuman as much as the human. Crucially then, whilst my approach in this thesis is theoretical, and whilst influenced by poststructualism, I depart in particular from the above poststructuralist or postmodernist approaches to Woolf's modernism and feminism in their emphasis on psychoanalytic structures of subjectivity and desire (something I discuss more fully in section 2.2.2 and in chapter three), and of language and discourse. As I will explain in the following section of this introduction, this is precisely to take account of the changing nature of 'theory' since the predominance of poststructuralism and postmodernism in the 1980s and early 1990s, where materiality has become the grounds for important theoretical debates that seek to re-evaluate how we think of our material contexts. That this is still linked to

poststructuralism rather than a complete break from it is emphasised by the fact that the work of Deleuze (both solo and with Guattari) is crucial to these new theories of materiality. As a key figure of 'high' (poststructuralist) theory and someone who was profoundly influenced by modernist literature, Deleuze, as I will explain below, has only recently come to prominence in modernist studies and Woolf studies, much later than other poststructuralist thinkers such as Derrida, Lacan, Kristeva and Foucault. But rather than simply aiming to fill a gap in Woolf studies where her work has still to be considered alongside Deleuze, I place my reading of Woolf in the context of contemporary dialogues on materialist theories of sex, animal and life that have been inspired by, and have also produced challenges to, his thought (for example the sceptical reactions of feminist theorists to the concept of 'becoming-woman', discussed in chapter two, or the conflicting ways that theorists have responded to Deleuze and Guattari's writings on the animal, discussed in chapter four). When I focus on important materialist theorists of the following generation(s), including Braidotti, Donna Haraway, Matthew Calarco, Karen Barad, and Jane Bennett, I do so not to suggest that what is revolutionary in contemporary theory can be characterised simply by the shift from one set of thinkers to another, but to situate my readings of Woolf in the context of ongoing and contentious theoretical debates concerning new and nonanthropocentric conceptualisations of materiality.

Following poststructuralism, there may well be a 'contemporary theoretical astuteness', as Claire Colebrook puts it, 'consisting of acknowledging the provisional status of one's position' and an awareness of 'some textual mediating condition – there is no sex in itself, race in itself, history in itself', but the way in which this awareness passes through diverse fields and disciplines sometimes 'avoids the problem of theory'.[36] In this thesis I am not simply concerned with imposing a theoretical framework onto Woolf's texts but in tackling the problem of doing theory itself, focusing of the ways in which in Woolf's texts are themselves theorised and theorising. Such an approach entails, of course, choosing to read Woolf in certain contexts, emphasising one set of debates rather than another. This points to a limitation in the kind of postmodernist approach Caughie

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[36] Claire Colebrook. 'Extinct Theory.' *Theory After 'Theory'*, ed. Jane Elliott and Derek Attridge. New York: Routledge, 2011, p.63.

advocates in her earlier book, in that her polemical critique of dualisms too easily falls back on a 'refusal to choose', a phrase that recurs throughout *Virginia Woolf and Postmodernism*,[37] as itself a subversive act rather than exploring the ways in which specific choices – whether made by or for us – can lead us to find heterogeneity and multiplicity in Woolf's texts. Whilst not wishing to reduce Woolf's writings to any one theoretical framework, in this thesis I have chosen to focus on specific thematic concerns and commit Woolf's texts to particular theoretical alliances. That is, whilst any theoretical approach to Woolf will, to some extent, be partial, it seems to me that rather than simply suspending or deferring commitment to close reading and sustained analysis of her texts, we can conceive of committed but open readings in a similar way to the notion of 'swift marriages' Woolf uses in 'Craftsmanship' (1937) to describe the powerful but changeable combinations words create in different contexts (a notion I explore more fully in chapter one in relation to her figuration of 'granite and rainbow'), where ideas and choices would be brought together in a certain context whilst remaining aware that 'the truth they try to catch is many-sided', and so will require change, revision, and future perspectives (E6 97).

Despite premature obituaries then, theory has far from disappeared (just as, vice versa, historicism is hardly a nascent activity). As Jane Elliott and Derek Attridge's recent intervention in *Theory After 'Theory'* suggests, the role of theory itself is at an exciting stage, 'returning' in new and unexpected forms:

> Since the mid-1990s, the story goes, theory has continued to diversify, drawing on the work of a range of new figures and examining a host of new archives and arenas, but its newer incarnations offer at most a kind of afterlife of the once vital object that was 'Theory', a diluted form lacking in both intellectual substance and institutional prominence. [...But] where theory continues to thrive, it increasingly adopts positions that challenge some of the fundamental intellectual stances that once defined 'Theory' […] new work is being produced that mounts such challenges from within theory's now much wider institutional and discursive boundaries.[38]

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[37] Caughie herself worries over, and defends, her use of this phrase in the book's conclusion. See Caughie 1991, p.194 – 210.

[38] Jane Elliott and Derek Attridge. 'Introduction: Theory's Nine Lives.' *Theory After 'Theory'*, ed. Jane Elliott and Derek Attridge. New York: Routledge, 2011, p.1.

If we are to consider the relationship between Woolf and theory today then, it has not simply to be a return to the poststructuralist or postmodernist readings of Woolf that were so influential in the 1980s and 1990s but to new theoretical paradigms. My own position here then is that much of the important work still to be done within Woolf studies in relation to theory involves close analysis of her texts in the context of our own contemporary theoretical debates – whether those conversations on new materialist conceptualisations of sex, animal and life that I engage with in this thesis or the others that have been beyond the scope of this study – that are influenced by both poststructuralist theorists and by Woolf herself. More broadly speaking then, it is at the intersection of these two concerns – on the revitalising of the relationship between modernism and theory and of theory after 'Theory' – that my own reading of Woolf and the materiality of theory can be situated.

Woolf, New Materialisms and Deleuze

Considerations of the relationship between Woolf's writing and materiality is itself nothing new to Woolf studies. Michèle Barrett, in her 1979 introduction to *Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing*, makes clear that Woolf is both a theorist[39] and concerned with the material conditions of women: 'She argued that the writer was the product of her or his historical circumstances, and that material conditions were of crucial importance. Secondly, she claimed that these material circumstances had a profound effect on the psychological aspects of writing, and that they could be seen to influence the nature of the creative work itself.'[40] Barrett cites a famous passage from *A Room of One's Own* (1929) to support her argument: 'these webs are not spun in mid-air by incorporeal creatures, but are the work of suffering human beings, and are attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in' (RO 53). Yet, contrary to other feminist critics such as Jane Marcus,[41] Barrett was uncomfortable with claiming

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[39] Michèle Barrett. 'Introduction.' *Virginia Woolf: Women & Writing*, ed. Michèle Barrett. London: The Women's Press, 1979, p.2.
[40] Barrett 1979, p.5.
[41] See Jane Marcus. 'Thinking Back Through Our Mothers.' *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Jane Marcus. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1981: 1-30, Jane Marcus. 'Storming the Toolshed.' *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism* (2nd Edition), ed. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl.

Woolf's 'materialist' argument as Marxist.[42] Writing twenty years later in *Imagination in Theory* (1999) – and having noted the 'intimate blow' dealt to many of the 'working assumptions' of Marxist materialism by poststructuralism's anti-humanism, its critique of teleological thought, and its insistence on the constructed nature of linguistic meaning[43] – Barrett reinforces the 'ambiguity' she finds in Woolf's materialism.[44] Intriguingly, she at the same time notes the ambiguity in Woolf's relationship to humanism, claiming that Woolf displays an 'agnostic kind of not-humanism' in contrast to the more pointed 'anti-humanism' of Louis Althusser or of the poststructuralists.[45]

In this thesis I seek to further explore – and, I hope, further complicate – the relationship between Woolf's writing and non-humanist, or even 'posthumanist' (a term I discuss more fully in chapter five), conceptualisations of materiality, including the ways in which this offers a challenge to the modelling of subjectivity. While Barrett is hesitant to go beyond agnosticism and ambiguity, partly as a result of her worries over the political impotence that she fears for such a position,[46] my own reading of Woolf places her in the politically and ethically charged context of debates which, following poststructuralism, have emerged in recent years and mark, as Rosi Braidotti puts it, 'a shift away from anthropocentrism, in favour of a new emphasis on the mutual interdependence of material, biocultural, and symbolic forces in the making of social and political practices […] a reconsideration of the concept of subjectivity in terms of "life-forces".'[47] In the wake of the poststructuralist emphasis on discourse and subjectivity, and 'the ontological and epistemological presumptions that have supported modern approaches to the material world', Diana Coole and Samantha Frost argue in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (2010) that 'it is now time to subject

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New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1997 [1982], p.263-278. Jane Marcus. 'Quentin's Bogey.' Critical Inquiry 11:3 (1985), 486-497.

[42] Barrett 1979, p.23.

[43] Michèle Barrett. *Imagination in Theory: Essays on Writing and Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999, p.19-20. Barrett also reflects here on the ways that she herself becomes increasingly critical of Marxist feminism in texts including *Women's Oppression Today* (1980) and *The Politics of Truth* (1992).

[44] See also Barrett 1999, p.62-67.

[45] Barrett 1999, p.196.

[46] Barrett's preference for an 'agnostic not-humanism' reflects her sense that anti-humanism jeopardises 'art, religion, pleasure, the emotions, the senses, political agency – in short, most of the important things in life'. Barrett 1999, p.6.

[47] Rosi Braidotti. 'The Politics of "Life Itself" and New Ways of Dying.' *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, ed. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost. Durham: Duke UP, 2010, p.203.

objectivity and material reality to a similarly radical reappraisal.'[48] They outline three themes of these 'new materialisms': the view of matter as itself having agency, a view that is tied to posthumanism; the status of 'life' and related bioethical and biopolitical issues; and a 'nondogmatic' critical reengagement with 'the material details of everyday life and broader geopolitical and socioeconomic structures […] An important characteristic shared by all three components is their emphasis on materialization as a complex, pluralistic, relatively open process and their insistence that humans, including theorists themselves, be recognized as thoroughly immersed within materiality's productive contingencies.'[49]

Jane Bennett has noted in *Vibrant Matter* (2010) that this move towards a nonanthropocentric conceptualisations of materiality, coupled with conceptualisations of a non-theological, immanent vitalism, offers a further challenge to Marxism:

> How did Marx's notion of materiality – as economic structures and exchanges that provoke many other events – come to stand for the materialist perspective per se? Why is there not a more robust debate between contending philosophies of materiality or between contending accounts of how materiality matters to politics?
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> For some time political theory has acknowledged that materiality matters. But this materiality most often refers to human social structures or to the human meanings "embodied" in them and other objects. Because politics is itself often construed as an exclusively human domain, what registers on it is a set of material constraints on or a context for human action. Dogged resistance to anthropocentrism is perhaps the main difference between the vital materialism I pursue and this kind of historical materialism.[50]

These emerging materialisms therefore involve an engagement with materiality that departs from poststructuralist emphases on language and discourse, but has nonetheless, as Jason Edwards puts it, grown out of 'powerful criticisms made by poststructuralism of the concepts of the subject and of historical teleology provided an unanswerable challenge to the humanist and historicist Marxism that tended also toward economic

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[48] Diana Coole and Samantha Frost. 'Introducing the New Materialisms.' *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, ed. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost. Durham: Duke UP, 2010, p.2-3.
[49] Coole and Frost 2010, p.7.
[50] Jane Bennett. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke UP, 2010, p.xvi.

determinism.'[51] As Coole and Frost stress, 'coming after poststructuralism and its criticisms, no workable version of Marxism can advance a historical metanarrative, aspire to the identification of determining economic laws, valorize an originary, pristine nature, or envisage communism as history's idealized material destiny.'[52] The move towards post-Cartesian and affirmative (rather than dialectical) materialism 'sees its task as creating new concepts and images of nature that affirm matter's immanent vitality', therefore complicating how we conceive of causation and emphasising multiple entanglements of agency.[53] The challenge with the new materialist ontologies then 'is to give materiality its due while recognizing its plural dimensions and its complex, contingent modes of appearing.'[54]

Throughout this thesis I encounter various different theories of materiality. I begin in chapter one with Woolf's own theory of 'granite and rainbow' which, I argue, is entangled in a vibrant, multiple and creative engagement with the material world. In the subsequent chapters I go on to consider the ways in which various aspects of her conceptualisation of sex, animal and life might be illuminated alongside Braidotti's materialist nomadic feminism (chapter two), Braidotti's 'polymorphous vitalism' and Colebrook's 'queer vitalism' (chapter three), Haraway's 'mud philosophy' (chapter four), and Bennett's theory of 'vital materialism' alongside Barad's quantum-inspired, material-discursive 'intra-action'. All these theories are in one way or another influenced by Deleuze (and Guattari). Therefore, by reassessing the much-discussed questions of sexual difference and sexuality in Woolf's writing alongside the more recently emerging debates on animality and life itself, I am interested not only in the more classically 'materialist' arguments Woolf puts forward in texts such as *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* (1938), but also the possibility that throughout her writing she theorises a nonanthropocentric or, to use the term that I turn to later in this thesis, 'posthumanist' conceptualisation of materiality. I want to argue that throughout her writings, Woolf displays a theoretically sophisticated engagement with materiality which impacts on her use of language, her modelling of subjectivity and her conceptualisation of external

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[51] Jason Edwards. 'The Materialism of Historical Materialism.' *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, ed. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost. Durham: Duke UP, 2010, p.296.
[52] Coole and Frost 2010, p.30.
[53] Coole and Frost 2010, p.8-9.
[54] Coole and Frost 2010, p.27.

realities. Woolf's politics is not so much situated in her textual practice or limited to the material concerns with having 'five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door' (RO 137) – although these are of course crucial – but consists in a wide-ranging reconceptualisation of materiality and subjectivity in her novels, short stories and essays as well as her autobiographical writings.

As mentioned above, a central figure throughout my reading of Woolf is Deleuze (both solo and with Guattari). Although a key figure of poststructuralist thought, the interest in Deleuze in literary studies, as well as in Anglophone continental philosophy, developed later than figures such as Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva and Lacan.[55] In the poststructuralist readings of Woolf outlined in the previous section of this introduction, Deleuze is almost entirely absent from consideration. When he is briefly referred to by Minow-Pinkney, it is to dismiss his anti-dialectical position and refusal to place language as the primary concern of subject-formation. Deleuze and Guattari are 'one-sided theorists' who 'fetishise the moment of de-structuration and a-signification'.[56] But in recent years Deleuze and Guattari have been hugely influential in new theories of materiality precisely because, unlike other poststructuralist perspectives, they do not fetishise language. As Colebrook helpfully summarises:

> At a time when political, film, literary and feminist theory were dominated by 'discourse', 'representation' and 'signification', Deleuze's and Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on life was incommensurable with the dominant style of criticism. Today, however, the turn to Deleuze has both created and been enabled by […] an emphasis on 'life' and the sciences of life in literary, social, political and film theory. […] Deleuze is a valuable thinker for just this reason: not only does he refuse to regard discourse, signification, representation or systems as adequate starting points for theory, he also explains *why* thinking is seduced into the illusion of transcendence.[57]

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[55] For the most part there is also a longer delay before translations of Deleuze's texts in comparison with Derrida's. For further details see Paul Patton and John Protevi. 'Introduction.' *Between Deleuze and Derrida*, ed. Paul Patton and John Protevi. London: Continuum, 2003, p.9.
[56] Minow-Pinkney 1987, p.20.
[57] Claire Colebrook. *Deleuze: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Continuum, 2006, p.154.

For Deleuze then it is not simply a case of the endless deferral of meaning, but of 'freeing the concept of sign and expression from linguistics, from their reduction to the dualism signifier/signified.'[58]

To be sure, this is not to say that Deleuze shared no affinities with other poststructuralists.[59] 'Affinity' is precisely the word used by Derrida, for example, in his eulogy for Deleuze (following Deleuze's death in 1995), where he writes that he felt 'a proximity or a near total affinity' with Deleuze in terms of the thesis 'concerning an irreducible difference that is in opposition to dialectical opposition, a difference "more profound" than a contradiction (*Difference and Repetition*), a difference in the joyously repeated affirmation ("yes, yes")'.[60] In chapter four of this thesis I turn to Derrida's writings on the animal, and read him alongside Deleuze. But a key difference in their approaches is that where Derrida has been characterised as displaying 'a sort of anxiety of influence […] leading to the redoubtable caution and reflexive awareness of his writing', Deleuze's affirmative philosophy is focused on the creation of the new.[61] This affirmative mode of creation is captured by Deleuze in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962):

> To affirm is still to evaluate, but to evaluate from the perspective of a will which enjoys its own difference in life instead of suffering the pains of the opposition to this life that it has itself inspired. *To affirm is not to take responsibility for, to take on the burden of what is, but to release, to set free what lives*. To affirm is to unburden: not to load life with the weight of higher values, but *to create* new values which are those of life, which make life light and active.[62]

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[58] André Pierre Colombat. 'Deleuze and Signs.' *Deleuze and Literature*, ed. Ian Buchanan and John Marks. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2000, p.21-22.

[59] For insightful discussion on the relationship between Deleuze and Foucault see Cary Wolfe. *Critical Environments: Postmodern Theory and the Pragmatics of the "Outside"*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1998, p.87-128; on Deleuze and Lacan see Daniel W. Smith. 'The inverse side of the structure: Zizek on Deleuze on Lacan.' *Criticism* 46:4 (2004), 635-650; on Deleuze and Derrida see Patton and Protevi 2003 and Pheng Cheah. 'Non-Dialectical Materialism.' *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, ed. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost. Durham: Duke UP, 2010: 70-91; on Deleuze and Kristeva see Catherine Driscoll. 'The Woman in Process: Deleuze, Kristeva and Feminism.' *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, ed. Ian Buchanan and Claire Colebrook. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2000, 64-85. Driscoll's article also discusses Woolf's feminism.

[60] Jacques Derrida. 'I'll have to wander all alone', trans. David Kammerman. http://www.usc.edu/dept/comp-lit/tympanum/1/derrida.html

[61] Patton and Protevi 2003, p.6.

[62] Gilles Deleuze. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson. London: Continuum, 2006 [1983], p.174.

The divergences between both Derrida and Deleuze's notion of difference are also marked by their key influences. Derrida's *différance,* promoting the free play of signifiers where, as he writes in *Writing and Difference* (1978), terms are bound up in 'infinite implication, the indefinite referral of signifier to signifier',[63] is 'post-phenomenological' and therefore the likes of Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger are engaged with in much more detail than they are in Deleuze's 'material and forceful' difference.[64] Deleuze turns more to Spinoza, Hume, Nietzsche and Bergson, all of whom are linked, he argues, by 'their critique of negativity, their cultivation of joy, the hatred of interiority, the externality of forces and relations, the denunciation of power'.[65] As Pheng Cheah helpfully glosses:

> Derrida also broke away from dialectical negation through the thought of an originary movement of difference (iterability/ *différance*). But whereas for Derrida originary difference intimates a radical alterity that is not of the order of presence and actuality and, thus, is neither negative or positive, Deleuze characterizes the movement of originary difference as […] a plane of immanence that generates actuality. […] Unlike Derrida, what is affirmed [by Deleuze] is not a form of haunting or afterliving (sur-vie) that interrupts and dislocates the organic form of a living being but the pulsing force of a nonorganic and impersonal life that has infinitely greater vitality than any organism.[66]

Difference for Deleuze, as I will explore further at various points in this thesis, is a vital, generative, ontologically primary force (see for example section 1.4 and 5.2.3). Deleuze himself distances his own approach to texts from Derrida's 'deconstructive' method: 'With regard to the method of deconstruction of texts, I see well what it is, I admire it greatly, but I don't see it having anything to do with my own…A text, for me, is only a little wheel in an extra-textual practice. It is not a question of commenting on a text by a method of deconstruction…or by any other method; it is a question of seeing what use a

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[63] Jacques Derrida. *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass. London: Routledge, 2001 [1978], p.29.
[64] Patton and Protevi 2003, p.5.
[65] Gilles Deleuze. 'Letter to a Harsh Critic.' *Negotiations: 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Columbia UP, 1995, p.6.
[66] Cheah 2010, p.83-84; 87.

text is in the extra-textual practice that prolongs the text.'[67] In chapter one of this thesis I draw both an inter-textual and extra-textual mapping of Woolf's famous 'granite and rainbow' term as an example of the difference embodied by the terms she uses in her own theorising, and in the chapters that follow I go on to discuss other materials for theory Woolf provides us with in her texts which survive and continue to act on questions of sexual difference and sexuality, animality, and posthuman life.

As alluded to above, central to Deleuze's view of literature is that it involves more than linguistic signs: his work 'cannot', John Hughes notes, 'be identified with perhaps more familiar post-structuralist and deconstructive work, and its fixation on the scrupulous delineation of textual aporias.'[68] Linguistic signs do not, for Deleuze, take a higher status than other types of signs. In *Proust and Signs* (1964), for example, Deleuze discusses 'several kinds of signs'[69] that all imply 'a heterogeneity of relation'[70] and in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) Deleuze and Guattari refer to 'heterogeneous regimes of signs':[71]

> A regime of signs constitutes a semiotic system. But it appears difficult to analyze semiotic systems in themselves: there is always a form of content that is simultaneously inseparable from and independent of the forms of expression, and the two forms pertain to assemblages that are not principally linguistic. However, one can proceed as though the formalization of expression were autonomous and self-sufficient. Even if that is done, there is such diversity, that it is impossible to attach any particular privilege to the form or regime of the "signifier." If we call the signifying semiotic system semiology, then semiology is only one regime of signs among others, and not the most important one.[72]

Deleuze outlines the heterogeneity of these signs in three particular ways in *Difference and Repetition* (1968): 'first, in the object which bears or emits them, […] secondly, in

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[67] qtd. in Bruce Baugh. 'Making the Difference: Deleuze's Difference and Derrida's Différance.' Social Semiotics 7:2 (1997), p.143. Baugh provides a thorough analysis of the differences between Deleuze's concept of difference and Derrida's différance.

[68] John Hughes. *Lines of Flight: Reading Deleuze with Hardy, Gissing, Conrad, Woolf.* Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997, p.16.

[69] Gilles Deleuze. *Proust and Signs*, trans. Richard Howard. London: Continuum, 2008 [1972], p.12.

[70] Deleuze 2008 [1972], p.15.

[71] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi. London: Continuum, 2004 [1988], p.93.

[72] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.123-124.

themselves, since a sign envelops another "object" within the limits of the object which bears it, and incarnates a natural or spiritual power (an Idea); finally, in the response they elicit, since the movement of the response does not "resemble" that of the sign.'[73] As Colebrook posits, this presents an opportunity to re-think modernist literature:

> If "theory" has been dominated by an attention to the limits of language and structure, then modernism of a certain mode has been its default aesthetic, for modernism discloses signs *as signs*. If, however there is another mode of theory – such as Deleuze's commitment to the smallest and most inhuman of perceptions – then it is possible to consider modernism not as reflection or interpretation of systems of signs, but as positively creative of new differences, new styles and new signs.[74]

Where Deleuze has hitherto been read in modernist context, he has been considered much more widely alongside the likes of Franz Kafka, Antonin Artaud, Samuel Beckett, and Marcel Proust than Woolf. On the one hand this reflects the fact that these authors are the ones Deleuze himself wrote about most fully, yet in a collection of essays on *Deleuze and Literature* (2000), for example, Woolf is mentioned only once in passing when one of the essays lists some of the Anglo-American writers who influenced Deleuze – a list that includes Lawrence, Miller and Melville, among others.[75] But Woolf's influence on Deleuze should not be overlooked, as he cites her writing, and life, as an important consideration for his philosophical thought in texts spanning from the 1970s to the end of his life in 1995 – including his *Dialogues* (1977) with Claire Parnet and *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What is Philosophy?* (1991) with Félix Guattari – where she is variously cited as exemplary of terms I will explore throughout this thesis including the key concepts of 'becoming' (see for example section 2.1.3 and 4.4) and 'haecceity' (see section 5.2.2). Woolf also provides rare examples of Deleuze's

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[73] Gilles Deleuze. *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton. London: Continuum, 2004 [1994], p.25.
[74] Claire Colebrook. 'Woolf and "Theory".' *Virginia Woolf in Context*, ed. Jane Goldman and Bryony Randall. Cambridge: CUP (In Press).
[75] See T. Hugh Crawford. 'The Paterson Plateau: Deleuze, Guattari and William Carlos Williams.' *Deleuze and Literature*, ed. Ian Buchanan and John Marks. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2000, p.57.

references to a female author.[76] In modernist studies, the first consideration of Woolf and Deleuze was in 1997 (and thus after the height of theory's power in modernist literary studies) in John Hughes' *Lines of Flight*, which focuses on Deleuze's empiricism and provides readings of Thomas Hardy, George Gissing, Joseph Conrad along with a chapter on *The Voyage Out* (1915). Hughes' Deleuzian reading of Woolf's first novel also involves a discussion of Bergson's 'duration' in an exploration of 'movement', which he outlines as 'not simply a function by which a body changes its position in space, but a function of ontological relatedness in which the body's qualities change as a function of their association within a larger open and changing whole'.[77] Whilst focused solely on *The Voyage Out*, Hughes' reading is important in opening the dialogue between Woolf and Deleuze at the same time as pointing to the links with Bergson, a key influence on Deleuze and someone who, as noted above, has received critical attention from Woolf scholars. Following Hughes' study, Jean-Jacques Lecercle's *Deleuze and Language* (2002) contains an acute analysis of Woolf's 'Kew Gardens', paying close attention to the textuality of Woolf's short story, Jessica Berman reads Woolf's (ethical) writing alongside Mieke Bal's reconceptualisation of the Deleuzian 'fold' for feminist studies,[78] and Beatrice Monaco's *Machinic Modernism* (2008) aligns Deleuze with what she sees as metaphysical aspects of modernist literature. Alongside chapters on Lawrence and Joyce, Monaco offers two chapters on Woolf, providing a reading of immanence and transcendence in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and form and rhythm in *The Waves* (1931) and *Orlando* (1928). In addition to this scholarship, in the time since I began writing this thesis a handful of further essays have begun to make further connections between the writings of Woolf and Deleuze: Jason Skeet has provided a Deleuzian reading of *The Waves* and Woolf's essay 'The Cinema' (1926),[79] Laci Mattison has offered an elegant reading of *To the Lighthouse* through Deleuze's conceptualisation of 'the fold',[80] Gina

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[76] Mary Bryden notes, however, the irony in the fact that Deleuze refers to Woolf in part because of her refusal to be thought of as a 'woman writer'. See *Gilles Deleuze: Travels in Literature*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007, p.155.

[77] Hughes 1997, p.161.

[78] See Jessica Berman. 'Ethical Folds: Ethics, Aesthetics, Woolf.' *Modern Fiction Studies* 50:1 (2004), 151-72.

[79] Jason Skeet. 'Woolf plus Deleuze: Cinema, Literature and Time Travel.' *Rhizomes* 16 (2008).

[80] Laci Mattison. 'Woolf's Un/Folding(s): The Artist and the Event of the Neo-Baroque.' *Contradictory Woolf: Selected Papers from the Twenty-first Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Derek Ryan and Stella Bolaki, Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press (forthcoming 2012)

Potts has used Deleuze to outline Woolf's 'nomadic, anti-authoritarian politics' in *Three Guineas*,[81] Carrie Rohman has considered Deleuze's conceptualisation of 'the refrain' in her analysis of the inhuman in *The Waves*,[82] Colebrook has considered, as mentioned above, the new possibilities Deleuze offers for our readings of Woolf and of modernist literature more generally,[83] and Judith Allen has made insightful reference to Deleuze and Guattari's 'rhizome' in her discussion of 'wildness' in Woolf's writing,[84] and to Deleuze's notion of 'repetition' in the context of Woolf's repetition of words.[85]

Deleuze then, has emerged in recent years as someone who demands serious consideration in dialogue with Woolf's writings. Building on the growing interest in the relationship between Woolf and Deleuze, in this thesis I situate my reading in the wider context of critical debates in Woolf studies as well as contemporary theoretical debates that engage with Deleuze's writings (and Deleuze studies is itself a growing discipline), including a focus on those aforementioned theorists/philosophers who have yet to be read alongside Woolf. That is, I do not intend to simply impose Deleuzian concepts on Woolf's texts, but show how her writing is already engaging with similar issues, something that is borne out in the fact that, as I will demonstrate in the following chapters, recent debates in Woolf studies and in contemporary theory already share many concerns. Having said that, and aware of the impossibility in capturing multiplicity in all its variety in one thesis, any single reading of Woolf will always of course be limited in scope. In the particular theoretical context in which I read Woolf I do not wish to foreclose the significance of Woolf's texts as 'Deleuzian' or any other such term, but rather to open up new perspectives and conceptual paradigms that might then provoke new conversations on the position of Woolf in theory and theory in Woolf – especially

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[81] Gina Potts. 'Woolf and the War Machine.' *The Theme of Peace and War in Virginia Woolf's Writings: Essays on her Political Philosophy*, ed. Jane Wood. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2010.

[82] Carrie Rohman. '"We Make Life": Vibration, Aesthetics, and the Inhuman in *The Waves*.' *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World: Selected Papers from the Twentieth International Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Kristin Czarnecki and Carrie Rohman. Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2011.

[83] Colebrook (In Press).

[84] Judith Allen. *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Language*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2010, p.71-73.

[85] Judith Allen. '"But . . . I had said 'but' too often." Why "but"'? In *Contradictory Woolf: Selected Papers from the Twenty-first Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Derek Ryan and Stella Bolaki, Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press (forthcoming 2012). Indeed, I write this as the programme has been released for a conference to be held in Paris in March 2012 on 'Virginia Woolf Among the Philosophers', and includes a paper from Elena Gualtieri on Woolf, Deleuze, Rancière and Photography, and from Marie-Dominique Garnier on Woolf, Carlyle and Deleuze.

the relationship between materiality and the three terms in my sub-heading: sex, animal, life. *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory* aims to revitalise theoretical readings of Woolf showing that they are as much a part of contextualising her writing as historical or archival perspectives are. Theorising materiality, and materialising theory, through Woolf need not be seen as a violent act of de-contextualisation at odds with historical and cultural approaches to her writing, but an affirmative acknowledgement that any reading of Woolf today comes from our own historically situated and culturally mediated moment, 70 years after the 'curtain rose' and Woolf's last novel, *Between the Acts* (1941), was published (BTA 197).

Chapter Overview

The five chapters of this thesis are concerned with Woolf's exploration of subjectivity and materiality in distinct but interrelated fields of debate, focusing on questions of the sexual difference, sexuality and desire, animality, quantum philosophy-physics, posthumanism and the concept of life itself. I make use of a wide-range of Woolf's writing, especially her 'middle novels' of *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando* (1928), *The Waves* (1931), *Flush* (1933), and her modernist feminist manifesto *A Room of One's Own*, but I also refer to her other novels, short stories, essays, diaries, letters and autobiographical texts. The thesis begins by focusing in chapter one on Woolf's key figuration of 'granite and rainbow' in 'The New Biography' (1927), but argues that the significance of this term is complicated and extended throughout Woolf's writing. 'Digging' and 'chasing' these terms, coupled and uncoupled, in a range of texts including *The Voyage Out*, *Night and Day* (1919), 'Sketch of the Past', and several essays and letters, as well as touching on the understanding of granites and rainbows in the natural sciences of geology and physics, I argue that this term has something to tell us about Woolf's resistance to totalising meanings, and her exploration of the natural world. I go on to suggest here that Woolf's multiple granites and rainbows not only complicate binary oppositions of fact and fiction, solidity and intangibility – indeed materiality and theory – but move beyond a framework of opposition and towards a paradigm of polygamous 'swift marriages', a term taken from 'Craftsmanship'. By starting with Woolf's own 'theory' of granite and rainbow, and only later in the chapter introducing

Braidotti and Deleuze, I emphasise that my consideration of the materials for theory found in Woolf's writing begins first of all with her own texts, and not the imposing of theoretical frameworks onto her work.

Chapters two and three focus on long-standing issues in Woolf studies concerning feminism, sexual difference and sexuality. My second chapter is divided into two parts, the first of which concentrates on the issue of sexual difference in relation to Woolf's much-discussed theory of androgyny in *A Room of One's Own*. I place Woolf in conversation with Braidotti's model of a feminist nomadic subjectivity (a model which she distances from the notion of androgyny) as well as Deleuze and Guattari's controversial 'becoming-woman' concept (which is partly influenced by Woolf) in order to explore the ways in which Woolf's androgyny might point to a subjectivity which takes us beyond the impasse of constructivism vs. essentialism. Woolf's androgynous subject, I suggest, is therefore materially embedded but non-unitary, and does not adhere to exclusive categorisations of identity based on oppositional models of sexual difference. In the second part of this chapter I analyse Woolf's handling of subjects and objects in *To the Lighthouse* in light of Deleuzian concepts such as the 'rhizome', 'smooth' and 'striated' spaces, and 'becoming', a reading which I frame by introducing my neologism 'tri-subjectivities', or *tri-s*, as a way of formulating the nonoppositional but also nonoedipal triangular relations found in this novel. In particular, I go on to consider the importance in *To the Lighthouse* of the sea, trees, grass, and paint in Woolf's attempt to articulate an inclusive form of sexual politics. Moving to issues of sexuality and desire, chapter three focuses on *Orlando* and opens with a reading of Braidotti's discussion in *Transpositions* (2006) of Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf's relationship, which she claims does not represent a powerful story of lesbian desire, but rather goes beyond a politics of identity and towards a formulation of love and desire as de-personalised and shared, and all the more subversive as a result. I then perform my own 'queering' of *Orlando* by focusing not simply on the relationship between human subjects but on a desire that includes nonhuman objects such as rings and motor-cars, and which has something to say about our conceptualisation of history itself. Following Deleuze's writing on love, desire and sexuality, I argue that Woolf offers a reconceptualisation of desire which is not founded on lack and understood within psychoanalytic paradigms, and

I demonstrate the ways in which *Orlando* rejects the notion of a plural self measured by quantity in favour of a multiplicitous subjectivity engaged in qualitative creation.

In chapters four and five I turn to the more recent, growing areas of interest concerning animality, posthumanism and the philosophical implications of quantum physics. Chapter four explores the complex and contested spaces shared by humans and animals in *Flush: A Biography*. Rather than viewing Woolf's fictional biography allegorically as many Woolf critics have tended to, I focus on its canine protagonist in order to open onto a wider discussion of the question of the animal, and of human-animal relations. This entails a reading of *Flush* in light of contemporary theories of the animal, including Derrida's feline-inspired treatise and Haraway's 'companion species' and 'becoming-with', as well as Deleuze and Guattari's 'becoming-animal'. Here I consider issues of nudity, mirrors, and gaze, all of which are usually seen as dividing human from animal, but which instead, I argue, are central to Woolf's challenging of our preconceived notions of human-animal difference. Taking into account the potential pitfalls of anthropomorphism, I nonetheless claim that *Flush: A Biography* offers a distinctly nonanthropocentric, symbiotic vision of human – animal relations. Woolf, I suggest, creates what I term an 'An*i*malous Society', in contrast to the exclusive and hierarchical organisation of the Spaniel Club described in the opening pages of the novel. I finish this chapter with a brief discussion of vulnerability, flesh and cows. Finally, in chapter five I focus on *The Waves*, with the first part specifically concerned with the novel's engagement with the philosophical implications of quantum physics, and the second part centring on the concept of 'life'. I begin by outlining some of the ways in which Woolf herself was influenced by developments in the first decades in quantum physics, before turning to a reading of *The Waves* alongside Karen Barad's recent work on 'quantum philosophy-physics', and her theorising of a feminist, posthuman form of agency and realism founded in 'intra-actions'. Following this, I turn to Eugene Thacker's consideration of the distinction between 'Life and the living', Jane Bennett's 'vital materialism' and Deleuze's 'univocity' or 'pure immanence', and argue that *The Waves* presents us with an immanent, posthuman ontology of life.

In *Transpositions* (2006), Braidotti, following Deleuze and Guattari, demonstrates that 'the axes of classical "difference" […] are currently being transposed into lines of

"becoming". Sexualization, racialization and naturalization transpose into becoming-woman/other/animal/earth'.[86] By arranging my chapters around key theoretical debates relevant to our own materially situated moment, specifically concerning sexual difference, sexuality, animality, and the materiality and conceptuality of life, I attempt to create a cartography of these lines of becoming in my reading of Woolf. Far from treating these as distinct issues in contemporary debate or in Woolf's writings that must be resolved into clear consensus, this involves working through the blurring of disciplinary and conceptual boundaries so as to ascertain, as Caughie puts it, 'how to go on in the face of conflict and in the absence of consensus',[87] or as Braidotti writes, to form 'alliances […] precisely on the understanding that no common agreement can be reached on matters of content. What can be agreed upon is the need for a common project'.[88]

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[86] Braidotti 2006, p.42.
[87] Caughie 1991, p.207.
[88] Braidotti 2006, p.139.

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Materials for Theory:
Digging Granite and Chasing Rainbows

This chapter builds from Woolf's theory of 'granite and rainbow' in 'The New Biography' and opens onto an analysis of how these terms are extended and complicated throughout her writings, offering a model of theorising that is embedded in the material world. This involves mapping Woolf's use of 'granite' and 'rainbow', together and apart, in texts spanning her writing life, from early diary entries and her first novels *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*, to various essays and letters and her posthumously published 'Sketch of the Past'. But 'digging' granite and 'chasing' rainbows – as the materials for Woolf's theory – also entails a consideration of modern scientific developments in geology and physics, as well as in art and mythology. In the final section I will introduce Deleuze's concept of 'repetition' and Braidotti's 'transposition' as theories that offer a fresh perspective on how we might in the future think about and use Woolf's 'granite and rainbow' term. Rather than representing two sides of reality (the material, factual world and the intangible sphere of personality) I argue that Woolf's multiple granites and rainbows are always already pointing beyond binary models of language and thought, and have something to tell us about Woolf's resistance to totalising meanings, and her exploration of the material world.

1.1 Recontextualising 'The New Biography'

> [I]f we think of truth as something of granite-like solidity and of personality as something of rainbow-like intangibility and reflect that the aim of biography is to weld these two into one seamless whole, we shall admit that the problem is a stiff one (E4 473).

Perhaps her most famous figuration taken from the natural world, Virginia Woolf's 'granite and rainbow' (E4 478) appears to capture both halves of a 'neatly split up'

question concerning the aims of biography (E4 473). Her 1927 essay 'The New Biography' assimilates granite with the 'hard facts' of reality: it is 'truth in its hardest, most obdurate form; it is truth as truth is to be found in the British Museum' (E4 473). In Woolf's view this is characteristic of Sir Sidney Lee's *A Life of William Shakespeare* (1898) and *King Edward VII: A Biography* (1925), books which are 'dull' and 'unreadable' respectively and which, typical of Victorian biographies, are 'stuffed with truth' but not 'those truths which transmit personality' (E4 473). In contrast, the rainbow is assimilated with the 'artful or highly coloured' (E4 473) which 'consists in personality' (E4 474), and Woolf provides the earlier example of James Boswell's *The Life of Samuel Johnson Ll.D* (1791), arguing that upon reading it 'we are aware that there is an incalculable presence among us which will go on ringing and reverberating in widening circles however times may change and ourselves' (E4 474). This ability to bring the personality of the biographical subject to life tells us that we 'can no longer maintain that life consists in action only or in works. […] Something has been liberated beside which all else seems odd and colourless' (E4 474).[1] The successful mixing of both granite and rainbow, fact and personality, has yet to be found, however. Harold Nicolson's *Some People* (1927) is an example of the new twentieth century biography which 'is not fiction because it has the substance, the reality of truth' and 'is not biography because it has the freedom, the artistry of fiction' (E4 476), but the combination between granite-like fact and rainbow-like personality ultimately jars in *Some People* – the author takes centre-stage and the biographical figures are 'below life size' (E4 477) – even if Nicolson 'waves his hand airily in a possible direction' (E4 478).

Granite and rainbow are then, as Kathryn Miles summarises, the constituent elements of 'a theory of biography that seeks to reconcile the binaries of truth and fiction, or put another way, action and thought.'[2] Miles uses Woolf's theory of granite and rainbow as a way of reading her mock-biography *Orlando*, published almost exactly one year after 'The New Biography', a move which she claims 'returns *Orlando* to […] its

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[1] For an in-depth discussion of the earlier development in Woolf's interest in biography, see Julia Briggs. *Reading Virginia Woolf*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2006, p.25-41. Briggs argues that long before writing 'The New Biography' Woolf 'was committed to extending [biography's] range and increasing its flexibility, to writing against it as well as within it.' (25)

[2] Kathryn Miles. '"That perpetual marriage of granite and rainbow": Searching for "The New Biography" in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*.' *Virginia Woolf & Communities: Selected Papers from the Eight Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Jeanette McVicker and Laura Davis. New York: Pace UP, 1999, p.212.

original theoretical rubric: Woolf's own essays'. In dealing with 'each binary' as they 'exist at opposite ends of the spectrum of biography', she interprets the starting point as a classic binary opposition, and understands the end goal to be the achievement of a 'seamless whole'.[3] Miles concludes that *Orlando* is the 'fictional praxis to underscore [Woolf's] theory'[4], where the successful recognition by the 'modern biographer' of 'his own subjective positioning'[5] allows him to adopt this ironic tone in which he evokes both the historical changes in the facts of Orlando's various environments (granite) at the same time as retaining that elusive quality in Orlando (rainbow) where there is always the possibility of letting slip 'out of one's grasp altogether' (O 175). But where Miles uses 'The New Biography' to illustrate the success of *Orlando*, Mitchell Leaska has used Woolf's essay to explain the 'failure' of *The Pargiters*.[6] In his 1978 introduction to Woolf's abandoned project, Leaska maps the theory of granite and rainbow onto Woolf's initial intention to have essay segments interspersed with fiction and argues that Woolf 'gradually realised that all the factual matter which would constitute the essay portions was weighty substance that somehow collided with the artistic design she originally planned', therefore meaning that 'the truth of fact and the truth of fiction could not meet in felicitous alliance.'[7] Confining Woolf's term to an oppositional framework, Leaska argues that Woolf had to abandon *The Pargiters* 'in despair'[8] because she felt 'the pressure of granite against rainbow'.[9]

Specific readings of *Orlando* and *The Pargiters* are not my primary concern here, but as examples of the ways in which Woolf's essay has been utilised by critics, they are important for two main reasons. Firstly, both Miles' and Leaska's appropriations of Woolf's 'granite and rainbow' illustrates that the term can be extended and applied to her other writings rather than exclusively being read in relation to academic literature on

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[3] Miles 1999, p.212.
[4] Miles 1999, p.213.
[5] Miles 1999, p.217.
[6] Mitchell. A. Leaska. 'Introduction.' *The Pargiters: The Novel-Essay Portion of* The Years. London: The Hogarth Press, 1978, p.xviii. For more on his reading of *The Years*, see Mitchell Leaska. 'Virginia Woolf, the Pargeter: A Reading of *The Years*.' *Bulletin of the New York Public Library 80* (Winter 1977): 172-210. For the significance of the verb 'to parget', meaning 'to whitewash, patch over, suppress', see Goldman 2006, p.79. Leaska's biography of Woolf also, of course, took the title *Granite and Rainbow: The Hidden Life of Virginia Woolf* (1998).
[7] Leaska 1978, xiv.
[8] Leaska 1978, xiv.
[9] Leaska 1978, vii.

biography[10] - something that is also emphasised by the fact that Leonard Woolf chose *Granite and Rainbow* (1958) as the title for a posthumously published collection of Woolf's essays;[11] secondly, although using it to different ends, they both employ Woolf's apparently oppositional theory without ever challenging the stability of the terms 'granite' and 'rainbow' themselves. This also applies to Ann Banfield's *The Phantom Table*, which aligns Woolf's 'granite and rainbow' at various points to further dichotomies of being and existence, mysticism and logic, vibrant sexuality and sexlessness, and impersonality and personality.[12] That is, this natural metaphor may be more or less amalgamated but remains, from the start, as two distinct elements working within a binary framework. Rather than understanding this dual term as a fixed and stable metaphor, I would like to argue that the complexity and usefulness of Woolf's theory of granite and rainbow has yet to be fully realised. Little critical attention has been paid to the appearance of the first conditional in the quotation from 'The New Biography' with which I opened this chapter (signalled by Woolf's use of 'if' and 'shall'), but, dealing in likelihood and conditionality rather than certainty, this tense allows Woolf to commit to her theory whilst also maintaining a level of ambiguity and doubt, features Mark Hussey feels are crucial to her writing: 'Beyond doubt, as far as Woolf is concerned, lies not certainty but more doubt […] It is *acting* in the state of radical doubt that characterises

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[10] In a recent article, Ray Monk laments that Woolf's essay is probably the most cited in this field. He claims that Woolf's theory of biography is very closely tied to her thoughts on fiction, but rather than recognising the potential for using 'The New Biography' to explore both biography and fiction alike, he argues that the essay shows Woolf's 'fundamentally flawed' thoughts. He maintains that her writing is characterised by an unwillingness to blur boundaries at all – her 'determination to keep the two ("truth of fiction" and "truth of fact") separate' – and indeed he labels any readings which suggest that Woolf felt positive potential in the confusion of fact and fiction to be 'strained' and 'perverse'. See 'This Fictitious Life: Virginia Woolf on Biography and Reality.' *Philosophy and Literature* 31:1 (2007), 1-40. Focusing on Woolf's later 'The Art of Biography' (1939) has led other critics to conclude that Woolf does indeed reject the idea that fact and fiction can intermix. Again a frustration with the incompatibility of oppositions as necessarily negative and a failure of unity is seen in the comments of Thomas Lewis: 'There is a note of resignation here; granite and rainbow are not to be.' See 'Combining "The Advantages of Fact and Fiction": Virginia Woolf's Biographies of Vita Sackville-West, Flush, and Roger Fry.' *Virginia Woolf: Critical Assessments (vol.II)*. East Sussex: Helm Information, 1994 [1983], p.396. In any case, Elizabeth Cooley reminds us that Woolf's own frustrations whilst writing *Roger Fry* may have clouded her argument in the later essay. See 'Revolutionizing Biography: *Orlando*, *Roger Fry*, and the Tradition.' *Virginia Woolf: Critical Assessments (vol.II)*. East Sussex: Helm Information, 1994 [1990]: 398-407.
[11] Virginia Woolf. *Granite and Rainbow*: Essays. London : the Hogarth Press, 1958.
[12] Ann Banfield. *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism*. Cambridge: CUP, 2000, p.153; p.191-198; p.201; p.382.

Woolf's work.'[13] In the remainder of this chapter I am interested in asking if, and in what ways specifically, Woolf's 'granite and rainbow' enacts this kind of radical doubt. I attempt, therefore, to extend Woolf's theory not by simply applying its dual premise, but by analysing her use of the terms 'granite' and 'rainbow', both coupled and uncoupled, throughout her writing. Digging granite and chasing rainbows in Woolf's texts will also lead me to consider the significance of these terms in relation to the natural sciences of geology and physics, drawing links between materiality and theory.

Returning briefly to Leaska's reading of *The Years* (1937) as a kind of unwanted offspring of *The Pargiters,* it seems that he fails to take account of the self-reflexive qualities of Woolf's theory of 'granite and rainbow' by refusing to see beyond the granite-like fact of this opposition. As Pamela Caughie has noted, 'Leaska relies on distinctions between fact and fiction, essay and novel, "didactic discourse" and dramatic discourse'.[14] She insists that 'it is not a *form* Woolf abandons but a *motive*', and this failure of motive rather than form is because granite and rainbow in *The Pargiters* is a 'given distinction', rather than an 'operational distinction'.[15] For Caughie, *The Pargiters* was not finished because the premise of the book relied on 'generalised polarities' that Woolf herself was suspicious of, and as this distrust grows we see that 'the essays begin to sound more and more like the novel chapters', evidence that 'Woolf could not persist in the clear-cut divisions between essays and scenes that were meant to reveal the deep ideas beneath the surface forms. Nor could she persist in the dichotomy of genuine feelings and false conventions that inspired the essay-novel divisions.'[16] Where Leaska sees *The Pargiters* as 'a new experiment in form' which creates 'an imaginary audience', concentrates on 'the restrictions imposed upon a woman who chooses writing as a profession', and is interspersed with segments 'explaining how the woman novelist deals with certain principal controlling ideas from factual life and transforms them into fiction',[17] Caughie rightly questions how *new* this really was (could it not describe *A*

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[13] Mark Hussey. '"Hiding Behind the Curtain": Reading (Woolf) Like a Man.' *Virginia Woolf: Texts and Contexts: Selected Papers from the Fifth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf,* ed. Beth Rigel Daugherty and Eileen Barrett. New York: Pace UP, 1996, p.13-14.
[14] Caughie 1991, p.95.
[15] Caughie 1991, p.96.
[16] Caughie 1991, p.98-99.
[17] Leaska 1978, xvi.

Room Of One's Own, for example?).[18] Following Caughie's reading, I therefore view Woolf's unfinished project of *The Pargiters* as a positive disavowal of the static distinction between granite and rainbow, fiction and fact. More than that, it becomes an affirmative recognition of the difficulties one is bound to encounter when attempting to subvert a binary framework without challenging the stability of the particular oppositional terms in play (a point I will return to in subsequent chapters). Taking notice of Woolf's use of the first conditional to frame her theory in 'The New Biography' opens up potentiality and flexibility as a fundamental element of the 'granite and rainbow' figuration, and not as proof of its failure. Moreover, Caughie's reading of this essay is in line with her wider argument that Woolf's theorising should be viewed as experimentation: 'She does not start with a theory to be expressed and then discover the appropriate form; rather, she articulates theories as they evolve from her fictional experiments.'[19] But while Caughie's emphasis is on 'testing out the possibilities of literature'[20] she misses an opportunity to read this experimentation back into 'granite and rainbow', instead leaving Woolf's essay tantalisingly behind having pointed to what its most important sentence may be: 'They have no fixed scheme of the universe, no standard of courage or morality to which they insist that [the subject] shall conform.' (E4 476) Where Leaska is perhaps guilty of viewing 'The New Biography' from the solid ground of granite-like fact, it could be argued that Caughie ends up performing a flight from its true complexity.

From the second paragraph of 'The New Biography' Woolf is already blurring the distinctions between granite and rainbow. We learn that even granite-like scientific fact has 'an almost mystic power. Like radium, it seems able to give off forever and ever grains of energy, atoms of light.' And the rainbow-like intangibility of 'that inner life of thought and emotion' in fact 'meanders darkly and obscurely through the hidden channels of the soul' (E4 473). The inversion of dark and light properties appears to confuse the opposing granite and rainbow; the bland and dark shades of granite become mystic and filled with light, and the luminous colours of the rainbow become dark and obscure. Furthermore, when Woolf concludes that we cannot yet 'name the biographer whose art

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[18] Caughie 1991, p.96.
[19] Caughie 1991, p.20.
[20] Caughie 1991, p.23.

is subtle and bold enough to present that queer amalgamation of dream and reality, that perpetual marriage of granite and rainbow' (E4 478), self-reflexivity is again displayed; even in this very sentence she undermines the expected parallel by aligning 'dream' with 'granite', 'reality' with 'rainbow'. It is perhaps telling that the only other occurrence of Woolf deploying granite and rainbow in the same sentence also complicates the expected parallel, when in *Orlando* we are told: 'Nature, who has played so many queer tricks upon us, making us so unequally of clay and diamonds, of rainbow and granite' (O 46). In one sense, granite's pairing with diamonds is no surprise – being hard, obdurate rocks – and, to a lesser extent, the symmetry of rainbow and clay works in the sense of clay's transformative, non-fixed form. But delighting in 'the muddle and mystery' (O 46), Woolf is playing with the overlapping possibilities for these 'queer' couples whereby an argument could just as convincingly be made for the rainbow/diamonds symmetry (mysticism, beauty, rarity), and the clay/granite symmetry (as naturally occurring materials). Already we become vigilant to Caughie's warning that 'we cannot count on any one element meaning the same thing from one text to another.'[21] Instead, we must open up the 'case' into which granite and rainbow have been 'stuffed' (O 46). As Woolf puts it in 'Craftsmanship':[22]

> It is only a question of finding the right words and putting them in the right order. But we cannot do it because they do not live in dictionaries, they live in the mind. And how do they live in the mind? Variously and strangely, much as human beings live, by ranging hither and thither, by falling in love, and mating together. It is true that they are much less bound by ceremony and convention that we are. (E6 96)

We cannot conceive of a marriage of words as we do a conventional marriage between two people. Rather, there are many 'swift marriages' because words have a profound 'need of change': 'It is because the truth they try to catch is many-sided and they convey it by being themselves many-sided, flashing this way, then that. Thus they mean one thing to one person, another thing to another person […] it is because of this complexity that they survive' (E6 97).

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[21] Caughie 1991, p.101.
[22] Broadcast on BBC radio on 29th April as part of their 'Words Fail Me' series.

Free to mate with many other words, Woolf's granites and rainbows often appear uncoupled in her writings, and sometimes within the same text. Turning my attention to Woolf's posthumously published autobiographical 'Sketch of the Past' as well as passages from *Night and Day* and a range of Woolf's essays including 'This is the House of Commons' (1932), 'The Novels of E. M. Forster' (1927), and 'The Sun and the Fish' (1928), I would like to argue that the various ways in which Woolf's multiple granites and rainbows 'hang together' (E4 96) with different words in different contexts demonstrates that we find solidity and intangibility, truth and fiction, are always already intermingled on the vast majority of occasions when Woolf writes these words. Methodologically, my search for granite and rainbow in Woolf's writings recalls the different but complimentary approaches of Rachel Bowlby and Jane Goldman, to take two insightful examples, where they trace Woolf's use of 'in love' and canine tropes respectively. Bowlby, for example, draws attention to the inverted (comma) occurrences of being 'in love' throughout Woolf's novels by emphasising that 'the line of "in love" is not a straight one, smoothly declining itself downhill all the way from ineffability at the beginning to commonplace at the end.'[23] Not wishing to fall for a conclusive and overarching meaning of love in Woolf's texts, she posits multiple possible and changing significances: speeches of love as 'eerie insistent ghosts' in *The Voyage Out*;[24] 'a state which may not have an object' in *Night and Day*;[25] and finally 'in love' as cliché in *Between the Acts*.[26] In a similar vein, Jane Goldman follows Woolf's canine tropes, emphasising that her signifying dog does not lead us towards any final meaning: 'Woolf's signifying dog is a constructed, monstrous, multivalent figure whose "referent" is certainly not just a dog'.[27] As 'marked and marking',[28] the dog for Goldman is associated with the non-fixed narrator of *A Room of One's Own*, with slave, with woman, and – as she demonstrates through careful reading of the 'fine negress' passage of Woolf's

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[23] Rachel Bowlby. *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1997, p.174.
[24] Bowlby 1997, p.175.
[25] Bowlby 1997, p.183.
[26] Bowlby 1997, p.190.
[27] Jane Goldman. '"Ce chien est á moi": Virginia Woolf and the Signifying Dog.' *Woolf Studies Annual* 13 (2007), p.50.
[28] Goldman 2007, p.54.

manifesto[29] – with men: 'The dog as usual performs a number of vehicular tasks: its tenors are both men and women, English and African, coloniser and colonised.'[30] It is a dog always simultaneously running through many different streets, in other words, and Goldman's reading opens up possible routes rather than halting at any one signpost of meaning. In the following section I demonstrate that the 'canine business' of 'digging' and 'chasing' need not necessarily be tied to the collar of dogs.[31]

Like both Bowlby and Goldman then, I want to explore Woolf's use of specific terms in different contexts but without claiming any final meaning for these terms, a trap that some critics have fallen into. An early example of this is found in Jean Love's tracing of Woolf's 'lighthouse' throughout her novels, where, despite highlighting the diffuse nature of objects in a previous chapter of her book, Love traces a strikingly linear development of the symbolic meaning of the lighthouse. This approach resolves itself in the contentious claim that, whereas the meaning of Lily Briscoe's painting at the end of *To The Lighthouse* explodes in possibilities, the lighthouse loses its multiple significance; to Love it is symbolic of conquering 'the prototypical mother': 'The Lighthouse […] becomes more discrete in its meaning'.[32] I prefer Gillian Beer's view that *To the Lighthouse* is a 'post-symbolist novel' where symbolism may be evident but is 'consistently brought into question.' Symbolism, Beer argues, 'is the means by which we make *things* serve the human. Symbol gives primary to the human because it places the human at the centre, if not of concern, yet of signifying. […] By its means concepts and objects are loaded with human references.'[33] Woolf's often-cited comment about the symbolic significance of the lighthouse is therefore also relevant: 'I meant nothing by The Lighthouse […] trusted that people would make it the deposit for their own emotions – which they have done, one thinking it means one thing another another. […] directly I'm told what a thing means, it becomes hateful to me.'[34] I discuss *To the Lighthouse* in the following chapter, including the ways in which it offers a critique of totalisation in a

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[29] Goldman is here responding to Jane Marcus' reading of the 'fine negress' passage in *A Room of One's Own*. See Jane Marcus. '"A Very Fine Negress".' *Hearts of Darkness: White Women Write Race*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2004: 24-58.

[30] Goldman 2007, p.67.

[31] Goldman 2007, p.51; 81.

[32] Jean O. Love. *Worlds in Consciousness*. London: U of California P, 1970, p.194.

[33] Gillian Beer. *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground*. Edinburgh UP, 1996, p.41.

[34] Quentin Bell. *Virginia Woolf: A Biography (vol.2)*. London: Hogarth, 1972, p.129.

different guise, namely that of resistence to 'arborescence', but throughout my digging and chasing of Woolf's multiple granites and rainbows in the remainder of this current chapter I am keen to keep in mind precisely this resistance to totalising, and human-centred, signification. Whilst Woolf's 'granite and rainbow' is often seen as having a dualistic, symbolic or emblematic quality, I argue that her various usage of these terms instead points towards the limitations of binary, and totalising, models of language and thought. In the following sections I aim to demonstrate this by providing details of each instance in which 'granite' or 'rainbow' appears across the span of Woolf's writings. Like many other Woolf scholars, in my efforts to verify these instances I am extremely grateful to Mark Hussey for his careful archival work in compiling the Woolf CD-ROM (1997). It is, I think, the perfect example of the ways in which important archival material can enable the type of theoretical approach I have taken in this chapter. As such, my digging and chasing of Woolf's granites and rainbows provides in its very methodology an example of refusing the opposition between archive/theory and granite/rainbow. Below, this opposition between the historical or archival and theoretical is also challenged by considering modern advances in the geological study of granite and in the physics of the rainbow (where the rainbow is concerned I will also touch on its place in mythology, and in art). In order to allow for these creative connections to be made then, the following sections present a kind of cartography of granites and rainbows rather than a chronology of their appearances in Woolf's work.

1.2 Digging Granite

1.2.1 Obduracy and Memorialisation

Although I will go on to show the more complicated resonances in Woolf's use of 'granite' in various texts, it would be misleading to claim that there are no examples at all where Woolf offers a more conventional association of granite as assimilated with obduracy and memorialisation. Indeed, there are a few instances when granite is used as a figuration for unattractiveness and obduracy (contrasting greatly with her descriptions of Cornwall's granite hills discussed below, for example), or where granite is linked to memorialisation. There are examples of the former in the published manuscript version of *A Room of One's Own* when Woolf uses the simile 'dour as a granite wall' amongst a list

of various descriptions of rooms (WF 127),[35] and in a letter to Vanessa Bell on 28ᵗʰ June 1938 when Woolf describes 'bathing sheds of granite' in Oban (where she is writing from) as 'grim' (L6 249). The obduracy of granite is drawn on for Woolf's description of Peter's interruption of the kiss shared between Clarissa and Sally. This kiss was 'the most exquisite moment of [Clarrisa's] whole life […] she felt she had been given a present, wrapped up […] a diamond, something infinitely precious', but when the 'revelation' is disturbed by Peter '[i]t was like running one's face against a granite wall in the darkness! It was shocking; it was horrible!' (MD 30). In addition, in a diary entry on 15ᵗʰ March 1937 Woolf likens Julian Bell's 'set & rather self centred' manner to the 'grinding of an iron upon a Granite slab' (D5 69), in a letter in 1904 to Violet Dickinson she writes that '[t]his paper is like granite slabs to write upon' (L1 131), in a 1924 letter to Jacques Raverat she describes his wife as 'that granite monolithic Gwen[]' (L3 136), in her diary in 1921 she writes that the 'pertinacity' of Mark Gertler 'would bore holes in granite' (D2 150) and writing in 1931 to Ethyl Smyth, with comments on an article Smyth was writing on music criticism, Woolf uses the image of a 'granite pillar' in a self-deprecating manner, and to humorous effect:

> If I were you I'd train typists and street singers rather than go on whipping these gentrys hard and horny behinds. You will say however that I know nothing, feel nothing and understand less than nothing. So be it. I realise why I am so essential to you – precisely my quality of scratching post, what the granite pillar in the Cornish field gives the rough-haired, burr-tangled Cornish pig – thats you. An uncastrated pig into the bargain; a wild boar, a savage sow, and my fate in life is to stand there, a granite pillar, and be scraped by Ethel's hoary hide. Yes, because not another soul in Woking but lies under you like sweet lavender; there you roll and trample and bellow. I'm the only friend you have who is thoroughly and disgustingly upright and blind and deaf and dumb. (L4 348-349)

On a few occasions Woolf displays a further conventional use of granite, which points to its links with memorialisation and war: in a diary entry in 10ᵗʰ February 1923 she writes of the 'several tons of granite crucifix' used to memorialise Belgian soldiers

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[35] Virginia Woolf. *Women and Fiction: The Manuscript Versions of* A Room of One's Own, ed. S.P. Rosenbaum. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.

(D2 233); in a letter to Julian Bell in 1936 she notes seeing some of the 'granite crosses' situated in and around Falmouth;[36] in *Between the Acts* a line from the village pageant speaks of 'granite and cobble/ From Windsor to Oxford/ Loud Laughter, low laughter/ Of warrior and lover/ The fighter, the singer' (BTA 77); and in her 1925 essay 'On Not Knowing Greek', Woolf use granite to contrast the originality and vividness of characters in Greek as opposed to English literature: in the plays of ancient Greece, '[a] fragment of […] speech broken off would, we feel, colour oceans and oceans of the respectable drama […] we meet them before their emotions have been worn into uniformity' (CR1 27), whereas we think about the famous figures of Renaissance literature 'posed gracefully on granite plinths in the pale corridors of the British Museum' (CR1 28). Similarly, in '"This is the House of Commons"', first published in 1932, Woolf imagines that if statues are to be erected one day in the honour of MPs they will be 'like granite plinths set on the tops of moors to mark battles' (E5 327).

Yet unlike the aforementioned examples, this later essay goes on to trouble the straightforward, conventional relationship between granite and solidity or truth. At first the House of Commons itself – 'not in the least noble or majestic or even dignified' – seems an apt setting for faceless, soon-to-be-granite politicians, where everything is predictable: '[w]herever one looks one says, "of course"' (E5 324). But Woolf is quick to point, even in its apparent plainness, to an intangible aspect of the Chamber: 'It has somehow a code of its own […] only those who are in the secret of the House can say. All we can be sure of is that a secret is there […] no assurance of virtue, genius, valour is here sure of success if something else – some indefinable quality – is omitted' (E5 325). On one level this 'indefinable quality' is clearly the privileged position of being a man, an ironic jibe by Woolf in keeping with the tone of this essay; but Woolf specifically avoids linking the elusive quality (and sexual politics) simply to the personalities of men. Notwithstanding the future possibility of becoming granite plinths, part of the joke is that these men are already 'featureless, anonymous': 'as [the Secretary of Foreign Affairs] spoke so directly, so firmly, a block of rough stone seemed to erect itself there on the Government benches'. The 'secret' of the House of Commons, the 'code' that unlocks

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[36] Virginia Woolf. *Nineteen Letters to Eleven Recipients*, ed. Joanne Trautmann Banks. *Modern Fiction Studies* 30 (1984), p.186.

these '[m]atters of great moment' (E5 326) – everything that is mysterious about this patriarchal environment – is linked precisely to the 'plain, featureless, impersonal' qualities which are shared by 'the machine itself and the man upon whom the stamp of the machine descends' (E5 326-327). In other words, this more abstract and elusive 'machine' is associated with solidity and fact, and without a necessarily fixed and discernible target granite-like truth becomes less certain.

1.2.2 *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*

The more nuanced, ambiguous figuration of 'granite' hinted at in the essay '"This is the House of Commons"' is also apparent in Woolf's first two novels, *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*. The important presence of granite in Woolf's earlier writing has been highlighted by David Bradshaw in his contextual reading of a particular London space in *The Voyage Out* – the Victoria Embankment – which, he claims, is more revealing than initially seems the case. The word 'granite' actually appears only once in Woolf's first novel, in a description of 'massive granite rocks' by the sea in chapter XVI (VO 218), but Bradshaw draws attention to the presence in the opening pages of Cleopatra's Needle, 'a granite obelisk eighteen metres high and weighing 186 tonnes, [which] was set in place on the Victoria Embankment "in a fit of imperial bravura" on 12 September 1878' to commemorate Britain's victory sixty-three years earlier over Napoleon.[37] Bradshaw focuses his reading on the passage when we learn that Helen, walking on the Embankment,

> knew how to read the people who were passing her; there were the rich who were running to and from each others' houses at this hour; there were the bigoted workers driving in a straight line to their offices; there were the poor who were unhappy and rightly malignant. Already, though there was sunlight in the haze, tattered old men and women were nodding off to sleep upon the seats. When one gave up seeing the beauty that clothed things, this was the skeleton beneath [.] (VO 4)

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[37] David Bradshaw. '"Great Avenues of Civilisation": The Victoria Embankment and Piccadilly Circus Underground Station in the Novels of Virginia Woolf and Chelsea Embankment in *Howards End*.' *Transits: The Nomadic Geographies of Anglo-American Modernism*, ed. Giovanni Cianci, Caroline Patey, and Sara Sullam. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010, p.192. For a brief summary of Cleopatra's Needle, including its treacherous journey from Alexandria, Egypt, see http://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/England-History/CleopatrasNeedle.htm

On the one hand the granite obelisk that would be looming over Helen here is an enduring emblem of imperialist bombast – a symbol of totalisation – but on the other hand it is linked to the meetings and passings-by of a wider-range of society: 'Almost from the outset [] the Victoria Embankment became a space not just where London's genteel and governing classes could disport themselves but, especially at night, an infinitely more abject environment where her myriad dispossessed congregated.'[38] As Raphael Samuel describes:

> The Thames Embankment, the most spectacular of mid-Victorian 'improvements' in inner London, very soon became a by-word for the number of its tramps, some of whom filled the seats beneath the plane trees […] and other of whom used it as an all-night promenade. Its character was reinforced by the Shelters built at either end… [and] by charitable distributors of food (such as the Eustace Miles Food Barrow at Cleopatra's Needle) […] by 1910 [the police were] treating the Embankment as a 'kind of corral' where large numbers of tramps were conveniently assembled under the direct observation of law and order.[39]

The socio-political import of Woolf's text, Bradshaw convincingly argues, is increased by an awareness 'that the Embankment, especially at night, was a 'corral' of social deprivation, and bearing in mind that Helen's distress becomes un-containable in the vicinity of Cleopatra's Needle, where, twice a day, queues of destitute men and women had food doled out to them'.[40] By focusing on this granite obelisk even though its granitic consistency is not actually mentioned at this point in the novel, Bradshaw's reading illuminates a kind of invisible presence of granite (mixing granitic obduracy and elusiveness) in Woolf's text where the realities associated with this granite are multiple and changing.

In chapter XVIII of Woolf's following novel, *Night and Day*, granite becomes the focal point for the very questioning of truth and reality. From the beginning of the chapter

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[38] Bradshaw 2010, p.192.
[39] Cited in Bradshaw 2010, p.192.
[40] Bradshaw 2010, p.195.

both Mary Datchet and Ralph Denham, walking together in the countryside, have moments of doubt concerning the object of love and of happiness. For Mary, it 'seemed a mere toss-up whether she said, "I love you," or whether she said, "I love the beech-trees," or only "I love – I love."' (ND 208) And for Ralph: '"Unhappiness is a state of mind […] it is not necessarily the result of any particular cause."' (ND 210) Both characters doubt the object of their feelings, supporting Bowlby's view that '*Night and Day* represents being in love as a state which may not have an object, may not be reciprocated and may not know a definite source of its feeling.'[41] Indeed, even as Ralph apparently reconciles this with the realisation that 'his unhappiness had been directly caused by Katherine', he goes on to reveal that the whole matter of such emotion is always and already a balancing of illusions and delusions: 'Like most people, I suppose, I've lived almost entirely among delusions, and now I'm at the awkward stage of finding it out. I want another delusion to go on with. That's what my unhappiness amounts to' (ND 210). This uncertainty is increased when the narrator reveals that Mary felt Ralph 'was not speaking the truth.' Moreover, elusiveness is separated from personality and attached to this uncertain 'actual' as Katherine dissolves into 'black particles', and 'the light of truth […] shines on a world not to be shaken by our personal calamities' (ND 220).

Whilst dissociating intangibility from personality (in keeping with what we see in '"This is the House of Commons"'), the elusive 'light of truth' comes to focus on 'a lonely spot marked by an obelisk of granite' (ND 224) where the narrative viewpoint has now turned to William Rodney and Katherine Hilbery when they decide to disembark from their carriage at this obelisk, around two miles short of their return to Lampsher from Lincoln. In this scene the obelisk, I suggest, oversees the uncertainties of truth and becomes what we might think of as a non-symbolic or anti-symbolic feature of the text. In the first place, granite is linked here to 'the gratitude of some great lady of the eighteenth century who had been set upon by highwaymen at this spot and delivered from death just as hope seemed lost' (ND 224), but it soon sparks a narrative shift to a general seasonal description which seems to belong to neither the particular story of this woman nor to any precisely fixed moment:

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[41] Bowlby 1997, p.183.

In summer it was a pleasant place, for the deep woods on either side murmured, and the heather, which grew thick round the granite pedestal, made the light breeze taste sweetly; in winter the sighing of the trees was deepened to a hollow sound, and the heath was as grey and almost as solitary as the empty sweep of the clouds above it. (ND 225)

'Here' it is that 'Rodney stopped the carriage and helped Katherine to alight', and the uncertainty of 'Here' is reiterated with mention of the very point that led to the uncertainty: 'the couple standing by the obelisk' (ND 225). Far from fitting with a view of *Night and Day* where, as Caughie suggests, the past is 'stationary', 'standard', or 'absolute';[42] the past, the present, and the unknown collide as Katherine 'read the writing on the obelisk […] She was murmuring a word or two of the pious lady's thanks' (ND 225). Following this episode, when she later asks herself why she had agreed to marry Rodney when she did not wish to, Katherine thinks of it as 'a desperate attempt to reconcile herself with facts – she could only recall a moment, as if waking from a dream, which now seemed to her a moment of surrender.' In other words, the truth of her feelings now betrays the 'fact' that she had tried to acknowledge; severed from 'fact', truth of feeling becomes the realisation of 'the illusion which sustains youth midway between heaven and earth' (ND 229-230), or somewhere between the eighteenth century woman and the timeless granite obelisk.

The uncertainty surrounding this obelisk is accentuated by the fact that, as Michael Whitworth has recently noted, Woolf's chosen topography here 'is that of classic realism, mingling actual places (Lincoln) with imaginary ones (Lampsher), and at this point on the road between the two we may not know whether we are in the actual or the imaginary.'[43] This is reflected in the fact that there is a great deal of uncertainty over whether this obelisk alludes to a particular obelisk Woolf herself knew of in the same way she clearly knew Cleopatra's Needle. Julia Briggs, for example, has suggested that

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[42] Caughie 1991, p.102. Caughie goes on to argue: 'The world of *Night and Day*, as its title suggests, is substantial and orderly, the "and" marking the boundary between two realms, bringing them together while keeping them separate.' My reading of this chapter – with its shifts in time and narrative viewpoint – suggests that Woolf's second novel may not be as 'based on distinct divisions' (and certainly not show reality 'as given and substantial') as critics have previously argued. (105)

[43] Michael Whitworth. 'Woolf, Context, and Contradiction.' *Contradictory Woolf: Selected Papers from the Twenty-first Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Derek Ryan and Stella Bolaki, Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press (forthcoming 2012). Cited with permission from the author.

Woolf's source is the Dunstan Pillar, built by Sir Francis Dashwood in 1751, and located a few miles to the south of Lincoln.[44] But as Whitworth points out, 'the Pillar fails to match Woolf's obelisk in several respects: it is not a memorial to a specific incident of robbery; it is not an obelisk in form, and it is far taller than anything we might call an obelisk.' Whitworth offers a second possibility of the Robbers' Stone in Wiltshire, built in 1840 to record the attack and robbery of a Mr Dean of Imber by four highwaymen[45] (a further stone marks the spot where one of the highwaymen died whilst being pursued), but concedes that the narrative fails to exactly match Woolf's obelisk, as do the proportions and location of this stone. 'Both might be *sources*,' Whitworth notes, 'but Woolf isn't *alluding* to them in the conventional sense.'[46]

1.2.3 Cornwall

Written more than twenty years after *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*, doubts about solidity and intangibility, fact and fiction, are nowhere more closely associated with granite than in Woolf's autobiographical 'Sketch of the Past'. Here, Woolf remembers childhood days in the granite county of Cornwall, recalling 'old men and women' who 'danced round Knills Monument – a granite steeple in a clearing' (MB 136). She describes everywhere seeing 'walls [that] were thick blocks of granite built to stand the sea storms' and supposes that the 'town was then much as it must have been in the sixteenth century, unknown, unvisited, a scramble of granite houses' (MB 133). Importantly then, the endurance of granite does not solidify the town's meaning, instead adding to the sense of the 'unknown, unvisited', to a somewhat mysterious existence. It is granite that evades a stable entry into linear time: 'The eighteenth century had left no mark upon St Ives, as it has so definitely upon every southern village. It might have been built yesterday; or in the time of the Conqueror.' The Church, 'like the houses', was 'built of granite' and therefore 'ageless' (MB 133). Indeed, it is a simultaneous endurance and intangibility of Cornish granite that also appears to be captured by D. H. Lawrence, when in 'The Nightmare' chapter of *Kangaroo* (1923) he describes the mysterious

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[44] Julia Briggs (ed.). *Night and Day*, by Virginia Woolf. London: Penguin, 1992, p.446.
[45] Whitworth 2012. See also http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/535208
[46] Whitworth 2012.

materiality of Cornwall's 'huge granite boulders bulging out of the earth like presences' as 'the mystery of the powerful, pre–human earth, showing its might'.[47]

Woolf's reflections of Cornish granite are in fact clear from the earliest to latest of her autobiographical writings. On the 11th of August 1905, during a summer holiday in Carbis Bay, near St. Ives, Woolf wrote in her journal about the 'granite blocks in the earth' as one element 'which had impressed itself minutely upon our childish minds' (PA 281-282). Three days later Woolf starts a longer diary entry which she continues for many days (without keeping note of the exact date), and where she again returns to the 'granite hills', noting that although they 'loved the conflict' of 'a storm', on 'sunny days', such as the one she is writing on, they contain a 'curious creamy richness' (PA 286). Later, she further complicates the notion of granitic solidity by describing how the arrangement of granite walls 'keeps the land fluid':

> The Cornish substitute for a gate is simple; in building a wall of granite blocks they let two or three jut out at convenient intervals so as to form steps; you often find these arranged beside a gate which is heavily padlocked, as though the farmer winked one eye at the trespasser. The system of course has its advantages for the native, or for one well acquainted with the lie of the country; it keeps the land fluid, as it were, so that the feet may trace new paths in it at their will [.] (PA 290)

In her letters too Woolf makes reference to Cornish granite. In 1909 she writes to Clive Bell from Cornwall, this time deep in winter on the 26th December, about how she 'staggered up Tren Crom in the mist this afternoon, and sat on a granite tomb on the top, and surveyed the land.' What she sees is 'rocks comparable to couchant camels, and granite gate posts, with a smooth turf road between them' (L1 416). And in early spring 1921, whilst in Ponion, near Zennor, Woolf writes of 'granite rocks' and hills that 'lie graceful' and are 'so subtly tinted; greys, all various with gleams in them; getting transparent at dusk' (D2 105). The gleaming transparency in these granite hills was also emphasised by Woolf in a letter to Saxon Sydney-Turner two days previously, when she describes them as 'half transparent', elusive entities provoking the imagination and

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[47] D. H. Lawrence. *Kangaroo*, ed. Bruce Steele. Cambridge: CUP, 2002 [1923], p.225.

memories, reminding her of childhood (L2 462). There is little doubt that Woolf saw beauty in this granite:

> I'm not sure though that the beauty of the country isn't its granite hills, and walls, and houses, and not its sea. What do you say? Of course its very pleasant to come upon the sea spread out at the bottom, blue, with purple stains on it, and here a sailing ship, there a red steamer. But last night walking through Zennor the granite was – amazing, is the only thing to say I suppose, half transparent, with the green hill behind it, and the granite road curving up and up. (L2 462)

The aesthetic appeal and happiness provoked by these hills directly disrupts Woolf's metaphor making in a later letter to Vita Sackville-West. On 30th August 1928, her use of granite as a metaphor this time slides into a memory of childhood in Cornwall: 'my happiness is wedged like (but I am using too many metaphors) in between these granite blocks (and now that they are granite blocks I can compare my happiness to samphire, a small pink plant I picked as a child in Cornwall)' (L3 521).

In 'Sketch of the Past' Woolf elaborates on the mystery of these hills, 'scattered with blocks of granite; some said of them to be old tombs and altars; in some, holes were driven, as if for gate posts' (MB 138). Virginia Stephen and her siblings found great adventure in them, and Woolf alludes to the legend of the Logan Rock – an 80-ton rocking stone, finely balanced at the top of a cliff (so finely balanced that in April 1824 it had been tipped over by a disgraced Lieutenant Goldsmith before the locals demanded it be replaced!).[48] Woolf expresses the childhood wonderment it evoked: 'The Loggan rock was on top of Tren Crom; we would set it rocking; and be told that perhaps the hollow in the rough lichened surface was for the victim's blood' (MB 138). This description is strikingly similar to one in *Jacob's Room* (1922): 'These white Cornish cottages are built on the edge of the cliff; the garden grows gorse more readily than cabbages; and for hedge, some primeval man has piled granite boulders. In one of these, to hold, an historian conjectures, the victim's blood, a basin has been hollowed, but in our time it serves more tamely to seat those tourists who wish for an uninterrupted view' (JR 47).

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[48] 'Myths and Legends of Cornwall.' *Cornwall in Focus*. 2010, http://www.cornwallinfocus.co.uk/history/legends.php

Far from these hills always and already signifying their obdurate actuality, it was only her father's 'severe love of truth', Woolf writes in 'Sketch of the Past', that attempted to reduce an already mysterious granite: he 'disbelieved it; he said, in his opinion, this was no genuine Loggan rock, but the natural disposition of ordinary rocks' (MB 138). It is precisely this notion of 'natural disposition', of a fixed and ready-made reality, that Woolf challenges by sharing her memory of this childhood event. The massive and yet tentative position of this granite rock is recalled and re-appropriated in the fight against patriarchy, and foregrounded are the pervading doubts about fact and fiction, about 'whether I mean anything real, whether I make up or tell the truth' (MB 138). For Woolf these granite rocks are 'at once real and imaginary' (E4 475) – they do not signify one totalising meaning. As she notes plainly in a letter to Katherine Arnold-Forster in June 1923: 'I don't like symbolical granite' (L3 49)![49]

1.2.4 Granite Origins

The stability of granite is, in fact, already challenged by modern advances in natural science. We do not need to dig too deep into our geological world to discover that whilst granite may be a hard, durable, and dense material, studies since the Enlightenment have led to a less than straightforward understanding of it. The epigraph of Wallace Pitcher's book *The Nature and Origin of Granite* (1993) cites acclaimed geologist Joseph Beete Jukes speaking in 1863: 'Granite is not a rock which was simple in its origin but might be produced in more ways than one'.[50] The extent to which Woolf would have been aware of modern advances in geology, and in particular the controversy involved in accounting for the origin of granite, is unclear, but she did have a copy in her library of the second edition of Charles Darwin's *Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited during the Voyage of H.M.S. "Beagle" Round the World* (1839).[51] In this book Darwin writes of the granitic coastal rocks in Brazil, and reflects on the uncertainty over the formation of this granite: 'Was this effect produced beneath the depths of a profound ocean? or did a covering of strata formerly extend over it, which has

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[49] This statement comes as a response to a question asked in a previous letter sent by Katherine Arnold-Forster to Woolf, but I have been unable to trace what this precise question was.

[50] Wallace. S. Pitcher. *The Nature and Origin of Granite*. London: Blackie Academic & Professional, 1993, vii.

[51] *http://www.wsulibs.wsu.edu/masc/onlinebooks/woolflibrary/woolflibraryonline.htm*

since been removed? Can we believe that any power, acting for a time short of infinity, could have denuded the granite over so many thousand square leagues?'[52] Darwin also writes of the granite mountains in Tres Montes, Chile:

> After breakfast the next morning a party ascended one of these mountains, which was 2400 feet high. The scenery was remarkable. The chief part of the range was composed of grand, solid, abrupt masses of granite, which appeared as if they had been coeval with the beginning of the world. […] I took much delight in examining the structure of these mountains. […] Granite to the geologist is classic ground: from its widespread limits, and its beautiful and compact texture, few rocks have been more anciently recognised. Granite has given rise, perhaps, to more discussion concerning its origin than any other formation. We generally see it constituting the fundamental rock, and, however formed, we know it is the deepest layer in the crust of this globe to which man has penetrated. The limit of man's knowledge in any subject possesses a high interest, which is perhaps increased by its close neighbourhood to the realms of imagination.[53]

Woolf's understanding of granite might be closely associated with her personal experience in Cornwall, but it seems at least possible that if Woolf did read this text by Darwin, the uncertainty surrounding the origin of this most deeply embedded material would have fed her imagination, perhaps partly accounting for some of the more complicated and conflicting uses of 'granite' throughout the span of her writing.

As it turns out, there is even less excuse for us to fall into stable understandings of granite today, as Pitcher informs us of a resurgence of interest in the twentieth century 'stimulated by the thesis that granites image their source rocks in the inaccessible deep crust, and that their diversity is the result of varying global tectonic context'.[54] With its truth both diverse and context-dependent, it is somewhat appropriate that granite should be formed from magma and contain potential metamorphic properties. As Guo-Neng Chen and Rodney Grapes outline in *Granite Genesis: In-situ Melting and Crustal Evolution* (2007), 'the overwhelming opinion of most earth scientists is that granite is

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[52] Charles Darwin. *Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited during the Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle*. Cambridge: CUP, 2011, p.12.
[53] Darwin 2011, p.284.
[54] Pitcher 1993, p.v.

derived by partial melting of crustal rocks of various compositions. This idea essentially brings together the earlier competing explanations of granite genesis; magmatic (granites are igneous rocks resulting from the crystallization of magma) and metamorphic (granites are the result of a dry or wet granitisation process that transformed sialic sedimentary rocks into granite), because granites are the result of ultra-metamorphism involving melting (anatexis) of crustal rocks.'[55] Due to the complexity of its formation, Pitcher highlights the intense difficulties in attempting to classify granites: 'It could well be argued that any attempt to categorize the granite family on a natural basis is doomed to failure given the virtually infinite number of different types which might be generated in response to a variety of generative processes and possible source rock compositions.'[56] Indeed, as Chen and Grapes point out, 'the number of "granite types" has proliferated from at least 20 schemes that have been proposed to classify them'.[57] Although Pitcher concedes that 'a proper order is obviously required for description and comparison', he stresses that 'the resulting arrangements are wholly static, often artificial, and lead nowhere along the path of understanding'. This sounds remarkably close to poststructuralist readings of Woolf which argue, as Caughie puts it, that categorisations 'are not necessarily discrete […] Rather, they are *constructed* to solve certain problems.'[58] Like Caughie then, Pitcher emphasises what he calls 'process based, dynamic classification.'[59]

1.3 Chasing Rainbows

1.3.1 'the paraphernalia of reality […] lit up'

As with her use of 'granite', there are a few instances in Woolf's writing where 'rainbow' is conventionally employed, associated with beauty and vibrancy, and several occasions when Woolf's use of this term appears in citations of another author's work. In the following sections I will go on to consider some of the more nuanced, complicated appearances of rainbows in 'The Sun and the Fish' and 'Sketch of the Past', and I will

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[55] Guo-Neng Chen and Rodney Grapes. *Granite Genesis: In-situ Melting and Crustal Evolution*. Dordrecht: Springer, 2007, p.4. For more on the controversy over the origin of granite, see Davis A. Young. *Mind Over Magma: the Story of Igneous Petrology*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003, p.81-103.
[56] Pitcher 1993, p.19.
[57] Chen and Grapes 2007, p.4.
[58] Caughie 1991, p.20.
[59] Pitcher 1993, p.19.

also reflect on the mythological and scientific implications of this term. Firstly, however, I want to briefly note these more conventional or expected figurations of the rainbow in Woolf's letters and diaries, and highlight where we can see a slightly more unexpected association being made. This is evident in two different letters Woolf writes to Vanessa Bell, twenty years apart: on January 17th, 1918, Woolf speaks of plans 'for establishing [Alix Sargant-Florence] in Ormond Street above Saxon [Sydney-Turner]', in the hope that '[h]is gloom and her despair meeting may build a rainbow' (L2 210), and on 9th June 1938 Woolf writes that one of Bell's paintings is 'complete and entire, firm as marble and ravishing as a rainbow' (L6 235; a phrase which evokes Woolf's 'granite and rainbow' term). But Vanessa Bell herself disrupts the luminous resonance of the rainbow – in a letter to Woolf writes to Sydney Waterlow on May 3rd 1921 she refers to a party hosted by Clive Bell 'to which all his ladies went in different colours of the rainbow' and yet they were 'utterly outshone by Vanessa in old lace' (L2 467). Indeed, the colours of the rainbow are dimmed further by Woolf in a letter to Vita Sackville-West on March 2nd 1926, when she writes of her mongrel fox terrier, Grizzle, who is at the vet (and as it turns out she is put down later that year) 'with eczema, and a cough' (L3 249) – the eczema described as 'rainbow stripes across her back' (they are, nevertheless, 'sanguine on the whole') (L3 246). Associated here with illness, in a diary entry dated 6th April 1940 Woolf links the rainbow with the type of war memorialisation more often associated with granite (see section 1.2.1): 'Whom did we meet in London this week? Bonamy Dobrée the very moment we arrived. Spick & span, clipped, grey, with a rainbow of medal ribbons across his breast'(D5 277).

As well as citing Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (1915) in a letter to Lytton Strachey on the 28th Feb 1916 about a 'private indecency press called the Rainbow, for the production of that and other works' (L2 82), appearances of the word 'rainbow' appear as quotations in a range of Woolf's essays. More straightforward examples of this are found in 'The Duchess of Newcastle' (1925) when Woolf quotes 'the hangings of a Rainbow made that's thin' from the revised version of Margaret Cavendish's 'The Palace of the Fairy Queen' (1664), a poem which showed the 'fresh and delicate fancy' of her early writings (CR1 74-75). In 'Life and the Novelist' (1926), the rainbow has a different import, when Woolf quotes Gladys Bronwyn Stern's description in *A Deputy Was King*

(1926) of a Chinese coat as an example of her technique which is too focused on detail to allow character to emerge – we might say too much 'fact' and not enough on 'personality' (E4 473): 'Quality is added to quality, fact to fact, until we cease to discriminate and our interest is suffocated under a plethora of words' (E4 404). Notably, however, in this instance the rainbow is on the side of fact and materiality, as we read that this coat has 'a rainbow' embroidered on it behind the 'outstretched wings' of a 'silvery heron' (E2 134). Both of these essays pre-date 'The New Biography' by a matter of just a couple of years, but in a citation from *A Room of One's Own*, published two years after 'The New Biography', the rainbow becomes both embedded, and encased, in solidity, when Woolf quotes Christina Rossetti's 'A Birthday' (1857): 'My heart is like a rainbow shell' (RO 16).

In the 'Novels of E. M Forster', Woolf quotes her contemporary and friend in his use of the term 'rainbow bridge' (a term I return to in the following section) in *Howards End* (1910):

> [Forster's] concern is with the private life; his message is addressed to the soul. "It is the private life that holds out the mirror to infinity; personal intercourse, and that alone, that ever hints at a personality beyond our daily vision." Our business is not to build in brick and mortar, but to draw together the seen and the unseen. We must learn to build the "rainbow bridge that should connect the prose in us with the passion." (E4 495)[60]

Indeed, earlier in the paragraph in which she quotes from *Howards End*, Woolf uses the word 'rainbow' herself when outlining Forster's tendency towards both 'the preachers and teachers' and the 'pure artists' of literature (E4 494). At first she predictably aligns rainbows with aesthetics, the light surface which covers the true depth of the 'message': 'Behind the rainbow of wit and sensibility there is a vision which he is determined that we shall see' (E4 495). Yet she immediately turns this on its head, and it is Forster's grander 'vision' which is most evasive, for it 'is of a peculiar kind and his message of an elusive nature.' And yet, Woolf writes, the 'soul' which is Forster's concern is actually found to have a quite tangible home: 'The omnibus, the villa, the suburban residence, are an essential part of his design' (E4 494); 'the soul […] is caged in a solid villa of red

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[60] See E. M. Forster. *Howard's End*. New York: Penguin, 2000 [1910], p.69; p.158.

bricks somewhere in the suburbs of London' (E4 495). According to Woolf, however, neither Forster's treatment of the truths of materiality nor the truths of the soul are fully successful: 'if his books are to succeed in their mission his reality must at certain points become irradiated; his brick must be lit up; we must see the whole building saturated with light. We have at once to believe in the complete reality of the suburb and in the complete reality of the soul.' Forster's desired 'combination of realism and mysticism' (E4 495) certainly evokes Woolf's 'granite and rainbow' figuration in 'The New Biography', but Woolf's emphasis on bricks becoming 'lit up' – an image which is the inverse of Rossetti's 'rainbow shell' – suggests that we cannot conceive of two separate and distinct elements coming together and creating a settled whole; rather it would seem to require more intense, even if less fixed, combinations. Citing Henrik Ibsen as the perfect example, Woolf observes that 'the paraphernalia of reality have at certain moments to become a veil through which we see infinity' (E4 495), a material reality that becomes 'luminously transparent' (E4 496). Ibsen 'gives us it by choosing a very few facts and those of a highly relevant kind. Thus, when the moment of illumination comes we accept it implicitly […] It has not ceased to be itself by becoming something else.' Forster fails because he cannot capture this; it is always a choice between one and the other with a dichotomous arrangement, 'the change from realism to symbolism' (E4 496).

1.3.2 'the world tinged with all the colours of the rainbow'

This 'paraphenalia of reality' that Woolf speaks of points towards a reality that necessarily emanates an element of elusiveness, where the intangibility of the 'rainbow' is assimilated with materiality. It is not a question of dimming the rainbow, but of realising that the vibrancy of the rainbow is always already infused in the material world. Returning to Woolf's 'Sketch of the Past', this is seen in relation to the formation of subjectivity when, recalling the 'bright colours' and 'many distinct sounds' (MB 91) of childhood, Woolf emphasises an embodied 'movement and change', a complicated material 'actual' (MB 92) that involves an equally evasive sense of self, 'the little creature':

> One must get the feeling of everything approaching and then disappearing, getting large, getting small, passing at different rates of speed past the little creature […] driven on as she was by the growth of her legs and arms, driven without her being able to stop it, or to change it, driven as a plant is driven up out of the earth, up until the stalk grows, the leaf grows, birds swell. That is what is indescribable, that is what makes all images too static. (MB 91)

Following this, Woolf then appears to associate rainbows straightforwardly with the imagination; describing her first memory of her mother she recalls how 'she told me to think of all the lovely things I could imagine. Rainbows and bells…' (MB 93). But rather than the intangibility of her memory and imagination being an escape from reality, 'these minute separate details' are very much a part of the material life of the young Virginia Stephen (MB 93). For example, as Woolf remembers the elusiveness of her mother's personality, Julia Stephen becomes not so much a 'particular person' as she is 'generalised; dispersed; omnipresent […] the creator of that crowded merry world' (MB 94).

> living so completely in her [mother's] atmosphere that one never got far enough away from her to see her as a person […] She was the whole thing; Talland House was full of her; Hyde Part Gate was full of her […] She was keeping what I call in my shorthand the panoply of life – that which we all lived in common – in being. (MB 94)

Crucially, Woolf is eager to avoid the notion of her mother as a totalising symbolical figure by adding, '[i]t is true that I enclosed that world in another made by my own temperament; it is true that from the beginning I had many adventures outside that world; and often went far from it; and kept much back from it' (MB 96). In chapter two I return to this phrase when discussing *To the Lighthouse* by claiming that it provides a challenge to oedipal readings of Woolf's texts (see section 2.2.5) but I would note here that this could also be regarded as a cautionary note to those who would argue that because Woolf is writing 'autobiography' then somehow we are perceiving the real 'I' that constituted Woolf's childhood. Alex Zwerdling has written of 'Sketch of the Past' as though it takes away a pretence that is somehow evident in fiction and moves us nearer to the 'truth':

'Woolf allows herself to write about her childhood more personally than she had ever done, without pretending that "I" could easily be translated into "we."'[61] De-linking 'granite and rainbow' from a compulsory relationship with biographical writing frees it from its often restricted use, but the fact that the complexity of their relationship is then further illuminated by returning to autobiographical writing (in this instance Woolf's 'Sketch'), reminds us that readings of auto/biography need not necessarily be treated differently from fiction, that Woolf's letters, diaries, or autobiographical writings encourage us to trespass the boundaries between fact and fiction.

Exploring the complexity of the granite/rainbow dynamic in 'Sketch of the Past' illuminates, to borrow a further phrase from that text, 'the world tinged with all the colours of the rainbow' (MB 55). A similar phrase can in also be found in *Orlando*:

> What is love? What friendship? What truth? but directly he came to think about them, his whole past, which seemed to him of extreme length and variety, rushed into the falling second, swelled it a dozen times its natural size, coloured it all the tints of the rainbow and filled it with all the odds and ends in the universe. (O 60)

What is interesting here is that the rainbow is linked to variety and colour, but is also infused with history – 'his whole past' – and even a cosmic materiality: 'all the odds and ends of the universe.' In 'The Sun and the Fish',[62] published the same year as *Orlando*, Woolf uses the image of the rainbow to draw this materialist world. In this essay she describes witnessing the total eclipse of 1927, and we see the world becoming filled in by colour as the sun slowly appears from behind the moon:

> at first, so pale and frail and strange the light was sprinkled rainbow-like in a hoop of colour, that it seemed as if the earth could never live decked out in such frail tints […] But steadily and surely our relief broadened and our confidence established itself as the

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[61] Alex Zwerdling. *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1986, p.269.
[62] 'Rainbow' is also, of course, a kind of fish. In her essay 'Herman Melville' (1919) Woolf uses the phrase 'rainbow fish sparking in the water' (E3 81).

great paint brush washed in woods, dark on the valley, and massed the hills blue above them. The world became more and more solid (E4 522).[63]

The link here between the 'rainbow' and materiality is pronouncedly non-transcendent, as the earth soon becomes the familiar and populous place of 'farm-houses', 'villages', and 'railway lines', as the 'rainbow-like' sprinkles of light 'modelled and moulded' the 'whole fabric of civilisation', before Woolf tells us of the true revelation: 'But still the memory endured that the earth we stand on is made of colour; colour can be blown out' (E4 522).[64] It is both the earth as rainbow, and the earth as 'ephemeral as a rainbow' (TL 20).

1.3.3 Rainbows in Mythology and Art

A comparison could be made here between Woolf's 'The Sun and the Fish' and Lawrence's *The Rainbow*, where at the end of his novel 'a faint, vast rainbow' appears to Ursala 'mysteriously' and is described as 'great architecture of light and colour' that 'stood on the earth'[65] – a re-writing of Genesis, where the rainbow is presented to Noah as God's covenant: 'And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that [is] upon the earth.'[66] But whilst Lawrence's rainbow is more earthly, it does not entirely turn away from transcendental symbolism: '[Ursula] saw in the rainbow the earth's new architecture, the old, brittle corruption of houses and factories swept away, the world built up in a living fabric of Truth, fitting to the overarching heaven'.[67] We can not be sure whether or not Woolf had Lawrence's novel or indeed Genesis in mind when writing 'The Sun and the Fish', but they do point to potential wider mythological and artistic resonances – much of which she would surely have been familiar with – to Woolf's rainbows, which themselves complicate a strict opposition between on the one

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[63] For an in-depth analysis on Woolf and the 1927 eclipse (including 'The Sun and the Fish') see Goldman 2001 [1998].

[64] A description of the eclipse is also found in Woolf's diary entry on 30th June 1927, although there is no mention there of a rainbow (see D3 143-144).

[65] D. H. Lawrence. *The Rainbow*, ed. Kate Flint. Oxford: OUP, 1998 [1915], p.493.

[66] Gen:16 http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Genesis-Chapter-9

[67] Lawrence 1998 [1915], p.494. For an insightful discussion of *The Rainbow* and Genesis see Terence R. Wright. *D. H. Lawrence and the Bible*. Cambridge: CUP, 2000, p.84-109.

hand materiality or earthliness and on the other an intangible, transcendent rainbow. Given her knowledge of Greek mythology, for example, Woolf would likely have known that the rainbow goddess and also messenger of the gods, Iris, is, in some genealogies, the granddaughter of Gaea, Mother Earth.[68] Furthermore, while Woolf initially links the rainbow to personality in 'The New Biography' in line with most Greek writers, Xenophanes was one of those who resisted anthropomorphising the rainbow, offering naturalistic explanations: "And she whom they call Iris, this too is by nature a cloud, purple, red and greenish-yellow to behold".[69] Anaxagoras puts it in similar terms – 'we call the reflection of the sun in the clouds a rainbow'[70] and Aristotle's writing on the rainbow built from these insights. It is worth noting here that in her own writing Woolf never refers to Iris in the sense of the rainbow, but she does use it to refer to the iris flower, which takes its name from the Greek rainbow and aptly emphasises the vibrantly material import this term has taken on (as does the other surviving usage – the iris of the eye). The most well-known example of this is found in *Orlando*, when suitably enough the sight of 'the red hyacinth, the purple iris wrought [Orlando] to cry out in ecstasy at the goodness, the beauty of nature' (O 91).[71] In addition to the Iris-rainbow, Raymond Lee and Alistair Fraser's *The Rainbow Bridge: Rainbows in Art, Myth, and Science* (2001) helpfully outlines various understandings of the rainbow in Babylonian times, Judeo-Christian culture, ancient Greece and Egypt, and non-Western and Near Eastern antiquity cultures, highlighting both the emphasis that has been placed on it as a bridge to God, and the more materialist-oriented readings of the rainbow.[72] One example of a more tangible mythic rainbow that Woolf would likely not have been as familiar with is that

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[68] Raymond L. Lee and Alistair B. Fraser. *The Rainbow Bridge: Rainbows in Art, Myth, and Science.* Pennsylvania: the Pennsylvania State UP, 2001, p.18.

[69] Xenophanes. *Xenophanes of Colophon: Fragments*, ed. James H. Lesher. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2001, p.89. For further commentary see p.139-148.

[70] Anaxagoras. *Anaxagoras of Clazomenae: Fragments and Testimonia*, ed. Patricia Curd. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007, p.74.

[71] For passing references to the iris flower see (L3 312) and (JR 85). For an extensive account of the iris and other flowers in Woolf's writing see Elisa Kay Sparks. '"Everything tended to set itself in a garden": Virginia Woolf's Literary and Quotidian Flowers: A Bar-Graphical Approach.' *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World: Selected Papers from the Twentieth Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Kristin Czarnecki and Carrie Rohman. Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press: 42-60. Woolf's other references to 'iris' are to the character of that name in *Between the Acts*, and in her letters and diaries to Marchesa Iris Origo.

[72] See Lee and Fraser 2001, p.2-33.

the Siberian Yakuts and Buryats 'identify it as a graceful, colourful arc of urine', produced by 'the she-fox'![73]

In their discussion of the rainbow in visual art, Lee and Fraser draw attention to the importance of Albrecht Dürer in offering a more solid rendering of the rainbow. In his 1511 painting, *Adoration of the Trinity* (see appendix A, fig. 1), Dürer includes a double rainbow – one on which God sits and rests his robes over, and one which is 'solid enough' to act as a stool for his feet. Whilst the two rainbows are far from naturalistic and still in a heavenly sphere, Lee and Fraser note that there is a curious mixture of materiality and unreality to them based on a 'combination of unnatural rainbow solidity and coloring': 'Compared to the vividly colored clothes of the heavenly and earthly elect, the rainbows […] are wan indeed. Despite their ghostly coloration, though, they retain […] solidity'.[74] Whilst Woolf emphasises the luminosity of the non-transcendent rainbow, at the beginning of the sixteenth century it may have been necessary to dim the rainbow in order to subtly undermine its godly, transcendental status. There are of course rainbows elsewhere in Dürer's work, and Lee and Fraser note that in his later, enigmatic engraving *Melencolia I* (1514) he 'makes the outside of his […] rainbow darker than the inside – a subtle bit of realism that is superfluous to any purely symbolic reading' (see appendix A, fig. 2). But where the rainbow in *Adoration of the Trinity* is particularly important is the way that Dürer 'relegates it to the status of a minor prop', so that 'within a generation of Dürer's death, artists' use of the rainbow as a support for Father or Son declined rapidly. This decline is partly due to the increasing artistic energy devoted to pagan and secular images, yet it also reflects the passing from fashion of a powerful, centuries-old pairing of Christ and the rainbow.'[75] Could *Adoration of the Trinity* have influenced the iconography of the rainbow in Woolf's mind? Although Woolf mentions Dürer in an early essay 'Impressions at Bayreuth' (1909), comparing 'a gigantic old woman, with a blue cotton bonnet on her head' with 'a figure like one of Dürer's' (E1 290), and notes in a 1933 letter to Ethyl Smyth that the journalist Kingsley Martin has 'autotypes from Albert Durer' on his wall (L5 242), she never refers specifically to this particular painting, nor to Dürer's rainbows. Woolf did, however, have a copy in her

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[73] Lee and Fraser 2001, p.31.
[74] Lee and Fraser 2001, p.52.
[75] Lee and Fraser 2001, p.55.

library of Thomas Moore's *Albert Dürer* (1905) where *Adoration of the Trinity* is reproduced, along with *Melencolia I*.[76]

1.3.4 Woolf's 'double rainbow' and the Art of Science

The unweaving of Woolf's 'rainbow' as solely signifying intangibility as opposed to the hard facts of our material reality has, of course, also been emphasised by centuries of scientific discovery, most famously by Descartes in *Discourse on Method* (1637) and also by Newton.[77] We know today that on the one hand rainbows are multiplicities of colour and type: everyone is familiar with the reds and yellows, greens and blues, but there are also variations which include reflected and refracted rainbows, the supernumerary rainbow, and the 'double rainbow', as discussed above in Dürer's *Adoration of the Trinity*. Indeed, Virginia and Leonard Woolf themselves witnessed a 'double rainbow' on their terrace in September 1930 – a spectacle that Woolf notes as interrupting her letter writing to Ethel Smyth:

> but look, I have written so much and at such a pace that the words scarcely cover the ideas – these are horrid splits, – and the writing is only an attempt to encircle a few signs. Do you ever show my letters? Do you ever quote them? Do what you like, but I rather hope not, because I am never able to write at leisure; (I'm trying to finish a good many things) and then I cannot be expressive (these interruptions are because of a double rainbow on the terrace – L. has dashed in from the rain to show me) (L4 217).[78]

In *Unweaving the Rainbow: Science, Delusion, and the Appetite for Wonder* (1998) Richard Dawkins describes this relatively rare phenomenon of seeing a double rainbow

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[76] Jane Goldman has recently made illuminating links between Woolf and Durer's *Melencolia I* in relation to their respective figurations of dogs. See '"When Dogs Will Become Men": Melancholia, Canine Allegories, and Theriocephalous Figures in Woolf's Urban Contact Zones.' *Woolf and the City: Selected Papers from the Nineteenth Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Elizabeth F Evans and Sarah E. Cornish. Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2010: 180-188, and 'The Dogs That Therefore Woolf Follows: Some Canine Sources for *A Room of One's Own* in Nature and Art.' *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World: Selected Papers from the Twentieth Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Kristin Czarnecki and Carrie Rohman. Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2011: 125-132.

[77] For a summary of their respective studies of the rainbow see Lee and Fraser 2001, p.168-205.

[78] A rarer 'quadruple rainbow' was recently captured on film for the first time. See http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-15197774

as a 'delightful complication' where, instead of light from the sun entering a raindrop 'through the upper quadrant of the surface facing the sun, and leav[ing] through the lower quadrant', it enters through the lower quadrant and so '[u]nder the right conditions, it can then be reflected *twice* round the inside of the sphere, leaving the lower quadrant of the drop in such a way as to enter the observer's eye, also refracted, to produce a second rainbow, 8 degrees higher than the first, with the colours reversed.'[79]

Dawkins reminds us then that the multiplicitous nature of rainbows is not solely due to their colours or types: 'why do you see a complete rainbow? Because there are lots of different raindrops. A band of thousands of raindrops is giving you green light (and simultaneously giving blue light to anybody who might be placed above you, and simultaneously giving red light to somebody else below you.)[80] *Ad infinitum*, so that there is never only one rainbow that we all see; Virginia and Leonard were not in fact seeing the same 'double rainbow'. Dawkins wider argument is that 'Science is, or ought to be, the inspiration for great poetry', and he therefore takes issue with Keats' famous disappointment in his 1819 poem 'Lamia' – a poem which Woolf of course knew (D2 130) – that Newton had reduced rainbows to fully understood 'common things':

> Do not all charms fly
> At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
> There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
> We know her woof, her texture; she is given
> In the dull catalogue of common things.
> Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
> Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
> Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine –
> Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
> The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade. [81]

Dawkins emphasises that science has multiplied the rainbow's beauty and mystery:

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[79] Richard Dawkins. *Unweaving the Rainbow: Science, Delusion, and the Appetite for Wonder.* London, Allen Lane, 1998, p.48.
[80] Dawkins 1998, p.46.
[81] John Keats. 'Lamia.' *The Complete Poems of John Keats*. London: Wordsworth, 2001 [1994], p.188.

far from being rooted at a particular 'place' where fairies might deposit a crock of gold, there are as many rainbows as there are eyes looking at the storm. Different observers, looking at the same shower from different places, will piece together their own separate rainbows using light from different collections of raindrops. Strictly speaking, even your two eyes are seeing two different rainbows […] A further complication is that the raindrops themselves are falling, or blowing about. So any particular raindrop might pass through the band that is delivering, say, red light to you then move into the yellow region. But you can continue to see the red band, as if nothing had moved, because new raindrops come to take the places of the departed ones.[82]

Nor are rainbows, it should be added, always so evasively distant from us, and can even be seen 'as a complete circle only a few feet in diameter, racing along the near side of a hedge as you drive by.'[83] There is then a kind of solid intangibility, a granite-like illusion. As Dawkins states: 'The illusion of the rainbow itself remains rock steady'.[84]

1.4 Against Totalisation: Repetition and Transposition

Having created an inter-textual mapping of Woolf's multiple usage of 'granite' and 'rainbow' above, as well as considering some of their extra-textual resonances, in the final section of this chapter I want to suggest that we might think about these various granites and rainbows as performing a kind of lexical polygamy. The many 'swift marriages' these terms create with other words (as well as each other) are, I would argue, part of a critique of totalisation that runs through Woolf's texts (a critique which I will explore further, with different foci, in the following chapters). In her insightful work on Woolf and realism, Pam Morris has recently argued that Woolf's rejection of totalisation is linked to her wariness 'of aspects of subjective interiority and of the metaphorisation of language, even though these are often regarded as defining features of modernist writing'.[85] Although not working with the 'granite and rainbow' figuration in her reading

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[82] Dawkins 1998, p.47.
[83] Dawkins 1998, p.48.
[84] Dawkins 1998, p.47.
[85] Pam Morris. 'Woolf and Realism.' *Virginia Woolf in Context*, ed. Jane Goldman and Bryony Randall. Cambridge: CUP (In Press). Quoted with permission of the author.

of Woolf's texts, Morris does imply the importance of considering granite-like reality alongside rainbow-like personality: Woolf's 'representations of public world, individual consciousness and inter-personal discourse retain a realist underpinning in conjunction with experimental form'.[86] Drawing on Derrida's critique of metaphor as supporting the idealist tradition in Western metaphysics, and working with Roman Jakobson's definitions of metaphor as centripetal and metonymy as centrifugal, Morris therefore emphasises that where metaphor has a vertical structure, totalising meaning by turning heterogeneity into unity, metonymy (including synecdoche) is marked by horizontal contiguity, producing, as Morris puts it, 'an unending chain moving through a diverse particularity'.[87] In her reading of *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and *The Waves*, Morris is keen to emphasise Woolf's writing as characterised by an 'inclusive metonymic syntax' that reveals an 'epistemological open-endedness and materiality',[88] and she therefore favours a 'metonymic realism' that is symptomatic of a contiguous materialism, insisting that Woolf seeks 'outwardness as much as inwardness'.[89] We could set this last point in contrast to Hussey's phenomenological argument in *The Singing of the Real World* (1987) that

> Woolf's art tells us not about an external, objective Reality, but about our experience of the world. […] Beginning with Woolf's ideas of self and identity, we are led eventually to realise that her concept of the essential nature of human being was religious *in character*. Although an ardent atheist, Woolf gradually came to hold what can best be described as a faith, the essential element of which was belief in a "soul."[90]

Concerned with 'the actual world beyond the text' and not simply our subjective experience of that world,[91] Morris argues that 'Woolf's artistic imagination is more metonymic than metaphoric or symbolic', where '[s]ymbolism and metaphoric idealisation function to impose totality and universality upon diversity, to deny a

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[86] Pam Morris. 'Virginia Woolf's Metonymic Realism in *Mrs Dalloway*.' *English Literature Visiting Speaker Series, University of Glasgow*, 2008. Quoted with permission of the author.
[87] Morris 2008, n.pag.
[88] Morris (In Press).
[89] Morris 2008, n.pag.
[90] Hussey 1987, p.xiii-xv
[91] Morris 2008, n.pag.

troublesome material heterogeneity by merging' together. Morris argues that on an individual level this promotes 'a seductive aggrandisement of the subjective self', and on a social level 'facilitates a dangerously totalising perception of complex actuality'.[92]

One of the most illuminating examples Morris provides of Woolf's suspicion of metaphor comes during the scene where the car passes through Bond Street near the beginning of *Mrs Dalloway*, creating a 'gradual drawing together of everything to one centre' (MD 13). As Morris notes of this section of the novel, Woolf satirises 'the pervasive willingness among people of all classes to metaphorically elevate the particular and concrete into symbols of the abstract and metaphysical', and this is evident in the vehicles transformation into 'the enduring symbol of the state', 'greatness' and 'the majesty of England' (MD 14). There is a sinister aspect to this 'metaphoric mode', as Morris points out that '[t]he diverse faces of the passersby become rapt in uniformity', seen when we are told that 'they had heard the voice of authority; the spirit of religion was abroad with her eyes bandaged tight and her lips gaping wide' (MD 12). The 'ripple' left behind from the car's passing leads to verbal and physical violence, 'a general shindy' in 'a public-house in a back street' (MD 15), as well as men 'with hands behind the tails of their coats' standing perfectly straight in a display of obediant patriotism (MD 16). Contrary to this symbolising of cars as abstract ideal, Morris argues that they function metonymically, acting as 'denotative tracks' leading us outside Woolf's text 'to the structures and processes of the social world'.

> There are references to motor vehicles on almost every page of *Mrs Dalloway*. Woolf humorously even calls two characters Mr Bentley and Mr Morris respectively. The names indicate the Woolfian opposition between realism and idealism. Mr Morris (who owns two cars) is, as the saying goes, down to earth, with a daughter going into the family business and a son with a scholarship at Leeds University (MD 135-6). Mr Bentley, in keeping with the elite connotations of the car, is an idealist seeing the plane over London as 'a symbol of man's soul', of the desire to transcend the materiality of the body (MD 24). Of another unnamed idealist in the text, the narrator comments, 'Such are the visions which ceaselessly float up, …put their faces in front of, the actual thing' (MD 49). In so

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[92] Morris 2008, n.pag.

doing, the passage continues, they take away a sense of the earth, transforming the fever and multiplicity of life into a unified ideal order.[93]

In this chapter I have tried precisely to show, in the fact they appear together in the same sentence only twice in Woolf's writings and in the attachments each of the two terms make in other contexts, that it may be too easy to assume a 'unified ideal order' underlying Woolf's granite and rainbow. Woolf's refusal, as Morris has it, to impose a totalising metaphorical or symbolic meaning in her writing is important then in negotiating a move away from the dichotomous categorisation of traditional realism versus post/modernism, and the emphasis it places on the extra-textual aspects of Woolf's writing. But I would like to suggest that my mapping of granite and rainbow poses problems for this form of metonymic realism as well as for metaphor. The 'multiplicity of life' Morris speaks of – 'the multiplicity of the actual scene' – is always restricted to the 'metonymic outward movement into the world'; wishing to argue against purely subjective versions of reality, she transfers authority onto an agreed and fixed reality. But if Woolf's 'granite and rainbow' figuration might be transformed precisely through a kind of metonymical tracing into geological findings on the less solid and less fixed properties of granite or physicists discoveries of the materiality of rainbows, let alone the multiple contexts in which these terms appear throughout Woolf's writings, then it would be problematic to pin down Woolf's words as referring to part of an agreed whole, as a metonymic realism would seem to do.[94] If 'granite' and 'rainbow' are the materials for Woolf's theory of 'The New Biography', then these materials expand throughout her writings to form an inter-textual and extra-textual map of granites-rainbows that appears to end with neither the metaphorical nor metonymical; neither centripetal nor centrifugal; neither a flight into 'idealisation' nor a settling into 'the actual non-fictional world.'[95]

Where does this all leave us regarding how we as critics may think about and use Woolf's 'granite and rainbow' term? I want to propose two theories that might help to crystalise my particular mapping of Woolf's granites and rainbows, as well as further

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[93] Morris (In Press). Quotes from *Mrs Dalloway* are from the Oxford World's Classics edition.
[94] For a brief description of the distinction between metaphor and metonymy see Murray Knowles and Rosamund Moon. *Introducing Metaphor*. New York: Routledge, 2006, p.52-54.
[95] Morris 2008, n.pag.

extend the possible implications of Woolf's terms. The first concerns Deleuze's concept of 'repetition' which, he explains when introducing *Difference and Repetition*, is bound together with the production of difference: 'on every occasion *these concepts of a pure difference and a complex repetition* […] connect and coalesce. The perpetual divergence and decentring of difference correspond closely to a displacement and a disguising within repetition.'[96] Repetition, according to Deleuze, has nothing to do with resemblance and everything to do with the creation of difference, and therefore the creation of the new: 'To repeat is to behave in a certain manner, but in relation to something unique or singular which has no equal or equivalent. And perhaps this repetition at the level of external conducts echoes, for its own part, a more secret vibration which animates it, a more profound, internal repetition within the singular.'[97] Passing through different contexts, mixing with different words, the decoupling of Woolf's 'granite and rainbow' into a mapping of the repetition of each term in her writing shows how 'granite' and 'rainbow' are complex terms that always already differ in themselves; an 'internal repetition' that is 'a condition of action',[98] creating further external repetitions. This means that in Woolf's writing 'granite' and 'rainbow' can be said to embody difference: they affirm a new difference each time they are repeated by Woolf. Judith Allen has recently argued that Woolf's use of 'But' can similarly be understood through Deleuze's 'repetition' where '[w]ith each repetition, an incremental change takes place, altering the meaning in some substantial way – creating difference.'[99] Where Woolf's repetition of 'granite' and of 'rainbow' are concerned, this would mean the acknowledgement that granite returns in her writing with a difference every time it is repeated, and crucially in the extra-textual dimension these signs take on – some of which I also explored above. Woolf's multiple granites and rainbows cannot, therefore, be said to be a coherent emblem or symbol through Woolf's writing, nor a totalising metaphor, because the complex singularity of each element is repeated in its difference each and every time it appears.

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[96] Deleuze 2004 [1994], p.xviii.
[97] Deleuze 2004 [1994], p.1.
[98] Deleuze 2004 [1994], p.113.
[99] Allen (forthcoming 2012). Quoted with permission of the author.

Woolf's 'granite' and 'rainbow', then, are not then to be equated with 'parts' of a 'whole' (either the whole of 'granite', the whole of 'rainbow', or of the combined 'granite and rainbow' figuration) but as themselves always already containing differences that are brought into play when these terms are repeated. Deleuze and Guattari argue in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972):

> We no longer believe in the myth of existence of fragments that, like pieces of an antique statue, are merely waiting for the last one to be turned up, so that they may all be glued back together to create a unity that is precisely the same as the original unity. We no longer believe in a primordial totality that once existed, or in a final totality that waits us at some future date.[100]

We see the example of granite coloured by the rainbow and 'no longer believe in the dull gray outlines of a dreary, colourless dialectic of evolution, aimed at forming a harmonious whole out of the heterogeneous bits by rounding off their rough edges. We believe only in totalities that are peripheral.'[101] Freeing Woolf's granites and rainbows from an oppositional framework is to say that these terms do not depend on negation: 'differentiation', Deleuze writes in *Bergsonism* (1966), 'is never a negation but a creation, and that difference is never negative but essentially positive and creative.'[102] Decoupled 'granite' and 'rainbow' have an affirmative quality throughout Woolf's writing where difference is repeated, so that when we do think of them as a couple, we can no longer, I would suggest, conceive of a straightforward opposition where each term negates the other, nor the dialectical resolution of contradictory term, but as the affirmation of the singularities of granite and of rainbow in all their multiplicity. It is not that Woolf's granite or her rainbow repeats itself as a stable whole, nor that we see a plurality of granite or of rainbow which we can then say resembles each other: 'Repetition is no more the permanence of the One than the resemblance of the many.'[103] Seen in this light, my mapping of granites and rainbows attempts to *affirm* the different

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[100] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p.45.
[101] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p.46.
[102] Gilles Deleuze. *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. New York: Zone Books, 1991, p.103.
[103] Deleuze 2004 [1994], p.153.

chains formed by each which challenge the oppositional arrangement of solidity and intangibility, fact and fiction, materiality and theory. Two chains of textual and extra-textual signs are formed which are not linear and which are not teleologically driven, but where '[e]ach chain captures fragments of other chains' and demonstrate 'the ability to rearrange fragments continually in new and different patterns of configurations'.[104] Crucially, '[t]he error we must guard against is to believe that there is a kind of logical order to this string, these crossings or transformations.'[105] Therefore, if 'granite and rainbow' represents 'the Janus-like qualities' of Woolf's writings as Goldman posits, it is not just that she 'combines' the two. She is 'as committed to fact as to imagination'[106] as tools to wedge open a multiplicity doors, of gateways simultaneously offering escapes from unity and entrances into the affirmation of disjunction and diversity.

I have been arguing here that Woolf's multiple granites and rainbows form multiplicitous connections with other words and contexts; we can no longer treat her figuration as straightforward metaphor (with its tendency towards totalisation) or metonymy (where the part stands for the whole). This brings us to the second, related, theory I suggest might be useful here - Braidotti's 'transpositions', which is conceptualised as an alternative to metaphor (and metonymy): 'Transposing is a gesture neither of metaphorical assimilation nor of metonymic association. It is a style, in the sense of a form of conceptual creativity, like a sliding door, a choreographed slippage.'[107] In this chapter I have referred at various points to 'assimilation' and 'association', but transposition involves non-linear leaps, mobility and cross-referencing, 'notions that drift nomadically among different texts', and may better explain the relations between Woolf's multiple granites and rainbows. For Braidotti, 'the theory of transpositions offers a contemplative and creative stance that respects the visible and hidden complexities of the very phenomena it attempts to study.[108] In all of this, Braidotti emphasizes that transposing 'is no mere rhetorical device';[109] instead, it is 'connecting philosophy to [science and] social realities; theoretical speculations to concrete plans'; they are

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[104] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p.42; p.7.
[105] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.275.
[106] Goldman 2009, p.227.
[107] Braidotti 2006, p.9.
[108] Braidotti 2006, p.6-7.
[109] Braidotti 2006, p.146.

'discursive and also materially embedded'.[110] It is by emphasising the multiplicitous and complex mixing of meaning-making and materiality (ideas I return to in the following chapters) that we can discover 'the positivity of difference as a specific theme of its own'.[111]

Braidotti takes music and genetics – which she argues are both exemplars of non-linear transfer, working as 'dissociative shifts or leaps' – as the 'double source of inspiration' for transpositions. Transposing Woolf's multiple granites and rainbows onto this model, could they become 'the double source of inspiration'[112] for the complex inter-, intra- and extra-textual map of her writings, where these terms are freed from the assignment of unification and from *a priori* associations, and where their heterogeneity is celebrated? As transpositions that are sustained and enduring precisely because of their fluidity, uncertainty and adaptability, granites and rainbows would, then, be considered as the 'perpetual marriage' becoming many 'swift marriages'; a polygamy of syncronizations, or, to use Braidotti's own words, 'a joyful kind of dissonance'.[113] Perhaps it is transpositions that could help explain why when we are digging granite and chasing rainbows we are at the same time unearthing rainbows and – as Woolf writes in *Jacob's Room* – 'piercing the sky […] like granite cliffs' (JR 61).

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[110] Braidotti 2006, p.7.
[111] Braidotti 2006, p.5.
[112] Braidotti 2006, p.5-6.
[113] Braidotti 2006, p.93.

2

Sexual Difference in Becoming:
A Room of One's Own* and *To the Lighthouse

Having explored the ways in which Woolf's theory of 'granite and rainbow' is embedded in a complex and creative materiality that escapes totalising models of language and thought, in this chapter I turn attention to materialist, inclusive and affirmative formulations of sexual difference and subjectivity. This chapter is divided into two parts, approaching the question of materiality by revisiting Woolf's much-discussed theory of androgyny in *A Room of One's Own* before going on to analyse the sexual politics in *To The Lighthouse*. In the first part I focus on sexual difference by staging a dialogue between Woolf's 'androgyny', Braidotti's 'nomadic subject', and Deleuze and Guattari's 'becoming-woman' – three concepts with distinct relationships to the materiality of sexual difference but with shared concerns, and all entangled in the materiality of theory. Starting with a brief overview of the conflicting responses to Woolf's androgyny, I go on to draw out some of the continuities and dissonances between these theories, emphasising the importance of each to contemporary feminist debates on sexual difference. Directly influenced by my discussion of androgyny and sexual difference, in the second part of this chapter I introduce my own concept of 'tri-subjectivities' or *tri-s* to frame my discussion of the various relations formed, and the sexual politics evident, in *To the Lighthouse*. Here I consider the striking connections between Woolf's novel and several Deleuzian concepts including 'schizoanalysis', 'smooth' and 'striated' spaces, the 'rhizome', and 'becoming'.

2.1 Sexual Difference in Three Concepts: Androgyny/Nomadism/Becoming-woman
2.1.1 Androgyny and Contradiction
Combining the Greek roots andro (male) and gyne (female), the term 'androgyny' has historical ties to a wide range of myths and religions, as well as philosophy, psychology

and literature. Critics have explored its links to the Yin and Yang of Taoism, the Upanishads and Puranas of Hinduism, various aspects of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and noted that versions of androgyny can be found in Plato's philosophy, Freud's psychoanalytic theory, and Jung's psychology.[1] But it is to literature, and in particular Samuel Taylor Coleridge, that Woolf points in her famous passage on androgyny in *A Room of One's Own*:

> the sight of the two people getting into the taxi and the satisfaction it gave me made me also ask whether there are two sexes in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body, and whether they also require to be united in order to get complete satisfaction and happiness. And I went on amateurishly to sketch a plan of the soul so that in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man's brain, the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain, the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating. If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilised and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine, I thought. (RO 127-128)[2]

Woolf appears to see intrigue and subversive potential in the notion of an androgynous mind that is 'resonant and porous', 'transmits emotions without impediment' and is 'naturally creative, incandescent and undivided' (RO 128), but if her 'sketch' of androgyny is clearly influenced by Coleridge, she is quick to point out that his thinking does not much concern women: 'Coleridge certainly did not mean, when he said that a great mind is androgynous, that it is a mind that has any special sympathy with women; a mind that takes up their cause or devotes itself to their interpretation' (RO 128). Indeed Woolf herself, as Bowlby notes, seems to betray an asymmetry in the way in which this

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[1] For a thorough discussion of these various links see *Women's Studies* 2:2 (1974).

[2] Woolf refers here to Coleridge's statement that 'a great mind must be androgynous' in *The Table Talk and Omniana of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (1918) which she first wrote about in a review for the TLS in 1918. See 'Coleridge as Critic' (E2 221-225).

model of androgyny comes about, where the man would simply have a 'woman part' to his brain whereas the woman 'must have intercourse with the man in her' (RO 128): 'the masculine dominates as whole to part, and we have returned to another version of the patriarchal structure.'[3] The tension that is therefore created – between androgyny as promising creative potential beyond sexual divisiveness and Woolf's appropriation of it in a context in which she is concerned with the material restrictions facing women writers – has led critics such Goldman and Hargreaves to view her theory as 'contradictory'[4], echoing Woolf's narrator who in the British Museum scene contrasts her 'contradictory jottings' with 'the reader next door who was making the neatest abstracts, headed often with an A or a B or a C' (RO 38). At various points in Woolf's text contradiction appears to be evident: Jane Austen and Emily Bronte are praised by writing 'as women write, not as men write' (RO 97) at the same time as stressing 'the fully developed mind […] does not think specially or separately of sex' (RO 129); Woolf's narrator simultaneously claims that Proust, as a man, 'is terribly hampered and partial in his knowledge of women' (RO 108) and that he is 'wholly androgynous, if not perhaps a little too much of a woman' (RO 135); and Charles Lamb is listed as a writer who 'never helped a woman yet' (RO 99) and as a writer who is androgynous (RO 135).

The numerous conflicting responses to androgyny in terms of both its general relevance to feminism and its specific treatment by Woolf in the above 'principal offending or inspiring passage', to again borrow Bowlby's words, are well known to Woolf scholars. The range of views in the 1970s include celebratory readings of androgyny as a liberating concept in classic studies by Carolyn Heilbrun and Nancy Topping Bazin. In *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* (1973), Heilbrun argues that androgyny 'defines a condition under which the characteristics of the sexes, and the human impulses expressed by men and women, are not rigidly assigned. Androgyny seeks to liberate the individual from the confines of the appropriate.'[5] In looking for the 'signs of androgyny' in myth and literature,[6] she finds *To the Lighthouse* to be Woolf's

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[3] Bowlby 1998, p.39.

[4] Jane Goldman 2006, p.100; Tracey Hargreaves. *Virginia Woolf and Twentieth Century Narratives of Androgyny*. PhD Thesis Submitted to University of London, 1994. p.52.

[5] Carolyn G. Heilbrun. *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny*. London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982 [1973], p.x.

[6] Heilbrun 1982 [1973], p.x.

'best novel of androgyny'.[7] In *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision* (1973), Bazin sees the androgynous mind as the ability to 'use and harmonize the masculine and feminine approaches to truth' and reads this into Woolf's life and writings.[8] As she later remarks with Alma Freeman, 'the Masculine and the Feminine must unite for the Rebirth of the new human being and the new society. This, in the widest possible sense, is the Androgynous Vision'.[9] Responses to these accounts of an unproblematically inspiring androgyny include pessimistic assessments by Cynthia Secor, who dismisses the term as 'essentially a male word' that fails to dispose of gender/sexual dualisms,[10] and by Daniel Harris, who notes that androgyny has always been aligned with sexism and heterosexism from the 'Greek and Roman usage of the interchangeable terms "androgynous" and "hermaphroditic"' to its English usage where it is often 'used to signal fear of homosexual and others who do not conform to male norms'.[11] Where Woolf is concerned, Harris therefore sees the passages on androgyny as 'a compromise, a retreat from the more radically feminist fury Woolf feared to express',[12] a comment echoed by Elaine Showalter's notorious accusation that 'Androgyny was the myth that helped [Woolf] evade confrontation with her own painful femaleness and enabled her to choke and repress her anger and ambition.'[13]

When, in 1985, the radical potential of androgyny is revisited by Moi in her introduction to *Sexual/Textual Politics*, she criticises not only Showalter for writing off the 'abstract merits' of androgyny and for claiming that Woolf was guilty of 'the separation of politics and art';[14] Moi is also critical of Heilbrun for distinguishing Woolf's androgyny from her feminism and of Bazin for positing a simple union of

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[7] Heilbrun 1982 [1973], p.156.

[8] Nancy Topping Bazin. *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision*. New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1973, p.3.

[9] Nancy Topping Bazin and Alma Freeman. 'The Androgynous Vision.' *Women's Studies* 2:2 (1974), p.212.

[10] Cynthia Secor. 'Androgyny: an Early Reappraisal.' *Women's Studies* 2:2 (1974), p.162.

[11] Daniel A. Harris. 'Androgyny: the Sexist Myth in Disguise.' *Women's Studies* 2:2 (1974), p.174.

[12] Harris 1974, p.175. Whilst sharing some of these concerns and claiming that Woolf's androgyny is 'an ambivalent and limited concept', Marilyn Farwell argues that Woolf also provides us with 'the tools to go beyond that'. See 'Virginia Woolf and Androgyny.' *Contemporary Literature* 16:4 (1975), p.451.

[13] Elaine Showalter. *A Literature of Their Own: From Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing*. London: Virago, 1982 [1977], p.264. In this respect Showalter precedes critics such as Alex Zwerdling who see Woolf as compromising her artistic integrity to appease men in a short term strategy of conciliation in order to achieve political goals and Jane Marcus who holds Woolf up as a 'guerrilla fighter in a Victorian skirt'. See Zwerdling 1986, p.259 and Jane Marcus. 'Thinking Back Through Our Mothers.' *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Jane Marcus. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1981: 1-30.

[14] Showalter 1982 [1977], p.288.

dualities of masculinity and femininity 'that retain their full essential charge of meaning'. She instead argues that Woolf's feminist politics and modernist aesthetics are closely bound, therefore 'locating the politics of Woolf's writing *precisely in her textual practice*',[15] and suggests that Woolf anticipates Kristeva's third 'attitude' of feminism as outlined in her hugely influential essay 'Women's Time' (where the first was the demand for '*insertion* into history' and for 'equal footing with men', and the second the demand for 'recognition of an irreducible identity, without equal in the opposite sex').[16] Here, Kristeva writes, binary oppositions are overcome:

> In this third attitude, which I strongly advocate – which I imagine? – the very dichotomy man/woman as an opposition between two rival entities may be understood as belonging to *metaphysics*. What can "identity", even "sexual identity" mean in a new theoretical and scientific space where the very notion of identity is challenged? I am not simply suggesting a very hypothetical bisexuality which, even if it existed, would only, in fact, be the aspiration toward the totality of one of the sexes and thus an effacing if difference. What I mean is, first of all, the demassification of the problematic of difference, which would imply, in a first phase, an apparent de-dramatization of the "fight to the death" between rival groups and thus between the sexes […] in order that the struggle, the implacable difference, the violence be conceived in the very place where it operates with the maximum intransigence, in other words, in personal and sexual identity itself, so as to make it disintegrate in its very nucleus.[17]

In *A Room of One's Own*, Mary Carmichael's writing certainly appears indicative of this 'third attitude', where 'Men were no longer to her "the opposing faction"; she need not climb on to the roof and ruin her peace of mind longing for travel, experience and a knowledge of the world and character that were denied her. Fear and hatred were almost gone' (RO 120). And later, just after the narrative shifts from Mary Beton, Woolf more directly addresses this viewpoint: 'All this pitting of sex against sex, of quality against quality; all this claiming of superiority and imputing of inferiority, belong to the private-

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[15] Moi 1995 [1985], p.16.
[16] Kristeva 1997 [1981], p.864-865.
[17] Kristeva 1997 [1981], p.875.

school stage of human existence where there are 'sides', and it is necessary for one side to beat another side […] Praise and blame alike mean nothing' (RO 138).

The emphasis on moving beyond 'this pitting of sex against sex' is evident in an array of poststructuralist and postmodern approaches to Woolf's androgyny which, alongside Moi, advocate its potential to destabilise or leave behind binary constructions of identity. Moi was not, of course, the first critic to point to the combining forces of Woolf's aesthetic and feminist vision, as in 1979 Mary Jacobus had understood Woolf's androgyny to be 'a mind paradoxically conceived of not as one, but as heterogeneous, open to the play of difference', but also as the perfect description of 'Woolf's own prose'.[18] Following Moi and Jacobus, Minow-Pinkney sees androgyny as the 'rejection of sameness' which 'aims to cultivate difference on an individual level' and therefore resist 'a cultural impulse to reduce the two sexes into something which is seemingly neither, but in actuality male';[19] for Caughie it is a 'refusal to choose', where Woolf is 'testing out the consequences of different concepts of language and identity' without settling on any position;[20] and, pointing out that 'Woolf does not settle on where androgyny's dualism might be located, claiming simultaneously that distinguishing two sexes is an effort, that two sexes are not sufficient, and that there must be "two sexes in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body"', Catherine Driscoll suggests that androgyny might be linked with Deleuze's 'becoming-woman' (something I will consider further in section 2.3): '[f]or Woolf, as for Deleuze', Driscoll claims, 'woman is an infinitive, a process of event, a speaking position perhaps but not an identity.'[21] One thing these readings share is the view that Woolf's androgyny does more than attempt to carve out a neutral or balanced sexual identity, that 'test[ing] what one meant by man-womanly, and conversely by woman-manly' (RO 128) is more complicated than the bringing together of two sets of otherwise clearly defined 'masculine' and 'feminine' traits. But given that Moi has now claimed that for feminism and theory alike '[t]he poststructuralist paradigm is now exhausted',[22] the question becomes whether the subversive potential signalled by

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[18] Mary Jacobus. 'The Difference of View.' *Women Writing and Writing About Women*, ed. Mary Jacobus. London: Harper & Row, 1979, p.20.
[19] Minow-Pinkney 1987, p.9.
[20] Caughie 1991, p.82, p.80.
[21] Driscoll 2000, p.80.
[22] Toril Moi 2006, p.1735.

poststructuralist readings of Woolf's androgyny has been fully realised. Indeed, Brenda Helt has recently argued that not only is androgyny not a useful term for feminists but Woolf herself was always resistant to this 'male-promoting concept', with her comments on Coleridge providing evidence that she 'engaged in encouraging women to write history, psychology, even science from a woman's perspective, not an androgynous one.'[23] Curiously enough, these recent interventions by Helt and Moi seem to be motivated by concerns similar to the aforementioned feminists writing in the 1970s; Helt is focused on 'social realities of gendered embodiment'[24] in Woolf's writing, and Moi's vision for a new feminism grounded in 'everyday problems' facing women.

As well as acknowledging the importance of a focus on the everyday lives of women, and indeed Woolf's emphasis on material concerns, in the first half of this chapter I want to reconsider Woolf's androgyny as a theoretically agile term which still has something to add to feminist considerations of sexual difference.[25] I therefore look at some of the specific ways in which Woolf's androgyny extends into contemporary feminist debates, especially concerning Braidotti's nomadic model of sexual difference which pays attention to precisely the lived realities of female embodied subjectivity that Moi and Helt worry over, and feminist responses to Deleuze and Guattari's controversial 'becoming-woman' concept (which Deleuze and Guattari themselves find evidence of in *A Room of One's Own*). My aim is to consider how we might think of androgyny as relevant to our own material realities at the same time as, following poststructuralist/postmodern readings, it points beyond theories of sexual difference which rely on oppositional frameworks. Ultimately, I want to suggest that Woolf's reasons for writing about the material necessity of having 'five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door' (RO 137) at the same time as theorising a move beyond

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[23] Brenda S. Helt. 'Passionate Debates on "Odious Subjects": Bisexuality and Woolf's Opposition to Theories of Androgyny and Sexual Identity.' *Twentieth Century Literature* 56:2 (2010), p.132; p.151. She adds: 'The mind's ability to "make these distinctions" is extremely important to Woolf. They make a woman with her "single-sexed mind" psychologically a woman'.

[24] Helt 2010, p.132.

[25] I focus primarily, although not uncritically, on 'sexual difference' rather than 'gender' in this chapter, following the preferred term used by Braidotti, who is interested in the epistemological and ontological workings of sexual differences that do not pertain to the separation of essentialist/constructivist, material/discursive, sex/gender. In addition, in the texts I focus on here, Deleuze and Woolf discuss 'sex' and not 'gender'.

sex-consciousness and becoming androgynous might be thought of as complementary rather than contradictory aspects of *A Room of One's Own*.

2.1.2 Nomadism and Sexual Difference

If there was one sense in which Showalter was right, it was in warning against the notion of a utopian androgynous mind as somehow an escape from materiality. According to Braidotti too, the concept of androgyny is associated with the type of fleeing from material realities that led some of the critics cited in the previous section to distrust the concept so much. In *Transpositions*, she warns against 'blurring the boundaries of sexual difference, in the sense of a generalized androgynous drive',[26] and in *Nomadic Subjects* (1994) she specifically opposes androgyny to the embodied female feminist subject: 'we come to opposing claims: the argument that one needs to redefine the female feminist subject' versus the argument that 'the feminine is a morass of metaphysical nonsense and that one is better off rejecting it altogether, in favour of a new androgyny.'[27] Braidotti does not refer directly to Woolf in her invocations of androgyny here, but given Woolf's association with the term and Braidotti's references to her on various other occasions (see in particular chapter 3.1 of this thesis), it seems fair to suggest that Woolf is probably not far from her mind. In addition, the dichotomous choice she presents recalls the disagreements critics have had about Woolf's own notion of androgyny, on issues of materiality and theory, summarised above. In this current section I will outline Braidotti's wider project of nomadic feminism, reflecting on her model of a non-unitary subjectivity which is nonetheless founded on a materially embodied sexual difference. Despite Braidotti distancing her nomadic feminism from androgyny, I will demonstrate that considering Woolf's particular theorising of the term in the context of Braidotti's thought is important in at least two ways: firstly, Woolf's androgyny shares some valuable features with the figuration of the 'nomadic subject', helping us to think about it as both materially embedded and theoretically useful; secondly, far from limiting or misleading us in our understanding of Woolf's feminism, androgyny can be a valuable concept to

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[26] Braidotti 2006, p.49.
[27] Braidotti 1994, p.153.

think through some potential limitations in Braidotti's model of sexual difference, raising issues crucial to contemporary debates.

Braidotti's affirmation of sexual difference as a subversive and necessary 'fact' permeates her work, evident in her first book *Patterns of Dissonance* (1991), and throughout her trilogy consisting of *Nomadic Subjects*, *Metamorphoses* (2002), and *Transpositions*. Her philosophical and political project rests on the attempt to negotiate a future for feminism, and for what she calls the 'female feminist subject'[28], that 'offers a way out of the essentialism–constructivism impasse.'[29] It is possible to see Braidotti's aim as that of bringing together aspects of second- and third-wave feminisms in an attempt to move beyond this impasse, and her own rhetoric, especially in *Nomadic Subjects*, learns a lot from their respective militant and postmodern vocabularies: on the one hand her argument is founded on 'the recognition of a band of commonality among women'[30] or 'the common world of women'[31], but on the other is the emphasis that women 'are not, in any way, the same', we must acknowledge 'the importance of rejecting global statements about all women'.[32] Defining her project of nomadic feminism, Braidotti posits 'sexual difference as providing shifting locations for multiple female feminist embodied voices.'[33] This paradoxical, pragmatic and politically charged foregrounding of sexual difference is the foundational element of a non-unitary subject as a 'nomadic, dispersed, fragmented vision, which is nonetheless functional, coherent and accountable, mostly because it is embedded and embodied.'[34] At the heart of Braidotti's theory of nomadism is her three-level 'diagram' or 'methodological map'[35] of sexual difference outlined in *Nomadic Subjects*, consisting 'Sexual Difference Level 1: Difference Between Men and Women'[36], 'Sexual Difference Level 2: Differences Among Women',[37] and 'Sexual Difference Level 3: Differences Within Each Woman'.[38]

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[28] Braidotti 1994, p.153.
[29] Braidotti 2006, p.185.
[30] Braidotti 1994, p.163.
[31] Braidotti 1994, p.168.
[32] Braidotti 1994, p.163.
[33] Braidotti 1994, p.172.
[34] Braidotti 2006, p.4.
[35] Braidotti 2011 [1994], p.151.
[36] Braidotti 1994, p.158.
[37] Braidotti 1994, p.162.
[38] Braidotti 1994, p.165.

Braidotti notes that this model is not intended to provide 'dialectically ordained phases' or 'categorical distinction[s]', though she maintains the urgency of viewing them 'from the perspective of sexual difference'.[39] Level 1 is the 'will to assert the specificity of the lived, female bodily experience; the refusal to disembody sexual difference […] the will to reconnect the whole debate on difference to the bodily existence and experience of women.'[40] Wishing to avoid the pitfalls of essentialism, Braidotti's second level focuses on heterogeneity between women, their different lived experiences, and level 3 attempts to hone in on women's 'multiplicity in herself: split, fractured' which entails 'an imaginary relationship to variables like class, race, age, sexual choices.'[41] As she states in *Metamorphoses*, 'internal or other contradictions and idiosyncrasies are indeed constituent elements of the subject'.[42] We have a model of subjectivity which therefore proposes a sexed female body 'as the foundation of subjectivity'[43] but which also refuses the notion of fixed foundations and locations; a subjectivity then that is irrevocably feminine and female, but where '[w]hat a female nature is must consequently be determined in each case and cannot be spelled out *a priori*'.[44] On several occasions Braidotti cites Jinny's statement in *The Waves* – 'I am rooted, but I flow' (W 83)[45] – as exemplary of a nomadism which is 'not fluidity without borders, but rather an acute awareness of the nonfixity of boundaries'.[46]

Considering Woolf's own use of androgyny alongside this shifting, non-unitary, but also situated and materialist, model of sexual difference, the question I am posing is whether and to what extent the subject created by Woolf's theory of androgyny (primarily of course the writing subject, although her discussion has implications beyond this) fits the mould of nomadism. On the evidence of the many contradictory readings of androgyny, and readings of androgyny as contradictory, it is certainly a term which does not sit easily under one definition for long. But more than that, Woolf's formulation of androgyny appears to anticipate the three levels of sexual difference that Braidotti lays

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[39] Braidotti 1994, p.158.
[40] Braidotti 1994, p.160.
[41] Braidotti 1994, p.165.
[42] Braidotti 2002, p.39.
[43] Braidotti 1994, p.103.
[44] Braidotti 2006, p.185.
[45] See Braidotti 2002, p.1; Braidotti 2006, p.199-200; Braidotti 2011 [1994], p.21.
[46] Braidotti 1994, p.36.

out. If we recall Mary Beton's vision of the 'the girl and the young man' getting into a taxi in *A Room of One's Own* (RO 125) we might well view this as the bringing together of the sexes, where Woolf's narrator goes on to extend an offer of 'collaboration' between woman and man 'before the art of creation can be accomplished' (RO 136). But throughout Woolf's text there are also instances where differences between men and women are emphasised. That is, the first level of Braidotti's paradigm is evident in the aforementioned remarks by Woolf's narrator that Coleridge did not have women much in mind in his formulation of the androgynous mind, in the earlier discussion of the way in which 'the values of women differ very often from the values which have been made by the other sex' (and where 'it is the masculine values that prevail') (RO 95-96), where the 'mind' (RO 99), the 'shape' of a 'man's sentence' (RO 100), and the 'nerves that feed the brain would seem to differ in men and women' (RO 101), and in the context in which *A Room of One's Own* itself is written, during such a 'stridently sex-conscious' (RO 129) age created largely because in writing 'virility has now become self-conscious – men, that is to say, are now writing only with the male side of their brain' (RO 132). More important than these differences, however, is the desire, exemplified in the famous 'Chloe liked Olivia' scene, to write 'relationships between women' rather than depicting women always 'in their relation to men' (RO 107), and therefore to provide 'more complicated' explorations of women, including the differences between them and within each of them. I will now briefly discuss some of these differences between women and within each woman – levels 2 and 3 of Braidotti's model.

Rather than setting women's writing against men's writing in a fixed and essential way, *A Room of One's Own* continually explores differences between women writers. The 'four famous names' that are foregrounded in chapter IV, Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë, and George Eliot, represent 'incongruous characters': 'what had George Eliot in common with Emily Brontë? Did not Charlotte Brontë fail entirely to understand Jane Austen?' (RO 85-86). When the narrator then describes the differences between *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), the differences between women are being described precisely by focusing on the moment in Brontë's novel when she emphasises similarities between men and women both in the content of what she is writing ('but women feel just as men feel') and through her tone of 'indignation' (RO

90). Therefore, as Woolf's narrator puts it earlier when realising the limitations of her own anger, she was 'angry because he was angry' (RO 44).[47] Woolf, then, does not stop at writing the differences between women and men; rather she concurrently begins to de-emphasise their differences (a point I will return to below). Therefore, when Woolf praises the 'genius' and 'integrity' of Austen and Emily Brontë writing 'as women write, not as men write' (RO 97), she is clearly not defining or prescribing a female or feminine sentence, an essentialist form of writing necessarily shared by all women – as these are only two '[o]f all the thousand women who wrote novels then' – but a writing that does not define itself either for or against the 'perpetual admonitions' of patriarchy to 'write this, think that' (RO 97). Writing 'as women write' is itself changeable, seen later when Mary Carmichael had 'broken up Jane Austen's sentence' so that 'there was no likeness between them.' Here too, by breaking 'the sequence – the expected order', Mary Carmichael wrote not 'as a woman' but 'as a woman would, if she wrote like a woman.' This somewhat odd sentence raises the question of who precisely 'she' refers to? But whether the 'she' is Mary Carmichael or 'woman', it is a 'she' separated from writing 'like a woman', the term 'woman' being thrown into doubt (RO 119).

The emphasis Woolf places on differences between women, then, is also apparent in her reluctance to offer a fixed definition of 'feminine' or 'woman'. Indeed, in her essay 'Women Novelists' written ten years before in 1918, Woolf touches on this issue in her remarks upon Brimley Johnson's critique of women's writing: 'As Mr Brimley Johnson again and again remarks, a woman's writing is always feminine; it cannot help being feminine; at its best it is most feminine: the only difficulty lies in defining what we mean by feminine' (*E2* 316). Similarly, towards the end of *A Room of One's Own* Woolf bemoans the view in 'newspapers and novels and biographies that when a woman speaks to women she should have something very unpleasant up her sleeve. Women are hard on Women. Women dislike women. Women – but are you not sick to death of the word? I

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[47] Contrary to my reading, Jane Marcus has argued that anger is 'a primary source of creative energy' for female writers: 'Rage and savage indignation sear the hearts of female poets and female critics.' See 'Art and Anger.' *Feminist Studies* 4:1 (1978), p.94-95. Brenda Silver also comments that anger is 'the most compelling source of our [feminism's] strength'. See 'The Authority of Anger: '*Three Guineas* as Case Study.' *Signs* 16:2 (1991), 340-370. Lili Hseih has more recently offered a nuanced contribution to the debate on Woolf and anger where she argues the political merits of indifference in *Three Guineas*. See 'The Other Side of the Picture: The Politics of Affect in Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas.' Journal of Narrative Theory* 36:1 (2006), 20-54.

can assure you that I am' (RO 145). Woolf's assertion here should not be mistaken for a rejection of the concerns of women (and in the following paragraph she notes what she likes about women and turns on men) but rather a criticism of the ways in which 'Women' – as with Brimley Johnson's 'feminine' – are discussed and appropriated by patriarchal culture. In both of these examples the serious point underlying the arch tone is a suspicion that terms such as 'women' and 'feminine' are of limited subversive potential because they are always defined in relation to 'men' and the 'masculine' (and indeed often defined and discussed by men). Whilst continuing to use these words throughout her writing – after all they are signifiers that need to be re-appropriated and worked through rather than rejected out of hand – Woolf is keen to look beyond the traditional categorisations they have hitherto created. Pointing to the heterogeneity within the category 'woman', Woolf therefore refuses to present a common room of one's own:

> One goes into the room – but the resources of the English language would be much put to the stretch, and whole flights of words would need to wing their way illegitimately into existence before a woman could say what happens when she goes into a room. The rooms differ so completely […] one has only to go into an room in any street for the whole of that extremely complex force of femininity to fly in one's face. How should it be otherwise? (RO 113-114)

As Peggy Kamuf comments in her reading of this passage, the dash in the opening sentence signifies a 'punctuated hesitation' creating doubt as to the identity of the 'one'. The entry of women into a language from which they were previously excluded 'will not simply substitute a "feminine" one for a masculine. Indeed, it cannot for a multiplicity already inhabits the site of this writing. […] In effect, Woolf displaces the issue of the "one" who enters the room by figuring in rapid succession a series of rooms to be entered, surveyed, plotted, described.'[48] In her later, posthumously published essay 'Professions for Women' (1942), Woolf also emphasises that whilst gaining 'rooms of your own in the house hitherto exclusively owned by men' is of the utmost importance for women, these rooms, and the women inside them, will differ: 'But this freedom is only a beginning; the room is your own, but it is still bare. It has to be furnished; it has to

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[48] Kamuf 1982, p.16-17.

be decorated; it has to be shared. How are you going to furnish it, how are you going to decorate it? With whom are you going to share it, and upon what terms?' (E6 483-484)

As well as differences within the category 'women' there are also moments when emphasis is placed on differences within each woman in Woolf's text. The inadequacy of language to express such non-unitary subjects is evident in the well-known discussion of the one-letter pronoun 'I', where its 'dominance' (RO 131) is linked to the patriarchal subject and male writer: 'after reading a chapter or two a shadow seemed to lie across the page. It was a straight dark bar, a shadow shaped something like the letter 'I' […] the worst of it is that in the shadow of the letter 'I' all is shapeless as mist' (RO 130). This often-cited passage places women in the shadow of this dominating 'I', and, I would suggest, shares similarities with the use Braidotti makes of it in her nomadic feminist subject: 'According to this vision of a subject that is both historically anchored and split, or multiple, the power of synthesis of the "I" a grammatical necessity, a theoretical fiction that holds together the collection of differing layers'.[49] As Goldman points out in her lucid reading of the above passage, the fact that 'Pheobe' (meaning 'the bright one') then enters as the woman who is in the shadow illuminates precisely such differing layers: 'In describing woman both as a source of light and as imprisoned in shadow, this passage shows how women's place historically has been conceptually marked out (or inscribed) as shadow by the discourse of masculine enlightenment, and how women's emancipation yet lies with the very illumination of this shadow.'[50] Interested in bringing women out of the shadow, Woolf's use of 'I' throughout a book that has multiple narrators (although the narrative does at times shift to 'we' and 'one') creates not an 'I' that is an internalised fragmentation, collapsing in on itself, but a multiplicity open to attachments with other multiplicities, where 'the experience of the mass is behind the single voice' (RO 85) is brought to light. There is something playful in Woolf's 'I', where she uses this one letter word 'just for kicks', to borrow a phrase from Deleuze and Guattari, re-appropriating it in each and every use, bringing out the multiplicity within the singular, injecting a lightness of touch to the 'dark bar' (RO 130) and showing that it does not have to remain a symbol of patriarchal dominance: 'it is relatively easy to stop saying

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[49] Braidotti 2011 [1994], p.158.
[50] Goldman 2001 [1998], p.17.

"I," but that does not mean that you have gotten away from the regime of subjectification; conversely, you can keep on saying "I," just for kicks, and already be in another regime in which personal pronouns function only as fictions.'[51] It is this lighter, more flexibile and fictionalised, less self-conscious – that is to say more androgynous – use of the letter 'I' that holds potential for Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*. After all, '"I" is only a convenient term for somebody who has no real being.' (RO 5) That Woolf's discussion of this 'I' immediately follows her most famous passage on androgyny serves as a reminder that becoming man-womanly or woman-manly – and also bearing in mind the unfixed nature of these sexed nouns – is not to cement a unitary 'I', but to reveal the multiplicity already within the androgynous subject.

Woolf's theory of androgyny, and her concerns for the marginalisation of women in writing and in their materially situated position 'in the shadow' of men, both aim their criticism at a misplaced over-consciousness of a rigid division between two sexes. This is emphasised when after sketching the theory of androgyny the first words to actually be written (in the sixth and final chapter of the text) on the piece of paper entitled 'Women and Fiction' are:

> it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly. It is fatal for a woman to lay the least stress on any grievance; to plead even with justice any cause; in any way to speak consciously as a woman. And fatal is no figure of speech; for anything written with that conscious bias is doomed to death […] it cannot grow in the minds of others.' (RO 136)

Whilst the above passage clearly contains a further asymmetry in that the fatality of speaking as a woman has historically been dictated by patriarchy (it has clearly not been fatal in the same way for men to speak as men), Woolf is aware that maintaining this assymmetry is both pragmatically and theoretically limited in that it plays into the binary framework that keeps men and women apart. Her theory of androgyny is not, then, an unproblematic celebration of a subjectivity which dispenses with male and female

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[51] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.152.

differences, but which multiplies differences to create a subject which is more complicated and which is not defined by an oppositional relation. The androgynous subject, like woman and man, is an emergent one with the potential to redraw the lines of asymmetry through collaboration. That is, the difference between Woolf's androgyny and Braidotti's nomadism is that where Braidotti maintains level 1 of her model – differences between men and woman – as a category seemingly undisturbed by the multiple differences between women (level 2) and within women (level 3), Woolf's androgyny points the way to more complex levels and combinations which challenges any models which privilege 'male vs. female' difference.

The very last words we hear from Mary Beton are even more revealing than the first ones that she would write: 'the taxi took the man and the woman, I thought, seeing them come together across the street, and the current swept them away, I thought, hearing far off the roar of London traffic, into that tremendous stream' (RO 137). The enduring image is not of the man and woman getting into the taxi but of the taxi cruising through the London traffic, and our attention is drawn to the material context in which this image first appeared. For Mary Beton did not simply observe the man and the woman standing together at the taxi; she saw them walking towards each other from the streets of London where 'no two people are ever alike' (RO 124), and she watched as 'the cab glided off' back into those streets. It is this movement towards and away from a partial, momentary connection that is the model in which androgyny is rooted, I would argue, where the further connections that these figures will make and have made before is brought into view, challenging the notion that this 'girl in patent leather boots' and this 'young man in a maroon overcoat' are emblems or symbols that stand in for all men and all women. If there is a 'collaboration' or a 'marriage of opposites' here – where 'the mind celebrates its nuptials' (RO 136) – then we are presented, I propose, with a model similar to my description of Woolf's granites and rainbows in chapter one. That is, I think of 'marriage' here as the many 'swift marriages' Woolf describes in 'Craftsmanship', of becoming man-womanly or woman-manly as I did transposing granites-rainbows, where the coming together, or consummation, of these terms (in this instance 'woman' and 'man') does not represent two discrete entities creating one whole; rather we have the committed – but

partial and fleeting – attraction of two non-fixed terms which create their own distinct meaning in their own distinct textual and material contexts.

Moreover, by including men in these nomadic 'marriages', Woolf's androgynous feminist vision demonstrates a complex model of subjectivity that shares features of Braidotti's nomadic subject, but ultimately goes further. Where Braidotti's nomadic model of sexual difference often only has women in mind (where men are discussed they are invariable defined in opposition to women, as with level 1 of her model), Woolf considers, however ironically at times, differences between men and within each man. Therefore, one of the implications of considering Woolf's theory of androgyny alongside Braidotti's theory of nomadism is that we might extend Braidotti's three-levelled model of sexual difference to include a fourth level of 'differences among men' and a fifth level of 'differences within each man'. This fourth level can be seen from near the beginning of *A Room of One's Own* when Woolf's narrator cites 'a direct contradiction' between Pope and La Bruyère in their writings on women, and between such contrary figures as Napoleon and Dr Johnson, Goethe and Mussolini (RO 38). Where androgyny is concerned, certain male writers such as Shakespeare, Keats and Sterne are judged to have been man-womanly whilst many, epitomised by Mr A but also including Milton, Wordsworth and Tolstoi who had 'a dash too much of the male in them', were not (RO 135). The fifth level is evident in the very fact that Woolf's theory of androgyny is an inclusive one, therefore the 'I' that is multiple (described above) is also an 'I' that is open to those men who become androgynous. Adding these levels of male difference to Braidotti's levels of female difference only further unsettles the first level of her model, where differences between men and women are always already in place. It is in this sense that I consequently think of Woolf's feminism and her theory of androgyny as providing a positive model of complex, nomadic and non-unitary subjectivity – not just on a theoretical level, but also a strategic one – which points beyond the binary apparatus of sexual difference.

In *Undoing Gender* (2004) Judith Butler considers both the subversive potential and limitations of Braidotti's nomadism. In the first place, Butler does endorse Braidotti's 'relentless search for what is mobile and generative'[52] and her emphasis on multiplicity:

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[52] Judith Butler. *Undoing Gender*. London: Routledge, 2004, p.196.

'Braidotti's multiplicity is a way of understanding the play of forces that work upon one another and that generate new possibilities of life. Multiplicity is not the death of agency, but its very condition. We misconstrue where action comes from if we fail to understand how multiple forces interact and produce the very dynamism of life.'[53] For Butler, however, sexual difference is something more elusive than Braidotti allows, a space from which to create questions rather than provide the firm basis for definitions, however mobile they may appear to be:

> sexual difference is the site where a question concerning the relation of the biological to the cultural is posed and reposed, where it must and can be posed, but where it cannot, strictly speaking, be answered. Understood as a border concept, sexual difference has psychic, somatic, and social dimensions that are never quite collapsible into one another but are not for that reason ultimately distinct. Does sexual difference vacillate there, as a vacillating border, demanding a rearticulation of those terms without any sense of finality? Is it, therefore, not a thing, not a fact, not a presupposition but rather a demand for rearticulation that never quite vanishes – but also never quite appears?'[54]

Of course, according to Braidotti it is precisely this elusiveness which she finds problematic, and which she dismisses as 'theoretical illusions of an infinitely malleable, free-floating gender'.[55] But a question that Butler posed to Braidotti in an earlier interview on the subject remains pertinent: 'what does it mean to establish that asymmetry [between men and women] as irreducible and irreversible, and then to claim that it ought to serve as a foundation for feminist politics? Doesn't that simply reify a social asymmetry as an eternal necessity, thus installing the pathos of exclusion as the "ground" of feminism?'[56] The paradox in Braidotti's vision of sexual difference as 'fact' is that she is, of the two, the most firmly opposed to the anthropocentric landscape, the most fervent proponent of the positivity of difference, and the most committed to a

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[53] Butler 2004, p.193.

[54] Butler 2004, p.186.

[55] Braidotti 2006, p.185. Braidotti's problems with the term 'gender' range from what she sees as its politically unfocused project, its Anglo-centric roots, and its academic institutionalisation. See Braidotti 2011 [1994], p.141-150.

[56] Rosi Braidotti and Judith Butler. 'Feminism by Any Other Name.' *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, ed. Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (eds.). Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1997, p.43-44.

theorisation of non-unitary subjectivity that takes into account material relationships and interactions with animals, the environment, and with technology.[57] These are all aspects that I will come on to discuss in later chapters, showing how Woolf's writing elsewhere provides a positive account of difference in the complicated material entanglements produced by such relations. But for now I want to keep in mind this emphasis on multiplicitous agency, and the potential limitations of Braidotti's model of sexual difference, to further consider the ways in which Woolf's theory of androgyny in *A Room of One's Own* might emphasise multiplicity as the very condition of writing sexual difference.

2.1.3 Becoming-woman and Minoritarian Writing

In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975), Deleuze and Guattari outline three interrelated characteristics of a 'minoritarian' writing or 'minor' literature. Firstly, rather than 'reterritorialising' language within a dominant discourse, upholding its conventional utterances, minor literature involves writing with 'a high co-efficient of deterritorialisation' so that a major language speaks in new ways.[58] Secondly, minoritarian writing is intensely political. Where major literature is focused on the private concerns of the individual and the relegation of the social, political, environmental context to mere background, minor literature's 'cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics. The individual concern thus becomes all the more necessary indispensable, magnified, because a whole other story is vibrating within it. In this way, the family triangle connects to other triangles – commercial, economic, bureaucratic, juridicial – that determine its values.'[59] And thirdly, minor literature is always concerned with collectives, 'everything takes on a collective value.'[60] With its deterritorialisation of the patriarchal "I", its emphasis on the material, social, artistic and political struggles facing women, and its continued concern with collective relations between men and women 'in relation to reality' (RO 149), we might think of *A Room of*

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[57] Butler admits plainly in *Undoing Gender* that she is 'not a very good materialist. Every time I try to write about the body, the writing ends up beings about language'. See Butler 2004, p.198.
[58] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986, p.16.
[59] Deleuze and Guattari 1986, p.17.
[60] Deleuze and Guattari 1986, p.17.

One's Own as an example of such 'minor' – and therefore all the more subversive – literature, and in this section I will explain why I see Woolf's theory of androgyny, with its deterritorialisation of terms such as 'male' and 'female', as an example of a specific form of minoritarian writing, what Deleuze and Guattari describe as the 'becoming-woman' of writing.

Deleuze and Guattari make reference to Woolf when discussing minoritarian writing and their concept of 'becoming-woman', to be understood not as being about representation of the woman as 'molar entity […] defined by her form, endowed with organs and functions and assigned as a subject', but as involving a deterritorialisation of subjectivity and the creation of 'molecular', multiplicitous, non-hierarchical attachments.[61] In *Dialogues*, Deleuze suggests that Woolf forms such connections because she 'forbade herself "to speak like a woman"' and 'harnessed the becoming-woman of writing all the more for this'.[62] And in *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari allude to Mary Carmichael's writing 'as a woman, but as a woman who has forgotten that she is a woman, so that her pages were full of that curious sexual quality which comes only when sex is unconscious of itself' (RO, 121). They insist that '[Woolf] was appalled at the idea of writing "as a woman." Rather, writing should produce a becoming-woman as atoms of womanhood capable of crossing and impregnating an entire social field, and of contaminating men, of sweeping them up in that becoming.'[63] Becoming-woman is therefore open to all, women and men, who form connections which are not based on models of opposition and ownership:

> the majoritarian as a constant and homogeneous system; minorities as subsystems; and the minoritarian as a potential, creative and created, becoming. The problem is never to acquire the majority, even in order to install a new constant. There is no becoming-majoritarian; majority is never becoming. All becoming is minoritarian. Women, regardless of their numbers, are a minority, definable as a state or subset; but they create only by making possible a becoming over which they do not have ownership, into which

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[61] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.304.

[62] Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet. *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. London: Continuum, 2006 [1987], p.32. This text translates Deleuze's concept as 'woman-becoming' rather than the more common translation of 'becoming-woman'. For consistency, I have changed all citations to 'becoming-woman'.

[63] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.304.

they themselves must enter; this is a becoming-woman affecting all of humankind, men and women both.[64]

If, as I argued in the previous section, we consider Woolf's androgyny as an attempt to overcome sex-consciousness founded on binary oppositions and instead to present a more complex model of sexual differences (where emphasis is on intra-category and intra-subjective difference as much as it is on inter-category difference), then we can understand it in Deleuze and Guattari's terminology as rejecting molar identities. Moreover, we can view the 'man-womanly' and 'woman-manly' formulation as the starting point of an attempt to articulate a becoming-minoritarian of both women and men, allowing for a multiplicity of different combinations, of different sexes where in the figuration of androgyny 'the two sexes imply a multiplicity of molecular combinations bringing into play […] the man in the woman and the woman in the man […] a thousand tiny sexes.'[65] It may be, then, that there are more than 'two sexes in the mind corresponding to two sexes in the body'. As we read later in *A Room of One's Own*, 'two sexes are quite inadequate […] For we have too much likeness as it is, and if an explorer should come back and bring word of other sexes looking through the branches of other trees at other skies, nothing would be of greater source to humanity' (RO 114).[66] Considering that androgyny is so much about a rejection of patriarchy and phallogocentric (major) writing, I suggest that becoming androgynous and becoming-woman form something of an affinity.

Just as some the critics discussed above (see section 2.1.1) view Woolf's androgyny as sitting uneasily with her feminist aims, however, so there has been criticism of Deleuze's becoming-woman by feminist critics. Indeed, in a recent article Gillian Howie associates becoming-woman with androgyny (albeit that she is not referring specifically to Woolf's formulation here) in her criticism of the term: 'Becoming-woman suggests a radically androgynous transvaluation of values, and it certainly appears to leap over the risk of dimorphic essentialism in an un-gendered becoming. It does so by

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[64] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.117.
[65] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.235.
[66] Some critics have linked this quotation to Edward Carpenter's notion of a 'third-sex' in *The Indeterminate Sex* (1912). For a summary of this see Hargreaves 1994, p.10-20.

risking, instead, de-contextualising and appropriating the affective body; interning the same dimorphic values whilst cutting the ground from critical interjection.'[67] Becoming-woman also marks a site of contention for Braidotti, where she suggests that there is a 'confrontation between Deleuze's theories of multiplicity and becoming-minority and feminist theories of sexual difference and becoming subject of women.'[68] She argues that where 'Deleuze proceeds […] as if there was clear equivalence in the speaking positions of the two sexes' it is important from a feminist perspective to remember that 'points of exit from the phallogocentric mode takes asymmetrical forms in the two sexes'[69] – a point that is familiar to readers of Woolf's theory of androgyny. Braidotti therefore takes issue with what she sees as Deleuze's suggestion that feminists 'should instead draw on the multisexed structure of the subject and claim back all the sexes of which women have been deprived; emphasis on the feminine is restrictive […] Women, in other words, can be revolutionary subjects only to the extent that they develop a consciousness that is not specifically feminine, dissolving "woman" into the forces that structure her.'[70] These criticisms point to challenging aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming-woman, where it can be seen to dispose of subjectivity at the very moment in history when feminism is beginning to gain a sense of identity, and as potentially another example of appropriation by masculine philosophy.[71] Critics of becoming-woman could even point to Woolf's own warning in *A Room of One's Own* about how 'woman' can be appropriated and exploited by men: 'Imaginatively she is of the highest importance, practically she is completely insignificant' (RO 56).

Whilst I think it is unfair to accuse Deleuze and Guattari of this kind of appropriation, it is easy to see some of the concerns about the type of terminology used when they talk about the women not having 'ownership' over their becomings (see above). But rather than seeing becomings as a negative loss of agency, it is important to remember in all this that for Deleuze and Guattari it is molar identities and major categories that are sedentary; becomings are fundamentally about molecular movement

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[67] Gillian Howie. 'Becoming-Woman: A Flight into Abstraction.' *Deleuze Studies* 2: Issue Supplement (2008), p.103.
[68] Braidotti 2011 [1994], p.251.
[69] Braidotti 2011 [1994], p.253.
[70] Braidotti 1994, p.78.
[71] Colebrook 2000a, p.10.

and creation. There is agency here, but, rather than belonging to an individuated subject it is a symbiotic form of agency that is shared with those other human and nonhuman elements that are entangled in becoming. Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari already anticipate questions such as those raised by Braidotti on 'becoming-woman', or, as Alice Jardine has put it, '[w]hy then do [Deleuze and Guattari] privilege the word woman?'[72] Deleuze and Guattari form their answer to this type of challenge by way of another question: '[w]hy are there so many becomings of man, but no becoming-man?'. The answer is that 'man is majoritarian par excellence, whereas becomings are minoritarian; all becoming is becoming-minoritarian.'[73] They certainly are not ignorant of the specifically feminist political struggles of women:

> the woman as a molar entity has to become-woman in order that the man also becomes – or can become – woman. It is, of course, indispensable for women to conduct a molar politics, with a view to winning back their own organism, their own history, their own subjectivity: "we as women…" makes its appearance as a subject of enunciation. But it is dangerous to confine oneself to such a subject, which does not function without drying up a spring or stopping a flow.[74]

In other words, becoming-woman, consistent with other becomings, goes beyond a politics of representation. Just as Woolf criticises Charlotte Brontë for 'protesting that she was "as good as a man"' (RO 96), 'becoming-woman' is not a question of women or indeed men becoming 'like' an idealised image of woman, an oversight often made in feminist discussions which tend to associate Deleuze and Guattari's concept with an specifically female or feminine subjectivity. Braidotti herself acknowledges that '[t]he reference to "woman" in the process of "becoming-woman" does not refer to empirical females, but rather to topological positions, levels, or degrees of affirmation of positive forces and levels of nomadic, rhizomatic consciousness. The becoming-woman is the marker for a general process of transformation.'[75] Woolf's androgyny illuminates the relevance and importance of a nomadic model of sexual difference, but also the ways in

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[72] Alice Jardine. 'Woman in Limbo: Deleuze and His Br(others).' *SubStance* 44/45 (1984), p.53.
[73] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.320.
[74] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.302.
[75] Braidotti 2011 [1994], p.250.

which this model can also be extended and combined with Deleuze's becoming-woman rather than seen in opposition to it, to show the materially bound and theoretically useful way to move beyond the perceived impasse between conctructivism and essentialism. Extending Braidotti's nomadic subject as exemplary of Deleuze and Guattari's 'becoming-woman', Woolf's androgyny can signal a re-shaping of non-unitary subjectivity so that it is attuned to a multiplicity conceived beyond a binary model of sexual difference, and does so in a way that does not simply become a rearticulation of patriarchal dominance. As Butler puts it, 'must the framework for thinking about sexual difference be binary for this feminine multiplicity to emerge? Why can't the framework for sexual difference itself move beyond binarity into multiplicity?'[76]

By sharing an affinity with nomadism as well as Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-minoritarian, Woolf's androgyny might be thought of as anticipating what Goulimari terms 'minoritarian feminism'. In her discussion of Braidotti and Deleuze, Goulimari points to the contradiction in Braidotti's emphasis on nomadism (which is confluent with Deleuzian philosophy) alongside a feminism founded on sexual difference (which disposes of Deleuze in favour of Irigaray).[77] She argues that there is a problematic and often unacknowledged majoritarian strain in Braidotti's work when she privileges sexual difference above other axes of difference. That is, Braidotti's project is one of minoritarian feminism because it accounts for 'an internally decentred feminism that interbreeds with other minoritarian movements rather than being separatist', and yet this is undermined by 'a "majoritarian" tendency that classifies, delimits, hierarchises and excludes: feminism as the only radicalism.'[78] She remarks that far from being endangered by Deleuzian becomings, feminism is 'perhaps the most successful minoritarian

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[76] Butler 2004, p.196.

[77] Braidotti refers to Irigaray's criticism of Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-woman: 'Irigaray concluded that Deleuze gets caught in the contradiction of postulating a general "becoming-woman" that fails to take into account the historical and epistemological specificity of the female feminist standpoint.' Deleuze as a man, so Braidotti says, is '"located" elsewhere'. See Braidotti 2011 [1994], p.252; 261. Given Braidotti's emphasis on inter- and intra-subjective differences in her theory of nomadism, however, we might question how useful it is to posit a generalised 'female feminist standpoint'.

[78] Pelagia Goulimari. 'A Minoritarian Feminism? Things to Do with Deleuze and Guattari.' *Hypatia* 14:2 (1999), p.110. Even if we are to consider that Braidotti may be advancing a kind of strategic essentialism, the problem in relation to Deleuze and Guattari, as Goulimari is right to point out, 'is that strategic essentialism turns "being-a-woman" into an artificial territoriality for feminism, thereby simultaneously turning race, age, sexual preference into subdivisions, into subterritorialities of "being-a-woman"' (106). Goulimari is speaking specifically about Braidotti's first book, *Patterns of Dissonance*, in this article, although her criticisms can be said to run through all of Braidotti's books.

movement of the century.'[79] Goulimari argues that Deleuzian becoming, and in particular the emphasis on becoming-woman as a necessary becoming that all others must pass through, is a recognition of 'feminism's success in opening the way to the desire of becoming other that is, other than one's "self," other than a branch on the tree of Man, other than a subordinate referent of Majority Rule.' It also 'remind[s] us of feminism's historic responsibility to keep this way open to its own and other minoritarian movements, to its own and other subordinate points, so that "woman" sheds its quality of being a universal referent and becomes a multiplicity.'[80] If it is true, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, that '[t]here is no history but of the majority, or of minorities as defined in relation to the majority',[81] then a feminism that is minoritarian might be precisely what is needed to bring together the past and future histories of the women's movement in the context of our materially present, nomadically situated moment. As both nomadic and minoritarian, I would suggest that Woolf's theory of androgyny continues to be a key marker of the becoming-minoritarian of feminism, a double process of deterritorialization – of the term 'androgyny' from its status as a 'male-promoting concept',[82] and of feminism from the promotion of sexual difference in binary, hierarchical, static oppositions.

It is with this emphasis on androgyny as deterritorializing concept – one that offers lines of flight to the creation of new concepts – that I turn in the second part of this chapter to my reading of *To the Lighthouse* alongside Deleuze and Guattari. Bearing in mind that Woolf's woman-manly/man-womanly formula for androgyny is put forward by a persona, Mary Beton, rather than Woolf herself, Gayatri Spivak reminds us that we should be wary of reducing her other texts to '*successful* articulations' of her theory.[83] By turning to *To the Lighthouse*, I would also hesitate to claim it (or indeed any of her other texts) as wholly representative of Woolf's theory, but my discussion of androgyny does lead me to my own formulation of 'tri-subjectivities' or *tri-s* which I introduce to frame my analysis of the ways in which *To the Lighthouse* challenges notions of subjectivity founded in rigid paradigms of sexual difference. Therefore, my reading below is inspired

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[79] Goulimari 1999, p.98.
[80] Goulimari 1999, p.103.
[81] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.322.
[82] Helt 2010, p.132.
[83] Spivak 1988, p.42.

by, but not limited to, Woolf's conceptualisation of androgyny. As Bazin puts it, '[t]he androgynous vision has its roots in the past, and its long history can help us understand its meaning and its importance. However, our concept of androgyny must be new'. Rather than limiting it to what Woolf might mean by it, '[w]e must expand it, alter it, and, above all, render it more concrete by defining it in terms of our own historical situation […] we must go beyond past definitions of androgyny.'[84]

2.2. Lines of Becoming: *To the Lighthouse*

2.2.1. *Tri-s* and 'the constellation of voices'

> It is a question of a model that is perpetually in construction or collapsing, and of a process that is perpetually prolonging itself, breaking off and starting up again. No, this is not a new or different dualism.[85]

> The only way to get outside the dualisms is to be-between, to pass between, the intermezzo – that is what Virginia Woolf lived with all her energies, in all of her work, never ceasing to become.[86]

Having discussed Woolf's influence on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'becoming-woman', in this section I extend the dialogue between their writings and look at *To the Lighthouse* in relation to various Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts including 'becoming', 'smooth' and 'striated' spaces, the 'rhizome', and 'schizoanalysis'. In order to frame this reading – one that is intended to be reciprocal, suggesting why Woolf's aesthetics might have influenced Deleuze and Guattari's thought but also the ways in which new perspectives on Woolf can be illuminated by reading Deleuze and Guattari's theories back into her writing – I will firstly introduce my formulation of 'tri-subjectivities' or *tri-s*, which grows out of my above discussion on androgyny.

In the first part of this chapter I considered Woolf's 'sketch' of androgyny in *A Room of One's Own* as presenting a non-unitary, nomadic, materialist theory of subjectivity which points beyond sexual dualisms. Rather than simply reading

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[84] Bazin and Freeman 1974, p.185.
[85] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.22.
[86] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.305.

'androgyny' into *To the Lighthouse* as if it were a fixed term that can be applied to Woolf's fiction, I am introducing *tri-s* as a concept inspired by Woolf's androgyny without wishing to stand in for it. Following my reading of androgyny in the context of contemporary debates on sexual difference, my formulation of *tri-s* has three key components: 1.) As a reading strategy, *tri-s* involve/s, as a starting point, an analysis of subjectivity in groupings of (at least) three. As I hope to demonstrate in the following part of this chapter, in *To the Lighthouse*, even when Woolf appears to be focusing on one character in opposition to another character, she continually points outwards to other subjects/objects, and in the process complicates and undermines views of sexual difference as a binary construct. *Tri-s* remind/s us to *try* different combinations so as not to foreclose the relations between subjects in a fixed textual framework. 2.) As a theoretical model, *tri-s* is/are influenced by Braidotti's three levels of sexual difference (differences between men and women, differences among women, and differences with each woman) whilst remaining open to the additional levels of differences among men and differences within each man. Therefore, *tri-s* encourage/s a more inclusive and flexible understanding of inter- and intra-subjective differences. 3.) As a grammatical construct, the term *tri-s* brings out the plural in the singular, the verb in the noun. *Tri-s* is/are simultaneously singular and plural, noun and verb, capturing both the rootedness and flowing of a non-unitary subjectivity that is also materially entangled. Following Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of triangular relationships in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, my neologism *tri-s* shares a concern with moving away from 'the hierarchy of triangles' and towards 'making triangles transform until they become unlimited'.[87] Working through the remaining sections of this chapter, focusing on different combinations of human (and nonhuman) relations, I aim to highlight that the formation of *tri-s* in *To the Lighthouse* transforms triangles into multiplicities, setting into motion various creative becomings rather than a settling into fixed categories of being.

Crucial to the movement of *tri-s* is Woolf's use of free indirect discourse, evident in many of the passages from *To the Lighthouse* that I cite below, which allows her to explore 'several distinct consciousnesses' and also 'consciousnesses that were several but

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[87] Deleuze and Guattari 1986, p.55-56.

indistinct, a "group consciousness".'[88] In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari's positing of indirect discourse as the '"first" language', and therefore at the heart of any question of subjectivity and difference, emphasises its importance to my reading: 'The "first" language, or rather the first determination of language, is not the trope or metaphor but *indirect discourse*.' Deleuze argues that the prominence these figures of speech are given 'proves disastrous for the study of language'; they 'are merely effects; they are a part of language only when they presuppose indirect discourse. There are many passions in a passion, all manner of voices in a voice, murmurings, speaking in tongues: that's why all discourse is indirect'.[89] Woolf's use of indirect discourse then could be a recognition that '[l]anguage is not content to go from a first party to a second party, from one who has seen to one who has not, but necessarily goes from a second party to a third party, neither of whom has seen […] Language is a map, not a tracing.'[90] What is specifically created in *free* indirect discourse is a 'collective assemblage of enunciation', where 'the variables of the assemblage enter into constant relations, however temporarily':[91]

> [t]here is no individual enunciation […] indirect discourse, *especially "free" indirect discourse*, is of exemplary value: there are no clear distinctive contours; what comes first is not an insertion of variously individuated statements, or an interlocking of different subjects of enunciation, but a collective assemblage […] Indirect discourse is not explained by the distinction between subjects; rather, it is the assemblage, as it freely appears in this discourse, that explains all the voices present within a single voice.[92]

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[88] Michael Whitworth. *Authors in context: Virginia Woolf*. Oxford: OUP, 2005, p.95. So often conflated with 'stream-of-consciousness' writing, Whitworth goes on to outline some key differences between the style in Joyce's *Ulysses* and Woolf's writing. For an early discussion of 'stream of consciousness' and Woolf's novels see James Naremore. *The World Without a Self*. London: Yale UP, 1973, pp. 60-76. See also Laura Doyle. '"These Emotions of the Body": Intercorporeal Narrative in *To The Lighthouse*.' *Twentieth Century Literature* 40:1 (1994), 42-71. Influenced by French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Doyle proposes 'intercorporeal narrative' as a description of Woolf's narrative technique in *To The Lighthouse*. For an insightful discussion of Woolf's free indirect discourse in relation to the public and private realms see Anna Snaith. *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000, p.63-87. Snaith offers the term 'communal free indirect discourse' as a way of understanding Woolf's use (74).
[89] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.85.
[90] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.85.
[91] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.93.
[92] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.88.

Utterances, therefore, cannot be tied to an individual subject, and the subject (whether in writing or otherwise) involves 'synchronis[ation] without a central agency':[93]

> the collective assemblage is always like the murmur from which I take my proper name, the constellation of voices, concordant or not, from which I draw my voice. I always depend on a molecular assemblage of enunciation that is not given in my conscious mind, any more than it depends solely on my apparent social determinations, which combine many heterogeneous regimes of signs. Speaking in tongues. To write is perhaps to bring this assemblage of the unconscious to the light of day, to select the whispering voices, to gather the tribes and secret idioms from which I extract something I call my Self.[94]

Where in the following sections I discuss the relations between specific characters in *To the Lighthouse*, it is in order to map their various movements away from totalising or symbolic representation and towards molecular enunciations. My focus is on the *tri-s* that the characters make, their *attempts* to form connections rather than fix subjectivity.

2.2.2 Mr Ramsay – Mrs Ramsay – James: Suppleness and Schizoanalysis

Where inter-subjective relationships are concerned, triangles, according to Deleuze and Guattari, too often resemble an Oedipal design. In *Anti-Oedipus*, they heavily criticise the fact that psychoanalysis 'continues to ask its questions and develop its interpretations from the depths of the Oedipal triangle as its basic perspective, even though today it is acutely aware that this frame of reference is not at all adequate to explain so-called psychotic phenomena.'[95] Their polemic against psychoanalysis in both *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* volumes consists of several interweaving strands, including an attack on the oedipalisation of the family and the organisation of a desire based on lack and interpreted through metaphor and metonymy. In chapter one of this thesis I discussed the question of metaphor and metonymy in a different context (namely in relation to Woolf's 'granite and rainbow' figuration and Braidotti's conceptualisation of 'transposition'), and in the following chapter I discuss Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualisation of desire

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[93] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.19.
[94] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.93.
[95] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p15.

more fully (in relation to *Orlando*). In the current section, however, I would like to focus specifically on Deleuze and Guattari's turn towards 'schizoanalysis' as a way out of what they see as the insular environment or 'intimate familial theatre' (AO 335) of psychoanalysis, where '[t]he triangulation of the subject, familial in origin, consists in fixing one's position in relation to the two other represented terms (father-mother-child).'[96] A key difference between psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis is that 'schizoanalysis attains a nonfigurative and nonsymbolic unconscious'.[97] As Daniel Smith notes, 'psychoanalysis begins with the symbolic and seeks out the "gaps" that mark the irruption of an "impossible" Real; whereas schizoanalysis starts with the Real as the immanent process of desire and seeks to mark both the interruptions of this process (reterritorializations) and its continuations and transformations (becomings, intensities ...).'[98] As Deleuze remarks in an interview included in *Negotiations*, Schizoanalysis was conceived of as a kind of 'materialist psychiatry' that 'brings production into desire' and 'desire into production'.[99] Deleuze and Guattari present schizoanalysis as the task of 'tirelessly taking apart egos and their presuppositions; liberating the prepersonal singularities they enclose and repress; mobilizing the flows they would be capable of transmitting, receiving, or intercepting; establishing always further and more sharply the schizzes and the breaks well below conditions of identity.'[100] In other words, where psychoanalysis relies on molar identities that are 'totalizable and organizable', schizoanalysis frees molecular becomings that are 'intensive' and 'constantly construct and dismantle themselves in the cause of their communications';[101] it is the difference between 'rigid segmentarity' and 'supple segmentation'.[102] In this section I argue that in *To the Lighthouse* Woolf is similarly attempting a critique of rigid oedipalisation and a freeing of supple segmentation through the relations between Mrs Ramsay, Mr Ramsay and James – relations that provide an example of *tri-s* rather than Oedipal triangulation.

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[96] Deleuze and Guattari 1986, p.53.
[97] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p385.
[98] Smith 2004, p.645-646.
[99] Deleuze 1995, p.17-18.
[100] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p396. It is important to note here that Deleuze and Guattari refer to schizophrenia in 'broad socio-historical rather than narrowly psychological terms, as a result of the generalized production of psychosis pervading capitalist society'. See Eugene W. Holland. *Deleuze and Guattari's* Anti-Oedipus: *Introduction to Schizoanalysis*. London: Routlege, 1999, p.2-3.
[101] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.36.
[102] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.221.

Psychoanalytic critics such as Elizabeth Abel have focused on the triangular relationship between the Ramsays and their son James as highlighting 'Woolf's Oedipal plot' in *To the Lighthouse*.[103] Indeed, whilst acknowledging Woolf's distrust of Freud,[104] Nicole Ward Jouve aligns Woolf's writing with a psychoanalysis that is 'forever fending off the threat of disintegration, blurred boundaries, insecure identities'.[105] These psychoanalytic readings of Woolf also tend to point towards the autobiographical dimensions of her novel, focusing on the influence of Woolf's parents on the characters and her own well-known reflection in 'Sketch of the Past' that writing it exorcised the ghost of her mother (MB 92). Contrary to this approach, I suggest that the relationship between Mrs Ramsay, Mr Ramsay and James in *To the Lighthouse* has little to do with an Oedipal triangle, and, whilst acknowledging their clear influence on her composition of the text, I do not wish to foreground Woolf's own familial relations here. Rather than understanding Woolf's writing as resisting the threat of 'blurred boundaries', the threat is instead, I would argue, the limitations of reading Woolf's depiction of the Ramsay's through an Oedipal lens. Woolf, as Driscoll puts it, explores 'assemblages of subject positions which escape Oedipal frames',[106] and in this section I want to focus on the early part of *To the Lighthouse* in order to bring out the supple segmentations that intermingle and create new combinations later in the novel.

Laura Marcus notes that in *To the Lighthouse* James's role in particular is often understood in relation to Freud's Oedipal complex. Pointing to a passage in the latter part of Woolf's novel when, stationary on the boat, '[a] rope seemed to bind him [James] there and his father had knotted it and he could only escape by taking a knife and plunging it…' (TL 212), Marcus suggests that 'James is literally becalmed, like the Ancient Mariner, by this narrative, and metaphorically bound, as Oedipus was bound by the chains with which his father sought to secure his death.'[107] Similarly, Minow-Pinkney

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[103] Elizabeth Abel. *Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989, p.50. For a recent survey of psychoanalytic readings of Woolf's work, see Makiko Minow-Pinkney. 'Psychoanalytic Approaches.' *Palgrave Advances in Virginia Woolf Studies*, ed. Anna Snaith. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007: 60-82.

[104] See for example Woolf's 1920 essay 'Freudian Fiction' (E2 195-197).

[105] Nicole Ward Jouve. 'Virginia Woolf and Psychoanalysis.' *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. Sue Roe and Susan Sellers. Cambridge: CUP, 2000, p.256.

[106] Driscoll 2000, p.65.

[107] Laura Marcus. *Virginia Woolf (2nd Edition)*. Devon: Northcote House, 2004 [1997], p.114.

claims that 'James inhabits a classical Oedipal triangle',[108] and Bowlby notes that '[t]he resentment of James […] for Mr Ramsay's prior claims to his mother parallels Freud's Oedipal scenario, where the boy wants nothing less than to put out of the way the father who asserts his rights to the mother.'[109] But to see James' narrative in *To the Lighthouse* as an Oedipal one risks overshadowing what Deleuze and Guattari call the 'amazing nonfamilial experience that psychoanalysis has completely failed to take into account', an experience that I would suggest is hinted at from the very beginning of Woolf's novel.[110] In only the second paragraph of *To the Lighthouse* James connects with a range of objects which are not limited to the figures of his parents: 'The wheelbarrow, the lawn-mower, the sound of poplar trees, leaves whitening before rain, rooks cawing, brooms knocking, dresses rustling – all these were so coloured and distinguished in his mind that he had already his private code, his secret language' (TL 5). It may be that this 'private code' or 'secret language' serves as an early reminder that 'children don't live as our adult memories would have us believe […] Memory yells "Father! Mother!" but the childhood block is elsewhere, in the highest intensities that the child constructs with his sisters, his pal, his projects and his toys, and all the nonparental figures through which he deterritorializes his parents every chance he gets.'[111] If we recall Woolf's own memories of childhood from 'Sketch of the Past', she seems to emphasise the importance of such nonparental connections: 'It is true that I enclosed that world [of family life] in another made by my own temperament; it is true that from the beginning I had many adventures outside that world; and often went far from it; and kept much back from it' (MB 96). In addition, the kind of nonparental attachments formed by James above are also evident in *To the Lighthouse* when Mrs Ramsay watches on as her daughter Cam

> dashed past. She was off like a bird, bullet, or arrow, impelled by what desire, shot by whom, at what directed, who could say? What, what? Mrs Ramsay pondered, watching her. It might be a vision – of a shell, or a wheelbarrow, of a fairy kingdom on the far side of the hedge; or it might be the glory of speed; no one knew. (TL 63)

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[108] Minow-Pinkney 1987, p.87.
[109] Bowlby 1997, p.59.
[110] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p51.
[111] Deleuze and Guattari 1986, p.79.

If, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, children not only form connections with parents, they also enter into 'the line of flight of the building, the street, etc.',[112] then here Cam's line of flight takes on a more literal dimension as she runs away from the parental framework: 'she would not stop for her father […] nor for her mother' (TL 63).

It is not only nonparental connections of the children Woolf hints at; her depiction of the Ramsays points beyond the molar identities that they are so often seen as representing (whether as stand-ins for Woolf's own parents, or as symbols of Victorian marriage). At the very beginning of the novel Mr Ramsay displays his dominance and severe manner in the patriarchal familial set-up: '"But," said his father, stooping in front of the drawing-room window, 'it won't be fine'" (TL 6); 'What he said was true. It was always true. He was incapable of untruth; never tampered with a fact' (TL 6). But somewhat ironically, 'severity' is precisely what links Mr Ramsay to his wife and child in these opening exchanges: Mr Ramsay's ruling against the lighthouse trip; Mrs Ramsay declaration '"Nonsense"' is made with 'great severity' which she then turns against Nancy (TL 8); and even the young James outwardly 'appeared the image of stark and uncompromising severity' (TL 6). When the narrative later points to Mr Ramsay's own 'compound of severity and humour' (TL 37), it is almost as if Woolf is gently satirising the tendencies we have to polarise into extreme categories, to emphasise severe differences. Thus there is a self-reflexive hint early on of how such severity and extremity will be undermined by a more nuanced vision of these characters' relations. From these opening pages then, and as I will attempt to show in the following sections by focusing on some of the further relations formed in *To the Lighthouse* –the *tri-s* that continually re-draw the lines and re-shape the design of triangular relations – Woolf may provide another example of what Deleuze and Guattari recognise in Kafka's novels: 'triangles that remain in Kafka's novels show up only at the beginning of the novels; and from the start, they are so vacillating, so supple and transformable, that they are ready to open into a series that break their form and explode their terms.'[113]

Despite what initially seems like a reassertion of difference as rigid and oppositional, a more flexible, supple form of difference begins to appear through Mrs

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[112] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.15.
[113] Deleuze and Guattari 1986, p.54.

Ramsay when, a few pages after the scene discussed above, the eight Ramsay children make way to their bedrooms 'to debate anything, everything; Tansley's tie; the passing of the Reform Bill; sea-birds and butterflies; people' (TL 11). The reader is told of two kinds of 'differences':

> Strife, divisions, difference of opinion, prejudices twisted into the very fibre of being, oh that they should begin so early, Mrs Ramsay deplored. They were so critical, her children […] 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. (TL 11)

The 'real differences' for Mrs Ramsay appear to be felt in the molar, binary oppositional groups of 'rich and poor, high and low' (TL 11). Similarly, there are many often-cited examples of how Mrs Ramsay props up molar identities of well-defined male and female roles, and by upholding 'the greatness of man's intellect […] the subjection of all wives' (TL 14) she has been compared to the idealised patriarchal looking-glass, as Woolf puts it in *A Room of One's Own*, 'possessing the magical and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size' (RO 45). Critics have pointed to instances in the novel where Mrs Ramsay is seen giving her husband sympathy (TL 45), her 'mania' for marriage (TL 58, 83, 199), her role as mother (TL 38, 45) and her short-sightedness (TL 14, 36, 83, 182).[114] But whilst it is tempting to view Mrs Ramsay as stuck within an oppositional framework, there are also moments when she looks beyond this. In the above passage her own relationship to these 'real differences' of rich and poor is somewhat ambiguous, with 'the great in birth receiving from her, half grudging, some respect' due to her own noble blood, and at the same time her concern with poverty, 'the things she saw with her own eyes, weekly, daily, here or in London' (TL 12). Mrs Ramsay's engagement with political issues is more pronounced later, with her concern 'about hospitals and drains and the dairy. About things like that she did feel passionately, and would, if she had had the chance, have liked to take people by the scruff of their

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[114] For an excellent recent survey of the changing critical responses to Mrs Ramsay, see Brenda Silver 'Editing Mrs. Ramsay: or, "8 Qualities of Mrs. Ramsay That Could be Annoying to Others".' *Woolf Editing / Editing Woolf: Selected Papers from the Eighteenth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Eleanor McNees and Sara Veglahn. Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press 2009, p.1-10.

necks and make them see. No hospital on the whole island. It was a disgrace' (TL 67). More gravely, her concern for 'the eternal problems' of 'suffering; death; the poor' are twice repeated: '[t]here was always a woman dying of cancer even here' (TL 70; see also 74). But as well as her contradictory relationship to these class differences, it is intriguing that at the very moment Mrs Ramsay's difference from her children is most pronounced in the above passage she is 'holding James by the hand' (TL 11) – a phrase that is repeated on the following page – hinting at a connection with his more molecular view of the world. Indeed James in this moment undermines her notion of what real differences are, for he escapes his own molar identity (as one of 'her children') 'since he would not go with the others' (TL 11). In relation to sexual difference, it is worth nothing here that the 'molar aggregates' par excellence, men and women, are not actually mentioned in the above quotation.[115] Might Mrs Ramsay be less contented after all by the 'relief of simplicity' that '[m]en, and women too, letting go the multiplicity of things, had allowed'? Even here, the narrative quickly moves from the 'simplicity' of men and women to Mrs Ramsay's sense of dissatisfaction with the 'vanity' she recognises in her own efforts to please and uphold societal and familial frameworks (TL 49). She is not, after all, entirely able reduce multiplicity to simplicity.

In 'The Window' section of *To the Lighthouse* there are further examples when Mrs Ramsay does not appear to be as rigidly Victorian in her ideals, as unflinchingly supportive of the status quo, or as 'short-sighted' as is initially presented. As Goldman notes, we can see both 'Mrs Ramsay's complicity with patriarchy and her potential to overthrow it'.[116] This more complicated view of Mrs Ramsay plays itself out at moments when she shows a level of awareness as to the ways in which her 'singleness of mind' consists of her ability to find 'truth which delighted, eased, sustained' but did so 'falsely perhaps.' (TL 34) The fragility of her supposed 'instinct for truth' (TL 64) is reflected when 'she made herself look in her glass a little resentful that she had grown old, perhaps, by her own fault. (The bill for the greenhouse and all the rest of it.)' (TL 114). This time viewing the looking-glass rather than acting as though she herself is one, its reflection enables Mrs Ramsay's acknowledgement of the transience of life matched by

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[115] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.45.
[116] Goldman 2001 [1998], p.173.

her awareness that things could and perhaps should be different in the future: 'even if it isn't fine tomorrow […] it will be another day' (TL 31). It could be argued, then, that Mrs Ramsay is as aware of the fabrication of familial, sexed roles as Lily Briscoe becomes, but is perhaps less willing or less able to let go of that illusion:

> she let it uphold her and sustain her, this admirable fabric of the masculine intelligence, which ran up and down, crossed this way and that, like iron girders spanning the swaying fabric, upholding the world, so that she could trust herself to it utterly, even shut her eyes, or flicker them for a moment, as a child staring up from its pillow winks at the myriad layers of the leaves of a tree. Then she woke up. It was still being fabricated. (TL 122)

Mrs Ramsay's view that 'windows should be open' (TL 33) – and later in 'Time Passes' it is Mrs McNab who is 'directed to open all windows' (TL 148) – as well as the fact that herself, her husband and James all stand or sit by the window at various points in the 'The Window' section of the novel, hints at a wish to maintain some connection with the world outside of the familial, perhaps a less polemical portrayal of Deleuze and Guattari's frustration with family-centred psychoanalysts: 'Do these psychoanalysts who are oedipalizing women, children […] know what they are doing? We dream of entering their offices, opening their windows and saying, "It smells stuffy in here – some relation with the outside, if you please"'![117] Or, as we read in *A Room of One's Own*: 'I thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and I thought how it is worse, perhaps, to be locked in' (RO 31).

Mrs Ramsay vision does not always, therefore, focus on the familial: 'She took a look at life, for she had a clear sense of it there, something real, something private, which she shared neither with her children nor with her husband' (TL 69). Moreover, whilst their specific concerns may be different, the short-sighted/long-sighted opposition of Mrs Ramsay and Mr Ramsay does not always ring true. As she regrets the lack of '[a] model dairy and a hospital up here – those two things she would have liked to do, herself' but is unable to '[w]ith all these children', and then immediately reflects upon the contentment of her position and that 'she never wanted James to grow a day older, or Cam either […]

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[117] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p391.

She would have liked always to have a baby […] was happiest carrying one in her arms' (TL 68), we are reminded of her husband's own simultaneous regret ('the father of eight children has no choice') and contentment ('he was for the most part happy; he had his wife; he had his children') (TL 52; see also 80-81). Indeed, we even see in these early chapters an example of Mrs Ramsay and Mr Ramsay and James combined in a vision that goes further than their familial relationship when, despite the fact all three of them are present to Lily's gaze, it is their nonhuman surrounding which is emphasised:

> The sky stuck to them; the birds sang through them. And what was even more exciting, she felt, too, as she saw Mr Ramsay bearing down and retreating, and Mrs Ramsay sitting with James in the window and the cloud moving and the tree bending, how life, from being made up of little separate incidents which one lived one by one, became curled and whole like a wave which bore one up with it and threw one down with it, there, with a dash on the beach. (TL 55)

In this passage Mrs Ramsay and Mr Ramsay are contained in parenthetical commas, and it is the way that '[t]he sky stuck to them' and 'birds sang through them' – as well as 'the cloud moving and the tree bending' – which takes Lily's thoughts on life away from 'little separate incidents which one lived one by one' (as a sequence of subjective experiences) to life as 'curled and whole like a wave' (an insight which anticipates my discussion in chapter five of quantum materiality). Rather than a psychoanalytic familial portrait, is this, perhaps, the image of the schizoanalyst?

2.2.3 Mrs Ramsay – Mr Ramsay – Lily: Bending Trees and Becoming Grass

In *Dialogues*, Deleuze and Parnet argue that 'trees are planted in our heads: the tree of life, the tree of knowledge, etc.' Their interest lies not in the tree as metaphor, but as the dominant 'image of thought' in Western philosophy:[118]

> a whole apparatus that is planted in thought in order to make it go in a straight line and produce the famous correct ideas. There are all kinds of characteristics in the tree: there is

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[118] Goldman reminds us that the tree is also a symbol of patriarchal patronage in pastoral poetry. See Goldman 2001 [1998], p.170.

a point of origin, seed or centre; it is a binary machine or principle of dichotomy, with its perpetually divided and reproduced brachings, its points of arborescence; […] a hierarchical system or transmission of orders […] The whole world demands roots. Power is always arborescent.[119]

They go on to contrast the tree as image of thought with grass: 'Trees are the opposite of grass. Not only does grass grow in the middle of things but it grows itself through the middle […] Grass has its line of flight and does not take root. We have grass in the head and not a tree'.[120] As Deleuze and Guattari clarify in *A Thousand Plateaus*, where the tree grows with arborescent rigidity, is rooted in phallogocentrism and promotes the binary machine, grass is aligned with the horizontal, multiple growths of the subterranean 'rhizome':

> The tree imposes the verb 'to be,' but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, 'and…and…and'. This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb 'to be'. Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions […] seeking a beginning or a foundation – all imply a false conception of voyage and movement.[121]

What counts most for Deleuze then is always 'the middle and not the beginning or the end, grass which is in the middle and which grows from the middle, and not trees which have a top and roots. Always grass between the paving stones'.[122]

In relation to Woolf, this 'grass between the paving stones' brings to mind the opening episode of *A Room of One's Own*, when the narrator provokes 'horror and indignation' by strolling onto the Oxbridge turf reserved for the male 'Fellows and Scholars' (RO 7), and the territory of sexual politics is clearly but also complexly marked. As Judith Allen has noted in her recent book *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Language* (2010), this 'gendered landscape […] holds within, in its sedimentary layers, the archaeological remains of its ancient past.' An exploration of this geological and

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[119] Deleuze and Parnet 2006 [1987], p.19.
[120] Deleuze and Parnet 2006 [1987], p.30.
[121] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.27.
[122] Deleuze and Parnet 2006 [1987], p.19.

textual site prompts readers to think about the 'ground on which the social, political and economic events of the past have made their marks, developed their cultures and created their so-called "civilisations"'.[123] But as well as prompting us to dig into the past, *A Room of One's Own* also looks forward, and contemporary revisitings to this scene suggest that readers continue to 'look carefully' for that elusive 'thought' which was 'laid on the grass' precisely as we are presented with the image of a 'burning tree', and moments before the narrator trespasses (RO 6). In this section I want to link Deleuze's emphasis on rhizomatic grassy conjunctions to *To the Lighthouse* and suggest that in Woolf's novel we see a challenge to the tree as image of thought and phallogocentric symbol. Whilst Allen's aforementioned book makes reference to *A Thousand Plateaus* in exploring Woolf's rhizomatic 'wild flowing grasses' as a place where women are linked together at the 'exclusion of men',[124] I will suggest that in *To the Lighthouse* Woolf points beyond a politics of exclusion (whether of women or of men); ultimately, her grass becomes an inclusive space in which no one is locked out or locked in. By focusing primarily on the relations firstly between Mrs Ramsay, Mr Ramsay and trees, and secondly between Lily, Mr Carmichael and grass, I want to emphasise that the movements of *tri-s* resist arborescence and are rhizomatic; in other words, the rhizome grows *tri-s* instead of trees.

The fragility of arborescent foundations in *To the Lighthouse* is hinted at early on when a pear tree in the orchard is shaken by Lily's 'undeniable, everlasting, contradictory' thoughts about Mr Ramsay, and 'a flock of starlings' (TL 29-30), and also the aforementioned passage when Lily watches Mr and Mrs Ramsay surrounded by a 'tree bending' (TL 55). Later, Woolf's exploration of the rhizomatic and arborescent is seen in the final two sections of 'The Window'. In the opening paragraphs here Mrs Ramsay appears to be searching for clearly defined points: 'She felt rather inclined just for a moment to stand still after all that chatter, and pick out one particular thing; the thing that mattered; to detach it; separate it off; clean it of all the emotions and odds and ends of things' (TL 129). In contrast to the inseparability of rhizomatic connections, Mrs Ramsay even wishes to introduce 'the moment' to patriarchal judgement, to institutionalise it: 'bring it to the tribunal […] the judges she had set up to decide these

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[123] Allen 2010, p.66.
[124] Allen 2010, p.70.

things. Is it good, is it bad, is it right or wrong? Where are we going to?' (TL 130). Thus rooted to arborescence – exemplified by this last question which echoes the 'false conception of voyage and movement' that Deleuze and Guattari outline above – she 'used the branches of the elm trees outside to stabilise her position' (TL 130). Her 'sense of movement' is here a restricted one where '[a]ll must be order. She must get that right and that right, she thought, insensibly approving of the dignity of the trees' stillness' (TL 130).

What follows, however, is a reminder that the arborescent and rhizomatic are not fixed oppositions creating their own binary framework but always already holding the potential to transpose each other. As Deleuze and Guattari put it: 'there are two kinds of voyage, distinguished by the respective role of the point, line and space […] Tree travel and rhizome travel […] But nothing completely coincides, and everything intermingles, or crosses over'.[125] And so here we witness a rhizomatic transformation of the tree itself, the becoming-cosmic of the tree: 'It was windy, so that the leaves now and then brushed open a star, and the stars themselves seemed to be shaking and darting light and trying to flash out between the edges of the leaves' (TL 130). In contrast to the ending of the previous section of the novel where Mrs Ramsay seems to abide by an arborescent point-system of time and memory when she comments, following her dinner, that 'it had become, she knew, giving one last look at it over her shoulder, already the past' (TL 128), now her rhizomatic metamorphosis refuses a settling into melancholic nostalgia, instead turning into something affirmative:

> They would, she thought, going on again, however long they lived, come back to this night; this moon; this wind; this house; and her too […] wound about in their hearts, however long they lived she would be woven; and this, and this, and this, she thought, going upstairs, laughing, but affectionately, at the sofa on the landing (her mother's) at the rocking chair (her father's) at the map of the Hebrides. All that would be revived again in the lives of Paul and Minta (TL 130).

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[125] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.531.

As Mrs Ramsay becomes entangled with her surroundings, there is a diffusion of subject, object and time, and a rhizomatic movement prevails in which 'the line frees itself from the point, and renders points indiscernible'[126] and which emphasises the conjunction 'and…and…and'[127] – 'and this, and this, and this', as Woolf writes in the above passage. This rhizomatic movement brings forth 'that community of feeling with other people which emotion gives as if the walls of partition had become so thin that practically (the feeling was one of relief and happiness) it was all one stream, and chairs, tables, maps, were theirs, it did not matter whose' (TL 131).

While Mrs Ramsay's resistance to arborescent thinking in this moment is, by definition, fleeting, it becomes apparent that some change has endured. For example, even when she is seduced again by the idea of marriage – 'How extraordinarily lucky Minta is! She is marrying a man who has a gold watch in a wash-leather bag!' (TL 134) – there is a hint of self-mocking as she is 'tickled by the absurdity of her thought' (TL 135). Moreover, it initially appears that Mr Ramsay brings his wife back to arborescence with his presence in the same vein in which he earlier appears to stifle Lily's creativity: 'she grew still like a tree which has been tossing and quivering and now, when the breeze falls, settles, leaf by leaf, into quiet' (TL 136). But to Mrs Ramsay this stillness appears to have been reimagined, somehow liberated, perhaps becoming what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as 'motionless voyage'[128] where the question of beginning or ending is superfluous, where we '[v]oyage in place: that is the name of all intensities […] To think is to voyage'.[129] In her motionless voyage Mrs Ramsay decides that '[i]t didn't matter, any of it, she thought. A great man, a great book, fame – who could tell?' (TL 136) In grasping at something beyond the confines of her familial relationship with her husband, 'dismissing all this', Mrs Ramsay affirms '[t]here is something I want – something I have come to get' (TL 136). As she murmurs of 'trees and changing leaves' from Charles Elton's 'Luriana Lurilee', the description of her then reading lines from William

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[126] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.324. Jean Love, in a different context, has argued that we find 'subject-object diffusion' in Woolf's writing, where 'persons do not have fixed and consistent boundaries […] their minds and consciousness and, at times, even themselves as entire beings are confluent with the external world' (35). Love also discusses space-diffusion, time-diffusion, and object-diffusion. See *Worlds in Consciousness*. London: U of California P, 1970, p. 35-62.

[127] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.27.

[128] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.177.

[129] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.532.

Browne's 'The Siren's Song' – in the book she finds on the table – is a rhizomatic one, and one which signals the becoming-rhizome of the tree itself: 'zigzagging this way and that, from one line to another as from one branch to another' (TL 137).[130]

The sound of Mr Ramsay then 'slapping his thighs' would ordinarily signal another interruption and overcoding of the arborescent, but instead sees him swept up in a rhizomatic entanglement: 'Their eyes met for a second; but they did not want to speak to each other. They had nothing to say, but something seemed, nevertheless, to go from him to her […] now, he felt, it didn't matter a damn who reached Z (if thought ran from an alphabet from A to Z). Somebody would reach it – if not he, then another' (TL 137-8). This 'if not he, then another' echoes the 'it did not matter whose' from Mrs Ramsay's earlier stream (see above). In addition, the gender-neutral terms the narrator employs here ('somebody', 'another') are important, and the parenthetical use of the second conditional – a tense used for improbable events – indicates a doubting of the arborescent linearity through which he had previously thought of his philosophical endeavours. Again temporarily escaping his familial role Mr Ramsay reads Walter Scott writing about 'these fishermen, the poor old crazed creature in Mucklebackit's cottage made him feel so vigorous, so relieved of something that he felt roused and triumphant and could not choke back his tears' (TL 138). In the mocking tone that follows as he 'forgot himself completely (but not one or two reflections about morality and French novels and English words and Scott's hands being tied but his view perhaps being as true as any other view)', it seems as though this time Mr Ramsay is too in on the joke, which adds to the sense in which the arborescent Mr Ramsay who took himself and his philosophy so seriously is beginning to be uprooted. Feeling 'more secure' in his less rooted state of mind, he 'could not remember the whole shape of the thing'. In what could almost be a direct response to Mrs Ramsay's earlier depiction of her judges, Mr Ramsay realises he must 'keep his judgement in suspense' (TL 138). He now resists the temptation to demand sympathy from his wife: 'One ought not to complain, thought Mr Ramsay, trying to stifle his desire to complain to his wife that young men did not admire him. But he was determined; he

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[130] In his eight-hour series of interviews with Claire Parnet, Deleuze ends with a discussion of the movement of a 'zigzag' which, he says, 'is perhaps the elementary movement, perhaps the movement that presided at the creation of the world'. See Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet. *From A to Z,* directed by Pierre-André Boutang and trans. Charles J. Stivale. 2011 [1996].

would not bother her again' (TL 139). Whilst it is important to remember that Woolf does not present us with a utopian vision here – after all, we do still see Mr Ramsay interrupting Mrs Ramsay (TL 134) and patronising her when she is reading (TL 140) – the fact Mr Ramsay is capable of being swept up (even if momentarily) in this resistance to arborescence would suggest that the particular form of sexual politics at play in the novel looks further than the male-female binary and towards a politics of inclusion.

As difficult as it may be to let go of old traditions – and sections of 'Time Passes' are certainly an elegy of and for that – the vision Woolf presents us with as the novel continues is one of molecular connections rather than molar categorisations: 'there was scarcely anything left of body or mind by which one could say "This is he" or "This is she"' (TL 144). If, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, 'the tree has implanted itself in our bodies, rigidifying and stratifying even the sexes',[131] then the 'wind and destruction' of 'Time Passes' is therefore necessary to triumph over arborescence. In other words, to bend a tree requires a storm: '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' (TL 146). Crucially, it is here that the focus turns from the plunging and bending trees to the grass lawn on which part of 'The Lighthouse' section of the novel will be set. Amongst the death and ruin of 'Time Passes', this lawn becomes a site of the regeneration of art when Mrs McNab is clearing out the house and realises that the 'mouldy' books have 'to be laid out on the grass in the sun' (TL 154).

In the next section I turn to the other setting of 'The Lighthouse', the sea, and in the final section of this chapter I go on to focus in more detail on Lily's painting, but for the moment I want to conclude by returning to the connection between the rhizome and grass. That the final lines of both the painting and Woolf's novel occur while Lily is sitting on this lawn seems significant enough in itself as an example of reclaiming the grass and rejecting the arborescent. But the fact that Lily shares this lawn with Mr Carmichael points to Woolf's grass as an inclusive space which welcomes an inclusive politics beyond dualistic antagonisms between men and women. Silent for almost all of the novel, Mr Carmichael refuses the role of the dominating male – to borrow Goldman's

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[131] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.20.

description, he 'does not threaten, but seems, muse-like, to assist Lily's progress'.[132] Indeed he shares a thought-connection with Lily: 'A curious notion came to her that he did after all hear the things she could not say' (TL 203); he 'seemed (though they had not said a word all this time) to share her thoughts' (TL 220). Rather than being a 'blank or absence in the text', as Minow-Pinkney claims,[133] we might say that he partakes with Lily in a becoming-grass, where sitting on the lawn is 'sitting on the world', a world envisaged beyond arborescent thought and patriarchal exclusion: 'The lawn was the world; they were up here together, on this exalted station' (TL 220). Have they achieved the kind of imperceptible, impersonal connection that Deleuze and Guattari claim makes one 'like grass: one has made the world, everybody/everything into a becoming' (TL 309)? *To the Lighthouse* would therefore be refusing to steer clear of the grass just as the narrators (and readers) of *A Room of One's Own* are caught 'audaciously trespassing' (RO 7) on the turf that patriarchy had tried to keep exclusively for men. It would mean that both Lily and Mr Carmichael, in silent collaboration with each other and perhaps even with the Ramsays, are affirming: 'I refuse to allow you, Beadle though you are, to turn me off the grass'! (RO 98)

2.2.4 Mr Ramsay – Cam – James: The Smoothing of the Sea

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari argue that different molar and molecular, rigid and supple, movements are brought into play variously in what they term 'smooth' and 'striated' spaces, where the smooth is 'an intensive rather than extensive space […] not of measures and properties' and the striated where 'one goes from one point to another' (TL 528):

> The smooth and the striated are distinguished first of all by an inverse relation between the point and the line (in the case of the striated, the line is between two points, while in the smooth, the point is between two lines); and second, by the nature of the line (smooth-directional, open intervals; dimensional-striated, closed intervals). Finally, there is a third difference, concerning the surface or space. In striated space, one closes off a surface and "allocates" it according to determinate intervals, assigned breaks; in the

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[132] Goldman 2001 [1998], p.182.
[133] Minow-Pinkney 1987, p.115.

smooth, one "distributes" oneself in an open space, according to frequencies and in the course of one's crossings [.][134]

For Deleuze and Guattari it is the sea that provides the perfect illustration that the smooth and striated is no simple opposition, but one that 'gives rise to far more difficult complications, alternations, and superpositions':[135]

> This is where the very special problem of the sea enters in. For the sea is a smooth space par excellence, and yet was the first to encounter the demands of increasingly strict striation […] the striation of the sea was a result of navigation on the open water […] *bearings*, obtained by a set of calculations based on exact observation of the stars and the sun; and *the map*, which intertwines meridians and parallels, longitudes and latitudes, plotting regions known and unknown onto a grid.[136]

The smooth space of the sea is therefore described as having always been there 'before longitude lines had been plotted', where 'there existed a complex and empirical nomadic system of navigation based on the wind and noise, the colours and sounds of the seas'.[137]

In *To the Lighthouse*, smooth and striated spaces are crossed when Mr Ramsay, Cam, and James attempt to row out to the lighthouse in the final part of Woolf's novel. At first it seems as though Mr Ramsay inhabits the sea as a striated space, or turns it into this with his presence. In her Deleuzian reading of this section of Woolf's novel, Landefeld concentrates on the moment when Mr Ramsay mocks Cam's ignorance of 'the points of the compass' (TL 190) and claims that Mr Ramsay provides a stark a contrast to Cam's (and James') freer experience of the sea: 'In the same way that [Deleuze and Guattari] describe the sea as able to be both smooth and striated, so it is in *To the Lighthouse*. Mr Ramsay's sea is knowable by the compass, whereas Cam's sea erases the paths and trails that striate the land they are fleeing.'[138] But whilst remaining true to Deleuze and

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[134] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.530.
[135] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.531.
[136] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.529.
[137] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.529.
[138] Ronnelle Rae Landefeld. 'Becoming Light: Releasing Woolf from the Modernists Through the Theories of Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.' MA thesis submitted to the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2005, p.61.

Guattari's emphasis on 'the sea as able to be both smooth and striated', Landefeld too easily locates Mr Ramsay as illustrating one whilst the children illustrate the other. As Deleuze and Guattari again clarify, this time with the example of the land: 'As simple as this opposition is, it is not easy to place it. We cannot content ourselves with establishing an immediate opposition between the smooth ground of the nomadic animal raiser and the striated land of the sedentary cultivator. It is evident that the peasant, even the sedentary peasant, participates fully in the space of the wind, the space of the tactile and sonorous qualities.'[139] Mr Ramsay may be 'acting instantly his part' (TL 189) as sedentary regulator of the sea as well as 'sedentary cultivator' of the land in *To the Lighthouse*, but we cannot, I would argue, reduce him to pure striation.

The possibility of a more subversive space occupied by Mr Ramsay is signalled by his becoming engaged with the smoothing of the sea. As Deleuze and Guattari repeatedly state, 'becoming' always happens 'through the middle',[140] and it is worth pausing at the moment in Woolf's novel when we are told that Mr Ramsay 'sat in the middle of the boat' which itself stops still in the 'middle of the bay' (TL 206). Abel views this motionless moment as the point where '[t]he Oedipal structure that dominates James' childhood in "The Window" is completed [...]: in the motionless "middle of the bay" – which mirrors the empty middle of the text, in which Mrs Ramsay vanishes – James submits to his father's will and "cease[s] to think" about his mother.'[141] But rather than seeing this as a moment of Oedipal completion where James identifies with his father and becomes separated from his mother, I would argue that it is partly Mr Ramsay's move away from his dominating role which means James can join him. Instead of representing a site where 'thoughts have ceased, their velocity is no more and they stagnate in familial tensions',[142] what we see is a molecular, 'motionless voyage' similar to Mrs Ramsay's in the previous section, where you 'keep moving even in place'.[143] Mr Ramsay in this moment is not opposed to Cam and James, but joins them as one of the 'true nomads': 'they do not move. They are nomads by dint of not moving, not migrating, of holding a

[139] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.530-531.
[140] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.323.
[141] Abel 1989, p.46. See also Minow-Pinkney 1987, p.112.
[142] Landefeld 2005, p.61.
[143] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.177.

smooth space that they refuse to leave'.[144] It is whilst 'the boat made no motion at all' (TL 184) that Mr Ramsay is portrayed more affectionately by his children, albeit that their other view of him as 'tyrant' is never quite erased. This is Mr Ramsay's capacity to be both smooth as well as striated and challenges any straightforward depositing of his character into the 'larger canon of enlightened masculine subjectivity'.[145] For example, whilst Cam continues to feel the pressure of her father's dominance, alongside this we also see her smoothing the way to pass 'a private token of the love she felt' for him: 'no one attracted her more; his hands were beautiful to her and his feet, and his voice, and his words, and his haste, and his temper, and his oddity, and his passion, and his saying straight out before every one, we perished, each alone, and his remoteness' (TL 191). As they are sitting in the middle of the sea, even James realises that it is the system of patriarchy – and not specifically his father – that he detests: 'now, as he grew older, and sat staring at his father in an impotent rage, it was not him, that old man reading, whom he wanted to kill, but it was the thing that descended on him – without his knowing it perhaps' (TL 209). Could this be James' becoming-minoritarian or even his becoming-woman?: 'he would track down and stamp out – tyranny, despotism, he called it – making people do what they did not want to do, cutting off their right to speak' (TL 209).

Importantly, it is at this moment that James goes on to think about the multiple potential actions of his father, showing a sensitivity to molecular creativity rather than molar fixity. Mr Ramsay becomes filled with the subversive potential of supple movement rather than rooted to his more despotic utterances such as 'Come to the lighthouse. Do this. Fetch me that' (TL 209):

> then next moment, there he sat reading his book; and he might look up – one never knew – quite reasonably. He might talk to the Macalisters. He might be pressing a sovereign into some frozen old woman's hand in the street, James thought; he might be shouting out at some fisherman's sports; he might be waving his arms in the air with excitement. Or he might sit at the head of the table dead silent from one end of the dinner to the other. Yes, thought James, while the boat slapped and dawdled there in the hot sun; there was a waste of snow and rock very lonely and austere; and there he had come to feel, quite often

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[144] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.532.
[145] Goldman 2001 [1998], p.171.

lately, when his father said something which surprised the others, were two pairs of footprints only; his own and his father's. They alone knew each other. (TL 209-210)

'What then was this terror, this hatred?' James' conclusion appears to associate his father with the childhood recollection of 'a wagon crush[ing] ignorantly and innocently, someone's foot'. But if Mr Ramsay's is here becoming-wheel, it is important to note that 'the wheel was innocent' (TL 210). As James tries to locate in his memory the episode of the wagon and the wheel, he recalls the enunciation: '"It will rain," he remembered his father saying. "You won't be able to go to the Lighthouse"' (TL 211). If the wheel is not in full control of the wagon, then the voicing of this utterance, the narrative seems to imply, cannot be forever rooted to, and held against, his father.

As their boat starts to move again, Mr Ramsay in this middle space raises his hand and lowers it 'as if he were conducting some secret symphony' (TL 213) – recalling James' 'secret language' (TL 5) and Mrs Ramsay's 'secret chambers' (TL 60) – in contrast to the more rigid linearity of his other preoccupation with walking 'up and down' (TL 18, 140, 168). Later, as they reach the lighthouse, the expectations of Mr Ramsay from Cam and James, and from the reader, are confounded when, instead of declaring once again in his self-indulgent tone 'But I beneath a rougher sea', he finally praises James: '"Well done!" James had steered them like a born sailor' (TL 234). Immediately following this, James' reaction is revealed through Cam's thoughts, and the supple movements of *tri-s* are evident once again through the narrative's shifting (free) indirect discourse, signalling a connection and collaboration between Cam and James, female and male:

> she knew that this is what James had been wanting, and she knew that now he had got it he was so pleased that he would not look at her or at his father or at any one […] He was so pleased that he was not going to let anybody take a grain of his pleasure. His father had praised him. They must think that he was perfectly indifferent. But you've got it now, Cam thought. (TL 234-5)

Mr Ramsay is crucial to this collaboration, and plays his own part in resisting Cam and James' instinct to offer him the chance to reassert his patriarchal rule. Both Cam and

James have the urge to ask him 'What do you want?' and they are poised to give him whatever is required. Yet, as with his earlier decision not to demand sympathy from Mrs Ramsay, 'he did not ask them anything.' Patriarchal demands are replaced by potentialities: 'he might be thinking, We perished, each alone, or he might be thinking, I have reached it. I have found it, but he said nothing' (TL 236).

2.2.5 Lily – Canvas – Line: Becoming Paint

I want to conclude this chapter by focusing on Lily's art in order to suggest that what we find at the end of *To the Lighthouse* between Lily, her canvas and her final brushstroke, is not so much a celebration of the individual achievement of the female artist as it is a collective creation beyond molar divisions. What I term here 'becoming-paint' refers to the shaping of molecular intensities rather than molar forms, the latter of which, we know from early on in *To the Lighthouse*, Lily does not attempt to capture. Her first painting, recalling the 'secret' molecular world of James, Mrs Ramsay and Mr Ramsay, is 'the residue of her thirty-three years, the deposit of each day's living, mixed with something more secret than she had ever spoken or shown in the course of all these days' (TL 61). Certainly not myopic, Lily has an ability to keep everything in view at once, the smallest detail and her larger environs: 'Even when she looked at the mass, at the line, at the colour, at Mrs Ramsay sitting in the window with James, she kept a feeler on her surroundings' (TL 22). From its very inception, then, Lily's painting is much more than an attempt to present an image of Mrs Ramsay and James on a blank canvas. Indeed, as Deleuze argues in *Francis Bacon: the Logic of Sensation* (1981),

> [i]t is a mistake to think that the painter works on a white surface […] If the painter were before a white surface, he – or she – could reproduce on it an external object functioning as a model. But such is not the case. The painter has many things in his head, or around him, or in his studio. Now everything he has in his head or around him is already in the canvas, more or less virtually, more or less actually, before he begins his work. […] He does not paint in order to reproduce on the canvas an object functioning as a model; he paints on images that are already there [.][146]

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[146] Gilles Deleuze. *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith. London: Continuum, 2005, p.61.

As a result, Deleuze suggests that it is important to 'define […] all these "givens" that are on the canvas before the painter's work begins, and determine, among these givens, which are an obstacle, which are a help'.[147] As part of her surroundings, I want to consider the role of Mr Ramsay and the other men in *To the Lighthouse* as a part of Lily's painting, where at the beginning they are seen to impede Lily's creativity, to be an obstacle on the canvas, but where they collaborate more and more as the novel progresses.

In section 2.2.3 I discussed the ways in which Woolf's novel offers an inclusive politics modelled on the rhizome or grass, and such a model is found, I argue, in Lily's painting, which she completes sitting on the grass lawn. Lily's painting seems to anticipate the affirmation in *A Room of One's Own*, and discussed in the first part of this chapter, that a writer's pages should be filled with a 'sexual quality' that is 'unconscious of itself' (RO 121): 'subduing all her impressions as a woman to something much more general; becoming once more under the power of that vision which she had seen clearly once and must now grope for among hedges and houses and mothers and children – her picture' (TL 62). As the picture is dissociated from Lily's own subjectivity – 'it had been seen; it had been taken from her' – we learn that by observing the painting William Bankes 'had shared with her something profoundly intimate' (TL 63). Crucially, Lily does not credit his sex for this intimacy, nor even him as a separated and individual subject: 'thanking Mr Ramsay for it and Mrs Ramsay for it and the hour and the place, crediting the world with a power which she had not suspected, that one could walk away down that long gallery not alone any more but arm-in-arm with somebody' (TL 63). As if to emphasise the connection to her painting, even her paint-box is entangled in this 'most exhilarating moment' as we are told that 'she nicked the catch of her paint-box to, more firmly than was necessary, and the nick seemed to surround in a circle for ever the paint-box, the lawn, Mr Bankes, and that wild villain, Cam, dashing past' (TL 63).

It is important to recognise Mr Ramsay as a part of the becoming-paint of *To the Lighthouse*. In 'The Lighthouse' section of the novel, Lily's vision seems to be initially blocked by Mr Ramsay and his demands, where 'he permeated, he prevailed, he imposed

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[147] Deleuze 2005, p.61.

himself. He changed everything. She could not see the colour, she could not see the lines […] That man, she thought, her anger rising in her, never gave; that man took' (TL 169-170). For good or for ill, however, we cannot overlook the fact that 'he permeated' and 'changed everything'; any vision we attribute to Lily should not therefore be seen as a complete escape from, or erasure of, Mr Ramsay. That is, Lily's ability to continue with her painting is not achieved by an outright rejection of Mr Ramsay or the men in the novel; there must be some collaboration between them despite their differences because opposition is an inadequate design: 'For whatever reason she could not achieve that razor edge of balance between two opposite forces; Mr Ramsay and the picture; which was necessary. There was something perhaps wrong with the design? Was it, she wondered, that the line of the wall wanted breaking, was it that the mass of the trees was too heavy?' (TL 219).

The place of men in Lily's art is noted by Goldman when she argues that 'Lily is no longer painting in the same social and political space […] her picture must come, not from opposition to Ramsay, but from her new sense of collectivity'.[148] Indeed, as well as her connection with Mr Carmichael on the lawn, there are clear instances elsewhere in the text where Lily connects with men. There is the revelation, for example, that '[o]ne could talk of painting then seriously to a man. Indeed, his friendship had been one of the pleasures of her life. She had loved William Bankes' (TL 200). This world that 'seemed to dazzle him' is also a world in which, again recalling my discussion above, the tree is not given precedence, but is just another part of their surroundings: 'they strolled through the courtyards, and admired, summer after summer, the proportions of the flowers […] as they walked, and he would stop to look at a tree, or the view over the lake, and admire a child (it was his great grief – he had no daughter)' (TL 201). Domesticated roles are not fixed to any stereotypes and we even witness their becoming-carpet!: 'he must buy a new carpet for the staircase. Perhaps she would go with him to buy a new carpet for the staircase' (TL 201). Lily and William then share their androgynous gaze towards Mrs Ramsay as '[Lily] saw, through Williams eyes, the shape of a woman' (TL 201). Whilst Goldman concludes that for Lily 'it is a social, multi-subjective view of Mrs Ramsay that she comes to desire', it is not, ultimately, a view that goes beyond the sexed binary:

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[148] Goldman 2001 [1998], p.182.

Lily's painting shows Mrs Ramsay as 'the feminine object of the feminine gaze', and her final 'line [no longer a tree as in her first painting] suggests the feminine reclamation of the first person'.[149] While there is certainly an element of this in Lily's final line, taking into account the rhizomatic connections which involve many characters, male and female, in this novel, I would agree with Monaco that Lily's painting expresses 'the liberation of the psyche from social and sexual limitations' of a binary nature,[150] and would argue that the 'lines running up and across' suggests a rhizomatic aesthetic (and politics) of the painting – that there is the impossibility of determining the precise angle of the final 'line there, in the centre' (TL 237). Moreover, what the centre is, what the middle is, cannot easily be decided. We are not only left with a line that rejects arborescence, but this line could, conceivably, be anywhere on the canvas; it resists what Deleuze and Guattari call the 'submission of the line to the point'.[151] We could even say that the line exemplifies the kind of modernist brushstroke which Deleuze and Guattari claim is 'without origin', a line that

> begins off the painting, which only holds it by the middle […] it is without localizable connection, because it has lost not only its representative function but any function of outlining a form of any kind […] the line has become abstract, truly abstract and mutant […] The line between points, in their midst, and no longer goes from one point to another. It does not outline a shape.[152]

Lily's line also coincides with the uncertainty that surrounds the lighthouse at the end of the novel, where this previously monolithic object 'had become almost invisible, had melted away into a blue haze' (TL 236). The becoming-paint of *To the Lighthouse*, which is the becoming-imperceptible of the lighthouse.

Seen through this lens, Lily's 'vision' (TL 137) at the end of the novel would therefore paint her as one 'of those with long-distance vision, the far-seers, with all their ambiguities […] They see a whole microsegmentarity, details of details […] tiny

[149] Goldman 2001 [1998], p.183; p.185.
[150] Beatrice Monaco. *Machinic Modernism: The Deleuzian Literary Machines of Woolf, Lawrence and Joyce*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p.51.
[151] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.323.
[152] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.328. Deleuze and Guattari refer to Klee, Kandinsky and Monet here.

movements that have not reached the edge, lines or vibrations that start to form long before there are outlined shapes […] A whole rhizome'.[153] As with the final brushstroke of the painting, this far-sightedness is evident in the use of the present perfect in the final sentence of the novel: 'I have had my vision' (TL 137). A tense ambiguous about its place in time, we do not know whether Lily is referring to the very recent past as she finished her painting or indeed to the decade before or before that still; it is in all these possibilities that her vision is perfectly present, that her far-sightedness reaches our own contemporary readings of Woolf's text.

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[153] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.222.

3

Queering *Orlando*

Following my focus in the previous chapter on Woolf's theory of androgyny and materialist theories of sexual difference, I will now consider the issues of sexuality, love and desire in Woolf's writing. This chapter presents a queer reading, or rather 'queering', of *Orlando* which reassesses these much-discussed themes in Woolf's mock-biography. I begin with a section on Woolf and Vita Sackville-West, focusing in particular on the new perspective offered by Braidotti's recent discussion of their relationship in *Transpositions*, and go on to consider the ways in which Woolf's theorising of love and desire in *Orlando* involves an array of material objects including rings and motor-cars. I also provide an analysis of the differences between plurality and multiplicity, via Deleuze and Braidotti, and of Orlando's history and bedrooms. Throughout this chapter I argue that in the relationship that most influenced its composition and the relations formed within the text itself, *Orlando* not only challenges notions of sexuality pertaining to identity categories and of desire founded on lack, but offers an affirmative reconceptualisation of love and desire as *de*personalised and shared among human and nonhuman. Precisely because of this *Orlando* is all the more entangled in the material realities involved in a love story.

3.1 Accidental Lovers

> Vita was here; & when she went, I began to feel the quality of the evening – how it was spring coming: a silver light; mixing with the early lamps; the cabs all rushing through the streets; I had a tremendous sense of life beginning; mixed with that emotion, which is the essence of my feeling, but escapes description […] I felt the spring beginning, & Vita's life so full & flush; & all the doors opening (D3 287).

In *Transpositions*, Rosi Braidotti reads this diary entry by Virginia Woolf – dated 16th February 1930 – as evidence of the 'shimmering intensity' of her love affair with Vita

Sackville-West, which famously inspired texts including the mock-biography *Orlando*.[1] In her groundbreaking study *Vita & Virginia*, Suzanne Raitt uses similar language when describing how Woolf's letters to Sackville-West 'shimmer with the luminosity of shared sexual pleasure'[2], and she emphasises that from the start Woolf's writing of *Orlando* was 'bound up with her desire for Sackville-West'.[3] Indeed, it is now commonplace for critics to refer to the correspondences and entangled biographies of Vita and Virginia in their readings of Woolf's mock-biography and this has helped to uncover a particularly lesbian thematic in the novel (importantly countering Quentin Bell, among others, in his wish to downplay this aspect of Woolf's life)[4]: Raitt shows that '[e]xplicit acknowledgement of sexual attraction was a part of their relationship, and a decisive factor in their experiences of one another', an experience as 'married lesbians;'[5] Sherron Knopp sees *Orlando* as both 'a public proclamation' and 'a way to heighten intimacy' between Vita and Virginia, 'not as a substitute for physical lovemaking but an extension of it';[6] Kirstie Blair focuses on the gypsies in *Orlando* and in correspondences between Vita and Virginia as evidence of 'an undercurrent […] a tug towards "gypsiness" that functions […] as a hint of same-sex desire';[7] and, more explicitly, for Leslie Hankins *Orlando* 'crafts a lesbian moment for all readers – refreshingly rare in the climate of 1928 […It is] a radical text that enables readers to experience panic-free lesbian desire [… Woolf] makes us all lesbians.'[8] Others such as Elizabeth Meese have been scathing about scholars who do not foreground the lesbian in Woolf's mock-biography: 'it matters when a critic avoids (a form of suppression) the word *lesbian*; as long as the word matters, makes a social,

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[1] Braidotti 2006, p.191.
[2] Suzanne Raitt. *Vita & Virginia: The Work and Friendship of Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf.* Oxford: OUP, 1993, p.1.
[3] Raitt 1993 p.17.
[4] See Marcus 1997 [1982].
[5] Raitt 1993 p.4.
[6] Sherron E. Knopp. '"If I Saw You Would You Kiss Me?": Sapphism and the Subversiveness of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*.' *PMLA* 103:1 (1988), p.27.
[7] Kirstie Blair. 'Gypsies and Lesbian Desire: Vita Sackville-West, Violet Trefusis, and Virginia Woolf. *Twentieth-Century Literature* 50:2 (2004), p.142. For more on the link between Vita and gipsies see Sabine French. 'Peeling the Gypsy'. *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* 67 (2005), 8-11.
[8] Leslie K. Hankins. 'Switching Sex and Redirecting Desire: the Surrealist Film, *Entre'acte*, and Woolf's *Orlando*.' *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* 67 (2005), p.26.

political, or artistic difference, it matters when *lesbian* is not spoken.'[9] Louise DeSalvo sees the humour in *Orlando* as another example of 'Woolf's continuing inability to give full acknowledgement to her own lesbianism'.[10] All of these readings add weight to Diana Swanson's suggestion that 'it is impossible to separate biography and literary analysis completely in discussions of Woolf and lesbianism'.[11]

Viewing *Orlando* through a strictly lesbian lens does, however, have some important limitations. As Chris Coffman has recently pointed out, *Orlando* brings together shared concerns of gender, sex and sexuality and as such is most fruitfully read in the context of feminist studies, queer studies and transgender studies simultaneously. She encourages critics to go beyond the 'logic of identity' that lesbian readings often invest in 'by asserting that all of its rhetorical multivalence is a disguise for a coherent identity that the critic then proceeds to unearth. This is most evident in efforts to demonstrate, often on biographical grounds, that the novel's polyvocal narrative is nothing but an elaborate screen for lesbian desire'.[12] Sharing Coffman's concerns with foregrounding a lesbian reading at the expense of feminist, queer or trans- readings of Woolf's text, in this chapter I will offer a 'queering' of *Orlando* which complements rather than conflicts with my discussion in the previous chapter on questions of feminism and sexual difference. Crucial to my analysis is an awareness that, as Tamara Ann Ramsey has put it, 'a queer mode of reading cannot establish an oppositional matrix, in the same way that lesbian (and gay male) matrixes oppose a heterosexual reading matrix,

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[9] Elizabeth Meese. 'When Virginia Looked at Vita, What Did She See; or, Lesbian: Feminist: Woman – What's the Differ(e/a)nce?' *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism* (2nd Edition), ed. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl. New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1997 [1992], p.472.

[10] Louise A DeSalvo. 'Lighting the Cave: The Relationship between Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf.' *Signs* 8.2 (1982), p.207.

[11] Diana L. Swanson. 'Lesbian Approaches.' *Palgrave Advances in Virginia Woolf Studies*, ed. Anna Snaith. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p.190.

[12] Chris Coffman. 'Woolf's *Orlando* and the Resonances of Trans Studies.' *Genders* 51 (2010), n.pag. The mining for signs of lesbian desire is perhaps more fruitful when focused primarily on Woolf's texts rather than her biography. For example, Kathryn Simpson's uncovering of signs of same-sex eroticism in Woolf's work opens up questions of sexuality rather than foreclosing them. Simpson focuses on Woolf's mermaid metaphors: 'In embodying woman-centred eroticism, whilst refusing to explicitly name or define this desire, Woolf's writing of desire between women maintains a radically queer evasion of precise definition as, like a "queer fish" itself, it remains on the borderlines and refuses binary oppositions or categorizations.' See 'Queer Fish: Woolf's Writing of Desire between Women in *The Voyage Out* and *Mrs Dalloway*.' *Woolf Studies Annual* 9 (2003), p.80. See also Kathryn Simpson. 'Pearl-diving: Inscriptions of Desire and Creativity in H.D. and Woolf.' *Journal of Modern Literature,* 27:4 (2004), 37-58 and Robert E. Kohn. 'Erotic Daydreams in Virginia Woolf's Orlando.' *Explicator* 68:3 (2010), 185-188.

but must compete with the emotional and sensual responses that aesthetic readings provide […] a queer reading strategy that develops textual affiliations, rather than identities, will allow for a departure to a new paradigm of reading.'[13] By forming textual affiliations between Woolf and various contemporary theorists who have written on issues of sexuality and desire, I hope to show that 'becoming-queer'[14] (like becoming-feminist) involves going beyond oppositional models of identity politics. 'Queering', therefore, is more than an uncovering of marginalised identities; it is about acknowledging, as Erica Delsandro writes, that 'the presence of the queer in literature, history, and culture has come to signify more than "transgressive" sexuality: queering has emerged as the means by which the power of signification and the very idea of identity are interrogated, disrupted, and continuously refigured.'[15] Queering *Orlando* involves both undermining stable identity categories and opening up new conceptualisations of sexuality and desire. This includes the queering of 'queer' itself, a term that Butler reminds us is in *Bodies that Matter* (1993) is there precisely to be 'redeployed, twisted, queered'.[16] Or, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick puts it in *Tendencies* (1994): 'Queer is a continuing moment, movement, motive – recurrent, eddying, *troublant*. The word "queer" itself means across – it comes from the Indo-European root –*twerkw*, which also yields the german *quer* (transverse), Latin *torquere* (to twist), English *athwart*.'[17] Queering enacts a move from categorising noun to continuous, changing verb.

Returning to the above diary entry from Woolf, what is interesting about Braidotti's discussion of Vita and Virginia – and what distinguishes her from the aforementioned critics who discuss their relationship within the discourse of lesbian studies – is the way in which she starts with biographical evidence of Vita's and Virginia's love affair not to emphasise the particular sexual preferences of either, nor to celebrate same-sex relationships or lesbian identities, but to spark a reading that moves

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[13] Tamara Ann Ramsey. 'Producing Queer Affiliations: Feminist, Lesbian, Aesthetic, and Queer Reading Practices.' *Virginia Woolf and Her Influences: Selected Papers from the Seventh Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Laura Davis and Jeanette McVicker. New York: Pace UP, 1998, p.276.

[14] Jeffrey J. Cohen and Todd R. Ramlow. 'Pink Vectors of Deleuze: Queer Theory and Inhumanism.' *Rhizomes* 11/12 (2005/2006), n.pag.

[15] Erica Delsandro. '"Myself – it was impossible": Queering History in *Between the Acts*.' *Woolf Studies Annual* 13 (2007), p.94.

[16] Judith Butler. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. London: Routledge, 1993, p.228.

[17] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. *Tendencies*. London: Routledge, 1994, p.xii.

beyond a concern with pinning down the 'real' lives of Vita and Virginia, or the importance of a specifically 'lesbian' identity.[18] That is, Braidotti does not wish to cement biographical facts or fall back on identity categories, whether queer or otherwise. This chapter therefore follows Braidotti in starting with the materials of (auto)biography precisely to move beyond them, and starting with a real-life same-sex relationship in order to question the subversive potential of such identity positions. In this section, by summarising the key points of Braidotti's discussion of Vita and Virginia and briefly looking at some well-known passages in *Orlando*, I do not wish to shore up the autobiographical influence in Woolf's text, but rather to open the text up to an exploration of what the complex entanglements between Vita, Virginia and the composition of *Orlando* might reveal about a desire and creativity that is, as Braidotti puts it, 'disengaged from the political economy of exchanges regulated by phallocentrism'.[19]

For Braidotti, Woolf's relationship with Vita Sackville-West brought about 'a heightening of sensorial perception, the flowing of deep-seated affinity, of immense compassion'; a process of becoming, in other words, which, she claims 'goes beyond their psychological, amorous and sexual relationship'.[20] When considering the relationship between Vita and Virginia, a crucial aspect for Braidotti is that the category 'same sex' does not sufficiently 'account for the complex and multiple affects, generated in the relation between two beings.' As Braidotti has argued at length elsewhere, any model of sexual difference has to take into account not only the nature of differences between men and women, but the differences that exist within the category 'women' as well as in each individual woman (see chapter 2.1.2). Therefore,

> [t]he fact that Virginia and Vita meet within this category of sexual 'sameness' encourages them to look beyond the delusional aspects of the identity ('woman'), which they are alleged to share. This proliferation of differences between women and within each one of them is evident in the outcomes and the products of their relationship, be it in the literature which Virginia and Vita produced, or in the many social, cultural and

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[18] Karen Kaivola teases out the less fixed sexual identities of Woolf and Vita Sackville-West in 'Virginia Woolf, Vita Sackville-West, and the Question of Sexual Identity'. *Woolf Studies Annual* 4 (1998), 18-40.
[19] Braidotti 2006, p.192.
[20] Braidotti 2006, p.191.

political projects they were engaged in. These included marriages, motherhood and child-rearing, political activism, socializing, campaigning, publishing and working as a publisher, gardening and the pursuit of friendships, or pleasures and of hard work.[21]

Braidotti claims that '[a] polymorphous and highly sexual text such as *Orlando* is the perfect manifesto' for this non-dialectic, variegated entanglement of sexuality 'which is productive of new meanings and definitions.'[22]

In Woolf's novel, Orlando's multitude of encounters over four centuries provide many well-known examples of the proliferation of differences between and within sexual categories, differences that complicate the notion of 'same-sex' desire. The stability of the male/female binary is, for example, continuously challenged by the narrator/biographer's reiteration that Orlando is only classified as male or female because this is what society – and language – expects. As is often noted by critics, when Orlando undergoes sexual metamorphosis there is no immediate feeling of essential difference in identity: 'Orlando looked himself up and down in a long looking-glass, without showing any signs of discomposure […] The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity […] The change seemed to have been accomplished painlessly and completely and in such a way that Orlando herself showed no surprise at it' (O 87). Before the reader's eyes Orlando has changed from a he to a she, a 'himself' to 'herself', yet we are reminded throughout that this classification is an arbitrary one and only 'for conventions sake' (O 87); after the sex-change, Orlando was still 'in a highly ambiguous condition' (O 108) where 'her sex was still in dispute' (O 153). Moreover, even when the narrator/biographer appears to offer a more stable definition of sexual difference, it subtly undermines this very notion, as in the following passage:

> there is much to support the view that it is clothes that wear us and not we them […] That is the view of some philosophers and wise ones, but on the whole, we incline to another. The difference between the sexes is, happily, one of great profundity. Clothes are a

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[21] Braidotti 2006, p.196.
[22] Braidotti 2006, p.196.

symbol of something hid deep beneath. It was a change in Orlando herself that dictated her choice of a woman's dress and of a woman's sex. (O 120-121)

Where the text appears to offer the possibility of essential sexual differences as an alternative to the philosophers' theory, it ironically reinforces their 'wise' argument. For if 'a change in Orlando herself' (Orlando as 'she') can prompt the choice of 'a woman's sex' (also Orlando as 'she') then exactly what type of change has occurred becomes unclear – the change is presented as 'she' becoming 'she', and therefore cannot be linked to a sexual metamorphosis within an oppositional binary framework. As Minow-Pinkney has argued, this 'sentence becomes circular, its first and last phrases coinciding with each other. It is the word and fact of "change" itself that loses its obviousness'. Therefore, the 'vacillation from one sex to another' becomes a change between states which themselves are not fixed or clearly defined.[23] According to Christy Burns' Butlerian reading, it 'points only to the essential instability of essence, the reversibility inscribed within the "truth." What is essential here is to be *without* an essence.'[24] Thus when the courts later attempt to impose an official sex upon Orlando it only emphasises the absurdity of society's need to distinguish based on sexual difference, the question of "truth" doesn't seem to come into it. Orlando's sex becomes what DiBattista terms as a 'legal fiction'.[25]

Rather than reinforcing sexuality as a highly personalised aspect of a fixed sexual identity, for Braidotti *de*personalisation is key in order to keep multiple possibilities in view, a willingness for a positive kind of self-effacement that is not an escape from embodied, material reality but, on the contrary, opens up space for various new encounters and entanglements. Beyond the sexual identities we usually think of as being involved in a love affair, the *intensity* of a love encounter, Braidotti argues, has something to say about the firmness of the boundaries between self and other:

in the love encounter, in intense friendship, in the spiritual experience as in more everyday interpersonal connections, is the necessary premise to the enlargement of one's fields of perception and capacity to experience. In pleasure as in pain, in a secular,

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[23] Minow-Pinkney 1987, p.129.

[24] Christy L Burns. 'Re-dressing feminist identities: Tensions between essential and constructed selves in Virginia Woolf's Orlando.' *Twentieth Century Literature* 40:3 (1994), p.350.

[25] Maria DiBattista. *Virginia Woolf's Major Novels: The Fables of Anon*. London: Yale UP, 1980, p.120.

spiritual, erotic mode that combines at once elements from all these, the decentring and opening up of the individual ego coincides not only with communication with other fellow human beings, but also with a heightening of the intensity of such communication. This shows the advantages of a non-unitary vision of the subject. A depersonalisation of the self, in a gesture of everyday transcendence of the ego, is a connecting force, a binding force that links the self to larger internal and external relations. An isolated vision of the individual is of hindrance to such a process, as […] Virginia Woolf knew all too well.[26]

Such a non-unitary vision of subjectivity is experienced, Braidotti claims, by Vita in her reaction to reading *Orlando*. In her letters to Virginia, we can see that Vita embraces the character of Orlando not through passive self-reflection, but active and affirmative depersonalisation. Consider the following letter from 11 October 1928 when Vita remarks: 'Darling, I don't know and scarcely even like to write so overwhelmed am I, how you could have hung so splendid a garment on so poor a peg. [...] Also, you have invented a new form of narcissism – I confess – I am in love with Orlando – this is a complication I had not foreseen'.[27] For Braidotti this reaction is evidence that

[t]he life that Virginia sees in her is something that Vita herself deeply aspires to. This is nothing to do with narcissistic delight – it is actually a sort of yearning on Vita's part for potential that lies not so much in her, as in the encounter between herself and Virginia. It is simultaneously the slightly ashamed recognition of her own limitations: ('I'm not that good, really!'), and the grateful recognition of what she owes to her lover's passionate enhancement of the life that is in her ('Thank God you saw that in me!').[28]

This reaction highlights the inadequacy of the relation, as it is conceived in psychoanalysis, between 'the empirical level (the real-life Vita) and its symbolic representation (the leading character in *Orlando*)' to account for the 'intense transformation that takes place around the field of forces that is activated by Virginia and

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[26] Braidotti 2006, p.197.
[27] Vita Sackville-West. *The Letters of Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf*, ed. Louise DeSalvo and Mitchell A. Leaska. New York: Morrow, 1985, p.288-289.
[28] Braidotti 2006, p.195.

Vita'.[29] The letters themselves are neither empirical biographical documents, nor symbolic fictional representations: 'The space of the letters is an in-between, a third party that does not fully coincide with either Virginia or Vita. It rather frames the space of their relationship. Read with Deleuze, it is a space of becoming.'[30]

The allusion to Deleuze in relation to Woolf is crucial, and speaks to my discussion in chapter two of Woolf's androgyny and Deleuze's becoming-woman (see section 2.1.3), as well as my more detailed discussion below of desire in *Orlando*. Braidotti emphasises this connection between Woolf and Deleuze and its influence on her thoughts on sexuality and desire in an interview with Rutvica Andrijasevic in August 2006 in Lodz, Poland:

> I start from the idea that sexuality means relations, which are actualized in encounters. It's a matter of who, what, when, and where trigger the desire. This can be due to a thousand different modalities. Desire is not just about the choice of object, the sex or gender of the person involved. It has to do with the broader picture: the quality of the light at the moment of the meeting, the temperature of the air, and of course the hormonal level…What I am interested in talking about are the ways of destabilizing the categories of identity while regrounding them in a cartographic account of how actual instances of desire emerge. As I see it, they always emerge contextually, or territorially; they always emerge with a background; they always emerge rhizomatically across an infinite field of intensities of all kinds. Gilles Deleuze and Virginia Woolf write beautifully about this. For example, when Virginia Woolf writes about Vita Sackville-West, it's always about the organization of space around her incredibly attractive legs and the elongated shape of her aristocratic face. A loved face is a landscape of desire, so it is about your "object" of desire, but fundamentally it's about something else – it is pure acceleration or speed. [31]

Braidotti's Deleuzian/Woolfian inspired desire is profoundly 'apersonal' and therefore in *Orlando* desire 'does not coincide at all with the individual biographies of the protagonists' but 'actively reinvents them as they rewrite each other's lives, intervening

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[29] Braidotti 2006, p.195.
[30] Braidotti 2006, p.192.
[31] Braidotti 2011 [1994], p.289. In a summary of this event see 'Transformative Thresholds: Braidotti, Butler & the Ethics of Relation.' *Mute: Culture and Politics After The Net.* 2006 (http://www.metamute.org/en/node/8508).

energetically in its course.'[32] It is not simply that Orlando has become Vita, but that Vita becomes Orlando; what we find is less the autobiographical in the fiction, and more the fictionalisation of autobiography:

> Vita herself does justice to this process by accepting to become other than she is, engaging with great generosity with her own reflected image […] she becomes a mere reader and not the main star of the process of becoming-Orlando […] she displays surprising skills of adaptation by letting her narcissicm be gratified – 'I love myself as Orlando!' – but simulatenously blown to smithereens, not only in the sense of 'I will never have been as fascinating and complex as Orlando', but also 'Orlando is the literary creation of a woman who is much greater than I will ever be!'[33]

In other words, Vita transforms negative into positive in an 'ethical moment' which rejects both nihilism and an 'ascetic withdrawal from the world of negativity'. It is through 'shameful recognition of her failing' and 'destitution of the ego' that she charges the intensity that shapes their encounter.[34]

What we are given by Braidotti is a theory of desire as radically immanent, energised by a materialist 'polymorphous vitalism' that acts as 'a sort of geometry, a geology, and a meteorology of forces that gather round the actors (V & V), but do not fully coincide with them.'[35] This 'polymorphous vitalism' is important when considering a queering of *Orlando* in that it offers a theory of sexuality and desire which departs from psychoanalytic models founded on lack, is disentangled from identity politics and does not rely on a unified vision of the subject – all issues I will be returning to in relation to Deleuze in the following sections of this chapter. It should be noted here that Braidotti does not much use the word 'queer' in her work because of its association with a certain brand of identity politics, and the potential conflicts, as she sees it, of some aspects of queer theory to her nomadic feminism founded on embodied sexual difference. Whilst I share these concerns (the reason why I emphasise that this chapter is interested in a 'queering' rather than queer *Orlando*) and yet also see some problems in Braidotti's

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[32] Braidotti 2006, p.194.
[33] Braidotti 2006, p.197.
[34] Braidotti 2006, p.198.
[35] Braidotti 2006, p.191.

model of sexual difference (discussed in section 2.1.2), Braidotti's reading of Vita and Virginia in *Transpositions*, and her view of sexuality and desire, I suggest, goes beyond the limitations of both positions. Braidotti herself clarified her openness to 'queering' in the 2006 interview with Andrijasevic: 'It is absolutely true that my nomadic subject is very compatible with queering practices, so long as we agree on the terms and the structure of the exercise. Sexuality for me is not linguistically mediated, but rather an embodied practice of experimentation with multiple relations in an affirmative manner.'[36] Therefore, she adds, 'I would agree to talk about queer, if by queer we mean a verb, a process, and not a brand of identity politics.'[37] What Claire Colebrook has recently termed 'queer vitalism' may employ 'queer' as an adjective rather than a verb, but it might also have something to add to the Deleuzian/Woofian vitalism Braidotti describes. Queer vitalism involves the potential lines of flight from majoritarian politics towards a becoming-minoritarian, where part of this process is to 'approach the world as the unfolding of events' rather than see 'bodies in their general recognisable form, *as* this or that ongoing and unified entity'.[38] A queer/polymorphous vitalism lifts us out of a sexual politics which plays social constructivists off against biological determinists, where 'the relations between terms are neither exclusive (either male *or* female, either social/political *or* genetic, either real *or* constructed) nor transcendent (where such terms organise and differentiate life, and do so on the basis of some grounding value, whether that be genetics, reproduction, liberty or the human).'[39] Queering vitalism is to acknowledge differences on a molar scale, but to refuse to settle into identity groupings (whether constructed by social factors or biology) and instead 'signal[s] the positive potentialities from which groups were formed: there could only be lesbian women because certain differences are possible (such as sexual difference, and difference in orientation), but that would then lead to further and further difference, not only to each individual but within each individual.'[40]

Throughout the remainder of this chapter my 'queering' is an attempt to find new patterns of desire in *Orlando* which include an array of nonhuman as well as human

[36] Braidotti 2011 [1994], p.291.
[37] Braidotti 2011 [1994], p. 293.
[38] Claire Colebrook. 'Queer Vitalism.' *New Formations* 68 (2009), p.83.
[39] Colebrook 2009, p.84.
[40] Colebrook 2009, p.86.

elements, and which do not settle into identity groupings. By grounding my focus on nonhuman objects Orlando engages with – for example rings and motor-cars – I hope to move towards the kind of 'post-anthropocentric theory of both desire and love' that Braidotti claims is required 'in order to do justice to the complexity of subjects of becoming': 'In an intensive encounter that mobilizes the sheer quality of the light and the shape of the landscape […] non-human cosmic elements in the creation of a space of becoming. This indicates that desire designs a whole territory and thus cannot be restricted to the mere human *persona* that enacts it.'[41] As examples of this queering, Vita and Virginia 'activate a process of becoming which goes beyond their psychological, amorous and sexual relationship. Something much more elemental, rawer, is at stake'.[42] 'Call it falling in love,' Braidotti writes, 'if you wish, but […] if falling in love it is, it is disengaged from the human subject that is wrongly held responsible for the event'.[43] Vita and Virginia may be entangled in a love story, but this story involves much more than the coming together of two individual women. As Braidotti states: 'Two is quite a crowd, when one is a multiple, complex and depersonalised entity to begin with.'[44] Whether we think of Orlando's relationships, or of Vita and Virginia, they are only 'accidental lovers'[45] entangled in a love affair that is 'not entirely Virginia's or Vita's or my own, or yours […] You can only share in the composition […] in the company of others.'[46]

3.2 Queer/ring Love

Whilst in the previous section I looked at the relationship that most influenced the composition of *Orlando*, on first reading of Woolf's mock-biography one could argue that within the text itself, after Orlando's sex-change and various lovers, the love story ultimately becomes a conventional one, with the meeting of Orlando and Shelmerdine quickly resulting in marriage (and later a child). Indeed, this aspect of Woolf's mock-

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[41] Braidotti 2006, p.197.
[42] Braidotti 2006, p.191.
[43] Braidotti 2006, p.197.
[44] Braidotti 2006, p.195. This echoes Deleuze and Guattari's opening sentences to *A Thousand Plateaus*: 'The two of us wrote Anti-Oedipus together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd.' Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.3.
[45] Cf. Braidotti's insistence in *Nomadic Subjects* that sexual difference is rooted in anatomy: 'Sexual difference is ontological, not accidental […] the process of construction of femininity fastens and builds upon anatomical realities [..] sexual difference is a fact.' Braidotti 1994, p.186.
[46] Braidotti 2006, p.194-195.

biography even irritated Vita Sackville-West, despite the otherwise positive impact reading it had on her. In a letter to Harold Nicolson on 12th October 1928 she criticised Woolf for

> making Orlando 1) marry 2) have a child. Shelmerdine does not really contribute anything either to Orlando's character or to the problems of the story (except as a good joke at the expense of the Victorian passion for marriage) and as for the child it contributes less than nothing, but even strikes a rather false note. Marriage and motherhood would either modify or destroy Orlando, as a character: they do neither.[47]

Most critics are more sympathetic to Woolf's choice to marry Orlando and Shelmerdine, either playing on the humour that Sackville-West concedes and siding with Adam Parkes' view that Woolf 'mocks heterosexual romance' by making the marriage and childbirth 'relatively unremarkable features on the landscape of Orlando's journey through history',[48] or alternatively following Bowlby's suggestion that after exploring 'the interchangability in theory of masculine and feminine sexes' it might point 'to the actual dominance of the masculine and its construction of a femininity in or as its own image'.[49] Whilst highlighting certain passages which could be said to encapsulate these claims, in this section I will go on to suggest that Orlando's marriage does not only serve as mockery of heterosexual institutions or love, or as a reminder of the very real patriarchal dominance after the theoretical playfulness of sex; rather it is precisely and paradoxically through Orlando's marriage that Woolf points towards a subversion of the heteronormative frameworks of sexuality. That is, this more conventional aspect of Woolf's text could actually be a more (or at least as) crucial site of subversion than Orlando's sex-change and various lovers.[50]

　　As a traditional symbol of heteronormative union, rings are central to *Orlando*'s exploration of sexuality and desire in the context of engagement and marriage. This is evident when, following a 'repulsive' (O 155) moment in which Orlando writes 'the most

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[47] Cited in Madeline Moore (ed.). 'Orlando: An Edition of the Manuscript.' *Twentieth Century Literature* 25:3/4 (1979), p.349.
[48] Adam Parkes. 'Lesbianism, History, and Censorship: The Well of Loneliness and the Suppressed Randiness of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*.' *Twentieth Century Literature* 40:4 (1994), p.450.
[49] Bowlby 1997, p.53.
[50] For a discussion of *Orlando* and convention see Caughie 1991, p.77-84.

insipid verse she had ever read in her life' (O 154), her body undergoes an 'extraordinary tingling and vibration' that reaches her 'toes' and 'marrow'. The description is more than suggestive of an erotic, polymorphous and vital experience, as we are told that '[s]he had the queerest sensations about her thigh bones. Her hairs seemed to erect themselves. Her arms sang and twanged' (O 155). But just when these vibrations appear to be reaching their climax, we learn that the sensation is located not so much in Orlando's physiology as it is in an external object: 'all this agitation seemed at length to concentrate in her hands; and then in one hand, and then in one finger of that hand, and then finally to contract itself so that it made a ring of quivering sensibility about the second finger of the left hand.' Finally it is revealed to be 'nothing but the vast solitary emerald which Queen Elizabeth had given her' (O 155). At first the 'second finger' with the ring on it is ambiguous, as it could indicate the middle finger (second finger after the thumb) or wedding finger (if counted from the other side), but by the time Orlando questions 'was that not enough? […] It was worth ten thousand pounds at least', the reader is aware that it is the former, and the wedding finger is ring-less:

> The vibration seemed, in the oddest way (but remember we are dealing with some of the darkest manifestations of the human soul) to say No, that is not enough; and, further, to assume a note of interrogation, as though it were asking, what did it mean, this hiatus, this strange oversight? till poor Orlando felt positively ashamed of the second finger of her left hand without in the least knowing why. (O 155)

The absence of a ring on her wedding finger is reinforced when Bartholomew, the housekeeper, appears and Orlando becomes conscious of something 'she had never noticed before – a thick ring of rather jaundiced yellow circling the third finger where her own was bare'. The importance given to this jaundiced ring is gently mocked as we witness Bartholemew's exaggerated reaction to Orlando's attempts to remove it:

> Bartholomew made as if she had been struck in the breast by a rogue. She started back a pace or two, clenched her hand and flung it away from her with a gesture that was noble in the extreme. "No," she said, with resolute dignity, her Ladyship might look if she pleased, but as for taking off her wedding ring, not the Archbishop nor the Pope nor

> Queen Victoria on her throne could force her to do that. Her Thomas had put it on her finger twenty-five years, six months, three weeks ago; she had slept in it; worked in it; washed in it; prayed in it; and proposed to be buried in it. In fact, Orlando understood her to say, but her voice was much broken with emotion, that it was by the gleam on her wedding ring that she would be assigned her station among the angels and its lustre would be tarnished for ever if she left it out of her keeping for a second. (O 156)

Orlando is 'amazed' by the importance placed upon this ring in this Victorian era to the extent that '[i]t now seemed to her that the whole world was ringed with gold.' At dinner 'rings abounded', at church they 'were everywhere' (O 156).

To be sure, beauty is not the reason for this obsession with rings, but their symbolic attachment to marriage: 'thin, thick, plain, smooth, they glowed dully on every hand. Rings filled the jewellers' shops, not the flashing pastes and diamonds of Orlando's recollection, but simple bands without a stone in them'. A significant detail here in relation to this current chapter's focus on desire is that Orlando notices that these rings coincide with a more reserved public display of sexuality: meeting 'a boy trifling with a girl under a hawthorn hedge' has now been replaced by couples who 'trudged and plodded in the middle of the road' (O 156). Woolf clearly satirises this restrained behaviour:

> Often it was not till the horses' noses were on them that they budged, and then, though they moved it was all in one piece, heavily, to the side of the road. Orlando could only suppose that some new discovery had been made about the race; that they were somehow stuck together, couple after couple, but who had made it, and when, she could not guess. It did not seem to be Nature. She looked at the doves and the rabbits and the elkhounds and she could not see that Nature had changed her ways or mended them, since the time of Elizabeth at least.

Such is the pervasive nature of this Victorian preoccupation with marriage and decency, Orlando comes to the swift conclusion that '[t]here was nothing for it but to buy one of those ugly bands and wear it like the rest' (O 157) and then, following another failed attempt at writing, 'to yield completely and submissively to the spirit of the age, and take

a husband' (O 158). Importantly, marriage is not held out as natural, and Orlando's decision to get married is itself 'against her natural temperament' (O 158).

One thing that seems to concern Orlando in the above passages is the way in which marriage and the vibrancy of sexuality are conceived as mutually exclusive – this is reinforced both in the way that Orlando's experience of the 'queerest sensations' is de-eroticised by the ring that reminds her of the one absent from her wedding finger, and also in the mocking of restrained public coupling at the expense of a quickie 'under a hawthorn hedge'. This concern is succinctly captured when Orlando recalls her previous desire for '"Life! A Lover!" not "Life! A Husband!"' Her pursuit of a lover led her to go 'to town and run about the world' but the 'antipathetic' nineteenth century replaces 'Lover' with 'Husband' and 'batters down' such desires. Her body is now far from vibrancy, 'dragged down by the weight of the crinoline which she had submissively adopted. It was heavier and more drab than any dress she had yet worn. None had ever so impeded her movements'. Where earlier Orlando experienced an 'extraordinary tingling and vibration' in her toes, marrow and thigh bones, now her 'muscles had lost their pliancy' (O 158). But Orlando does not obey convention for long, as in one paragraph her thoughts of loneliness and the need to find a Husband to lean upon 'bore her down unescapably', and in the next she seems to have recaptured her bodily vibrations and sensations: 'some strange ecstasy came over her. Some wild notion she had of following the birds to the rim of the world and flinging herself on the spongy turf'. Orlando now 'quickened her pace; she ran; she tripped; the tough heather roots flung her to the ground. Her ankle was broken. She could not rise' (O 160). Even though Orlando's movements once again appear to have been 'impeded' (O 158), her 'ecstasy' has not entirely disappeared: 'she lay content. The scent of the bog myrtle and meadow-sweet was in her nostrils. The rooks' hoarse laughter was in her ears. "I have found my mate," she murmured. "it is the moor. I am nature's bride," she whispered, giving herself in rapture to the cold embraces of the grass as she lay' (O160-161) As Orlando lays on the grass where her 'forehead will be cool always' and anticipates (erotic?) 'wild dreams' while 'slipping [the ring] from her finger', we seem to be witnessing an outright rejection of marriage. This is a moment of heightened sensation when Orlando looks up at the clouds and sees 'camels' and 'mountains' and hears 'goat bells ringing'. But just as the

vibrations that ran through her toes, marrow and bones return now as 'the heart in the middle of the earth', these turn out to be, of course, 'the trot of a horses hoofs' carrying Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, Esquire to whom Orlando becomes engaged '[a] few minutes later' (O 162). It is here, then, at the very moment when the rejection of the desire for marriage appears to be most obvious that she decides that she will in fact get engaged. The crucial point I would like to make, and the reason I read this passage as entirely in keeping with Woolf's disruption of sexual and gendered identities in *Orlando*, is that meeting and then marrying Shelmerdine allows Orlando to move beyond a concern with the opposition between 'Lover' and 'Husband', an opposition designed to uphold societal conventions with regard to sexuality. This is hinted at when we are told that Orlando did not actually learn of her new fiancé's name until the morning after their first night together 'as they sat at breakfast'. Orlando neither accepts the replacement of 'Husband' for 'Lover' nor rejects the idea of a husband entirely, refusing to uphold the opposition between the terms, and therefore refusing to submit to a conceptualisation of love that fully obeys the conventions of the time.

Therefore, whilst it may initially seem as though the Victorian age gets the better of her, by the time Orlando gets married the ring does not symbolise union in the way it is depicted in the Victorian period of the novel – plodding down the middle of the street together – but rather signals a speed and intensity: 'She had been about to say, when Basket and Bartholemew interrupted with the tea things, nothing changes. And then, in the space of three seconds and a half, everything had changed […] There was the wedding ring on her finger to prove it' (O 172). On the one hand the ring is the centre-piece of the satire in the passages that follow, as Orlando now takes care 'lest it should slip past the joint of her finger' (O 172) and 'doubts' are expressed about what marriage means (O 173), but on the other hand Orlando is now able to write, having performed a delicate negotiation and passed the 'examination successfully' of her time (O 174). The metaphor she draws in the description of her negotiation with her age is revealing in both its lightness and seriousness: she now performed

> a deep obeisance to the spirit of her age, such as – to compare great things with small – a
> traveller, conscious that he has a bundle of cigars in the corner of his suit case, makes to

the customs officer who has obligingly made a scribble of white chalk on the lid. For she was extremely doubtful whether, if the spirit had examined the contents of her mind carefully, it would not have found something highly contraband for which she would have had to pay the full fine. (O 174)

What seems like a light-hearted comparison of course has a stark realism when we consider that the year in which the novel is now set, 1928, is a time when homosexuality was a criminal offence and also the year of the obscenity trial of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) (with Woolf being one of those writers who appeared in court in support of the book's publication) – the material realities of the 'present moment' (O 195) are brought to the fore. Like Lily in *To the Lighthouse*, Orlando escapes Victorian stricture 'by skin of her teeth' (TL 200; O 174), just as Woolf narrowly avoids the censors with *Orlando*.[51] But where Lily rejects marriage outright in *To the Lighthouse*, Orlando realises that, as Lily herself thinks in relation to her painting, opposition is an inadequate design (see section 2.2.5). Orlando's wedding ring, then, is a distinctly queer ring; if it symbolises anything it is a queering of love and of desire.

By making Orlando marry, Woolf not only shows how pervasive the societal customs were of the time but reconceptualises marriage in a way that creates a space for desire – including her writing – to flourish. That is, Orlando does not conform to the heteronormative rules of marriage, nor does she allow her own sexuality to be thought in direct opposition to marriage (and therefore negatively defined against heteronormativity). As Parkes comments, Orlando 'finds that a wedding ring is the only cure for the "tingling and twangling" that afflicts her left finger in the nineteenth century. As it turns out, the union with Shelmerdine could not have been more appropriate, for his sexual identity is as unstable as Orlando's', which is of course highlighted by the well-known exchange between them: "You're a woman, Shel!" she cried./ "You're a man, Orlando!" he cried" (O 164). Or as Burns writes, '[a]lthough she conforms by virtue of marrying Shelmerdine, Orlando resists the particular demands of Victorian marriage and womanly roles. She finds that she has conformed just enough to slip by unnoticed in the

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[51] For more on *The Well of Loneliness* trial and *Orlando*'s escape from the censors see Parkes 1994.

age, while she may also maintain a resistance to further constraint.'[52] What Woolf manages to do so skilfully through her queering of love and of those 'queerest sensations' is to disentangle them from an oppositional framework and instead emphasise intensity. Interestingly, this chimes with a particular remark Woolf herself makes in a letter to Molly McCarthy as early as 1912, where she describes moving from an 'ideal' of marriage to a rejection of it before finally seeing a third way of thinking about it: 'I began life with a tremendous, absurd, ideal of marriage, then my bird's eye view of many marriages disgusted me, and I thought I must be asking what was not to be had. But that has passed too. Now I only ask for someone to make me vehement, and then I'll marry him!' (L1 492).

The question of whether or not the choice to marry necessarily conflicts with a subversive, nonheteronormative conceptualisation of love and desire is something Deleuze remarks upon in his 'Letter to a Harsh Critic' – a wonderfully sarcastic letter Deleuze wrote in response to Michel Cressole, who had contacted Deleuze whilst preparing publication of a highly critical book on him. After being accused by Cressole of being 'domestically trapped' because he was married and had children, Deleuze notes that what he calls 'nonoedipal love' is not simply a superficial rejection of social-familial structures, but comes about through 'experimenting on yourself' and 'opening yourself up to love and desire'. In other words to be married is not, *per se*, the problem, nor, as Deleuze stresses, is it about creating counter-categories: 'Non-oedipal love is pretty hard work. And you should know that it's not enough just to be unmarried, not to have kids, to be gay, or belong to this or that group, in order to get round the Oedipus complex':[53]

> We have to counter people who think "I'm this, I'm that," and who do so, moreover, in *psychoanalytic* terms (relating everything to their childhood or fate), by thinking in strange, fluid, unusual terms: I don't know what I am – I'd have to investigate and experiment with so many things in a non-narcissistic, non-oedipal way – no gay can ever definitively say "I'm gay." It's not a question of being this or that sort of human […] but unraveling your body's human organization, exploring this or that zone of bodily

[52] Burns 1994, p.355.
[53] Deleuze 1995, p.10.

intensity, with everyone discovering their own particular zones, and the groups, populations, species that inhabit them.[54]

In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari reinforce this point:

> It is a lie to claim to liberate sexuality, and to demand its rights to objects, aims, and sources, all the while maintaining the corresponding flows within the limits of an Oedipal code (conflict, regression, resolution, sublimation of Oedipus) […] no "gay liberation movement" is possible as long as homosexuality is caught up in a relation of exclusive disjunction with heterosexuality […] instead of bringing to light their reciprocal inclusion and their transverse communication in the decoded flows of desire (included disjunctions, local connections, nomadic conjunctions). In short, sexual repression, more insistent than ever, will surivive all the publications, demonstrations, emancipations, and protests concerning the liberty of sexual objects, sources, and aims, as long as sexuality is kept – consciously or not – within narcissistic, Oedipal, and castrating co-ordinates[.][55]

For Deleuze and Guattari we cannot judge subversiveness simply based on whether someone is married and heterosexual, unmarried and homosexual, or even presumably, married and homosexual or bisexual. What is important is the particular conceptualisation of desire at play, and they point to another modernist author, Lawrence, as exemplary in exposing 'the poverty of the immutable identical images, the figurative roles that are so many tourniquets cutting off the flows of sexuality: "fiancée, mistress, wife, mother" – one could just as easily add "homosexuals, heterosexuals," etc. – all these roles are distributed by the Oedipal triangle, father-mother-me'.[56] We might think of Woolf, I argue, as also challenging these 'figurative roles', and in the following section I will

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[54] Deleuze 1995, p.11. Deleuze's 'I'm this, I'm that' here echoes a phrase from *Mrs Dalloway* which Deleuze and Guattari draw attention to in *A Thousand Plateaus* and their discussion of haecceity: 'Never again will Mrs. Dalloway say to herself "I am this, I am that; he is this, he is that."' See section 5.5 of this thesis.

[55] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p.384.

[56] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p.385. For an insightful discussion of Lawrence and Deleuze see Anneleen Masschelein. '"Rip the veil of the old vision across, and walk through the rent": Reading D. H. Lawrence with Deleuze and Guattari.' *Modernism and Theory: A Critical Debate*, ed. Stephen Ross. New York: Routledge, 2009: 23-39.

focus more closely on the ways in which queering *Orlando* moves beyond a politics of identity and a desire founded on lack.

3.3 'Hail! natural desire!'

'many variations can be played on the theme of sex, and with such happy results'[57]

According to Deleuze and Guattari, understanding sexuality through identifications with nouns such as 'homosexual', 'heterosexual' and 'bisexual' confines desire within molar categories of identity, and defines it in relation to a majoritarian standard: '[Sexuality] is badly explained by the binary organization of the sexes, and just as badly by a bisexual organization within each sex. Sexuality brings into play too great a diversity of conjugated becomings, these are like *n* sexes'.[58] A similar frustration with the limitation of categorising desire in this way is evident in Woolf's observations on 'Perversion', noted in a letter to Ethel Smyth on the 15th August, 1930: 'Where people mistake, as I think, is in perpetually narrowing and naming these immensely composite and wide flung passions – driving stakes through them, herding them between screens. But how do you define 'Perversity'? What is the line between friendship and perversion?' (L4 200). In this chapter I have been suggesting that in the relationships that brought about its composition as well as those within the text itself, *Orlando* not only challenges binary frameworks of sexuality but attempts a reformulation of desire based on molecular connections rather than molar identities. Such a queering of *Orlando*, I argue, involves what Verena Conley has referred to as a particularly Deleuzian form of 'vital desire that experiments with innumerable sexualities'.[59] As Deleuze and Guattari emphasise in *Anti-Oedipus*, desire is 'apprehended below the minimum conditions of identity'[60] and consists of 'inclusive disjunctions, nomadic conjunctions: everywhere a microscopic

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[57] Virginia Woolf. 'Old Bloomsbury.' *Moments of Being*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind. London: Pimlico, 2002 [1976]: 43-61.
[58] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.307. 'Making love is not just becoming as one, or even two, but becoming as a hundred thousand. Desiring-machines or the nonhuman sex [later]: not one or even two sexes, but *n* sexes.' Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p. 325.
[59] Verena Andermatt Conley. 'Thirty-six Thousand Forms of Love: The Queering of Deleuze and Guattari.' *Deleuze and Queer Theory*, ed. Chrysanthi Nigianni and Merl Storr. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, p.26. Nonetheless, Conley does point to potential limitations of Deleuze here, and how some of their thoughts have perhaps become out-dated (34).
[60] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p.385.

transsexuality'.[61] It is also worth noting that their explanation of this microscopic transsexuality – as 'resulting in the woman containing as many men as the man, and the man as many women, all capable of entering – men with women, women with men – into relations of production of desire that overturn the statistical order of the sexes'[62] – echoes my reading of Woolf's androgyny in *A Room of One's Own* which I discussed the previous chapter (see section 2.1.3).

Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualisation of desire, then, is positive and productive – as simple as the creation of aggregates or contexts[63] – and always invested in the social field.[64] As Tamsin Lorraine has recently put it:

> Deleuze and Guattari present us with the provocative possibility that desire does not have to be about what a personal self wants, but could be about connecting with the world, making things happen, and experiencing what happens in ways that defy subject/object and self/other dichotomies. […] On Deleuze and Guattari's view, a personal self or identity as a totalised point of origin to which to refer all desire operates as a kind of stranglehold on the individual and the capacities it could unfold as well as […] block off intensification of other tendencies insisting in me[.][65]

Opposed to psychoanalytic structures of repression and lack, desire is disengaged from a typical subject/object negotiation: 'From the moment that we place desire on the side of acquisition, we make desire an idealistic (dialectical, nihilistic) conception, which causes us to look upon it as primarily a lack: a lack of an object, a lack of the real object.'[66] Contrary to this model, Deleuze and Guattari are insistent that desire is not structured as part of a three-tiered framework of desire, pleasure and lack as psychoanalysis, broadly speaking, would have it: 'If desire produces, its product is real […] Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the *subject* that is missing in desire, or

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[61] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p.325.

[62] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p.325.

[63] See Deleuze and Parnet 2011 [1996]. Deleuze emphasises this simplicity of desire as assembling as the point of discussion for the letter 'D'.

[64] For more on this, including a discussion of mis-readings of Deleuze's conceptualisation of desire by Judith Butler among others, see Smith 2004, p.646-647; 650. See Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*. New York: Columbia UP, 1999 [1987], p.214–15.

[65] Tamsin Lorraine. 'Feminist Lines of Flight from the Majoritarian Subject.' *Deleuze Studies* 2: Issue Supplement (2008), p.75.

[66] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p.26.

desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject unless there is repression. Desire and its object are one and the same thing'. Desire is consequently 'not bolstered by needs, but rather the contrary; needs are derived from desire: they are counterproducts within the real that desire produces. Lack is a countereffect of desire'.[67]

In the first two chapters of *Orlando* desire is linked to the majoritarian will to possess and gain status. In the first appearance of the term 'desire' in the text, the biographer remarks that Orlando is destined to climb the social/professional hierarchy with ease: 'From deed to deed, from glory to glory, from office to office he must go, his scribe following after, till they reach what ever seat it may be that is the height of their desire. Orlando, to look at, was cut out precisely for some such career' (O 4). Later, it is repeated that Orlando had a '[d]esire of Fame' (O 48) and Orlando's 'desire to make [Nick Greene's] acquaintance' (O 50) is based on this. But in chapter three of *Orlando*, and, perhaps significantly, after the sex change has taken place, we begin to see an overt challenge to this desire to attain, possess or control. This is seen when the narrator describes how '[n]o passion is stronger in the breast of man than the desire to make others believe as he believes. Nothing so cuts at the root of his happiness and fills him with rage as the sense that another rates low what he prizes high' (O 94). One example of this is in political allegiances – a macro politics based on molar parties: 'Whigs and Tories, Liberal party and Labour party – for what do they battle except their own prestige? It is not love of truth, but desire to prevail that sets quarter against quarter and makes parish desire the downfall of parish' (O 94). Several pages later we see a further, and more direct, challenging of the 'desire to prevail'. This example is clearly linked to Orlando's new position as a woman, with an outsiders view of the majoritarian rule:

> She remembered how, as a young man, she had insisted that women must be obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely apparelled. "Now I shall have to pay in my own person for those desires," she reflected; "for women are not (judging by my own short experience of the sex) obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely apparelled by nature. They can only attain these graces, without which they may enjoy none of the delights of life, by the most tedious discipline". (O 99)

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[67] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p.28.

In a further passage, when the narrator begins to describe what happens when Nell, Prue, Kitty and Rose join Orlando 'round the punch-bowl' to share 'fine tales' and 'amusing observations' (O 140), the desire of the (male) subject wishing to obtain an object even extends to the desire to possess desire itself:

> it cannot be denied that when women get together – but hist – they are always careful to see that the doors are shut and that not a word of it gets into print. All they desire is – but hist again – is that not a man's step on the stair? All they desire, we were about to say when the gentleman took the very words out of our mouths. Women have no desires, says this gentleman, coming into Nell's parlour; only affectations. Without desires (she has served him and he is gone) their conversation cannot be of the slightest interest to anyone. "It is well known," says Mr. S. W., "that when they lack the stimulus of the other sex, women can find nothing to say to each other. When they are alone, they do not talk; they scratch." (O 140-141)

The stuttering syntax here is gradually – first with a 'step of the stair', then entering the parlour, and finally through the direct speech of Mr S. W. – taken over by men who will not allow that women have desires of their own.

But whilst the men succeed in silencing the women in this particular passage, Orlando has already moved beyond a majoritarian appropriation of desire; in an earlier passage we see the beginnings of a reconceptualisation of desire as she reflects that it is '"better to leave the rule and discipline of the world to others; better to be quit of martial ambition, the love of power, and all the other manly desires" if so one can more fully enjoy the most exalted raptures known to the human spirit" (O 102-103). Named as one of these 'exalted raptures', 'love' is then opposed to 'manly desires' (O 103). Rather than being about the wished acquisition by the subject of an object, the frustrated attempt to satiate the lack, Orlando promotes a letting go, an affirmative dispossession of the object of desire, and an appreciation for what it is in itself – the 'exalted rapture' brought about by the creation of new minoritarian connections. By the final chapter this is more fully realised, and desire is conceived as a joyful interruption of patriarchal Empire-building:

Hail! natural desire! Hail! happiness! divine happiness! and pleasure of all sorts, flowers and wine, though one fades and the other intoxicates; and half-crown tickets out of London on Sundays, and singing in a dark chapel hymns about death, and anything, anything that interrupts and confounds the tapping of typewriters and filing of letters and forging of links and chains, binding the Empire together[.] (O 192)

In this passage there is no subjective 'I' controlling desire, illustrating Deleuze and Guattari's aforementioned claim that 'the *subject* that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject […] Desire and its object are one and the same thing'. Objects, clearly named in this passage, are not lacking, yet are not possessed either; desire is precisely that which escapes 'filing', 'binding' and 'chains'. *Orlando* hints at more than just a critique or opposition to majoritarian desire, but a reconceptualisation of it - a minoritarian desire that has something in common, perhaps, with the type of desire Jessica Berman sees in *Orlando* following the sex change, where it 'becomes the principle of affiliation not in terms of a strict one-to-one, lover/beloved arrangement, but in a more open-ended social relationship'. [68] In the next section I will discuss the ways in which this more social, minoritarian model of desire opens onto Orlando's history.

3.4 A History of Bedrooms

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari themselves comment on Woolf's *Orlando* as operating 'by blocks, blocks of ages, blocks of epochs, blocks of the kingdoms of nature, blocks of sexes, forming so many becomings between things, or so many lines of deterritorialization'.[69] The emphasis is placed on a particular form of history in becoming, therefore as well as those passages in the novel in which we can find specific allusions to autobiographical happenings, or which consider domestic and marital relations between characters, Deleuze and Guattari draw attention to the fact that Woolf sets the novel over four centuries, engaging with a range of factual and fantastical detail. As Monaco puts it in her reading of *Orlando*, 'Woolf practices a kind of hyperbolic historical materialism: she draws a sweeping and vivifying outline of "moments" of cultural change in England over the course of three centuries and fills them with material

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[68] Berman 2001, p.134.
[69] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.324.

detail.'[70] I would add that Woolf's theorising of desire in *Orlando* is bound up with this 'hyperbolic historical materialism'. Woolf emphasises the materiality of theory where the becoming-queer of *Orlando* is also the becoming of history:

> through its loves and sexuality […] the libido is continually re-creating History, continents, kingdoms, races, and cultures […] our choices in matters of love are at the crossroads of "vibrations", which is to say that they express connections, disjunctions, and conjunctions of flows that cross through a society, entering and leaving it, linking it up with other societies, ancient or contemporary, remote or vanished, dead or yet to be born […] The desiring sexual relationships of man and woman (or of man and man, or woman and woman) are the index of social relationships between people. Love and sexuality are the exponents or the indicators, this time unconscious, of the libidinal investments of the social field. Every loved or desired being serves as a collective agent of enunciation. And it is certainly not, as Freud believed, the libido that must be desexualised and sublimated in order to invest society and its flows; on the contrary, it is love, desire, and their flows that manifest the directly social character of the nonsublimated libido and its sexual investments.[71]

Desire is always already social, and history, as Deleuze and Guattari make clear in *What is Philosophy?*, is important to the creation of the 'new' that is becoming, but never determinate or *a priori*: 'History today still designates only the set of conditions, however recent they may be, from which one turns away in order to become, that is to say, in order to create something new. […] How could something come from history? Without history, becoming would remain indeterminate and unconditioned, but becoming is not historical'.[72] What we find in *Orlando* is a desire and a history filled with molecular events. As Monaco emphasises, '*Orlando* fashions, in effect, a historiography of flows […] bodies, words, weather, buildings and vegetation through which the advancement of distinct epochs of the British Empire are mediated'.[73] Monaco is referring here to the well-known passage in *Orlando* when, 'the strokes sounded, the cloud increased, and she

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[70] Monaco 2008, p.156.
[71] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p.386.
[72] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson. London: Verso, 1994, p.96.
[73] Monaco 2008, p.157.

saw it darken and spread with extraordinary speed […] with the twelfth stroke of midnight, the darkness was complete. A turbulent welter of cloud covered the city. All was darkness; all was doubt; all was confusion. The Eighteenth century was over; the Nineteenth century had begun' (O 145). This passage creates 'an arena where everything is given agency'; the particular moment in all its historical specificity is an accident of intermingling agencies: 'in *Orlando* history is not just something we write and authorise, but something which acts for, and which changes, itself. History is a multiplicity, the whole nature of which changes with each localised modification.'[74]

The affirmation of desire, and of history, as multiplicity is also seen in the novel through the depiction of the house in which Orlando was born which 'had 365 bedrooms and had been in the possession of her family for four or five hundred years' (O 93). Orlando makes the mistake of assuming her own ancestry of 'earls, or even dukes' as the oldest, truest example of an 'ancient and civilised race' (O 93). But the multiplicity and scope of history is emphasised as Orlando comes to realise that Rustum and the other gypsies she is with judged a 'descent of four or five hundred years only the meanest possible. Their own families went back at least two or three thousand years. To the gypsie whose ancestors had built the Pyramids centuries before Christ was born, the genealogy of Howards and Plantagenets was no better and no worse than that of the Smiths and the Joneses: both were negligible' (O 93). The desire to build and possess hundreds of bedrooms was 'vulgar' to the gypsies, and Orlando comes to realise that

> from the gipsy point of view, a Duke […] was nothing but a profiteer or robber who snatched land and money from people who rated these things of little worth, and could think of nothing better to do than to build three hundred and sixty-five bedrooms when one was enough, and none was even better than one. She could not deny that her ancestors had accumulated field after field; house after house; honour after honour […] Nor could she counter the argument (Rustum was too much of a gentleman to press it, but she understood) that any man who did now what her ancestors had done three of four

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[74] Monaco 2008, p.157.

hundred years ago would be denounced – and by her own family most loudly – for a vulgar upstart, an adventurer, a *nouveau riche*. (O 94)[75]

Whilst Orlando refuses to give up her defence of her own particular ancestry – 'had none of them been saints or heroes, or great benefactors of the human race' (O 94), she asks – significantly she now speaks of how '[f]our hundred and seventy-six bedrooms mean nothing to them' (O 94). The specificity of her history becomes muddled, and an extra 111 bedrooms are added to her previous dwelling place. Rather than strengthening the fact of Orlando's history, such quantitative detail appears to be satirised, the number of bedrooms becomes arbitrary or accidental. Once again Orlando is not held up as representative of opposition and instead refuses dichotomous choices; she neither wants to return to her old life nor to remain with the gypsies: 'To leave the gipsies and become once more an Ambassador seemed to her intolerable. But it was equally impossible to remain for ever where there was neither ink nor writing paper, neither reverence for the Talbots nor respect for a multiplicity of bedrooms' (O 95).

By creating a 'multiplicity of bedrooms' that appears to be numerically arbitrary, *Orlando* brings to light the distinction between two kinds of multiplicity that we find in Deleuze's philosophy: quantitative and qualitative, where the former is homogeneous and numerical, the latter is heterogeneous and intensive. Multiplicity, they explain in *A Thousand Plateaus*, 'was created precisely in order to escape the abstract opposition between the multiple and the One, to escape dialectics, to succeed in conceiving the multiple in the pure state, to cease treating it as a numerical fragment of a lost Unity or Totality or as the organic element of a Unity or Totality yet to come, and instead distinguish between different types of multiplicity.'[76] Deleuze's emphasis on 'multiplicity' is especially influenced by Bergson's *durée* as a form of multiplicity that is 'qualitative and fusional' as distinct from 'metric multiplicity or the multiplicity of magnitude',[77] and in *Bergsonism* he outlines Bergson's importance in offering a way out

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[75] Kirstie Blair and Sabine French probe the potentially lesbian significance of gypsies in *Orlando*. See fn.6 of this chapter.

[76] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.36.

[77] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.533-534. Deleuze and Guattari also discuss how their conceptualisation of multiplicity is influenced by Riemann, Meinong, and Russell, amongst a others. See

of dialectical thought which, Deleuze writes, deals with abstract concepts that are overblown and empty 'like baggy clothes':

> There are many theories in philosophy that combine the one and the multiple. They share the characteristic of claiming to reconstruct the real with general ideas. We are told that the Self is one (thesis) and it is multiple (antithesis), then it is the unity of the multiple (synthesis). Or else we are told that the One is already multiple, that Being passes into nonbeing and produces becoming. […] To Bergson, it seems that in this type of dialectical method, one begins with concepts that, like baggy clothes, are much too big. The One in general, the multiple in general, nonbeing in general…In such cases the real is recomposed with abstracts.

As Deleuze stresses, the dialectic is a '*false movement*' because '[t]he concrete will never be attained by combining the inadequacy of one concept with the inadequacy of its opposite. The singular will never be attained by correcting a generality with another generality.'[78]

Deleuze and Guattari propose a whole range of ways to conceptualise these different multiplicities, using many terms I refer to elsewhere in this thesis:

> we distinguish between arborescent multiplicities and rhizomatic multiplicities. Between macro- and micromultiplicities. On the one hand multiplicities that are extensive, divisible, and molar; unifiable, totalizable, organisable; conscious or preconscious – and on the other hand, libidinal, unconscious, molecular, intensive multiplicities composed of particules that do not divide without changing in nature, and distances that do not vary without entering another multiplicity and that constantly construct and dismantle themselves in the course of their communications, as they cross over into each other at, beyond, or before a certain threshold.[79]

In *Transpositions*, Braidotti helpfully captures these distinctions between two types of multiplicity in relation to her theory of nomadic, non-unitary subjectivity by describing

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p.37; p.532. For an illuminating recent discussion of Bergsonian multiplicity in *The Waves* see Mattison 2011.
[78] Bergson 1991, p.44.
[79] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p. 36-37.

the distinction between 'quantitative pluralities' that represent 'merely a multiple of One', and 'qualitative multiplicities' which 'trace patterns of becoming' and 'express changes not of scale, but of intensity, force, or *potentia* (positive power of expression)'.[80] Seen in this light, the multiplicity of Orlando's bedrooms is not so much a celebration of a plurality of lovers as it is a kind of qualitative polyamory, which depends not on one or many lovers but on a realisation that love is always already a question of intensity (as with Braidotti's discussion of Vita and Virginia in the first section of this chapter, and my discussion of the inadequacy Orlando feels in defining love and desire within an oppositional framework of 'lovers' and 'husbands'). Rather, love and desire involve much more than two individuals from the start, whether you stay in one bedroom or explore many, precisely because each individual, and each bedroom, is already a multiplicity. After all, as Deleuze puts it in *Dialogues* with Claire Parnet,

> What a depressing idea of love, to make it a relation between two people, whose monotony must be vanquished as required by adding extra people. […] The question about sexuality is: into the vicinity of what else does it enter to form […] particular relations of movement and rest? […] it is not simply from one to the other of the two 'subjects' that this vicinity or combination takes place; it is in each of the two that several fluxes combine to form a bloc of becoming which makes demands on them both […] Not the man and woman as sexual entities, caught in a binary apparatus, but a molecular becoming[.][81]

Queering in *Orlando* is precisely this move from quantitative plurality to qualitative multiplicity, entering into/creating molecular events together in the company of other elements, human and nonhuman, always keeping a relation to the outside that each is entangled with.

The nonhuman dimension of *Orlando* is touched on by Julia Briggs, where following Sasha's departure there is a flood and the melting of the ice, and the river

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[80] Braidotti 2006, p.94.
[81] Deleuze and Parnet 2006 [1987], p.75-76.

becomes 'a figure for time itself, carrying away a bizarre medley of human and non-human life':[82]

> The river had gained its freedom in a night. […] All was riot and confusion. The river was strewn with icebergs. Some of these were as broad as a bowling green and as high as a house; others no bigger than a man's hat, but most fantastically twisted. […] For furniture, valuables, possessions of all sorts were carried away on the icebergs. Among other strange sights was to be seen a cat suckling its young; a table laid sumptuously for a supper of twenty; a couple in bed; together with an extraordinary number of cooking utensils. (O 35-36)

This move towards the nonhuman, infused here with humour, is 'at once the most imaginative and the most violent of Woolf's moments of rupture'. Significantly, it follows the departure of Sasha, 'the impossible and perfect love object'.[83] Seen in this light, desire in *Orlando* cannot be attached or belong to any individual subject, be it real-life figures such as Sackville-West and Woolf or indeed any of the characters from Woolf's text, but would take place on a molecular level that involves so many nonhuman elements. 'Desire', says Deleuze, 'is revolutionary because it always wants more connections', and these connections should not be limited to the human.[84]

The queering of Orlando's bedrooms has as much to do with the queer nature of history as it does Orlando's queer sex and sexuality, then. Neither her own personal history or that of the gipsies is appealing as Orlando realises that these histories are not determined by quantitative measures, but qualitative creation. Orlando's desired return to England is not sparked by an attempt to find a lost object, but rather her desire produces a new England, where nature is part of a shared agency rather than reduced to a passive background:

> And then Nature, in whom she trusted, either played her trick or worked a miracle […] Suddenly a shadow, though there was nothing to cast a shadow, appeared on the bald mountain-side opposite. It deepened quickly and soon a green hollow showed where there

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[82] Briggs 2006, p.134.
[83] Briggs 2006, p.134.
[84] Deleuze and Parnet 2006 [1987], p.58.

had been barren rock before. As she looked, the hollow deepened and widened, and a great park-like space opened in the flank of the hill. Within, she could see an undulating and grassy lawn; she could see oak trees dotted here and there; she could see the thrushes hopping among the branches. She could see the deer stepping delicately from shade to shade, and could even hear the hum of insects and the gentle sighs and shivers of a summer's day in England. (O 95)

In his preface to the untranslated *L'Après-Mai des faunes* (1974), written by pioneering French queer theorist Guy Hocquenghem, Deleuze presents Proust as offering 'a more multiple and "localized" homosexuality which includes all kinds of transsexual communications, such as flowers and bicycles'.[85] In this above passage I would suggest that Woolf presents such multiple and localised connections with the 'undulating' grass, the 'hopping' thrushes, the 'stepping' deer and the humming insects which all combine in Orlando's desiring-England. In the same preface Deleuze, discussing Hocquenghem's writing on motorcycles, playfully asserts that 'the motorcycle is another sex'.[86] Like Proust's flowers and bicycles, or Woolf's grass and insects, the emphasis is on a desire that forms connections between an array of elements that are not limited to the human subject. In the next two chapters I discuss nonhuman, material connections in Woolf's novels more fully – firstly by focusing on the question of the animal in *Flush: A Biography* in chapter four, and then by looking at quantum physics and posthumanist conceptualisations of life in chapter five. Before that, however, I want to conclude this chapter by considering whether Woolf's motor-car, like Hocquenghem's motorcycle, might also be undergoing its own 'sexual becoming',[87] perhaps providing a further answer to the question Deleuze and Guattari pose in *Anti-Oedipus*: 'what are your nonhuman sexes?'[88]

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[85] Gilles Deleuze. 'Preface to Hocquenghem's *L'Après-Mai des faunes.*' *Desert Islands: and Other Texts, 1953-1974*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004, p.287. See also Deleuze 2008 [1972].
[86] Deleuze 2004, p.285.
[87] Deleuze 2004, p.288.
[88] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p.354.

4.5 Multiplicity in a Motor Car and 'Monday or Tuesday'

It is in the throes of 'the present moment' that Orlando cruises through and out of London in her motor-car (O 195). In this section I want to suggest that the time Orlando spends in this motor-car demonstrates a queering of subjectivity, time, and space, so that what results is a multiplicity of agency which involves the nonhuman as well as human. '[C]hanging her selves as quickly as she drove', Woolf's protagonist somewhat frantically contemplates a multiplicity of selves to the point that it becomes 'an open question in what sense Orlando can be said to have existed at the present moment' (O 201):

> "What then? Who then?" she said. "Thirty-six; in a motor car; a woman. Yes, but a million other things as well. A snob am I? The garter in the hall? The leopards? My ancestors? Proud of them? Yes! Greedy, luxurious, vicious? Am I? (here a new self came in). Don't care a damn if I am. Truthful? I think so. Generous? Oh, but that don't count (here a new self came in). Lying in bed of a morning listening to the pigeons on fine linen; silver dishes; wine; maids; footmen. Spoilt? Perhaps. Too many things for nothing. Hence my books (here she mentioned fifty classical titles; which represented, so we think, the early romantic works that she tore up). Facile, glib, romantic. But (here another self came in) a duffer, a fumbler. More clumsy I couldn't be. And – and – (here she hesitated for a word and if we suggest 'Love' we may be wrong, but certainly she laughed and blushed and then cried out –) A toad set in emeralds! Harry the Archduke! Blue-bottles on the ceiling! (here another self came in). But Nell, Kit, Sasha? (she was sunk in gloom: tears actually shaped themselves and she had long given over crying). Trees, she said. (Here another self came in.) I love trees (she was passing a clump) growing there a thousand years. And barns (she passed a tumble-down barn at the edge of the road. She carefully avoided it). And the night. But people (here another self came in). People? (she repeated it as a question.) I don't know. Chattering, spiteful, always telling lies. (Here she turned into the High Street of her native town, which was crowded, for it was market day, with farmers, and shepherds, and old women with hens in baskets.) I like peasants. I understand crops. (O203)

In this remarkable and well-known passage Orlando's variegated selves are described as '[t]ruthful', '[s]poilt', 'romantic', and 'clumsy' to name only a few. But this is much

more than a case of different adjectives being used to describe different aspects of one personality. The striking spatial and temporal dimension to this passage includes the coming together of form and content, where the brackets become a doorway through which 'another self came in', disrupting the temporal rhythm of the reader and the spatial flow of the text. When the parentheses are not introducing 'another self' they are updating the reader on the movement of the car, emphasising the motion and physicality of these changes (we are not to read this passage as transcendent powers of the imagination): 'she passed a tumble-down barn', 'she turned into the High Street', for example. After all, she was 'changing her selves as quickly as she drove – there was a new one at every corner' (O 202). Further examples – '[l]ying in bed of a morning listening to the pigeons on fine linen' and 'I love trees (she was passing a clump) growing there a thousand years' – foreground both time and place, stretching from a specific morning to a millennium. As Andrew Thacker observes in *Moving Through Modernity* (2003), in this passage 'the boundaries between psychic identity and physical place are being elided […] The words in brackets somehow exist embedded in the landscape through which Orlando travels, propping up when her gaze alights upon them, or flashing back from the landscape to the viewer'.[89]

Of all Woolf's other writings, this scene from Orlando is most commonly read alongside her short posthumously published essay 'Evening Over Sussex: Reflections in a Motor Car' (1942), where the narrator describes how 'the self splits up' whilst driving through and perceiving the Sussex landscape (E6 453-456). In 'Virginia Woolf and the Age of Motor Cars' (2000) Minow-Pinkney reads these texts together in the historical context of the development of the motor-car in the first decades of the twentieth century and Woolf's own changing response to this. In contrast to Leena Kore-Schröder, who argues that Woolf's motor-car is a 'metaphor for understanding the nature of embodiment in time and space […] revealing to us […] that human embodiment is at the centre of the subjective world',[90] Minow-Pinkney shows that 'the link between motoring experience and aesthetic practices is not just a matter of trope or analogy but motoring, together with

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[89] Andrew Thacker. *Moving Through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2003, p.179.
[90] Leena Kore-Schröder. 'Reflections in a Motor Car: Virginia Woolf's Phenomenological Relations of Time and Space.' *Locating Woolf: The Politics of Space and Place*, ed. Anna Snaith and Michael Whitworth. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p.132.

other experiences distinctive to the modern age of technology, affects the human sensory organization itself, which, dissolving its linear cohesion, necessitates new modes of thought and aesthetic representation adjusted to it.'[91] Of 'Evening Over Sussex', she places emphasis on the car's movement – rather than that of the human mind – in the creation of multiple images,[92] and this does indeed appear to be evident in Woolf's essay: 'a haystack; a rust red roof; a pond; an old man coming home with his sack on his back; […] Gone, gone; over, over; past and done with, past and done with. I feel life left behind even as the road is left behind'.[93] According to Minow-Pinkney, the '"I" has no control over the concatenation of the images; the rhythm and the visual impression effected by the list of words, the use of commas and semicolons, coveys the sensation of the compulsive, fast movement.' Woolf's aesthetic imagination 'extends itself to the future and to a nonanthropomorphous vision'.[94]

I would like to suggest that such a nonanthropomorphous, and indeed nonanthropocentric,[95] vision is also evident in another of Woolf's short pieces, 'Monday or Tuesday', and that here it is conceived directly in relation to desire. Written in 1920, the story is without an identifiable narrator, and, while offering an imagined insight into what the point of view of the 'heron' in the story might be, it certainly never fully anthropomorphises this bird: 'Lazy and indifferent, shaking space easily from his wings, knowing his way, the heron passes over the church beneath the sky.'[96] There is no 'I' in the story and the only personal pronoun is 'his', which is used twice in the first sentence to refer to the heron. What is immediately striking looking at 'Monday or Tuesday' alongside the above passage of Orlando in her motor-car, is their similar use of textual space, with bracketed parenthesis concerned with movement in a surrounding environment:

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[91] Makiko Minow-Pinkney. 'Virginia Woolf and the Age of Motor Cars.' *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, ed. Pamela L. Caughie. New York: Garland, 2000, p.163.
[92] Minow-Pinkney 2000, p.177.
[93] Virginia Woolf. 'Evening Over Sussex: Reflections in a Motor Car.' *Virginia Woolf: Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw. Oxford: OUP, 2008 [1942], p.205.
[94] Minow-Pinkney 2000, p.177-178.
[95] The relationship between anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism is discussed in the following chapter on *Flush*. See section 4.1.
[96] Virginia Woolf. 'Monday or Tuesday.' *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf (2nd Edition)*, ed. Susan Dick. London: Harcourt, 1989 [1920], p.137.

Desiring truth, awaiting it, laboriously distilling a few words, for ever desiring – (a cry starts to the left, another to the right. Wheels strike divergently. Omnibuses conglomerate in conflict) – for ever desiring – (the clock asseverates with twelve distinct strokes that it is midday; light sheds gold scales; children swarm) – for ever desiring truth. (CSF 137)

In her wonderfully titled short article 'Woolf's Verb Impersonators (and Other Deviants)', Molly McQuade describes how this story has the movement of poetry but with 'brilliantly concrete language'.[97] She points in particular to Woolf's 'deviant verbs', occurring at a more frequent ratio than is often found in prose (McQuade counts 1 in every 6 words as verbs in the story; this is even more than the above passage from *Orlando*, which on my count stands at a ratio of 1 in 8 words), as well as Woolf's use of dashes which combine to 'introduce furious speed into her prose'.[98] But I want to suggest that what is really central to the intensity of this piece is Woolf's use of the gerund 'desiring', the putting into continuous movement of desire, which punctuates the whole of the second paragraph. That we find a 'desiring truth' transposed through movement so vividly in a text without a definitive human presence – simply 'children', 'men's feet and women's feet' and 'Miss Thingummy' (CSF 137) – could be viewed as further evidence of the nonhuman connections Deleuze sees as part of desire (desire which we might also see evinced in the above passage from *Orlando* where nonhuman movements are pronounced, this time alongside the human, but queering, Orlando). After all, as Deleuze states in *Dialogues*, 'Do you realize how simple a desire is? Sleeping is a desire. Walking is a desire. Listening to music, or making music, or writing, are desires. A spring, a winter, are desires.'[99] Woolf's 'desiring' is both her deviant verb and her queering verb.

If Orlando's cruising out of London in her motor-car puts into motion a range of desires seen in the connections different selves make as every corner is turned, then we need not view these selves as simply plural or multiplied version of Orlando's identity. As Minow-Pinkney notes, Woolf here 'comes close to the complete disappearance of the subject itself'.[100] Recalling the distinction made by Deleuze and Guattari and by Braidotti

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[97] Molly McQuade. 'Woolf's Verb Impersonators (and Other Deviants).' *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* 70 (2006), p.6.
[98] McQuade 2006, p.6.
[99] Deleuze and Parnet 2006 [1987], p.71.
[100] Minow-Pinkney 2000, p.163

between quantitative pluralities and qualitative multiplicitities, we might say that Orlando transports subjectivity from plurality to multiplicity. The idea of countable selves is satirised both here and with the changing and seemingly arbitarary (and inconsistent) numerical speculations as to how many selves one has (similar to the 'multiplicity of bedrooms' discussed in the previous section). For example, in just four pages we are told that 'a biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many thousand' (O 202), that 'there may be more than two thousand' (O 205), 'if there are (at a venture) seventy-six different times all ticking in the mind at once, how many different people are there not – Heaven help us – all having lodgement at one time or another in the human spirit' (O 201), and Orlando might be 'a million other things as well' (O 203). We are left in little doubt about the inadequacy of numbers to quantify these selves: 'she had a great variety of selves to call upon, far more than we have been able to find room for' (O 202). This move from quantitative to qualitative is perfectly summed up when we read that 'still the Orlando she needs may not come; these selves of which we are built up, one on top of another, as plates are piled on a waiter's hand, have attachments elsewhere, sympathies, little constitutions and rights of their own, call them what you will (and for many of these things there is no name)' (O 201). The quantitatively measured figuration of plates 'piled on a waiter's hand' proves insufficient and so the sentence continues into a further clause, as if in realisation that these selves are already forming qualitative connections that cannot be counted, balanced, or gathered together; they have 'attachments elsewhere, sympathies, little constitutions' – a description that has more in common with Deleuze and Guattari's statement that 'everyone is a little group'[101] than it does a simile involving the piling of plates. The point then is that one does not *have* any selves in the sense of being contained within or by a 'Captain Self' who 'amalgamates and controls' all these different selves and has 'the power to desire' (O 202). The motor-car scene contradicts the possibility of this controlling self, already undermined a few sentences later when we are told 'in this we may well be wrong' (O 203).

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[101] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p.396.

If *Orlando*, as Braidotti claims, is 'one of the greatest love stories of all times'[102] (a statement to perhaps rival Nigel Nicolson's ubiquitously quoted comment that it is the 'longest and most charming love letter in literature'), then I have tried to illustrate in this chapter the important involvement of Orlando's motor-car, ring, bedrooms – along with the other nonhuman elements I have touched on – in an intensive, qualitative queering of desire and love. But to conclude this chapter we might plainly ask, as Woolf does in a diary entry in 1926, '[w]hat is this "love"?' (D3 85), or as Deleuze and Guattari put it in *A Thousand Plateaus*, '[w]hat does it mean to love somebody?' Deleuze and Guattari's answer, and one that I suggest suits *Orlando* well, is that '[i]t is always to seize that person in a mass […] to find […] the multiplicities he or she encloses within himself or herself which may be of an entirely different nature. To join them to mine'. Crucially these multiplicities are always already formed in connection with other multiplicities, but it is not a question of individual and group, internal and external; rather, it is a co-emerging, desiring, queering, and becoming entangled with 'machines, cogs, motors, and elements that are set in motion at a given moment' – whether in a motor-car or not – 'forming an assemblage productive of statements: "I love you" (or whatever)'.[103]

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[102] Braidotti 2006, p.198.
[103] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.39.

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The Question of the Animal in *Flush: A Biography*

In this chapter I follow the turn toward the nonhuman at the end of the previous chapter by focusing on the question of the animal in *Flush: A Biography*. Starting with a review of the ways in which critics have dealt with the pertinent matters of allegory and anthropomorphism in Woolf's mock-biography, I go on to discuss issues of nudity, mirrors, gaze, nonverbal communication, and vulnerability in a way that allows for various, and sometimes seemingly contradictory, theoretical perspectives on the material relations between human and animal to be considered. This includes reading sections of Woolf's novel alongside Jacques Derrida's feline-inspired thoughts on animality, Donna Haraway's 'companion species' and Deleuze and Guattari's 'becoming-animal'. I also touch on some important developments in scientific animal research. Ultimately, I claim that *Flush* details the ordinary, everyday experiences of a dog interacting with humans, but that the text can also be understood as a journey away from the kind of hierarchical, essentialist categorisations satirised in Woolf's description of the Spaniel Club and towards a more open, entangled zone of human and animal, nature and culture – what I term an 'an*i*malous society'.

4.1 After Allegory and Anthropocentrism

As Woolf's underdog novel, *Flush: A Biography* has recently received increased levels of critical attention and gained entry into Woolf's fictional canon,[1] although it is still by no means afforded the same scrutiny as her more famous novels. Indeed, *Flush*'s (re)creation of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's cocker spaniel – from early life in the country to a back bedroom in London's Wimpole Street, dognapping and incarceration in Whitechapel, a journey abroad to Florence and finally his death on his owner's lap – has

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[1] As recently as 2000, for example, *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf* did not include *Flush* in its list of Woolf's novels.

often been written off as a relatively trivial escapade, with Woolf's own description of the novel as 'just a little joke' frequently presented as justification for this (L5 140). To use these remarks as evidence of the novel's unimportance is, however, to overstate their significance; it must be remembered that in the aforementioned comment Woolf is writing to Ethyl Smyth, the person she had earlier worried would 'hate' the novel (L5 108). Similarly, Woolf refers to *Flush* again as being 'by way of a joke', but does so when writing to her publisher, apprehensive of his reaction (L5 155). By contrast, Woolf seems genuinely thrilled in a letter to Lady Colefax, in reaction to her praise for the book: 'I'm so glad that you liked *Flush*. I think it shows great discrimination in you because it was all a matter of hints and shades, and practically no one has seen what I was after, and I was elated to Heaven to think that you among the faithful firmly stood – or whatever Milton said' (L5 236).

Even when critics have taken Woolf's fictional biography seriously, they have not necessarily taken Flush the dog seriously. For example, Susan Squier considers Flush as a 'stand-in for the woman writer';[2] for Michael Rosenthal he is a 'satiric device' there to illuminate 'Elizabeth Barrett Browning's escape from familial and class oppression;[3] to Pamela Caughie *Flush* is 'an allegory of canon formation and canonical value';[4] and for David Eberly the dogginess of Flush is merely a decoy, allowing Woolf to 'bring to the surface the repressed emotional narrative of her childhood' (in particular, her experience of sexual abuse).[5] When it does seem as though the critical focus may be turning towards Woolf's canine protagonist, this is often little more than a gesture. This is evinced when Ruth Vanita comments on Mr Browning's introduction and 'Flush's silent suffering, his feelings of neglect, loneliness and helplessness' being 'movingly evoked', but then shifts immediately to focus on the role of jealousy in Woolf's own relationships with other

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[2] Susan Merrill Squier. *Virginia Woolf and London: The Sexual Politics of the City*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1985, p.124.
[3] Michael Rosenthal. *Virginia Woolf*. New York: Columbia UP, 1979, p.206.
[4] Caughie 1991, p.146. Caughie argues: 'Reading *Flush* can show us that readings, texts, and canons are always mixed, never pure, and that we give them the illusion of purity, permanence, and prestige by reading efficiently, separating off the excess that would expose this rather messy and conflicted system.' (163)
[5] David Eberly. 'Housebroken: The Domesticated Relations of *Flush*.' *Texts and Contexts: Proceedings of the First Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Beth Rigel Daugherty and Eileen Barrett. New York: Pace UP, 1996, p.24.

women.[6] Vanita goes on to describe Flush's relationship with Barrett Browning as 'a metaphor for the socially created gap between members of the same gender'.[7] Such readings are at risk of displaying what Craig Smith terms an 'anthropocentric bias', where critics claim that Woolf *uses Flush* (and its eponymous protagonist) for allegorical ends and is therefore 'accepted as a serious object of study only to the extent that it may be represented as being not really about a dog.'[8] Without wishing to deny that these critics offer insightful political, social, cultural and biographical interpretations of Woolf's novel, it might be argued that none of their readings shift the focus further from the human than Guiguet did in his classic book-length study of Woolf's writings. In Guiguet's view, Flush is a mirror reflecting his owner's life, where his own experiences are of little importance: 'Flush's incapacity either to interest us in his own story or to tell us his mistress's effectively, leads one to wonder why Virginia Woolf chose this subject and this point of view.'[9] Indeed he doubts the place in literature altogether of this branch of the Canidae family tree: 'Flush's inarticulate and primitive reactions, however penetrating, are incompatible with the resources of literature. After all, this was never meant for dogs'. For Guiguet *Flush* is interesting because of 'the limits it seems to set to the author's theories' rather than opening up a space in which these theories can be discussed.[10] Perhaps the most interesting part of his commentary comes, however, when he refers to 'Flush's mind and sensibility',[11] but fails to ask questions of the extent to which we can think of dogs as having such a mind and sensibility, let alone what the possible effects could be of representing Flush as having these faculties and what questions this may pose for the assumed human/animal divide. This is similar to the way in which Rosenthal unflinchingly refers to 'the richness of [Flush's] memory'[12] and yet,

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[6] Ruth Vanita. '"Love Unspeakable:" The Uses of Allusion in *Flush.*' *Themes and Variations: Proceedings of the Second Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Vera Neverow-Turk and Mark Hussey. New York: Pace UP, 1993, p.252.

[7] Vanita 1993, p.254.

[8] Craig Smith. 'Across the Widest Gulf: Nonhuman Subjectivity in Virginia Woolf's *Flush.*' *Twentieth Century Literature* 48:3 (2002), p.349. Smith also notes that such bias exists against studies of animal consciousness in science.

[9] Jean Guiguet. *Virginia Woolf and Her Works*, trans. Jean Stewart. London: Hogarth Press, 1965, p.347.

[10] Guiguet 1965, p.348.

[11] Guiguet 1965, p.346.

[12] Rosenthal 1979, p.211.

once again, the focus does not remain on Flush for long enough to reflect upon what Woolf's canine protagonist may reveal about dogs, or about the question of the animal.

Where critics have turned their focus to canine matters, Woolf has sometimes been criticised for displaying anthropomorphism in her depiction of Flush. This view is evident in Jutta Ittner's recent comparison of *Flush* and Paul Auster's *Timbuktu* (1999), when she raises concerns that Woolf fails to fulfil the 'radical potential' in presenting the animal in literature and concludes that Woolf's anthropomorphic depiction leaves Flush as 'a creature that is doubly instrumentalized':

> First, because he has been created by Woolf as a conscious and emotive animal in order to tell a familiar story from an unusual angle, he has no agency of his own […] Flush is constructed less for the purpose of creating complexity or contrast than for amusement while reinforcing societal values. In fact, all the different layers of this anthropomorphic construct are human- rather than animal-oriented […] Second, the mock agency granted to Flush is Woolf's ironic critique of Victorian constructs of class, rank, and gender relationships […] animal existence is diminished to an anthropomorphized caricature – animal alterity turned into a literary device. Flush's inner and outer world as constructed by Woolf does not challenge the reader to reconceptualize animalness but rather reaffirms human projections in a loving, if ironic and often condescending, way'.[13]

I will discuss below the reasons why I think Ittner is too quick to dismiss the subversive potential of Woolf's exploration of the animal, but her reading does point to the potential danger of anthropomorphism in that it subsumes the animal within a human 'world' without taking on board the different experiences specific to different species. In *The Open: Man and Animal* (2004), Giorgio Agamben comments on this danger by focusing on German ethologist Jakob von Uexküll's concept of *Umwelt* (referring to each animal's specific 'environment-world'). Agamben warns against judging an animal's sensory-perceptual world based on our own. We must not fall into the assumption

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[13] Jutta Ittner. 'Part Spaniel, Part Canine Puzzle: Anthropomorphism in Woolf's *Flush* and Auster's *Timbuktu*.' *MOSAIC* 39:4 (2006), 181-196, p.189.

that the relations a certain animal subject has to the things in its environment take place in objects in our human world. This illusion rests on the belief in a single world which all living beings are situated […] The fly, the dragonfly, and the bee that we observe flying next to us on a sunny day do not move in the same world as the one in which we observe them, nor do they share with us – or with each other – the same time and the same space.[14]

My reading of *Flush* in this chapter will at various points focus on instances in Woolf's novel that could be seen as anthropomorphic, and I may at times also run the risk that readers also face of projecting anthropomorphic significance onto the animal. But whilst it is important to keep in mind the potential pitfalls in accounting for nonhuman animals through a human perspective, it is equally important, I argue, not to dismiss the subversive potential of what might on first reading appear to be a straightforward case of anthropomorphism. As Dan Wylie has pointed out, the aspects of novels like *Flush* that some critics have labelled simply as 'anthropomorphic' actually function in more complex ways. For example, it is important to remember that Woolf is 'painfully aware of the linguistic limitations under which such an enterprise labours'.[15] For Wylie anthropomorphism does have its limits, but

> anthropomorphic writing nevertheless seems to embody the proposition that animals – or at least certain animals – are in some sense understandable, and have enough in common with us to demand an ethically equivalent response and sense of responsibility from humans […] the use of the spaniel's perspective seems more than merely instrumental or allegorical. Woolf also seems interested in the actuality of an animal's consciousness.[16]

In this view, then, it is the very process of imagining that is most important; the implications of this possible animal consciousness and of a 'new kind of society' that is 'inclusive of dogs and human' is what matters: '[t]he issue is not whether or not

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[14] Giorgio Agamben. *The Open: Man and Animal,* Trans. Kevin Attell. Standford: Stanford UP, 2004, p.40.
[15] Dan Wylie. 'The Anthropomorphic Ethic: Fiction and the Animal Mind in Virginia Woolf's *Flush* and Barbara Gowdy's *The White Bone.*' *Isle: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 9:2 (2002), p.116.
[16] Wylie 2002, p.116-117.

anthropomorphising is "true," but that it is both imaginatively possible and fruitful. This is the ethic of anthropomorphism.'[17]

This 'ethic of anthropomorphism' has something in common with what Marjorie Garber describes in *Dog Love* (1996) as 'The New Anthropomorphism' in science: 'a new wave of "neo-anthropomorphists" has arisen: animal behaviourists who believe that anthropomorphism can actually help them "do their science," as scientists like to say. "Anthropomorphism is just another word for empathy," they claim.'[18] At the very least anthropomorphism can lead to a willingness to consider that the animal is more capable than we ordinarily think. I would note here the significance of Woolf's short story 'The Widow and the Parrot: A True Story'[19] when Mrs Gage talks to the Parrot, James, 'as though he were a human being' but in doing so thinks that '[t]he creature has more meaning in its acts than we humans know'.[20] More recently Jane Bennett, whose theory of 'vital materialism' I discuss in the next chapter, has argued that 'an anthropomorphic element in perception can uncover a whole world of resonances and resemblances – sounds and sights that echo and bounce […] revealing similarities across categorical divides' that help to challenge human claims to privilege over nonhuman worlds. It may be, then, that a little anthropomorphism does not necessarily lead to an anthropo*centric* outlook, and that, in fact, the outright rejection of any sign of anthropomorphism allows the human/animal divide to remain unchallenged, limiting the sense to which nonhumans and humans are materially, socially and emotionally co-involved. As animal research scientist Jonathan Balcombe argues, it is possible to 'use our own experiences as a useful template for interpreting the emotions of other beings' without falling into the false and problematic assumption – not least because we already know that sensory systems work differently between species – that 'human capacity for feeling' is 'the "gold standard" by which all other species should be measured.'[21]

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[17] Wylie 2002, p.122.
[18] Marjorie Garber. *Dog Love*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996, p.31.
[19] This story was written in the 1920s for the Bell children's newspaper, *The Charleston Bulletin*, but the precise date is unknown.
[20] Virginia Woolf. 'The Widow and the Parrot: A True Story.' *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf (2nd Edition)*, ed. Susan Dick. San Diego: Harcourt, 1989 [1985], p.167.
[21] Jonathan Balcombe. *Second Nature: The Inner Lives of Animals*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p.47.

A more sympathetic reading of Flush in this respect is provided by Smith who sets *Flush* apart from earlier novels that placed an animal as protagonist – for example, Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877) and Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* (1903) – by claiming that it 'is neither specifically humane nor specifically humanist in its agenda'. Instead of this, he argues that Woolf maps 'a canine subjectivity, as an experiment worth performing for its own sake.'[22] Rather than shirking further consideration of the capacity of the dog's mind or richness of the dog's memory, Smith takes examples such as the episode where Flush dreams in order to argue that rather than being written-off as anthropomorphic, Woolf's depictions may not be so implausible:

> He slept as dogs sleep when they are dreaming. Now his legs twitched – was he dreaming that he hunted rabbits in Spain? Was he coursing up a hot hill-side with dark men shouting 'Span! Span!' as the rabbits darted from the brushwood?[23] Then he lay still again. And now he yelped, quickly, softly, many times in succession. Perhaps he heard Dr Mitford egging his greyhounds on to the hunt at Reading. Then he wagged his tail sheepishly. Did he hear old Miss Mitford cry 'Bad dog! Bad dog!' as he slunk back to her, where she stood among the turnips waving her umbrella?' (F 104)

Smith points to the general consensus amongst animal researchers that dogs do indeed dream and that it is the precise content we are unaware of. But as he notes, rather then claiming to know the contents of Flush's dream, 'Woolf humbly describes his dream in the form of postulations.'[24] By refusing to claim certain knowledge of content at the same time as asserting dogs do dream, it turns out that Woolf is surprisingly close to the position of current animal researchers: 'Woolf's imagining of Flush's dream, written from the assumption that canine dreams like human ones emerge from a mixture of memory, anxiety, and desire, is as valid as any.'[25] Again Woolf turns our focus towards the dog in this story rather than allegorical interpretations centred on his human "owner": '[n]otably absent from the dream are any memories of Flush's life with Elizabeth Barrett Browning,

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[22] Smith 2002, p.349.
[23] Woolf is here referring back to the beginning of the book when she lays out the etymology of the word 'Spaniel' (F 5). See section 4.4 of this chapter.
[24] Smith 2002, p.357.
[25] Smith 2002, p.357.

affirming that this book has not been simply a secondary biography of the poet.'[26] Consequently, if *Flush* is taken 'as an intuitive, clear-eyed attempt to represent a nonhuman subject', we might see it as 'one of Woolf's most original and forward-looking achievements [...] making a substantial gesture toward crossing the gulf of understanding between human and nonhuman subjects, and toward understanding the relationship between the two.'[27]

Whilst I would take issue with the way in which Smith maintains the primacy of the 'subject' in his argument, the particularly important point for my argument in the remainder of this chapter is the emphasis Smith's reading places on the possibility of viewing *Flush* in nonhumanist terms, especially if we accept Matthew Calarco's recent claim in *Zoographies* (2008) that it is the humanist tradition which has upheld the human/animal distinction, and consequent marginalisation of (and violence against) animals. Calarco's project is to disassociate the pro-animal discourse from the 'rights' based agenda of liberal humanism and instead cast it 'as a direct *challenge* to liberal humanism and the metaphysical anthropocentrism that underlies it.'[28] In his carefully argued book, Calarco exposes the 'blind spots' of 'implicit anthropocentrism' at the heart of the contemporary debates in continental philosophy, and argues that it is essential to turn to thinkers such as Derrida and Deleuze in order to counter humanist discourses, but also to the growing refusals seen in the works of neo-Marxist and neo-Lacanian thinkers such as Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou to abandon the subject as a ground for thought where

> even if this concept of subjectivity functions [...] as a means of opening onto something other than metaphysical *humanism*, it is not at all clear that it opens onto something other than metaphysical *anthropocentrism*. When these theorists [Žižek and Badiou] speak of the subject as being called into being as a response to an event of some sort, it is always a

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[26] Smith 2002, p.357.
[27] Smith 2002, p.359.
[28] Matthew Calarco. *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida*. New York: Columbia UP, 2008, p.6. The limitations of 'animal rights' that are based on a liberal humanist model are also discussed by Haraway: 'We do not get very far with the categories generally used by animal rights discourses, in which animals end up permanent dependents ("lesser humans"), utterly natural ("nonhuman"), or exactly the same ("humans in fur suits").' Haraway 2008, p.66-67. See also Calarco p.128 and Derrida p.87-88.

human subject that is being described, and it is always an *anthropogenic* event that gives rise to the human subject.[29]

Defending Derrida and Deleuze against accusations that their different critiques of subjectivity result in 'a political dead end', Calarco argues that their work is useful in that 'it leads us to see more fully the inner connection between metaphysical humanism and metaphysical anthropocentrism'. He therefore claims that '[i]t is essential that the signposts toward a nonanthropocentric or critically anthropocentric thought that Derrida, Deleuze, and related thinkers have opened not be shut down in the name of a hasty retrieval of anthropocentric subjectivity toward supposedly radical political ends.'[30]

Arguing that *Flush* is indeed one of Woolf's most 'forward-looking' texts, this chapter will go on to read her fictional canine biography alongside Derrida and Deleuze, as well as Donna Haraway. Taking the dog in this text seriously as well as the text itself – therefore worrying over, as Goldman puts it, the 'dogginess of the dog'[31] – throughout this chapter I am interested in the ways in which Woolf's modernist canine experiment anticipates and intervenes in the wider context of our own contemporary debates on the question of the animal in literary studies, theory and philosophy, and posthumanities more broadly. The approach I take here does not mean to empty Woolf's text of humour, but rather to ask whether the humour is not aimed at the ways in which we take our own human position too certainly, to 'caricature the pomposity of those who claim that they are something' (F 89). As Pamela Caughie comments: 'To take *Flush* as a joke might not be to dismiss it but to keep from taking oneself too seriously as a leader or figure, to keep from taking a firm position'.[32] Therefore, rather than attempting to reach a conclusion as to whether Woolf's writing is either anthropocentric or illustrative of a truly animal agency, I want to suggest some of the ways in which *Flush* opens up a space where we

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[29] Calarco 2008, p.12.
[30] Calarco 2008, p.13.
[31] Goldman, Jane. '"Ce chien est à moi": Virginia Woolf and the Signifying Dog.' *Woolfian Boundaries: Selected Papers from the Sixteenth Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anna Burrells, Steve Ellis, Deborah Parsons and Kathryn Simpson. Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2007, p.100.
[32] Caughie 1991, p.154. Caughie points to a section in 'A letter to a Young Poet' where Woolf states: 'There's no harm in it, so long as you take it as a joke, but once you believe in it, once you begin to take yourself seriously as a leader or as a follower…then you become a self-conscious, biting, scratching little animal whose work is not of the slightest value or importance to anyone'.

may (re)think the animal/human relation, and where there are more than these two options – anthropocentric allegory or animal agency – available to us.

4.2 Derrida's Cat and Woolf's Denuded Dog

> It is generally thought […] that the property unique to animals, what in the last instance distinguishes them from man, is their being naked without knowing it. Not being naked therefore, not having knowledge of their nudity[.][33]

At the beginning of *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2008), Derrida reminds us that one issue upholding the human/animal distinction in Western philosophy is a two-fold assumption concerning nudity; that the animal is naked, and the animal is unaware of this nakedness: 'They wouldn't be naked because they are naked. In principle, with the exception of man, no animal has ever thought to dress itself. Clothing would be proper to man, one of the "properties" of man.' In the world, therefore, humans dress, adorning themselves with a layer of cultural expression and performance, where animals are reduced to their biological wear: 'The animal, therefore, is not naked because it is naked. It doesn't feel its own nudity. There is no nudity "in nature."'[34] Naked in his bathroom and facing his cat, Derrida uses the realisation of his own nudity to launch his philosophical treatise on the nature of the human/animal relationship. Whilst this chapter will at different points discuss both of Derrida's main concerns in the essays in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (where/how this human/animal distinction should be drawn, and the ethical implications of animal suffering), I will stay for the moment with this much-discussed encounter between Derrida and his cat: 'Before the cat looks at me naked' he asks, 'would I be ashamed *like* a beast that no longer has the sense of its nudity? Or, on the contrary, *like* a man who retains his sense of nudity?' What is interesting in this remark is not only the focus on shame (something we will return to), but Derrida's emphasised simile suggests that from the start he is unwilling to go along with simple assumptions concerning animal nudity, as if he is not quite settled upon his own humanity/animality. From the beginning, from the double-meaning of the French *je suis* ('I am' and 'I follow'), Derrida is asking us to consider the ontological uncertainty of

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[33] Derrida 2008, p.4-5.
[34] Derrida 2008, p.5.

both himself and his cat: 'Who am I, therefore? Who is it that I am (following)?' And these are questions not only for him to ask of himself: 'Whom should this be asked of if not of the other? And perhaps of the cat itself?'[35]

In *Flush*, cats themselves figure only as figures of speech (or rather, of silence) as their only appearance in the text comes when we are told that Flush 'came to prefer the silence of the cat to the robustness of the dog' (F 32).[36] Through her own rich portrayal of the canine, however, I would like to argue that Woolf engages with the type of philosophical questions at the heart of Derrida's naked encounter with his own silent cat, and perhaps goes even further in her literary rendering of a cocker spaniel than Derrida does in his philosophical consideration of the cat's perspective in all of this. One key moment which invites a comparison between Flush and Derrida's bathroom encounter with his cat comes towards the end of Woolf's text when a fully clothed (as far as we can tell) Mr Browning clips off Flush's fur whilst in Florence – a result of 'red and virile' fleas that 'scourged' him, that 'nested in Flush's fur' and 'bit their way into the thickest of his coat' (F 88). Rather than Flush's coat signalling his natural status as naked, he appears to be clothed by his fur and it is the fleas that are reduced to their 'virile', unkempt nature. It is also suggested that Flush's coat, perhaps like human clothing, was seen as a sign of his status:

> He carried his pedigree on his back. His coat meant to him what a gold watch inscribed with the family arms means to an impoverished squire whose broad acres have shrunk to that single circle. It was a coat that Mr Browning now proposed to sacrifice. He called Flush to him and, taking a pair of scissors, clipped him all over into the likeness of a lion. (F 89)

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[35] Derrida 2008, p.5.

[36] Elsewhere Woolf herself is praiseworthy of cat qualities other than silence, seen when she describes Katherine Mansfield: 'It struck me that she [Katherine Mansfield] is of the cat kind: alien, composed, always solitary and observant.' Woolf empathises with this, and there is a connection between them: 'And then we talked about solitude, and I found her expressing my feelings, as I never heard them expressed' (D2 44). Whilst beyond the scope of this current chapter, it might also be fruitful to compare Derrida's cat to Woolf's depiction of the Manx cat who appears in *A Room of One's Own* as a 'queer animal' without its tail (RO 16).

The comparison of Flush's coat to a watch and his now denuded body to that of a lion subtly hints at both human-animal likenesses as well as animal-animal differences. We learn that 'as the travesty of quite a different animal rose round his neck, Flush felt himself emasculated, diminished, ashamed.' (F 89) Whilst it could be argued that it is simply an anthropomorphic projection to claim that Flush being purged of his coat qualifies as animal nudity, I would suggest that this is precisely one instance, as with Woolf's description of dog dreams, where a perceived anthropomorphism might in fact lead to insights into the question of the animal, allowing us to, at the very least, pose important questions that might otherwise be left unasked.

Such imaginative possibilities are considered when the narrative informs us that it is Flush who this time ponders: 'What am I now? he thought, gazing into the glass. And the glass replied with the brutal sincerity of glasses, "You are nothing". He was nobody. Certainly he was no longer a cocker spaniel' (F 89). Importantly, Flush's aforementioned shame does not triumph over curiosity and he begins to feel positively about his changed appearance that he gazes not once but twice in the mirror:

> as he gazed, his ears bald now, and uncurled, seemed to twitch. It was as if the potent spirits of truth and laughter were whispering in them. To be nothing – is that not, after all, the most satisfactory state in the whole world? He looked again […] there could be no doubt that he was free from fleas. He shook his ruff. He danced on his nude, attenuated legs. His spirits rose. (F 89-90)

Flush appears to revel in his nudity, indeed to 'caricature the pomposity of those who claim that they are something'. Challenging the notion that an animal cannot experience nudity, and that the very questioning of such an experience need involve a human at all, it is revealing that Flush recognises his changed appearance in a mirrored encounter with his denuded self, rather than with Mr Browning. Derrida argues that these questions of animal nudity and of recognition are ones that 'philosophical thinking […] has never touched on.' Emphasising the heterogeneity within the category 'animal', he notes that 'one of the structural differences among animals is drawn there, between those who have

some experience of the mirror and those who don't have any at all'.[37] As one of those animals who appears to have some experience of the mirror, does Flush's encounter with his denuded body show that Woolf is beginning to imagine in literature what philosophy has failed to do? It is worth noting that the passage cited above is not the only moment in the text where Flush is faced with himself in a mirror. In an earlier scene Miss Barrett makes Flush 'stand with her in front of the looking-glass and ask him why he barked and trembled. Was not the little brown dog opposite himself? But what is 'oneself'? Is it the thing people see? Or is it the thing one is? So Flush pondered that question too' (F 32). This passage has been traced to a letter Barrett wrote to her friend Hugh Stuart Boyd in which she comments that Flush 'can't bear me to look into a glass, because he thinks there is a little brown dog inside every looking glass, and he is jealous of its being so close to *me*' (F 122, fn.32). In *Dog Love*, Garber emphasises the significance of the fact that Woolf's Flush is described differently in front of the mirror than Miss Barrett had originally put it: 'Where Barrett's Flush sees "another" dog, and is jealous, Woolf's Flush sees "himself," and ponders the problem of reality.'[38] By re-writing Barrett's

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[37] Derrida 2008, p.59. Various studies into animal cognition have attempted to tackle this question of animals' self-recognition in relationship to the mirror. Such experiments have tended to have a very simple design (developed by Gordon Gallup Jnr in 1970 and commonly known as 'The Mirror Test'), usually involving putting a mark somewhere on the animal's body that could only be seen with the use of a mirror, and seeing whether the animal responds to this mark by touching or exploring it on their own body. John Pearce has provided an overview of research in this area which has indicated that such mirror-recognition is evident in some great apes, dolphins, and elephants. See *Animal Learning & Cognition: An Introduction (3rd edition)*. New York: Psychology Press, 2008, p.319-325. It may be, however, that self-recognition extends beyond mammals, as Jonathan Balcombe has argued. In his most recent book, Balcombe has drawn attention to a 2008 study which showed that some magpies indicated self-awareness. See Balcombe 2010, p.65-67. Whilst these studies have not indicated that dogs can pass the mirror test, they are important in emphasising that we must not only think of humans as having a relationship to the mirror, and that Woolf was ahead of her time in imagining that a nonhuman may have such a relationship. In addition, Balcombe and Pearce both note that the relatively simple design of this study and the limitations of drawing conclusions about the inner lives of animals based on behaviour, and so future studies are needed to reveal more about animals' relationships with the mirror, and what these relationships may reveal about self-recognition.

[38] Garber 1996, p.47. Garber goes on to draw parallels between Flush's mirrored encounter and Lacan's 'mirror-stage' formulation. Jacqui Griffiths has complicated this reading of Flush by arguing that unlike the infant in Lacan's theory – or the child without language, 'the child at the *infans* stage' – Flush's 'encounter cannot be characterized as infantile in a pre-Oedipal sense.' Griffiths argues that whilst Flush 'occupies the subordinate position of a child in the family structure, he is obviously at an advanced (i.e. post-Oedipal) stage of childhood development.' But where Griffiths suggests this episode shows Woolf's 'anthropomorphic use of the Oedipalized dog as a human substitute', I would argue that we again see an example of anthropocentric bias in the critic, who is primarily focused on 'the child' in this story. See 'Almost Human: Indeterminate Children and Dogs in *Flush* and *The Sound and the Fury*.' *The Yearbook of English Studies* 32 (2002), p.166.

interpretation of Flush's mirrored gaze, Woolf again turns the focus away from the human and towards the animal.

With her re-creation of Miss Barrett's canine companion, then, Woolf not only asks the questions, 'Can one speak of the animal? Can one approach the animal?', nor does she simply consider – and this would already be going further, according to Derrida, than the majority of Western philosophical tradition – whether 'one from the vantage of the animal [can] see oneself being looked at naked?'[39] Instead, Woolf seems to ask whether the animal 'can see *itself* naked', a question that according to Derrida 'is never asked.'[40] Derrida posits: 'The animal looks at us, and we are naked before it. Thinking perhaps begins there.'[41] Is Woolf opening up the possibility that Flush looking at himself naked (regardless of whether a naked human is present) may be where thinking begins? After being cured of fleas, like the beautiful woman freed from 'clothes and cosmetics' or the clergyman whose collar and is let off his leash, '"Flush," Mrs Browning wrote to her sister, "is wise." […] The true philosopher is he who has lost his coat but is free from fleas' (F 90). When Flush returns to London with his coat growing back, we are told that he falls asleep one afternoon as the sun 'burn[t] through his fur to the naked skin' (F 103). This is the moment when Flush dreams, as discussed in the previous section, but it is also the moment where the suggestion is reinforced that Flush is not, as an animal, always and already naked – his 'naked skin' being covered by his fur.

By describing Flush's denuded encounter with the mirror, focusing on his (self-) gaze, Woolf may invite accusations of anthropomorphism, but in the process she may also point to limitations in Derrida's own consideration of the animal, nudity and the mirror. At the end of the first essay in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, which shares the same title, Derrida introduces a 'full-length mirror [une psyché]' as a segue into his next discussion, 'But as for me, who am I (following)?':

> Wherever some autobiographical play is being enacted there has to be a psyché, a mirror that reflects me naked from head to toe. The same question then becomes whether I should show myself but in the process see myself naked (that is, reflect my image in a

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[39] Derrida 2008, p.21.
[40] Derrida 2008, p.59.
[41] Derrida 2008, p.29.

mirror) when, concerning me, looking at me, is this living creature, this cat that can find itself caught in the same mirror? Is there animal narcissism? But cannot this cat also be, deep within her eyes, my primary mirror?[42]

In passages such as these, the extent to which Derrida is ultimately concerned with the animal is in question. Haraway picks Derrida up on precisely this issue, insisting that whilst he 'understood that actual animals look back at actual human beings [...and] he was in the presence of someone, not of a machine [...] he did not seriously consider an alternative form of engagement either, one that risked knowing something more about cats and *how to look back*, perhaps even scientifically, biologically, and *therefore* also philosophically and intimately.[43] For Haraway, then, despite coming 'right to the edge of respect', where his cat was concerned 'Derrida failed a simple obligation of companion species; he did not become curious about what the cat might actually be doing, feeling, thinking, or perhaps making available to him in looking back at him that morning [...] he missed a possible invitation'.[44] Unlike Flush, Derrida is perhaps more concerned with the shame of his own nudity, and the shame of Western philosophy, than curiosity about his cat:[45] 'in all this worrying and longing, the cat was never quite heard from again'.[46] Calarco holds a similar frustration that, given Derrida's careful and rigorous probing of the human-animal distinction on ethical as well as ontological levels, and despite his taking Heidegger to task elsewhere on his insistence of an 'abyssal' gulf between human and animal (for example in his 1985 essay 'Geschlecht II: Heidegger's Hand'), Derrida himself falls back on 'a definitive division, or rather a series of divisions, between human beings and animals.'[47]

Nonetheless, in his autobiographical and theoretical inquiry into the animal, Derrida does pose a range of important questions that he feels have been neglected, some of which I claim Woolf engages with, to a greater or lesser degree, in *Flush*:

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[42] Derrida 2008, p.50-51.
[43] Donna Haraway. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2007, p.20.
[44] Haraway 2008, p.20.
[45] Haraway 2008, p.22-23.
[46] Haraway 2008, p.20.
[47] Calarco 2008, p.146.

The question "Does the animal dream?" is, in its form, premises, and stakes, at least analogous to the questions "Does the animal think?" "Does the animal produce representations?" a self, imagination, a relation to the future as such? Does the animal have not only signs but a language, and what language? Does the animal die? Does it laugh? Does it cry? Does it grieve? Does it get bored? Does it lie? Does it forgive? Does it sing? Does it invent? Does it invent music? Does it play music? Does it play? Does it offer hospitality? Does it offer? Does it give? Does it have hands? eyes? etc.? modesty? clothes? and the mirror?[48]

To this we can add Haraway's question: 'can I learn to play with *this* cat? Can I, the philosopher, respond to an invitation or recognize one when it is offered'.[49] And we could contrast Derrida's naked encounter with his cat here with a similar meeting described by Balcombe in *Second Nature,* when sitting in the bath he uses suds to change his hairstyle into one upright peak (to which his cat Mica looked relaxed) and then form two horns (to which Mica's 'stare intensified, his pupils began to dilate, and he lowered himself gradually into a crouching position'). What is noticeably different in Balcombe's bathroom encounter with his cat is his sense of curiosity for what the cat may be feeling, leading Balcombe to think of experiments 'to test cats' responses to familiar faces with various horns, some of which do and do not resemble those of real animals.' For Balcombe, his own nudity is far from the focus of his reflections.[50] Indeed, this touches on a further question posed by Haraway: 'what if the question of how animals engage *one another's* gaze *responsively* takes centre stage for people?'[51] Perhaps it is a variation of this last question posed by Haraway – a question that we are left asking – which is also raised by comparing the encounters between Derrida and his cat and Woolf's depiction of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's denuded dog: what would happen if Flush's gaze were to be directed towards Derrida's cat?

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[48] Derrida 2008, p.62-63. For Jonathan Balcombe, '[t]he question is no longer Do animals think? But What do animals think?' Balcombe takes issue with the way that science has often placed 'the burden of proof on those who would ascribe thoughts and feelings to animals rather than on those who would deny animals these attributes.' Once again, Woolf's decision to ascribe thoughts and feelings to a dog may not be evidence of an anthropocentric attitude that doesn't take into account the singularity of Flush, but rather 'humbly allow[ing] the likelihood that animals have more going on in their minds than our limited vantage points allow us to appreciate.' See Balcombe 2010, p.29.

[49] Haraway 2008, p.22.

[50] Balcombe 2010, p.45-46.

[51] Haraway 2008, p.22.

4.3 On Four Gazes: Face-to-Face with Companion Species

> We are face-to-face, in the company of significant others, companion species to one another. That is not romantic or idealist but mundane and consequential in the little things that make lives.[52]

Regardless of the extent to which it might be argued that Derrida is in the end more concerned with shame than curiosity, he insists that we do not generalise his cat, or elevate it to some mythical creature: 'the cat I am talking about is a real cat, truly, believe me, a *little cat*. It isn't the *figure* of a cat. It doesn't silently enter the bedroom as an allegory for all the cats on the earth, the felines that traverse our myths and religions, literature and fables.'[53] In his insistence that we recognise his cat's 'unsubstitutable singularity', Derrida is keen to reinforce that we can not think of animals in one generalised and homogeneous grouping. In responding to his cat's gaze, he is unwilling to assume that it is only he (and all humans) who have the capacity for response, whilst his cat (representing all animals) would only have the ability to react: 'When it responds in its name (whatever "respond" means, and that will be our question), it doesn't do so as the exemplar of a species called "cat," even less so of an "animal" genus or kingdom.'[54] It is interesting to note here that a similar emphasis on the singularity of her dog is evident in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 'To Flush, My Dog' (1843), where it is repeated on several occasions that the poem is about 'This dog' as opposed to 'Other dogs', with eight lines beginning with one of these two phrases.[55] In her later 'Flush or Faunus' (1850), the first line also repeats the demonstrative pronoun as specific marker of 'this

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[52] Haraway 2008, p.93.
[53] Derrida 2008, p.6.
[54] Derrida 2008, p.9. My aim in this section is not to answer definitively what constitutes a response, but to suggest that through Flush we are presented with a 'response' that it is not reserved for the human in direct opposition to a hard-wired, fixed 'reaction' of the animal.
[55] Elizabeth Barrett Browning. 'To Flush, My Dog.' *Sonnets from the Portuguese and Other Poems*, ed. Stanley Appelbaum. New York: Dover, 1992 [1843], p.12-15.

dog', albeit that Flush is here elevated in his association to the part man, part beast mythical creature of the Faunus or Pan.[56]

Derrida distinguishes between his cat and Alice's cat in *Alice in Wonderland*, which, he posits, ends with 'Alice's very Cartesian statement' that '"On this occasion the kitten only purred: and it was impossible to guess whether it meant "yes" or "no."' He emphasises:

> my real cat is not Alice's little cat […] because I am certainly not about to conclude hurriedly […] that one cannot speak with a cat on the pretext that it doesn't reply or that it always replies the same thing […It] comes down to knowing not whether the animal speaks but whether one can know what *respond* means. And how to distinguish a response from a reaction.[57]

This raises its own questions in relation to Woolf's novel: is the singularity we are speaking of named Flush capable of responding? Does Flush's gaze shed any light on the questions Derrida asks following the gaze of his cat? Are we capable of responding to his response? In *Flush* there are four key moments where Flush and Miss Barrett gaze at each other, moments where we see examples of mutual recognition and response of various forms. I will briefly describe these instances and the potential significance of each below.

4.3.1. 'For the first time Flush looked at the lady lying on the sofa'

After Miss Mitford gives Flush to Miss Barrett as a gift, the first face-to-face encounter between Flush and his new "owner" occurs: '"Oh Flush!" said Miss Barrett. For the first time she looked him in the face. For the first time Flush looked at the lady lying on the sofa' (F 18). Immediately, we are left in no doubt that Flush has a 'face',[58] but we are not yet certain that Flush is actually looking at Miss Barrett's, as his gaze is described here as

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[56] Elizabeth Barrett Browning. *Selected Poems*, ed. Marjorie Stone and Beverly Taylor. Ontario: Broadview, 2009 [1850], p.188.

[57] Derrida 2008, p.8.

[58] The pity evoked in the dog led Emmanuel Levinas to conclude that the dog 'has a face', although he remained 'agnostic' on how far this would extend to other animals. See Calarco 2008, p.67. Carrie Rohman argues that Derrida's cat has a face: 'The cat looks at me and, Derrida insists, *addresses* me. We might say, at the very least, that Derrida asymptotically approaches the claim in these moments that animals have a face, that faciality as an ethical demand extends beyond the human.' Carrie Rohman. 'On Singularity and the Symbolic: The Threshold of the Human in Calvino's *Mr. Palomar*.' *Criticism* 51:1 (2009), 66.

non-specific, directed simply 'at the lady'. In the next paragraph, as the narrator has described the similarities of their appearance – Miss Barrett's '[h]eavy curls', 'large bright eyes' and 'large mouth' reflecting Flush's '[h]eavy ears', 'large and bright' eyes, and 'wide' mouth – it is confirmed that this is indeed a face-to-face gaze. Whilst their mutual 'surprise' registers recognition of 'a likeness between them', it is soon their differences that are focused on: 'As they gazed at each other each felt: Here am I – and then each felt: But how different! [...] Between them lay the widest gulf that can separate one being from another. She spoke. He was dumb. She was woman; he was dog. Thus closely united, thus immensely divided, they gazed at each other' (F 18-19). Even here, however, when we are reminded of Miss Barrett's access to human speech as opposed to Flush who is 'dumb', Woolf's use of free indirect discourse refuses to mark the voice of Miss Barrett. The use of the semi-colon too is important in signalling an openness to boundaries between them, and the possibility that what they are 'divided' by is not essential and finally determined. Moreover, the response to this (mis)recognition is for Flush to join his new companion on the sofa, 'on the rug at Miss Barrett's feet'. Ironically, just as we are told that 'the widest gulf' lay between them, it is simply a matter of feet between Miss Barrett and Flush. What is important here, I would argue, is not the reinforcing of difference between human and animal, but the fact that there has been a moment of mutual recognition, that Flush seems to have responded, and that the narrative has at least posed the possibility of inter-species connection: 'Broken asunder, yet made in the same mould, could it be that each completed what was dormant in the other?' (F 18) According to Derrida, there are 'two types of discourse regarding the animal', those written by writers 'as if they themselves had never been looked at, and especially not naked, by an animal that addressed them', an animal that is 'something seen and not seeing', and those 'who admit to taking upon themselves the address that an animal addresses to them', those who Derrida does not yet know of: 'I have found no such representative, but it is in that very place that I find myself, here and now, in the process of searching.' Simply asking the above question, showing the face-to-face recognition, allows us, from this first instance, to consider that Woolf is also in this place with Derrida, experimenting and 'searching'.[59]

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[59] Derrida 2008, p.14.

4.3.2 'large bright eyes shone in hers'

Flush and Miss Barrett's connection is also illustrated in their second reciprocal gaze, which this time, we are left in no doubt, is eye-to-eye (or eye-in-eye) as Flush's 'large bright eyes shone in hers' (F 27). Rather than this being a case of Miss Barrett subsuming Flush, it is clear that she responds to his look, that it changes her mood and impacts upon her sense of reality as she is 'transformed' into 'a Greek nymph' being kissed by that 'bearded god' named 'Flush, or was it Pan?' (F 27) Mirroring the early phrase that '[s]he was woman; he was dog' (19), in this moment 'she was a nymph and Flush was Pan' (F 27). I touched on the potential problems of raising the animal to mythical status above, something Woolf does here based on Barrett Browining's 'Flush or Faunus', and this is an issue I will return to in the following section in relation to Deleuze. For now, however, I want to focus on the way that Flush appears to respond to her response: 'So, too, Flush felt strange stirrings at work within him' (F 27). Just as Miss Barrett imagines a time and place when they could be, perhaps, closer, so does Flush: 'he longed for the day when his own rough roar would issue like hers in the little simple sounds that had such mysterious meaning' (F 28). We might draw a comparison here with the 'little language such as lovers use, words of one syllable such as children speak' that Bernard desires in *The Waves*. In fact, Bernard barely wants to sound human at all when he declares 'I need a howl; a cry [...] I have done with phrases' (W 246), and at one point he even specifies that what one really needs is 'a bark' (W 210). We might say that what we see with both Flush and Bernard is a longing to, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, '[s]tammer language, be a foreigner in one's own tongue'.[60] Indeed, Deleuze claims Woolf's writing as one example of an author styling a 'new syntax' which breaks with dominant and conventional modes and creates 'a foreign language within the language'.[61]

If imagining Flush and Miss Barrett as Pan and a nymph is to imagine some state which blurs the human/animal distinction, then so is Flush's description of this longing to communicate with her on different terms. Importantly, however, this is not a wish for anthropomorphism, as he does not long to understand or speak the human language, but

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[60] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.148.
[61] Gilles Deleuze. 'Mediators.' *Negotiations: 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Columbia UP, 1995, p.133.

rather 'innumerable sounds', 'little simple sounds' with 'mysterious meaning' (F 28). Indeed a specifically human language, in this moment, is charged as hindering communication rather than aiding it: 'The fact was that they could not communicate with words, and it was a fact that led undoubtedly to much misunderstanding. Yet did it not lead also to a peculiar intimacy? [...] do words say everything? Can words say anything? Do not words destroy the symbol that lies beyond the reach of words?' (F 27) As Garber puts it, commenting on this same passage, '[p]recisely because our dogs cannot speak, we are able to hear – with uncanny and uncanine skill – what they have to say.'[62] In emphasising the inadequacies of speech and suggesting that it is not a necessary component of close companion species bonding, Woolf posits the animal's apparent lack of speech as not in fact a lack at all. As Derrida challenges: 'It would not be a matter of "giving speech back" to animals but perhaps of acceding to a thinking, however fabulous and chimerical it may be, that thinks the absence of the name and of the word otherwise, and as something other than a privation.'[63] Perhaps Flush is pointing us toward Deleuze and Guattari's statement that '[l]anguage is not life; it gives life orders. Life does not speak; it listens and waits.'[64] In any case, *Flush* would seem to imply that it is not sufficient to tie response to language, and therefore claim that humans 'respond' and animals simply 'react' in these terms.[65]

4.3.3 'Miss Barrett refused even to meet his eyes'

Whilst in the two examples so far Flush's meets Miss Barrett's gaze, there is a revealing scene later in the novel, our third example, in which Miss Barrett momentarily refuses to do so: 'though Flush might look, Miss Barrett refused even to meet his eyes. There she lay on the sofa; there Flush lay on the floor' (F 46). Chastised after his jealous attack on Mr Browning, Flush is relegated to the floor, and his status is lowered to such a state that Miss Barrett refuses to respond. But the semi-colon again seems important here,

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[62] Garber 1996, p.117.

[63] Derrida 2008, p.48.

[64] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.84.

[65] Focusing on the importance the dog's scent-centred world, Allen McLaurin argues that '[i]t is true in a sense that language "deforms" sensation, for the dog's sense of smell is much richer and more concrete than the words "smell" and "aroma".' See *Virginia Woolf: the Echoes Enslaved*. London: CUP, 1973, p.46. For more on olfaction in *Flush* see Alison Booth. 'The Scent of a Narrative: Rank Discourse in *Flush* and *Written on the Body*.' *Narrative* 8:1 (2000), 3-22.

signalling that although Miss Barrett is angry there is still the possibility of reconciliation, and Flush does indeed respond even to this refusal to respond:

> exiled, on the carpet, he went through one of those whirlpools of tumultuous emotion in which the soul is either dashed upon the rocks or splintered or, finding some tuft of foothold, slowly and painfully pulls itself up, regains dry land, and at last emerges on top of a ruined universe to survey a world created afresh on a different plan. (F 47)

The narrator ponders this unsettling moment in Flush's life: 'Which was it to be – destruction or reconstruction? That was the question.' Going against the stereotype of animalistic, mindless reaction, Flush opts for reconstruction, his response is the realisation that '[t]hings are not simple but complex. If he bit Mr Browning he bit her too. Hatred is not hatred; hatred is also love. Here Flush shook his ears in an agony of perplexity. He turned uneasily on the floor. Mr Browning was Miss Barrett – Miss Barrett was Mr Browning; love is hatred and hatred is love' (F 47).

It may be argued that the narrative again displays anthropomorphism, but more importantly, I suggest, it refuses to fall into the type of assumptions about the limitations of animal psychology that would lead to such a claim. It seems to me that, consistent with the representations of response we have already seen, the most important point being made is that '[t]hings are not simple but complex'. To emphasise the complex intertwining of their relationship, Miss Barrett does, after looking at Flush again, respond by forgetting her idea 'to buy a muzzle' (F 47) and, 'la[ying] down her pen' (as if to signal once again that language is secondary to their connection) 'she forgave him' (F 48). What follows is the description a few days later when Flush and Miss Barrett seem intimately connected in communication as Flush chooses to eat the cakes Mr Browning had previously brought because they were now 'symbols of hatred turned to love' (F 48). As Miss Barrett explains to Flush that he should not try to bite Mr Browning again, Flush's response suggests an inter-species communication that crosses over this supposed abyss between them: 'Flush solemnly repeated, in his own language, the words she had used – he swore to love Mr Browning and not bite him for the future' (F 49).

4.3.4 'he leapt on the sofa and thrust his face into hers'

As it turns out, Flush's ability to respond to his owner's gaze is only denied by death. In the final moments of the novel, we have the fourth and final example of human and dog meeting face to face. As Miss Barrett responds to Flush jumping on the sofa and 'thrust[ing] his face into hers' by recalling her sonnet 'Flush or Faunus', they seem to be connected by more than just their gaze (if you like they are not just face-to-face but face-in-face, recalling the eye-in-eye gaze above) (F 105). As Haraway notes, we now know that the 'molecular record' of humans and dogs contain traces of each other,[66] and if this material, molecular intermingling is being emphasised in Woolf's text, then it is fitting that this should occur – perhaps as a reminder of the importance of Flush's life on the shaping of his companion – moments before his demise. Woolf could not, of course, have been aware of today's advances in molecular biology, but it is as though she wants to emphasise that Flush should not be thought of as some generalised figure that stands for all dogs, let alone as mere allegory for a strictly human concern (just as Derrida insists with his cat). If he is a figure at all, he illustrates those of Haraway, where '[f]igures are not representations or didactic illustrations, but rather material-semiotic nodes or knots in which diverse bodies and meanings coshape one another.'[67] Goldman's focus on Woolf's canine tropes has taken a turn in precisely this direction, and she calls upon Haraway to suggest that in *The Years* it is 'a material-semiotic node of knotted beings, canine and human, that Mira, Lulu and the Colonel are forming'. Goldman therefore posits that the identity of the humans in this knot, the Colonel and Mira, and the dog, Lulu, are not easily disentangled.[68] I would add that such nodes or knots also seem to be evident in a short unfinished sketch written by Woolf entitled 'The Dog' (1989): 'She attached herself […] she would not let me out of her sight. She became like a supplementary limb – a tail, something attached to my person. I never had to call her. I had great difficulty in detaching her.'[69]

The fact that the closing lines of Flush echo the description used when Flush and Miss Barrett first looked at each other is also revealing. We will recall that in the first

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[66] Haraway 2003, p.31.
[67] Haraway 2008, p.4.
[68] See Goldman 2010, p.186.
[69] Virginia Woolf. 'The Dog.' *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Susan Dick. London: Harcourt, 1989, p.334-335. Thought to be written in 1939 (see p.341).

example, we read: 'Broken asunder, yet made in the same mould, could it be that each completed what was dormant in the other? She might have been – all that; and he – but no. Between them lay the widest gulf that can separate one being from another. She spoke. He was dumb. She was woman; he was dog' (F 18-19). And in the final paragraph we read that: 'Broken asunder, yet made in the same mould, each, perhaps, completed what was dormant in the other. But she was woman; he was dog' (F 105). It could of course be argued that these final comments reinforce the gulf between Flush and his human companion one final time, although we can see that as with the earlier passage the semi-colon appears to leave the possibility of boundary crossing open. More tellingly, however, this latter passage is different from the former in two important ways: firstly, the possibility that each 'completed what was dormant in the other' is no longer followed by a question mark – although Woolf uses the word 'perhaps', she seems to be more certain of their cross-species connection by the end of the book; secondly, instead of the sharp 'But no. Between them lay the widest gulf', the conjunction Woolf uses at the end of the novel is far softer. In this instance the 'but' may not be in forceful contradiction to the statement preceding it, but might simply present the anomaly that Woolf's text has illuminated: here is a human and a cocker spaniel whose lives are intertwined beyond language 'But' they belong to different species (we might note that this latter passage does not reinforce the statement concerning who could speak and who was 'dumb'). As we read that Miss Barrett 'looked at Flush again' and that 'he did not look at her' we are aware that this must not be due to an incapacity of his species for response or an abyssal gulf between human and dog (indeed the very fact Miss Barrett expected Flush to return her gaze emphasises their inter-species connection) but rather because '[h]e had been alive; he was now dead. That was all' (F 106).

Does seeing Flush and Miss Barrett's relationship through their shared gaze in these four examples point us towards the 'mortal world-making entanglements' that Donna Haraway terms 'contact zones'?[70] It is certainly true that Woolf's examples of human-dog gaze turn out to anticipate current scientific research. In 'The Secret Life of the Dog', a *Horizons* documentary first broadcast on the BBC on 6th January 2010, we

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[70] Haraway 2008, p.4.

see animal behaviour scientist Daniel Mills' experiment into dog recognition of human emotions, which previous research has shown to be expressed asymmetrically so that when humans look at a face they have a left-gaze bias (ie. they look at the right-hand side of the person's face). The findings are startling: while dogs look randomly at pictures of objects or of other dogs, they also display a left-gaze bias when looking at a human face. Later in the documentary, cognitive psychologist Juliane Kaminski conducts an experiment which shows that dogs are even attuned to the direction of the human gaze, something not achieved by our closest ancestor, the chimpanzee. Moreover, these skills are specifically developed through the co-evolutionary stories of humans and dogs (dogs do not show these abilities with their own species, for example).[71] Rather than emphasising 'The Great Divides' between animals (in nature) and humans (in culture), here differences appear to, as Haraway puts it, 'flatten into mundane differences – the kinds that have consequences and demand respect and response',[72] the kinds that are evinced in 'naturecultures' where '[w]e are training each other'.[73] In *Flush*, these learned and materially embedded capabilities for human-dog communication display 'material-semiotic dancing in which all partners have face, but no one relies on names. [… N]on-linguistic embodied communication [which] depends on looking back and greeting significant others, again and again.'[74] By asking us to respond to Flush's responses, Woolf reminds us that we cannot adequately account for the relations between companion species 'if the fleshly historical reality of face-to-face, body-to-body subject making across species is denied or forgotten in the humanist doctrine that holds only humans to be true subjects with real histories.'[75] Even in Wimpole Street – 'the heart of civilisation' (F 20) – we are reminded, as Haraway writes in 'The Companion Species Manifesto' (2003), that 'conceiving of "nature" and "culture" as either polar opposites or universal categories in foolish […] Instead of opposites, we get the whole sketchpad of

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[71] 'The Secret Life of the Dog.' *Horizon*. First broadcast on the BBC, 6th January 2010.

[72] Haraway 2008, p.15.

[73] Haraway 2008, p.16. Haraway's 'naturecultures' are influenced by Bruno Latour: 'Nature and Society are not two distinct poles, but one and the same production of successive states of societies-natures, of collectives.' Bruno Latour. *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1993, p.139.

[74] Haraway 2008, p.26-27.

[75] Haraway 2008, p.66-67.

the modern geometrician's fevered brain with which to draw relationality.'[76] Indeed, Haraway alludes to Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* when arguing that 'categorically unfixed dogs' – which we might call 'mongrels', 'random bred dogs', 'mixed breeds, or just plain dogs' – need '"A Category of One's Own": 'Woolf understood what happens when the impure stroll over the lawns of the properly registered.'[77] The relationship between Flush, as a cocker spaniel, and the 'properly registered' is the focus of the following section.

4.4 From Spaniel Club to An*i*malous Society

In the opening pages of *Flush*, the dogginess of the dog is defined by the exclusive and hierarchical organisation of the Spaniel Club:

> By that august body it is plainly laid down what constitute the vices of a spaniel, and what constitute its virtues. Light eyes, for example, are undesirable; curled ears are still worse; to be born with a light nose or a topknot is nothing less than fatal. The merits of a spaniel are equally clearly defined. His head must be smooth, rising without a too-decided stoop from the muzzle; the skull must be comparatively rounded and well developed with plenty of room for brain power; the eyes must be full but not gozzled; the general expression must be one of intelligence and gentleness. (F 7)

Membership of the Spaniel Club (established since 1885 as an offshoot of The Kennel Club, itself founded in 1873) depends on categorisation based on physiology. It is not only a question of who is a member and who is not; behind the humour and elegance of Woolf's prose is a matter of life itself: '[t]he spaniel that exhibits these points is encouraged and bred from; the spaniel who persists in perpetuating topknots and light noses is cut off from the privileges and emoluments of his kind' (F 7). Perhaps most telling, however, is the fact that standing at the top of this hierarchy, on only two legs, is always a human judge 'laying down the law, impos[ing] penalties and privileges which ensure that the law shall be obeyed' (F 7). Indeed, Linden Peach has pointed out that the Spaniel Club's focus on the 'pure bred' takes on an added significance when we consider

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[76] Haraway 2003, p.8.
[77] Haraway 2003, p.88.

the publication history of *Flush* – this section of Woolf's text appeared in the first installment in the October 1933 issue of *Atlantic Monthly* alongside a review of Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* by Alice Hamilton. [78]

If Woolf is opening up a space in *Flush* which offers the possibility of a more fluid and varied relation between companion species, then this space is quite different from the exclusive organisation of the Spaniel Club. The close relationship between companion species would seem to challenge the objectifying, hierarchical organisation of dogs, as well as between human and dog. For Haraway, it should never be a question of one species or being having control over another, but rather multiple stories of cross-species entanglements: "Companion Species" 'is less a category than a pointer to an ongoing "becoming with"'.[79] As Susan McHugh explains, it is a term used 'to inscribe people, animals, places, and technologies in relations that at their best inspire an ongoing sense of curiosity and reciprocity.'[80] Claiming to be a 'creature' (and philosopher) 'of the mud'[81], Haraway is the self-styled choreographer of 'a multipartner mud dance' where '[t]he partners do not precede their relating; all that is, is the fruit of becoming with: those are the mantras of companion species.'[82] But whilst Haraway's mud philosophy is important for emphasising the multiple ways in which our lives today – in domestic settings and in a coevolutionary sense[83] – are bound up with those of dogs (and other companion species), and also for shedding light on the specific ways in which animals are (mis)treated in our contemporary stories, I would like to argue that her insistence on the 'ordinary' and 'domestic' has its own blind spots when it comes to how we think about the human/animal divide – limitations which fail to explain the whole story of *Flush*.

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[78] Linden Peach. 'Editing Flush and Woolf's Editing in Flush.' Eleanor McNees and Sara Veglahn (eds.). *Woolf Editing/Editing Woolf: Selected Papers from the Eighteenth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf.* Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2009, p.203-204.
[79] Haraway 2008, p.16-17.
[80] Susan McHugh. 'Queer (and) Animal Theories.' *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 15 (2009), p.159.
[81] Haraway 2008, p.2, p.28.
[82] Haraway 2008, p.16.
[83] In her discussion of canine history in *Flush*, Jeanne Dubino argues that Woolf's text is 'informed by a deep appreciation and knowledge of Darwinism.' See 'Evolution, History, and Flush; or, The Origin of Spaniels.' Kristin Czarnecki and Carrie Rohman (eds.). *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World: Selected Papers from the Twentieth International Conference on Virginia Woolf.* Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2011, p.148.

Haraway's emphasis on 'molecular differences'[84] and 'becoming-with' has echoes of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'becoming-animal', which I will discuss further below but will briefly define here as the shared event of becoming different, of becoming entangled with the other in a 'creative line of escape' from traditional ontological categories of human and animal.[85] But despite herself sounding at times Deleuzian (and she does acknowledge in *When Species Meet* (2008), albeit tucked away in a footnote of further criticisms, that she is influenced by Deleuze and Guattari's theorising of 'assemblages')[86] Haraway is emphatic in her dislike of Deleuze and Guattari's 'becoming-animal': 'I want to explain why writing in which I had hoped to find an ally for the tasks of companion species instead made me come as close as I get to announcing, "Ladies and Gentlemen, behold the enemy!"'[87] Focusing on *A Thousand Plateaus*, what appears to make Haraway 'so angry' is what she sees as their 'scorn for all that is mundane and ordinary', for the 'homely'[88] and – in a more polemical version of her criticism of Derrida – 'profound absence of curiosity about or respect for and with actual animals'.[89] According to Haraway, they lack 'the courage to look […] a dog in the eye':[90] 'This is a philosophy of the sublime, not the earthly, not the mud'.[91] She goes on to accuse Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-animal of demonstrating one of the clearest displays in all philosophy of 'misogyny, fear of aging, incuriosity about animals, and horror at the ordinariness of flesh, here covered by the alibi of an anti-Oedipal and anticapitalist project.'[92] If Haraway is engaged in a mud dance with her dogs, the problem, perhaps, is that she is also throwing mud. More pragmatically, Braidotti has suggested that what is shared between Haraway and Deleuze, and also her own 'nomadic subjects' (discussed in section 2.1.2 of this thesis) is a deep 'alliance' in presenting theories which are 'materialist' and 'neo-literal', and therefore not limited to the 'textual'

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[84] Haraway 2003, p.5.
[85] Deleuze and Guattari 1986, p.17.
[86] Haraway 2008, p.314, fn.37.
[87] Haraway 2008, p.27.
[88] Haraway 2008, p.29.
[89] Haraway 2008, p.27.
[90] Haraway 2008, p.29.
[91] Haraway 2008, p.28.
[92] Haraway 2008, p.30. Haraway notes that her reading of Deleuze is largely influenced by Rosi Braidotti, and some of the criticisms of 'becoming-woman' that I have discussed in chapter 2 (315, fn.39). Yet, as noted above, Braidotti has pointed to important shared concerns of Haraway and Deleuze. See fn.197.

and 'resolutely not metaphorical': 'Haraway shares with Deleuze two key features: serious neo-foundational materialism on the one hand and a rigorous theory of relationality on the other'.[93]

Although Haraway has taken issue with Deleuze and Guattari, then, I want to argue that a combination of her focus on domestic and coevolutionary stories and Deleuze and Guattari's disruption of human-centred relations is important when considering the question of the animal in Woolf's text. As Calarco, whose entire project in *Zoographies* is focused on the rejection of 'human chauvinism',[94] notes, Deleuze and Guattari provide a rare example in Western philosophy of a non-anthropocentric treatment of the animal.[95] In contrast to Haraway's accusation that they lack a curiosity for the animal, for Calarco they demonstrate a

> "fascination" for the animal and other nonhuman perspectives that are at work in becoming-animal; for them, it is this fascination that motivates revolutionary literature and progressive discourses on animals […] a fascination for something "outside" or other than the human and dominant perspectives (and this "outside" might well lie within human beings, for example, in an inhuman space at the very heart of what we call human).[96]

The point then is not that Deleuze and Guattari are incurious as Haraway has charged, but that they are *more* than curious. Their real *fascination* is not limited to the animal in its 'molar' (that is, unified and unfixed) form but the 'molecular' changes and intensive interplay between species. Leonard Lawlor uses the example of the gaze to argue that for Deleuze and Guattari 'it is this gaze from the singular animal and its cries that place the

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[93] Rosi Braidotti. 'Posthuman, All Too Human: Towards a New Process Ontology.' *Theory Culture Society* 23 (2006), p.200.

[94] Calarco 2008, p.35.

[95] In *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Derrida speaks of Deleuze and Guattari's 'great, rich chapter' on becoming-animal (in *A Thousand Plateaus*) and urges students to read Deleuze's writings on the animal '*in extenso*': 're-read it all', he recommends. See *The Beast and the Sovereign, Volume 1*. Ed. Geoffrey Bennington and Peggy Kamuf. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2009, p.141-142.

[96] Calarco 2008, p.42-43. Despite Calarco's apparent interest in Deleuze and Guattari's writings on the animal, however, they are only discussed in a few pages of his book. Calarco instead concentrates on Heidegger, Levinas, Agamben, and Derrida.

animal *within* me: one in the other.'[97] If we recall the example where Flush thrusts his face into Miss Barrett's, we could perhaps think of this not simply as a 'representational relation' between molar forms, but a becoming-molecular. It is in this sense that fascination sparks becoming, where '[i]n the experience of becoming, when one is fascinated by something before oneself, when one contemplates something before oneself, one is *among* it, *within* it, together in a zone of proximity.'[98]

Turning to Deleuze and Guattari helps to expand upon and complicate the domestic, material-semiotic entanglements between Woolf's canine protagonist and his owner.[99] In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari outline three ways in which we can distinguish animals – two anthropomorphic and a third which challenges anthropocentric conceptualisations. First, there are the 'Oedipal animals […] "my" cat, "my" dog.' Importantly it is here, in their criticism of the ways in which this view of animals 'draws us into a narcissistic contemplation' and reinforces the tendency for anthropomorphism, that Deleuze and Guattari make the comment which Haraway finds particular distasteful: that '*anyone who like likes cats or dogs is a fool*'! This is indeed a startling statement, but taking this comment out of context, Haraway risks giving the impression that Deleuze and Guattari are cruelly dismissive of animals, when in fact they are exposing the ways in which such animals have been reduced to mere psychoanalytic facades with 'a daddy, a mommy, a little brother behind them';[100] they are attempting to unsettle and complicate our conceptualisation of human/animal relations.[101] In Deleuze and Guattari's model, the second kinds of animals are 'State animals', those 'with characteristics or attributes' that fit them into 'divine myths'. Here there seems to be an affinity with recognising Derrida's real cat, rather than generalising and mythologizing. Finally, there are the more nomadic 'pack or affect animals that form a multiplicity, a

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[97] Leonard Lawlor. Following the Rats: Becoming-Animal in Deleuze and Guattari.' *SubStance* 37:3 (2008),169-187, p.176.

[98] Lawlor 2008, p.176.

[99] Demonstrating further the links between them, the emphasis on 'material-semiotic' that we see in Haraway is also central to Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy: 'As matters of expression take on consistency they constitute semiotic systems, but the *semiotic* components are inseparable from *material* components and are in exceptionally close contact with molecular levels.' See Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.369.

[100] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p265.

[101] Susan McHugh has also recently disagreed with Haraway's harsh dismissal of Deleuze and Guattari's 'becoming-animal'. See *Animal Stories: Narrating Across Species Lines*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2011, p.14.

becoming'.[102] This third way of approaching the animal is to take into account their own capacity for world-making and rather than assimilating them into an anthropocentric 'classificatory or Oedipal schema.'[103] Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari invoke Woolf when clarifying that their emphasis on 'pack animals' is not a comment on the fact 'that certain animals live in packs' or such 'evolutionary classifications':

> Virginia Woolf experiences herself not as a monkey or a fish but as a troop of monkeys, a school of fish, according to her variable relations of becoming with the people she approaches. […] What we are saying is that every animal is fundamentally a band, a pack. That it has pack modes, rather than characteristics, even if further distinctions within these modes are called for. It is at this point that the human being encounters the animal. We do not become animal without a fascination for the pack, for multiplicity.[104]

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this current study to expand upon the relations between Woolf and monkeys or fish (!), the important point here is the emphasis placed on moving away from individuated subjectivity (of humans or animals) and towards affect and movement of intensely interwoven multiplicitous agencies. In order to explore the full extent of Woolf's fascination for the animal in *Flush*, I would argue that it is important not to abandon Deleuze and Guattari as 'the enemy', but to take on board their concerns about Oedipal and symbolic animals, and to ask whether this third kind of animal – the one that provides the line of flight from anthropocentrism – is located in Woolf's novel. After all, 'cannot any animal be treated in all three ways? [...] Even the cat, even the dog.'[105] Even, we might add, Flush. Again, Deleuze and Guattari allude here to Woolf - this time to her 'thin dog' (which Woolf actually takes from Katherine Mansfield's diary) to exemplify the symbiotic relations formed between the different elements that combine in an 'event' or 'haecceity' (a term I discuss in more detail in the following chapter, section 5.5): 'Climate, wind, season, hour are not of another nature than the things, animals, or people that populate them, follow them, sleep and awaken within them. This should be read without a pause: the animal-stalks-at-five-o'clock […]

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[102] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p265.
[103] Calarco 2008, p.42.
[104] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.264.
[105] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p265-266.

Five o'clock is this animal! This animal is this place! "The thin dog is running down the road, this dog is the road," cries Virginia Woolf. That is how we need to feel'.[106]

Although Flush spends most of his time in a Victorian domestic setting, and although he is on a couple of occasions compared to Pan, he ultimately contradicts rather than conforms to the model of an 'Oedipal' or 'State' animal. Rather than settling into the domestic order or mythological associations, he has a central role in Woolf's reimagining of the earthly space shared by humans and animals, where hierarchies are flattened and species categories blurred. Take, for example, the description of how the previous domestic order had created a gulf fuelled by hatred between Flush and his human companions, likened to 'an iron bar corroding and festering and killing all natural life beneath it'. After 'the cutting of sharp knives and painful surgery, the iron has been excised' and what results is a kind of material-semiotic alliance between Flush and Miss Barrett, the fleshly reconceptualisation of human/dog relations:

> Now the blood ran once more; the nerves shot and tingled; flesh formed; Nature rejoiced, as in spring. Flush heard the birds sing again; he felt the leaves growing on the trees; as he lay on the sofa at Miss Barrett's feet, glory and delight coursed through his veins. He was with them, not against them, now; their hopes, their wishes, their desires were his. (F 49)

Whilst this passage could again be read as an example of anthropomorphism, of another human appropriation of the dog, once again Woolf's use of free indirect speech encompasses a more collective, connected arrangement. I prefer to view this passage as pointing towards a 'naturalcultural assemblage', to put together key terms used by both Deleuze and Guattari and Haraway (terms I will focus on in further detail in the following chapter), where Flush's singularisation is intermingled with the 'birds', 'trees', as well as the 'feet' – which earlier signalled the so-called 'gulf' between them – of Miss Barrett. Moreover, he

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[106] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.290. Goldman weaves this passage into the introduction to her essay '"Ce chien est á moi": Virginia Woolf and the Signifying Dog' which digs up and chases down Woolf's canine metaphors, focusing particularly in *A Room of One's Own*. See Goldman 2007.

could have barked in sympathy with Mr Browning now. The short sharp words raised the hackles on his neck. "I need a week of Tuesdays," Mr Browning cried, "then a month – a year – a life!" I, Flush echoed him, need a month – a year – a life! I need all the things that you both need. We are all three conspirators in the most glorious of causes. We are joined in sympathy. We are joined in hatred. We are joined in defiance of black and beetling tyranny. We are joined in love (F 49).

This passage evokes the image of Cam and James in the boat with Mr Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, resolving to fight tyranny, a scene which I argued in chapter two showed their becoming-molecular together (see section 2.2.4). Just as the tyranny they were defying was patriarchal chauvinism that divided women and men in hierarchical terms, here we see 'some dimly apprehended but none the less certainly emerging triumph' (F 50) against the human chauvinism that would divide humans and animals, and seek to classify animals based on biologistic qualities (*á la* the Spaniel Club), deprived of their place in an exclusively human culture.

But rather than simply another example of where dogs, as Haraway writes, are '[p]artners in the crime of human evolution',[107] Flush and his companion species move here towards Deleuzian becoming which prefers the term 'involution' and which is not so much about 'descent and filiation' as it is about 'alliance' and 'transversal communications': 'to involve', they clarify, is to form a block that runs its own line "between" the terms in play and beneath assignable relations.'[108] The alliance formed between Miss Barrett, Mr Barrett and Flush forms a shared becoming-other that involves human and animal at the same time as working between these terms and beneath species characteristics. Importantly, Miss Barrett's becoming-animal is not a matter of her growing a tail, nor is Flush's becoming-other a matter of walking on two legs; it is not a case of resemblance or imitation, nor is it simply a metaphor. As Deleuze and Guattari stress in *Kafka*, '[t]here is nothing metaphoric about the becoming-animal. No symbolism, no allegory. […] It is an ensemble of states, each distinct from the other, grafted onto the man insofar as he is searching for a way out. It is a creative line of escape that says nothing other than what it is. […] it constitutes a single process, a unique

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[107] Haraway 2003, p.5.
[108] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p263.

method that replaces subjectivity.'[109] Or as they write in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the important question becomes:

> which reality is at issue here? For if becoming animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal, it is clear that the human being does not "really" become an animal any more than the animal "really" becomes something else. Becoming produces nothing other than itself. We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are. What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes […] becoming lacks a subject distinct from itself [.][110]

We might also recall here Deleuze's theory – discussed in chapter three – that what is missing in desire is not a yet-to-be-attained object, but rather the subject (see section 3.3).

If the aforementioned passage from Woolf's novel is a moment of 'deterritorialisation', a moment of Flush and his human companions becoming-minoritarian, it is followed by 'reterritorialisation', as predicted by Deleuze and Guattari's conceptual paradigm. The reterritorialisation in this instance is the dognapping of Flush, the blocking of his line of flight. This moment of deterritorialisation is therefore not absolute but relative, and seems to be an example of what Deleuze and Guattari term 'negative' deterritorialisation where it is 'immediately overlaid by reterritorialisations on property, work, and money.' As Flush is dognapped we are reminded of his position in an anthropocentric culture whereby he becomes a piece of property to be bargained over by humans – the gulf is reinforced as the agents are reterritorialised in their hierarchical positions. But as Deleuze and Guattari are keen to emphasise, deterritorialisation has 'highly varied forms', and what initially appears to be 'negative' soon becomes a 'positive' deterritorialisation which 'prevails over the reterritorialisations, which play only a secondary role'.[111] This is seen in the fact that this traumatic incident when Flush is captured and taken to Whitechapel leads to a discussion of Wimpole Street and its dangers, and in Miss Barrett's resistance to the dominant, majoritarian viewpoint (of her

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[109] Deleuze and Guattari 1986, p.35-36.
[110] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.262.
[111] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p560.

husband and father) that they should not save Flush: 'For her it was madness. So they told her. Her brothers, her sisters, all came round her threatening her, dissuading her […] But she stood her ground. At last they realised the extent of her folly. Whatever the risk might be they must give way to her' (F 66). The dognapping of Flush throws 'doubts upon the solidity even of Wimpole Street itself', undermining its 'apparent solidity and security' as the hub of Victorian civilisation (F 51).

Woolf ironically uses the moment where the human most obviously and cruelly exerts its power over the animal in order to illuminate human failings; that there is no natural order of things. When Flush does return to Miss Barrett their reterritorialisation does not dominate their deterritorialisation. After Flush is 'led out into the open air' and returned to Wimpole Street, it is a setting that for Miss Barrett has changed, a place that now points outward rather than inward at itself as the safe and untouchable haven of civilisation: 'The old gods of the bedroom – the bookcase, the wardrobe, the busts – seemed to have lost their substance. This room was no longer the whole world; it was only a shelter' (F 67). We are told that 'everything was different' and that '[e]verything in the room seemed to be aware of change' (F 69). Miss Barrett's becoming-animal leads her to recognise and respond to the violence enacted against her companion species as she hears 'the howls of tethered dogs, the screams of birds in terror' (F 67). Flush, too, realises his perilous position as dog amongst men: having previously felt Mr Browning was with him in fighting against tyranny, what is '[b]ehind those smiling, friendly faces' of Mr Browning and Mr Kenyon 'was treachery and cruelty and deceit' (F 67). The 'becoming-with', to use Haraway's preferred term, of Miss Barrett and Flush is a becoming-minoritarian-with, as they are closer now having somehow found a line of flight from the illusion of human superiority: 'They had been parted; now they were together. Indeed they had never been so much akin. Every start she gave, every movement she made, passed through him too' (F 68). Uncomfortable in her human skin, Miss Barrett 'seemed now to be perpetually starting and moving'. Intriguingly, she also hides the 'pair of thick boots' that are delivered (F 68), and it was '[g]reat boots […] stumbling in and out' (F 55), 'hard, horny boots' (F 57) that had haunted Flush when he was captive in Whitechapel. Tellingly, their communication is now carried out non-verbally, in 'tremendous silence' (F 71).

Of course, this all leads to a more literal fleeing, as Flush and his companion escape to Italy 'leaving tyrants and dog-stealers behind them'. Both Flush and Miss Barrett 'had changed' (F 75) and now that Flush was 'independent', his relationship with Mr Browning also improves. Mr Browning, like Mr Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, appears to have been swept up in their becoming (see section 2.2.3), so that 'he and Flush were the best of friends now' that Flush 'was his own master' (F 78). The deep empathy shared between Miss Barrett and Flush in their escape from hierarchies of oppression is reinforced here also: 'Fear was unknown in Florence; there were no dog-stealers here and, she may have sighed, there were no fathers' (F 78). The events immediately before and following Flush's dognapping therefore illuminate lines of flight that cross the human/animal divide, and attempt to show a less hierarchical relation between companion species. In *Dialogues*, Deleuze describes becoming-animal as 'the picking-up of a code where each is deterritorialized',[112] and true to their positive deterritorialisation Flush 'had revised his code accordingly' so that this 'new conception of canine society' (note again the mixing of canine and society, of nature and culture), is one where dogs are more liberated: 'Where was 'must' now? Where were chains now? Where were park-keepers and truncheons? Gone, with the dog-stealers and Kennel Clubs and Spaniel Clubs of a corrupt aristocracy!' We learn that Flush 'was the friend of all the world now. All dogs were his brothers. He had no need of a chain in this new world; he had no need of protection' (F 77). This reads like an earlier canine version of Woolf's famous statement in *Three Guineas* concerning the role of women as members of an 'Outsiders' Society' and therefore not being controlled within any nationalistic boundaries: '"For," the outsider will say, "in fact, as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world' (TG 313). It may well be true that on one level *Flush: A Biography* acts as an allegory for, as Woolf puts it in *A Room of One's Own*, the 'dog's chance' (RO 141) women writers have been given in patriarchal culture, and for some of the other concerns of critics I outlined in section 4.1, but I would also like to suggest that by seeming to fit better with an Outsider's Society as opposed to Spaniel Club, Flush the dog can be understood as offering a specifically

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[112] Deleuze and Parnet 2006 [1987], p.33.

nonanthropocentric version of such an Outsider's Society – what I term an 'An*i*malous Society'.

Anna Snaith has commented that *Flush* is 'a text whose supposed anomalousness has often caused it to be read out of context – or not to be read at all'.[113] Arguing that this novel is not so anomalous after all, Snaith's reading makes an important and convincing case for taking Flush the text seriously as 'part of Woolf's anti-fascist writing of the 1930s'.[114] But focusing on the question of the animal, I have been suggesting that it is precisely the anomalous status of Woolf's canine protagonist that enables us to explore a more entangled and non-hierarchical relation between human and animal. In *Flush*, we could say that the ordinary and extraordinary are intermingled to launch becomings-animal, the becoming-anomalous through the animal: a becoming-an*i*malous? In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari's definition of the 'anomalous' has much in common with their understanding of an Outsider – the anomalous is a 'phenomenon of bordering […] a position or set of positions in relation to a multiplicity' that is distinct from the 'abnormal' which 'can be defined only in terms of characteristics, specific or generic'.[115] As Joshua Delpech-Ramey notes, 'the anomalous is the cutting edge, the edge of "deterritorialization" of the group itself. What is anomalous is not that which is outside of the group or divergent within it, but that individual who forms a porous border between the group and its Outside.'[116] We are therefore reminded of the opening to the novel, when Woolf lays out the etymology of the word 'Spaniel', dog of 'Hispania' which 'derives from the Basque word *espana*, signifying an edge or boundary' (F 5). My neologism 'An*i*malous Society' implies that the anomalous and animal in Woolf's text are coextensive; Flush, as a dog who 'would meet with the approval of the Spaniel Club' as 'a pure-bred Cocker of the red variety marked by all the characteristic excellences of his kind' (F 10) but also becoming-with and becoming-animal-with his human companions, should not be seen as simply an 'exceptional individual' trapped within the confines of his role as 'the family animal or pet', but as transforming human/animal relations and becoming nomadic even within his domestic arena. If the anomalous

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[113] Anna Snaith. 'Of Fanciers, Footnotes, and Fascism: Virginia Woolf's *Flush*.' *Modern Fiction Studies* 48.3 (2002), p.615.
[114] Snaith 2002, p.632.
[115] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p269.
[116] Joshua Delpech-Ramey. 'Deleuze, Guattari, and the "Politics of Sorcery".' *SubStance* 39:1 (2010), p.13.

functions to draw us into 'a movement away from our molar identity' and moves us towards a 'zone of new ways of relating […] of novelty and possibilities' then it would seem to me that this could also describe Flush.[117] Taking account of the anomalous in *Flush* is not then a question of the abnormal and rejected or normal and included, nor is it about anomalies within a group; instead it is the creation of gaps in the divide, and the invitation to cross those divides, *between* inside and outside, culture and nature, human and animal.

4.5 Conclusion: It's a Cow's Life

In the preceding sections I have tried to keep in mind that in theorising the relation between animal and human, the 'fleshly historical reality' of dogs, [118] as Haraway would put it, are important in *Flush: A Biography*. That is, Woolf's cocker spaniel is not be read simply as 'an alibi for other themes'[119] nor does our reading of *Flush* lead us to some sublime escape from reality, but draws out the complexity of this reality of intensely involved entanglements between companion species which includes the possibility for movement and becoming rather than a fixed and defined dividing line. Whether or not there are moments in Woolf's novel that can be read as anthropomorphic, I have argued that it is not simply anthropocentric concerns we find in *Flush*, but a curiosity for animals (including humans) living together. As Jeanne Dubino has pointed out, these animals include more than simply cocker spaniels: 'Woolf populates *Flush* with wild and tamed species – a menagerie of cats and lions and tigers, partridges and parrots and rooks, elephants and fish and fox, black beetles and blue bottles, hares and fleas, and dogs'.[120] We could of course add cows to this list, and I want to finish by briefly turning to

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[117] Lori Brown. 'Becoming-Animal in the Flesh: Expanding the Ethical Reach of Deleuze and Guattari's Tenth Plateau.' *PhaenEx* 2:2 (2007), p.266. Reading becomings-animal alongside Barbara Smut's empirical documentations of her interactions with companion species – and therefore refusing to write-off Deleuze and Guattari's concept as being in opposition to the daily 'becomings-with' of the kind Haraway emphasises – Lori Brown suggests that we can read Smuts' description of her dog, Safi, as being 'more attuned and aware than perhaps many other animals, including humans' (270).

[118] Haraway 2008, p.66.

[119] Haraway 2003, p.5.

[120] Jeanne Dubino. 'The Bispecies Environment, Coevolution, and *Flush*.' *Contradictory Woolf: Selected Papers from the Twenty-first Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Derek Ryan and Stella Bolaki, Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press (forthcoming 2012).

Woolf's description of this particular species in order to consider further issues of flesh and suffering.[121]

Following Jeremy Bentham's famous plea for animal rights, Derrida claims that '[t]he *first* and *decisive* question would […] be to know whether animals *can suffer*.'[122] Whilst Haraway has pointed out the limitations of focusing our philosophical and ethical concern for animals on this question of suffering, she nonetheless accepts it as an important issue amongst others.[123] In addition, Calarco argues that rather than using Bentham's question to launch an empirical investigation into the capacity animals have to experience pain and suffering, Derrida's use has a more profound proto-ethical purpose: 'Derrida uses Bentham's question to broach the issue of the embodied exposure of animals, their finitude and vulnerability […] the question points toward and contains within itself the trace of something more basic: an interruptive encounter with animal suffering that calls for and provokes thought.'[124] In Woolf's novel, after Flush's dognapping from Wimpole Street and before we learn of his suffering in the seedy Whitechapel where he is held for ransom, we are presented with just such an interruptive encounter which highlights the 'embodied exposure of animals' and their 'vulnerability' when the narrator invokes Thomas Beames' 1852 book *The Rookeries of London*:

> he was shocked. Splendid buildings raised themselves in Westminster, yet just behind them were ruined sheds in which human beings lived herded together above herds of cows – 'two in each seven feet of space'. He felt that he ought to tell people what he had seen. Yet how could one describe politely a bedroom in which two or three families lived above a cow-shed, when the cow-shed had no ventilation, when the cows were milked and killed and eaten under the bedroom? (F 52)

Whilst much of the remainder of the paragraph goes on to focus on the suffering of the human beings living in these and similar conditions, it is significant that the narrative expands on the pronounced and exposed vulnerability of these cows, and that the

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[121] In 'Outlines', Woolf suggests that '[o]ur brilliant young men might do worse, when in search of a subject, than devote a year or two to cows in literature' (CR1 184).
[122] Derrida 2008, p.27.
[123] Haraway 2008, p.22.
[124] Calarco 2008, p.117.

sentence Woolf quotes directly 'two in each seven feet of space', refers to them. Instead of experiencing 'the recognition of an animals "ability" or "capacity" for suffering', this passage is most disturbing to a reader because it describes 'an encounter with an animal's *in*ability or *in*capacity to avoid pain, its fleshly vulnerability and exposure to wounding.'[125] What is so difficult for Beames to describe in the above passage, and what is most troubling for the reader, is the way in which these cows are already reduced to food and drink by the humans with whom they share such close living quarters. Moreover, when Flush's experience of his dognapping is then described, we are confronted with not only Flush's suffering, but his vulnerability which led to him being moved so easily and so quickly from his home to the 'complete darkness', the 'chillness and dampness' of his dognappers lair in Whitechapel. As if to emphasise the inability of the animal to avoid this plight, we are told that 'the floor was crowded with animals of different kinds', including 'dogs of the highest breeding […] like himself' (F 55). In Wimpole Street a dog's vulnerability is doubled – either kept on a leash, or stolen. Indeed, comparing Flush's later migration to Italy with the fact that Mrs Carlyle's dog Nero 'leapt from a top-storey window' and was later run over by a Butcher's cart (F 92; 103), Dubino points out that the two options ultimately become 'death or escape'.[126]

The key in all of this is not to stop at pity, but to explore, as I have claimed Woolf does in *Flush*, the way in which these encounters create a new relation between, and conceptualisation of, human and animal. As Deleuze and Guattari note in *What is Philosophy?*, 'the slaughter of a calf remains present in thought not through pity but as the zone of exchange between man and animal in which something of one passes into the other'.[127] In *Francis Bacon*, Deleuze argues that Bacon's paintings draw our attention to the fact that:

> [m]eat is not dead flesh; it retains all the sufferings and assumes all the colours of living flesh. It manifests such convulsive pain and vulnerability, but also such delightful invention, colour, and acrobatics. Bacon does not say, "Pity the beasts," but rather that

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[125] Calarco 2008, p.118.
[126] Dubino 2011, p.148.
[127] Deleuze and Guattari 1994, p.109.

every man who suffers is a piece of meat. Meat is the common zone of man and the beast, their zone of indiscernibility.[128]

Deleuze goes on to discuss the eighteenth century German writer Karl Philipp Moritz and his text *Anton Reiser* (1785-1790) and cites a particular passage which leads Deleuze to write that 'animals are part of humanity […] we are all cattle': 'a calf, the head, the eyes, the snout, the nostrils…and sometimes he lost himself in such sustained contemplation of the beast that he really believed he experienced, for an instant, the *type of existence* of such a being…in short, the question if he, among men, was a dog or another animal had already occupied his thoughts since childhood.'[129] For Deleuze, this reveals 'the real of becoming', which is not a question of resemblance between man and animal but 'a zone of indiscernibility more profound than any sentimental identification: the man who suffers is a beast, the beast that suffers is a man.' **'**What revolutionary person', asks Deleuze, 'in art, politics, religion, or elsewhere – has not felt that extreme moment when he or she was nothing but a beast, and became to become responsible not for the calves that died, but *before* the calves that died?'[130]

In this chapter I have tried to show that Flush's multiple experiences – his gazing and his playing as well as his denuding and his dognapping – added to Mr Beames' encounter with these cows, demonstrate the 'various ways' as Calarco states 'in which animals might interrupt us, challenge our standard ways of thinking, and call us to responsibility.'[131] By highlighting the specificities of Flush's varied lives against the backdrop of the plight of other animals – be it cows or humans – Woolf is resisting the homogenisation of animality/humanity at the same time as challenging any straightforward distinction between animalities and humanities. In this sense she seems to be offering a way out of what we could perhaps see as the false dichotomy ultimately presented by Derrida, where he places 'heterogeneities and abyssal ruptures as against the

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[128] Deleuze 2005, p.17. For a fascinating reading of Deleuze's becoming-animal in relation to Art, and specifically Francis Bacon's dogs, see Steve Baker. *The Postmodern Animal*. London: Reaktion Books, 2000, p.137-152.
[129] Deleuze 2005, p.18.
[130] Deleuze 2005, p.18.
[131] Calarco 2008, p.120.

homogeneous and continuous';[132] to put it crudely, the choice here appears to be between maintaining the human/animal distinction at the same time as exploring heterogeneities, or subverting the distinction and reducing everything to homogeneity. Focusing on this issue at the end of *Zoographies*, Calarco argues that

> there is another option available beyond philosophical dualism, biological continuism, and Derrida's deconstructive approach […] *we could simply let the human-animal distinction go* or, at the very least, not insist on maintaining it […] Might not the challenge for philosophical thought today be to proceed altogether without the guardrails of the human-animal distinction and to invent new concepts and new practices along different paths?[133]

For Haraway this different path would be one of 'naturecultures', of non-hierarchical emtanglements of companion species in assemblages which do not privilege a notion of a human culture or an animal nature, and in the next chapter I will discuss such naturecultures further in the context of quantum 'philosophy-physics' and the matter of life in *The Waves*. What is up for debate here, however, is how convincing Calarco's call to simply 'let the distinction go' is. For example, John Llewelyn has recently responded by arguing that in following Calarco's lead in letting the distinction go, we are still holding on to it: 'Must we not hang on to the distinction if we are to let it go? For even if we decide to avoid making this distinction in what we say, must we not, in order to carry out this resolution, retain the distinction in what we think?'[134] It may well be going too far to claim that *Flush* takes us beyond all thoughts of a human/animal distinction, but it does provide a careful and playful consideration of the question of the animal that involves, to borrow Haraway's words, 'transposing the body of communication; remolding, remodelling; swervings that tell the truth […] Woo[l]f'!'[135]

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[132] Derrida 2008, p.29.
[133] Calarco 2008, p.149.
[134] John Llewelyn. 'Where to Cut: Boucherie and Delikatessen.' *Research in Phenomenology* 40:2 (2010), p.187.
[135] Haraway 2003, p.21.

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Quantum Materiality and Posthuman Life: *The Waves*

Having discussed the relations between human and animal in the previous chapter, I will turn here to the ways in which Woolf, primarily in *The Waves*, engages with the materiality of 'life itself'. This chapter will be divided into two main sections: the first part will discuss the relationship between Woolf's writing and the philosophical implications of quantum physics, including how *The Waves* engages with many of the theoretical issues concerning materiality arising out of the new physics in the first decades of the twentieth century, before turning to the ways in which the novel anticipates more recent debates which include Karen Barad's work on 'agential realism' and 'intra-action'. In the second part of this chapter I consider the conceptualisation of 'life' in Woolf's novel, drawing especially on Eugene Thacker's consideration of the distinction between 'Life and the living', Jane Bennett's 'vital materialism' and Deleuze's 'assemblage' or 'haecceity', and 'pure immanence'. Throughout this chapter I argue that *The Waves* presents a posthuman ontology of life that is entangled in the immanent intra-actions of materiality.

5.1 Woolf's Philosophy-Physics

5.1.1 'This table […] about to undergo an extraordinary transformation' (W 97)

In *The Phantom Table* Ann Banfield sets Woolf's 'table' as the meeting place for her writings and the philosophy of Bertrand Russell and the Cambridge Apostles. As 'the paradigmatic object of knowledge' in the tradition of British Empiricism, the table is 'planted squarely in the centre of Woolf's novelistic scenery';[1] a place where Woolf can gather together her thoughts on '[s]ubject and object and the nature of reality' (TL 28) and, according to Banfield, a place that aligns Woolf with Russell's theory of knowledge. In a recent article Timothy Mackin also discusses Woolf's tables as central to her

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[1] Banfield 2000, p.66.

engagement with philosophy, but argues that she is not, like Russell, 'trying to provide the foundation for a realist epistemology' so much as she is attempting to work through a relation between internal emotions and the external world.[2] Whilst these important studies provide insights into Woolf's philosophical engagement with her contemporaries – contradicting Michael Lackey's view that to understand Woolf's work we must 'banish philosophy'[3] – I would like to emphasise some aspects of Woolf's exploration of epistemology and ontology, internal and external, subject and object, which extend beyond Russell's theory of knowledge and can be thought about more broadly through a quantum 'philosophy-physics' (more on this terminology later) born out of Planck's discovery of quanta in December 1900 (did human character change then, perhaps?), Bohr's atom (1913), Einstein's special theory (1905) and general theory (1916) of relativity, and the work on wave and particle theories of Heisenberg, de Broglie and Schrödinger amongst others.[4] In their own distinct contributions, these scientific theories revealed, as Coole and Frost have recently put it, 'that the empirical realm we stumble around in does not capture the truth or essence of matter in any ultimate sense and that matter is thus amenable to some new conceptions that differ from those upon which we habitually rely.'[5]

Several critics have illuminated the possible routes through which Woolf may have had access to contemporary developments in philosophy and physics. Regarding philosophy, Banfield argues that Woolf would have been introduced to Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume (whom she also read) by her father's *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (1876) and others of his books,[6] and Jaakko Hintikka has noted that Woolf learned Plato's dialogues as a child.[7] In relation to the new physics, Gillian

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[2] Timothy Makin. 'Private Worlds, Public Minds: Woolf, Russell and Photographic Vision.' *Journal of Modern Literature* 33:3 (2010), p.118.

[3] Michael Lackey. 'Modernist Anti-Philosophicalism and Virginia Woolf's Critique of Philosophy.' *Journal of Modern Literature* 29:4 (2006), 76-98, p.95. Lackey's provocative analysis does, however, provide an interesting general discussion of the changing role of philosophy in the twentieth century.

[4] For a brief contextual summary of these developments see Werner Heisenberg. *Physics and Philosophy.* London: Penguin, 2000 [1958], p.3-13. For Russell's own philosophical discussion of the developments in relativity and quantum mechanics see *Analysis of Matter*. London: Routledge, 1992 [1927].

[5] Coole and Frost 2010, p.11.

[6] Banfield 2000, p.29.

[7] Jaakko Hintikka. 'Virginia Woolf and Our Knowledge of the External World.' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 38:1 (1979), p.14, fn.43. We also know now that Woolf studied Greek at King's College

Beer has shown how Woolf assimilated ideas from the bestsellers by Arthur Eddington and James Jeans, whom she was reading whilst writing *The Waves*,[8] and Sue Sun Yom notes that Woolf would have learned about wave-particle duality and other aspects of light through newspapers such as *The Times* and *The Saturday Evening Post*,[9] as well as the *Listener*.[10] In addition to these sources, we know that Woolf often listened to scientists on the radio,[11] and she would have been exposed to both philosophy and science through the table talk of those around her: 'Woolf, we might say, had a knowledge *ex auditu* of philosophy'.[12] Regardless of which particular source most influenced Woolf's thinking, critics such as Michael Whitworth have argued that insights provided by the new physics coalesced with Woolf's own developing philosophical ideas.[13]

When linking these ideas to the new physics Woolf's use of the 'atom' is often referred to, a term that occurs too frequently in her writing to cite all instances here.[14] One example Whitworth draws attention to is from the 1908 section of *The Years*, when Eleanor contemplates the atomic formation of a cup, whilst pointing to the 'vast gaps' and 'blank spaces' in her knowledge: '[t]ake this cup for instance; she held it out in front of her. What was it made of? Atoms? And what were atoms, and how did they stick together? The smooth hard surface of the china with its red flowers seemed to her for a second a marvellous mystery' (Y 134). Of particular relevance to this current chapter, another revealing occurrence is in Woolf's diary entry from November 28th, 1928, when she is at the early stages of conceiving what would become *The Waves* – at this point

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Ladies' Department between 1897 and 1900. See Anna Snaith and Christine Kenyon-Jones. 'Tilting at Universities: Virginia Woolf at King's College London.' *Woolf Studies Annual* 16 (2010), 1-44.

[8] Beer 1996, p.114. For a specific discussion on Jeans see Beer, 'Wave, Atom, Dinosaur: Woolf's Science'. *The English Literary Society of Japan*. Tokyo: Kentkyusha Ltd, 2000. For an excellent discussion of the influence of Jeans' astronomy on *The Waves*, see Holly Henry, *Virginia Woolf and the Discourse of Science: The Aesthetics of Astronomy*. Cambridge: CUP, 2003, p.93-107.

[9] Sun Yom. 'Bio-graphy and the Quantum Leap: Waves, Particles, and Light as a Theory of Writing the Human Life.' *Texts and Contexts: Proceedings of the First Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Beth Rigel Daugherty and Eileen Barrett. New York: Pace UP, 1996, p.145.

[10] Beer 1996, p.113.

[11] Beer 2000, p.11.

[12] Banfield 2000, p.30.

[13] see Michael Whitworth. *Einstein's Wake: Relativity, Metaphor, and Modernist Literature*. OUP, 2001, p.162; Beer 1996, p.113; Louise Westling, 'Virginia Woolf and the Flesh of the World.' *New Literary History* 30.4 (1999), p.856.

[14] See Whitworth 2005, p.178-180 and 2001, p.166-169.

'The Moths' – and thinking about her 'position towards the inner & the outer' and that 'some combination of them ought to be possible'. Woolf writes that she wants to

> saturate every atom. I mean to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity: to give the moment whole; whatever it includes. Say that the moment is a combination of thought; sensation; the voice of the sea. Waste, deadness, come from the inclusion of things that don't belong to the moment; […] I want to put practically everything in: yet to saturate. That is what I want to do in The Moths. It must include nonsense, fact, sordidity: but made transparent. (D3 209)

The significance of this passage is emphasised by Deleuze, when in *A Thousand Plateaus* he and Guattari link it to their 'haecceities', and in *Dialogues* he links it to the 'plane of immanance', both concepts that I will go on to discuss in the second part of this chapter (see section 5.2.2 and 5.2.3). Additionally, in *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari link Woolf's 'atom' to their conceptualisation of the 'percept', a nonsubjective, nonhuman perception. Woolf, they write, shows us 'urban percepts, or those of the mirror': 'Characters can only exist, and the author can only create them, because they do not perceive but have passed into the landscape and are themselves part of the compound of sensations. […] It is Mrs Dalloway who perceives the town – but because she has passed into the town like "a knife through everything" and becomes imperceptible herself.'[15]

The extent to which Woolf's writing explores the more radical philosophical implications of quantum physics is the subject of Paul Tolliver Brown's recent work on Woolf, Leslie Stephen and Einstein. Brown points out that whilst several studies on Woolf have suggested correlations between her writing and the new physics, critics 'have yet to establish the specific ways in which the ideas she shared with the preeminent subatomic scientists of her time work into the characters and themes of some of her most important novels'.[16] In an attempt to do just this Brown neatly presents how two tables in *To the Lighthouse* – one associated with Mr Ramsay and the other with Mrs Ramsay –

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[15] Deleuze and Guattari 1994, p.172; p.168.

[16] Paul Tolliver Brown. 'Relativity, Quantum Physics, and Consciousness in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*.' *Journal of Modern Literature* 32:3 (2009), p.40.

signal Woolf's move from the theory of relativity to some of the more profound aspects of quantum mechanics that Einstein found so difficult to accept:

> The difference between Woolf 's viewpoint and that of her father and Einstein makes itself apparent through the contrast between the table as an object of permeability and connectivity versus the table as an object of independence and separation. The dinner table that acts as Mrs. Ramsay's primary domain of influence and unification is juxtaposed in the novel with Mr. Ramsay's kitchen table that represents the isolated and unperceived object […] Mr. Ramsay's table exists independently of its observation, whereas Mrs. Ramsay's table is a participatory "object," interacting and changing with the forces of her consciousness.[17]

Crucially, Mrs Ramsay is aligned with a quantum reality whereby the 'holistic relationship to the world around her [] confounds the notion that subjects and objects are specifically located and bounded'.[18] This would seem to go further than simply refusing to see the world as 'an unbroken whole' or having 'not one table, but many', as Banfield puts it;[19] it is a world that 'cannot be explained by any attempt at reducing them to their parts'.[20] Brown then focuses on Mrs Ramsay and the lighthouse beam to illuminate his claim that they 'simultaneously reflect and project each other, so distinguishing between the two entities is a misapplication of formal rationalization or an *a priori* assumption of distinctness between subjects and objects.'[21] Instead of choosing between wholeness and the fragmentation of this whole, the debate is already elsewhere – beyond arguments that depend upon a Cartesian or *a priori* subject/object split. Brown points to Niels Bohr's famous assertion that 'we are both onlookers and actors in the great drama of existence'[22] and argues that Bohr shares Woolf's sentiments that 'reality is not contained within a single perceptual consciousness, nor does it exist as a collection of multiple but rigidly divided perceptual consciousnesses […] The reality depicted in *To the Lighthouse* seems to be composed of multiple interpenetrating consciousnesses interconnected with one

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[17] Brown 2009, p.47-48.
[18] Brown 2009, p.48.
[19] Banfield 2000, p.108.
[20] Brown 2009, p.53.
[21] Brown 2009, p.49.
[22] Niels Bohr. *Atomic Theory and the Description of Nature*. Cambridge: CUP, 1934, p.119.

another and loosely housed within fluid subjectivities and objectivities that interactively create, as well as observe, their environment.' [23] Mrs Ramsay's relationship with objects therefore appears to reveal what Karen Barad has described as 'the heart of the lesson of quantum physics: *we are a part of that nature that we seek to understand.*'[24]

5.1.2 Intra-actions: the Entanglement of Agency

Quantum physics takes us away from a reality of dis/connecting individualities, where there is a leap beyond both traditional Newtonian realism (what Heisenberg calls 'dogmatic realism')[25] and Einsteinian realism.[26] In *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007), Barad outlines her notion of an 'agential realism' which, influenced by Bohr, is not reliant on 'subject-object, culture-nature, and word-world distinctions'.[27] Drawing on the work of Haraway, Butler and Foucault in her reading of Bohr's 'philosophy-physics',[28] Barad's 'posthumanist performative'[29] approach to realism is one in which '[a]gency is not an attribute' of a being or thing, subject or object, but is entangled in 'the ongoing reconfigurations of the world'.[30] This world is less about representation and more about 'naturalcultural practices',[31] and Barad's neologism 'intra-action' captures the new terms of debate brought about by quantum philosophy-physics:

> "intra-action" *signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies*. That is, in contrast to the usual "interaction," which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action. It is important to note that the "distinct" agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute, sense, that is,

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[23] Brown 2009, p.54.

[24] Karen Barad. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham & London: Duke UP, 2007, p.26.

[25] Heisenberg 2000 [1958], p.43.

[26] See Marilyn Slutzky Zucker. 'Virginia Woolf's Uncertainty Principle of Language.' *Virginia Woolf: Three Centenary Celebrations*, ed. Maria Cândida Zamith and Luísa Flora. Porto: Universidade do Porto, 2007, p.151 and Christine Froula. *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde.* New York: Columbia UP, 2005, p.204.

[27] Barad 2007, p.129.

[28] Barad 2007, p.24. I am following Barad's preference for this term, because for Bohr 'physics and philosophy were one practice'.

[29] Barad 2007, p.135 (italics in original)

[30] Barad 2007, p.141.

[31] Barad 2007, p.135.

agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements.[32]

Barad reaches this conceptualisation of reality by distinguishing Bohr's philosophy-physics from the work of Heisenberg, locating their difference on the matter of epistemology and ontology. Heisenberg's uncertainty is based on 'disturbance' and primarily concerned with epistemology (in other words, whilst we cannot know the value of a particle's momentum due to the disturbance that measurement entails, it is nonetheless 'assumed to exist independently of measurement')[33] whereas 'Bohr is making a point about the nature of reality, not merely our knowledge of it':[34]

> [f]or Bohr, the real issue is one of *indeterminacy*, not uncertainty […] He understands the reciprocal relation between position and momentum in *semantic* and *ontic* terms, and only derivatively in epistemic terms (i.e., we can't know something definite about something for which there is nothing definite to know.) Bohr's indeterminacy principle can be stated as follows: *the values of complementary variables (such as position and momentum) are not simultaneously determinate*. The issue is not one of unknowability per se; rather, it is a question of what can be said to simultaneously exist.[35]

Whilst critics working on Woolf's relationship to the new physics have been keen to indicate examples of these ideas in her writings, it is often Heisenberg's uncertainty that is focused on. For example, Zucker speaks of Woolf's 'uncertainty principle of language', whereby her 'literary "experiments"'[36] are characterised by 'disrupted syntax,

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[32] Barad 2007, p.33.

[33] Barad 2007, p.116. It is for this reason that one of the few literary references in Barad's book comes when she takes issue with the question posed by T.S. Eliot's Prufrock: 'Do I dare disturb the universe?': 'Disturbance is not the issue[…] There is no such exterior position where the contemplation of this possibility makes any sense […] there is no inside, no outside.' Barad 2007, p.396.

[34] Barad 2007, p.19. This is Barad's own elaboration of his insights, and she notes that Bohr himself was focused on experiments in lab, less concerned with larger ontological implications' (334). As 'the cornerstones of the Copenhagen interpretation' complimentarity and uncertainty 'constitute fundamentally different, indeed arguably incompatible, interpretive positions' (115). Barad notes that a commonly unreported fact is that 'Heisenberg acquiesced to Bohr's interpretation: it is complementarily that is at issue, not uncertainty' (20).

[35] Barad 2007, p.118. 'This can be contrasted with Schrodinger's notion of entanglement, which is explicitly epistemic (what is entangled is our knowledge of events)' (309).

[36] Zucker 2007, p.149.

ambiguous referents, apparent contradictions' among other features.[37] In addition, there is sometimes the very confusion between uncertainty and indeterminacy that Barad warns against – this is seen when Sun Yom talks of Heisenberg's 'indeterminacy principle' (with no mention of Bohr)[38] and also when Louise Westling comments on '[t]he indeterminacy of our access to accurate knowledge, which Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle clearly established early in the century'.[39] The fact that Brown, in the aforementioned study, therefore aligns Woolf with Bohr is important, and the reality he finds in *To the Lighthouse* where 'fluid subjectivities and objectivities […] interactively create, as well as observe, their environment' seems to point towards this notion of 'intra-action'.

In all of Woolf's writing I would suggest that the mutual entanglement of agency created by (and creating) intra-actions is perhaps most clearly evident in Bernard's summing up in *The Waves* when he attempts 'to break off, here at this table, what I call "my life", it is not one life that I look back upon; I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am – Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis; or how to distinguish my life from theirs' (W 230). It seems more than a coincidence that Bernard is accompanied by a table here as this key distinction between inter- and intra-action is brought to the fore, where the former is associated with epistemological uncertainty (there are six beings, I just do not know which one I am) and the latter with ontological indeterminacy (I cannot know which of these beings I am, because we are not distinct and separated).[40] It is several pages later, however, that the question of whether Bernard is describing a purely epistemic concern or an ontological one becomes clearer. Bernard, now 'begin[ning] to doubt the fixity of tables',[41] asks: '"Who am I?" I have been talking of Bernard, Neville, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda and Louis. Am I all of them? Am I one and

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[37] Zucker 2007, p.147.
[38] Sun Yom 1996, p.146.
[39] Westling 1999, p.868.
[40] Erica Roebbelen has linked this move away from Newtonian individuality to Woolf's anti-imperialist project in *The Waves*. She points, for example, to the entanglements of the main characters and lack of a clearly positioned narrator as evidence of Woolf 'drawing attention to the disintegration of many of the facets of imperialism inherent in classical physics through form in *The Waves*.' See 'Manifestations of Twentieth-century Physics in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*: Undermining the Ideological Foundations of the British Imperial Project.' *Erudito* 1 (2010), n. pag.
[41] Michael Whitworth also sees Bernard's doubting of the table's solidity as an ontological matter – terming it 'ontological insecurity' – and, whilst emphasising the influence of Russell here, like Gillian Beer he also points to the striking similarities between Eddington and Woolf. See Whitworth 2001, p.161.

distinct?' As Bernard concludes 'I do not know' (W 240), there is a sense in which there is no clear answer to know other than where '[k]nowing is a matter of intra-acting […] not a bounded or closed practice but an ongoing performance of the world.'[42] Such a network of 'material-discursive' intra-action,[43] where meaning and matter are entangled, is reinforced when Bernard 'cannot find any obstacle separating us. There is no division between me and them. As I talked I felt, "I am you". This difference we make so much of, this identity we so feverishly cherish, was overcome' (W 241). As Deleuze and Guattari claim when speaking of *The Waves*: 'each of these characters, with his or her name, its individuality, designates a multiplicity […] is simultaneously in this multiplicity and at its edge, and crosses over into the others.'[44]

Bernard goes on to describe 'patterns of marks on bodies'[45] caused by the intra-active dynamism of his friends: 'Here on my brow is the blow I got when Percival fell. Here on the nape of my neck is the kiss Jinny gave Louis. My eyes fill with Susan's tears. I see far away, quivering like a gold thread, the pillar Rhoda saw, and feel the rush of the wind of her flight when she lept' (W 241). That Jinny does not actually kiss Bernard, or that his eyes cannot in reality be filled with 'Susan's tears', does not mean that this is all in his imagination. It is possible to think of them as material marks of intra-action where '[c]onnectivity does not require physical contiguity. (Spatially separate particles in an *entangled state* do not have separate identities but rather are part of the same phenomena.)'.[46] As Barad clarifies: 'physics tells us that edges or boundaries are not determinate either ontologically or visually. When it comes to the "interface" between a coffee mug and a hand, it is not that there are x number of atoms that belong to a hand and y number of atoms that belong to the coffee mug.' [47] When Bernard 'come[s] to shape here at this table between [his] hands the story of [his] life' (W 241), his conclusion returns us to his statement near the beginning of the novel that 'when we sit together, close […] we melt into each other with phrases. We are edged with mist' (W 11). Not

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[42] Barad 2007, p.149.
[43] Barad 2007, p.141.
[44] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.278.
[45] Barad 2007, p.140.
[46] Barad 2007, p.377.
[47] Barad 2007, p.156.

only is the 'interface' between his hand and the table indeterminate, but between him and his friends too.

5.1.3 Naturalcultural Phenomena

Rather than a reality consisting of individuated subjects and objects, a quantum reading of *The Waves* emphasises a reality consisting of 'phenomena', as foundational units which include all features in a given experimental arrangement:

> Phenomena are constitutive of reality. Parts of the world are always intra-acting with other parts of the world, and it is through specific intra-actions that a differential sense of being – with boundaries, properties, cause, and effect – is enacted in the ongoing ebb and flow of agency. There are no preexisting, separately determinate entities called "humans" that are either detached spectators or necessary components of all intra-actions. Rather, to the extent that "humans" emerge as having a role to play in the constitution of specific phenomena, they do so as part of the larger material reconfiguration, or rather the ongoing reconfiguring, of the world. Thus no a priori privileged status is given to the human […] "Humans" are emergent phenomena like all other physical systems.[48]

Shared among agencies that can only be locally determined,[49] this notion of reality is posthumanist, where '[r]efusing the anthropocentrisms of humanism and antihumanism, *posthumanism* marks the practice of accounting for the boundary-making practices by which the "human" and its others are differentially delineated and defined […] it refuses the idea of a natural (or, for that matter, a purely cultural) division between nature and culture, calling for an accounting of how this boundary is actively configured and reconfigured.' Posthumanism challenges the hierarchical arrangement of the materiality of life which would place humans at the summit: 'Posthumanism does not presume that man is the measure of all things […] Posthumanism doesn't presume the separateness of any-"thing," let alone the alleged spatial, ontological, and epistemological distinction that sets humans apart.'[50] Where my previous chapter turned away from an anthropocentric relation between humans and animals, the issue here is a move away from a human-

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[48] Barad 2007, p.338.
[49] Barad 2007, p.175.
[50] Barad 2007, p.136.

centred form of interaction between individual things and beings and towards a posthuman form of intra-actions of 'emergent phenomena' where 'it is through such practices that the differential boundaries between humans and nonhumans, culture and nature, science and the social, are constituted.'[51]

If intra-action depends upon the naturalcultural entanglements[52] of agencies both human and nonhuman (and beyond this distinction), then from the beginning of *The Waves* there are examples of such a reality. Louis's very embodiment seems to be erotically intertwined with the earth at the same time as it is marked by Jinny's kiss:

> I am rooted to the middle of the earth. My body is a stalk. I press the stalk. A drop oozes from the whole at the mouth and slowly, thickly, grows larger and larger. Now something pink passes the eye-whole. Now a beam is slid through the chink. Its beam strikes me. I am a boy in a grey flannel suit. She has found me. I am struck on the nape of the neck. She has kissed me (W 8).

With this kiss the nature/culture distinction is 'shattered' (W 8), and the humanist privilege given to individualism challenged, as Louis wishes to escape his other-ised identity – as Rhoda would say, having 'to go through the antics of the individual' (W 186) – and 'be unseen' (W 8). This is emphasised a few pages later when Louis, again aware of his Australian accent, does not privilege knowledge over nature; the fact that he 'know[s] the lesson by heart' including the grammatical rules of 'cases' and 'genders', and his (admittedly egotistical) view that he 'could know everything in the world' is less important than the sense that his 'roots are threaded, like fibres in a flower-pot, round and round about the world' (W 14). Significantly, the friend he then attempts to 'imitate' is 'Bernard softly lisping Latin'. Rather than choosing Neville, with his belief that words and grammatical systems show '[t]here is an order in this world; there are distinctions' (W 15), in Bernard he has chosen to imitate the character most attuned to the complexity and instability (later to be inadequacy) of language with words that 'flick their tails' as he

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[51] Barad 2007, p.140.
[52] Barad is sharing this notion of 'naturecultures' with Donna Haraway. In *When Species Meet*, Haraway notes an affinity between Barad and herself: They 'are in firm solidarity that this theory [of intra-action and agential realism] richly applies to animals entangled in relations of scientific practice.' Haraway 2008, p.331, fn.4.

speaks them, 'now this way, now that way, moving all together, now dividing, now coming together' (W 14). This is Bernard who himself seems to reject the primacy of human knowledge and instead evokes the perfect description of quantum-inspired intra-action: 'To speak of knowledge is futile. All is experiment and adventure. We are forever mixing ourselves with unknown quantities' (W 97). As Erica Roebbelen has noted, '[t]he characters in *The Waves* express an increasingly diminished confidence in the human capacity to know throughout the novel.'[53]

Being rooted to the earth does not mean being rooted in a fixed and eternal way to a solid and external earth. In other words, materiality does not consist of distinct and solid parts attached to one another (e.g. 'the earth' and 'the human'), rather 'everything [even the 'hard ground'] dances – the net, the grass; your faces leap like butterflies; the trees seem to jump up and down. There is nothing staid, nothing settled, in this universe. All is rippling, all is dancing; all is quickness and triumph' (W 35). Later, when Louis' body is this time linked to his being identified as 'the best scholar in the school', it is 'unenviable' – thus when the body is not conceived of in its dynamic intra-actions it is an unwanted relic of individualism, of the self that defines Louis as an outsider because of his accent. Importantly, this does not mean that Louis wishes to escape the material world and delve into some mystic otherworldliness;[54] on the contrary it is in 'put[ting] off' this particular image of the body that he can 'inhabit space' (W 41). Perhaps Louis is again following Bernard, who perfectly captures this move from representation (and identity) to intra-action: 'I am only superficially represented by what I was saying tonight. Underneath, and, at the moment when I am most disparate, I am also integrated' (W 62). To intra-act is to be 'inextricably involved' (W 60); to be 'integrated' at the same time as 'disparate', is to feature within Bohrian phenomena. We can also think here about the

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[53] See Roebbelen 2010. We could align this intra-acting of humans and nonhuman 'unknown quantities' with Johanna Garvey's sharp reading of *Mrs Dalloway* where London becomes a liquid cityscape, and human consciousness is inextricably part of it: 'various forms of water imagery transform – as they also create – the city and Bourton, present and past, along with all of the consciousnesses to which the narrator has access' (73). As we see 'the consciousness wandering through' – or rather swimming through – the city, Garvey argues 'that consciousness and city are becoming indistinguishable […] Not only does the cityscape undergo metamorphoses, but the characters themselves are also often transformed through comparison to persons, objects, even animals associated with the aqueous element' (60; 67). See 'Difference and Continuity: The Voices of *Mrs Dalloway*.' *College English* 53:1 (1991).

[54] Julia Kane has, however, argued that quantum physics is entangled with differing forms of mysticism. See 'Varieties of Mystical Experience in the Writings of Virginia Woolf.' *Twentieth Century Literature* 41:4 (1995), 328-49.

narrative style of *The Waves*, the way in which direct speech is used for each character and a new paragraph is always taken before a new character speaks, and yet these monologues nonetheless seem to be integrated.

That Neville, arguably the character most attached to the idea of individuality and fixity, is involved in one of the clearest affirmations of intra-action in *The Waves* gives weight to the view that Woolf is engaging with this notion of reality. Having earlier 'hate[d] wanderings and mixing things together' (W 11), Neville then laments that the choice to follow this identity or that leads to the conclusion that '[c]hange is no longer possible. We are committed' (W 178). Now seeing past the 'narrow limits' of the identity he (thinks he) is known by, he is 'immeasurable; a net whose fibres pass imperceptibly beneath the world' (W 178). Similar to Louis' body and the earth, what is at stake here is not two distinct elements – one being 'the world' and the other the 'net' (or himself); rather the net captures Neville's intra-actions within the world, the 'net is almost indistinguishable from that which it surrounds' (W 178). Again there is no pre-determined internal and external, or separation between matter and meaning, in this material-discursive world; or, as Susan says, 'I cannot be divided, or kept apart' (W 79) – a comment which echoes Heisenberg's view that quantum physics 'makes the sharp separation between the world and I impossible'.[55] The 'I' in Susan's statement is already more than a defined, distinct human individual:

> I am the field, I am the barn, I am the trees; mine are the flocks of birds, and this young hare who leaps, at the last moment when I step almost on him. Mine is the heron that stretches its vast wings lazily; and the cow that creaks as it pushes one foot before another munching; and the wild, swooping swallow; and the faint red in the sky, and the green when the red fades; the silence and the bell; the call of the man fetching car-horses from the fields (W 78)

As in *Between the Acts*, '[s]heep, cows, grass, trees, ourselves – all are one. If discordant producing harmony' (BA 157).[56] What Susan cannot be divided from then is a

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[55] Heisenberg 2000 [1958], p.43.
[56] For more on Woolf's cows and the intermingling of human and nonhuman elements in *Between the Acts* see Westling 1999. See also section 4.5 of this thesis for a brief discussion of cows in *Flush: A Biography*.

multiplicitous 'I' which includes creaking cows and an array of other nonhuman elements: 'I am not a woman, but the light that falls on this gate, on this ground. I am the seasons, I think sometimes, January, May, November; the mud, the mist, the dawn' (W 79). Blurring the boundaries between human and nature in order to refuse any fixed concept of human nature, Woolf is here providing a naturalcultural picture of intra-action which rejects the notion of hierarchical distinctions between human and nonhuman, culture and nature.

It is important that all of the characters in *The Waves* are part of these naturalcultural intra-actions, even if their feelings about such entanglements differ. Writing of Woolf's 'mood waves', John Briggs links the novel to both chaos theory and neuroscience (in particular the nonlinearity of the brain) in order to emphasise that in Woolf's vision of reality 'it is not the mood itself that matters, but the way in which a mood – whether positive or negative – punctures the surface of everyday life, shatters for an instant habits of mind and emotion'.[57] Taking on board the (often sudden) fluctuations from exultation to depression in the novel, Briggs posits that

> Woolf's mood waves function at *different scales*: on the level of the novel as a whole, within sections, within sentences […] Like real waves – which even as they are rising and seem coherent, are, in fact, dissipating and incipient with the very disorder that will soon bring them down – Woolf's mood waves contain wavelets, and wavelets within wavelets, a fractal structure. This rhythmic action – and the rhythmic eddying action within action – imbues her work with its paradoxical atmosphere of both infinite variety and wholeness.[58]

Here Briggs' talk of 'action within action' sounds a lot like intra-action, and the 'paradoxical atmosphere of both infinite variety and wholeness' might be the reality of entanglements which do not adhere to an internal/external logic, but are always, as Barad writes, concerned with 'exteriority within'.[59] In relation to the characters in *The Waves*, the point is not that they the *same*, with consistent emotions and reactions, but neither

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[57] John Briggs. 'Nuance, Metaphor and the Rhythm of the Mood Wave in Virginia Woolf.' *Virginia Woolf Miscellanies: Proceedings of the First Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Mark Hussey and Vara Neverow-Turk. New York: Pace UP, 1992, p.110.
[58] Briggs 1992, p.109.
[59] Barad 2007, p.93.

should they be thought of as fully distinct and separate individuals simply interacting with one another and with an external environment. This chapter will now go on to discuss the ways in which Woolf's exposition of reality in *The Waves* as the entanglement of agencies that do not adhere to the opposition of between subject/object and internal/external can be aligned with an exploration of the concept of 'life'. To what extent is an ontology of quantum realism founded on intra-action of human/nonhuman phenomena actually an ontology of 'life in itself'?

5.2 Woolf's Life-Assemblages

5.2.1 Life and The Living

'What is an assemblage? It is a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liasons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures. Thus, the assemblage's only unity is that of co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a 'sympathy'.[60]

In his recent book, *After Life* (2010), Eugene Thacker argues that there are two central challenges when considering the term 'life' in our contemporary context: 'One of these challenges is to refuse a dichotomous concept of life, as caught between the poles of reductionism and mysticism, scientificity and religiosity, the empirical and romantic notions of life. […] This opens onto a second challenge, and that is the pervasive anthropomorphism of the concept "life".'[61] In *The Waves*, I would like to suggest that Woolf is also considering the possibilities of a concept of life that is neither divided between a naïve realism and idealism, nor human-centred. That is not to say Woolf's conceptualisation of life is always consistent, however. This section will focus in the first instance on some of the occasions when we can see Woolf pointing to potential contradictions in a concept of life, and secondly when we witness her moving beyond this to experiment with and suggest notions of life as non-anthropocentric, immanent assemblages.

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[60] Deleuze and Parnet 2006 [1987], p.52.
[61] Eugene Thacker. *After Life*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2010, p.xv

At the beginning of the concluding section of *The Waves*, Bernard conjures a 'life' that is possessed by him whilst at the same time acknowledging that it is beyond his grasp, that life cannot be captured by, or reduced to, the human:

> "The illusion is upon me that something adheres for a moment, has roundness, weight, depth, is completed. This, for the moment, seems to be my life. If it were possible, I would hand it you entire. I would break it off as one breaks off a bunch of grapes. I would say, 'Take it. This is my life.'
>
> "But unfortunately, what I see (this globe, full of figures) you do not see. You see me, sitting at a table opposite you, a rather heavy, elderly man, grey at the temples. (W 199)

On the one hand Bernard presents an image of 'life' as unified and tangible, under the control of its human possessor, but on the other hand this vision is only a subjective perceptual 'illusion'. This passage illuminates an important problem *The Waves* raises and attempts to work through in its exploration of life, namely that in Western philosophy there is an internal split in the concept 'life' between the immanent life of a human (or nonhuman) agent, and the transcendent life as the force by which that agent is living. In Thacker's terms, this would be described as the difference between 'Life' and 'the living', which can be thought of as a problem that goes back to the roots of philosophical concerns – specifically, as Thacker points out, in terms of Aristotle's *De Anima* and the concept of *psukhē* (usually translated as 'soul' but more accurately understood as 'vital principle' or 'principle of life').[62] The contradiction inherent to Aristotle's *psukhē* is that on the one hand 'there is no thing called "life-in-itself" that is ever present apart from its formal, dynamic, and temporal instantiations in the variety of living beings' and on the other hand 'Aristotle does not dispense with the *archē*-of-life altogether. He seems to imply its necessary existence if one is to think something like "life" at all'.[63]

There is further evidence in Woolf's novel of this tension inherent in *psukhē* between Life and the living, transcendence and immanence. Life is described as a discrete entity apart from the human by Neville, at the same time as it is connected to him. It is therefore seen as an obstacle to self-progress: 'my life was unavailing' (W 18). When life

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[62] Thacker 2010, p.11.
[63] Thacker 2010, p.14.

is connected to the living, grammatical conventions often lead to it being possessed by a subject (and therefore by language itself); there are several other examples throughout the book when characters refer to 'my life'. These provide instances of the possessive life used by Neville (W 37), Louis (W 41), Susan (W 48), Rhoda (W 169) and Bernard (W 243), where, for example, 'my life' for Neville, Louis and Susan signals temporal life tied to their experience as 'the living'. Intriguingly, it is Jinny who never refers in the novel to 'my life' in this way, perhaps supporting the view of some critics have of her as most attuned to the nonhuman (more on this later). But as we have already seen in the above quotations from Bernard, and in relation to quantum philosophy-physics, the 'my' in question cannot be easily joined to a distinct, fully individuated subject (the same way that Susan's 'I' is already more than a clearly-defined human individual – see above); it is a multiplicitous 'my' – as Louis puts it, 'my many-folded life' (W 138).[64]

These examples are only hints in the text of the paradoxical, perhaps counterintuitive, notion of life founded on indeterminacy. But what moves *The Waves* beyond a concern with Life and the living as the irreconcilable conflict between transcendence and immanence is Woolf's exploration of life as a nonanthropocentric/nontheistic, vital force. Although Bernard's thoughts suggest the elusiveness of 'life', it is never a question of sublimating it within a theological framework. Slightly later in the novel he again betrays an awareness of this illusory nature of life and the pretence of human agency over it as though it is an object to be captured and cultivated: 'Let us again pretend that life is a solid substance shaped like a globe, which we turn about in our fingers. Let us pretend that we can make out a plain and logical story, so that when one matter is despatched – love for instance – we go on, in an orderly manner, to the next' (W 210). In the sentences before this, Bernard claims that 'what one needs is nothing consecutive but a bark, a groan', and true to this his conceptualisation of life does not correspond to a wholeness which unfolds in an orderly progression as time passes; it is only pretending to be so. What is also interesting is the way in which this pretence that life is a tangible, solid object under control of human

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[64] We might think here of Deleuze's concept of 'the fold' which disrupts simple interior/exterior relations and allows for possibilities of nonhuman subjectivity. See *The Fold*, trans. Tom Conley. London: Continuum, 2006 [1993]. Recent links between Woolf's writing and Deleuze's 'fold' have been made by Laci Mattison and Jessica Berman. See Mattison (forthcoming 2012) and Berman 2004; 2011.

agency does open onto a material conceptualisation of 'life'. In other words, it is not so much a pretence about the materiality of life as it is about the role of human agency in this materiality. This recalls Woolf's view of 'human beings not always in their relation to each other but in relation to reality' (RO 149), or, as Deleuze and Guattari put it in *Anti-Oedipus*, 'a bit of *relation to the outside*, a little real reality.'[65]

This question of the materiality of life therefore takes us back to issues that have been central throughout this thesis, starting with my discussion in chapter one where Woolf's figuration taken from the natural world of 'granite' and 'rainbow' complicated and undermined the binaries of fact/fiction, solid/intangible, materiality/theory and, in the context of this current discussion, we might say immanence/transcendence. Towards the end of *The Waves* 'life' for Bernard demonstrates both solidity and intangibility intermingling:

> The crystal, the globe of life as one calls it, far from being hard and cold to the touch, has walls of thinnest air. If I press them all will burst. Whatever sentence I extract whole and entire from this cauldron is only a string of six little fish that let themselves be caught while a million others leap and sizzle, making the cauldron bubble like boiling silver, and slip through my fingers. Faces recur, faces and faces – they press their beauty to the walls of my bubble – Neville, Susan, Louis, Jinny, Rhoda and a thousand others. How impossible to order them rightly; to detach one separately, or to give the effect of the whole – again like music. What a symphony, with its concord and its discord and its tunes on top and its complicated bass beneath, then grew up! (W 214)

Just as music is a key inspiration for Braidotti's concept of transpositions, also discussed in chapter one of this thesis, Woolf is here emphasising the musicality of the 'transversal transfer'[66] or, as she writes in the above quote, 'leap and sizzle' of qualitative multiplicities (see section 3.4 and 3.5). Like 'a symphony with its concord and its discord', life is material but evasive; it is 'faces and faces' against 'walls of thinnest air'. Woolf is also describing the transpositions of language here, where, as Braidotti puts it, 'words grow, split and multiply, sprouting new roots or side branches and resonating with

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[65] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1984], p.367.
[66] Braidotti 2006, p.5.

all kinds of echoes and musical variations' (see section 1.4).[67] This again recalls 'Craftsmanship' where Woolf describes words as 'many-sided, flashing this way, then that' (E6 97), and also those passages we have looked at in *The Waves* where the relations between the friends are based on an ontological indeterminacy. But where Woolf's novel presents the meeting of quantum indeterminacy and 'some rapid unapprehended life' (W 203), it does so with an emphasis on the creative potential for locally determinate arrangements.

5.2.2 Things, Assemblages and Walking Haecceities

> materiality is always something more than "mere" matter: an excess, force, vitality, relationality, or difference that renders matter active, self-creative, productive, unpredictable.[68]

In the first part of this chapter I highlighted some of the ways in which *The Waves* rejects a realism founded on humanist individualism in favour of a posthumanist, material and creative, array of intra-actions formed out of indeterminacy, and in the preceding section (5.2.1) I suggested that Woolf's novel explores a nonanthropocentric/nontheistic conceptualisation of life. Crucial to this conceptualisation is the agency of nonhuman animals, but also seemingly inanimate objects. In *Vibrant Matter*, Jane Bennett calls this 'thing-power', or 'the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle'[69]: 'A primordial swerve says that the world is not determined, that an element of chanciness resides at the heart of things, but it also affirms that so-called inanimate things have a life, that deep within is an inexplicable vitality or energy, a moment of independence from and resistance to us and other bodies.'[70] This 'chanciness' and 'inexplicable' force is reminiscent of Niels Bohr's philosophy-physics, of an indeterminacy ingrained in the quantum materiality of life. It also shares similar aims with Braidotti's call for a 'vital politics of life itself, which means external non-human relations, life as *zoē*, or generative force. The "others" in question here are non-

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[67] Braidotti 2006, p.175.
[68] Coole and Frost 2010, p.9.
[69] Bennett 2010, p.6.
[70] Bennett 2010, p.18.

anthropomorphic and include planetary forces.'[71] Along with her aims to replace a focus on subjectivity with one on 'developing a vocabulary and syntax for, and thus a better discernment of, the active powers issuing from nonsubjects' and to create a political analysis that includes the 'contributions of nonhuman actants', Bennett, like Braidotti, is keen to dispel the onto-theological binary of life and matter.[72] She follows a Spinozan-Bergsonian-Deleuzian tract to ultimately posit a 'vital materialism' which is thoroughly nonanthropocentric and nontheistic: 'What I am calling impersonal affect or material vibrancy is not a spiritual supplement of "life force" added to the matter said to house it. Mine is not a vitalism in the traditional sense; I equate affect with materiality, rather than posit a separate force that can enter and animate a physical body.'[73]

In *The Waves*, Bernard's denunciation of possessions might paradoxically be seen as an affirmation of the force of 'things'. Leaving possessions behind would really be a affirmative letting go of human power over them (and the illusion of human power over life), a reconceptualisation of life as intra-actions between an array of nonhuman as well as human agencies. As such, there would be a positive disavowal of 'life' as a possession and a move from a human subject-centred conceptualisation of life-as-object towards an affirmation of life as vibrant matter. In the following passage where he contemplates his impending marriage, Bernard denounces individual ownership of objects and of 'life'.

> But I do not wish […] to assume the burden of individual life. I, who have been since
> Monday, when she accepted me, charged in every nerve with a sense of identity, who

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[71] Rosi Braidotti. 'On Putting the Active Back into Activism.' *New Formations* 68 (2009), p.48. *Zoē* for Braidotti is affirmative, it is life as inhuman, generative, vital force. This is not to be confused with Giorgio Agamben's *zoē* or 'bare life' which, Braidotti argues, is linked with a philosophy of finitude and a politics of loss and melancholia (Braidotti 2007). See Agamben. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. California: Stanford UP, 1998, p.1-11 and Braidotti 2006, p.36-43; 129-138; 232-236.

[72] Bennett 2010, p.ix; x. Bennett is utilising Bruno Latour's term 'actant' taken from Actor-Network Theory. An actant is 'something that acts or to which activity is granted by others. It implies no special motivation of human individual actors, nor of humans in general.' See 'On Actor-Network Theory: A Few Clarifications." *Soziale Welt* 47:4 (1996): 369-381. For more on Latour and ANT see *Reassembling the Social: An Introductuion to Actor-Network Theory*. Oxford: OUP, 2005.

[73] Bennett is influenced here by Deleuze and Guattari's term 'material vitalism' in *A Thousand Plateaus*. See Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.454. For a discussion of the influence of the vitalisms of Hans Driesche's 'Entelechy' and Bergson's 'élan vital' on her see Bennett 2010, p.62-81. Bennett explains how 'Driesch and Bergson, in their attempts to give philosophical voice to the vitality of things, came very close to articulating a vital materialism. But they stopped short: they could not imagine a materialism adequate to the vitality they discerned in natural processes. (Instead, they dreamed of a not-quite-material life force.)' (63).

could not see a tooth-brush in a glass without saying, '*My* tooth-brush,' now wish to unclasp my hands and let fall my possessions, and merely stand here in the street, taking no part, watching the omnibuses, without desire; without envy; with what would be boundless curiosity about human destiny if there were any longer an edge to my mind. But it has none. I have arrived; am accepted. I ask nothing. (W 92)

One striking aspect of this passage is that Bernard seems to move from a view of 'individual life' as life possessed by the living (human), to a more humble form of human agency. As Tamlyn Monson notes, 'Bernard experiences a feeling of claustrophobic horror at this phenomenon of individual life, which, he finds, is driven by agency exercised in response to "necessity"'.[74] Although Bernard expresses the wish to consider 'human destiny' apart from his own involvement in that destiny, he realises that he cannot erase himself entirely – 'taking no part', 'without desire', 'without envy' – from a consideration of life. This impossibility has less to do with negation than it does a very challenging of the subject-object relationship on which negation depends; what is more important is that there is no longer 'an edge to [his] mind', a clear border between his internal focus and external forces. Rather than a conscious relinquishing of possessions there is the realisation that he has already 'arrived' and is 'accepted' at this place where relations are not primarily between subject and object; the move from the 'individual life' to 'omnipresent, general life' (W 92), the 'general impulse' (W 93) into which he can 'sink down, deep, into what passes' (W 92).

Passages such as these in *The Waves* could then be an example of what Deleuze and Guattari describe as an 'assemblage' which includes 'semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously'[75] and has 'has neither base nor superstructure, neither deep structure nor superficial structure, it flattens all of its dimensions and mutual insertions play themselves out'.[76] This more unassuming and shared notion of agency can also be understood as intra-acting with the 'vitality' and 'energy' of Bennett's materialist 'thing-power',[77] and Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage is crucial to Bennett's theory.

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[74] Tamlyn Monson. "'A Trick of the Mind': Alterity, Ontology, and Representation in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*." *Modern Fiction Studies* 50:1 (2004), p.181.
[75] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.25.
[76] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.95.
[77] Bennett 2010, p.18.

We see the forming of a collective assemblage where instead of 'standing in the street, taking no part': 'Am I not, as I walk, trembling with strange oscillations and vibrations of sympathy, which, unmoored as I am from a private being, bid me embrace these engrossed flocks; these starers and trippers; these errand-boys and furtive and fugitive girls who, ignoring their doom, look in at shop-windows?' (W 93) The inadequacy of 'life' that does not involve the human at all, one that is therefore transcendent of the self (as in Bernard's above description of wanting to watch with no desire), is replaced by the turn towards multiplicitous intra-actions with the living, the creation of assemblages which include nonhuman as well as human agents,[78] '[t]he growl of the traffic [which] might be any uproar – forest trees or the roar of wild beasts' at the same time as 'sensations, spontaneous and irrelevant, of curiosity, greed, desire' (W 93). Seen in light of Bennett's vital materialism, the shop-windows in the above quotation are as much a part of the assemblage here as the 'furtive and fugitive girls' who look in them, in a similar sense in which I discussed Susan's naturalcultural entanglements (in section 5.1.3), where her 'I' signalled a multiplicity of human and nonhuman elements.

Bernard shows further signs of entering into assemblages with the nonhuman towards the end of the novel:

> "Silence falls; silence falls," said Bernard. "But now listen, tick, tick; hoot, hoot; the world has hailed us back to it. I heard for one moment the howling winds of darkness as we passed beyond life. Then tick, tick (the clock); then hoot, hoot (the cars). We are landed; we are on shore; we are sitting, six of us, at a table. It is the memory of my nose that recalls me. I rise; 'Fight,' I cry, 'fight!' remembering the shape of my own nose and strike with this spoon upon this table pugnaciously." (W 188)

Here I would claim that the passing 'beyond life' is not a transcendent escape from reality, but a subversion of a transcendent concept of life. Bernard is sonically attuned to the clock and the cars, which are materially intra-acting with the six friends at the table. It

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[78] This intermingling of human and nonhuman is also prominent in *Between the Acts*, as several eco-critical readings have suggested. For example see Isabel Andrés. '"O Let's Keep Together!" The Blurring of Individual Consciousness in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*.' *Consciousness, Literature and the Arts* 7:3 (2006), n.pag.; Kelly Sultzbach. 'The Fertile Potential of Virginia Woolf's Environmental Ethic.' *Woolf and the Art of Exploration: Selected Papers from the Fifteenth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. H H Southworth and E Kay. Clemson: Clemson UP, 2006: 71-8; and Westling 1999.

is these nonhuman and human entanglements that spark Bernard to rally and 'fight' in contrast to the nihilism expressed in the preceding lines by Susan, Rhoda and Louis (importantly, it is Jinny who offers the most optimistic viewpoint – something I will consider further below):

> "In this silence," said Susan, "it seems as if no leaf would ever fall, or bird fly."
>   "As if the miracle had happened," said Jinny, "and life were stayed here and now."
>   "And," said Rhoda, "we had no more to live."
>   "But listen," said Louis, "to the world moving through abysses of infinite space. It roars; the lighted strip of history is past and our Kings and Queens; we are gone; our civilisation; the Nile; and all life. Our separate drops are dissolved; we are extinct, lost in the abysses of time, in the darkness." (W 187-188)

Bernard's desire to 'fight' is also in response to his own reflection that 'the earth is only a pebble flicked off accidentally from the face of the sun and that there is no life anywhere in the abysses of space' (W 187). In addition, it is important to note that even as these characters express their worries on transience, they are still involved in an assemblage (recalling Woolf's 'mood waves' discussed in section 5.3) which, as Bennett puts it, 'are living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound them from within.'[79] It is also significant that Bernard returns in the above passage to the table, a table that does not simply act as a meeting place for the thoughts of subjects, but that the table is itself a vibrant, living object, materially and semiotically entangled here with the bodies of the friends.

In *The Waves* we can view Bernard's intra-actions with his environment - the human and the nonhuman - as creating a posthuman form of agency consisting of assemblages. According to Monaco, Bernard demonstrates this type of collective agency early on in the book when lying in bed he is 'afloat in the shallow light which is like a film of water drawn over my eyes by a wave. I hear through it far off, far away, faint and far, the chorus beginning' (W 20). For Monaco '[t]he child's hearing is like a net catching the sonic assemblages and inter-assemblages composing life [or in my reading these assemblages *are* life] and connecting him to the wider world':

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[79] Bennett 2010, p.23.

These early sections have a heightened luminosity, due to the two-fold purity: of both the poetic form, and of the quality of the child's perception itself, which is unobstructed and untainted by habit, and whose senses penetrate, as we see above, in both a localised and a far-reaching way. The child's psyche is a membrane of becoming, which fuses its emotional life with the material world.[80]

Monaco also gives the example of Susan as a child, arguing that in the following passage '[h]er suffering is inseparable from the environment'[81] where, as Bernard describes, she 'trips and flings herself down on the roots under the trees, where the light seems to pant in and out, in and out. The branches heave up and down. There is agitation and trouble here. There is gloom. […] The roots make a skeleton on the ground, with dead leaves heaped in the angles. Susan has spread her anguish out. (W 9)

This relation between human and environment is seen in other characters in *The Waves*. In a recent discussion of the inhuman in Woolf's novel, Carrie Rohman has argued that it is Jinny who is most attuned to the material entanglements between earth and human. She asks:

how do we connect such inhuman forces to the novel's human characters? We do so by asking this question: how do Woolf's characters relate to the vibrational? How do the characters function *as* forces of creative rhythm, or *in relation to* forces of creative rhythm. And interestingly, it is Jinny who attracts one most in this respect. It is Jinny who seems most vibrational, and ultimately then, perhaps most creative or artistic, in the posthumanist sense. […] Jinny is characterized by undulating movement and her connections to movement, by the bodily *as such* and her attraction to materiality, and by an awareness of and appreciation for […] qualitative experiential states.[82]

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[80] Monaco 2008, p.162.
[81] Monaco 2008, p.162.
[82] Rohman 2011, p.19. Rohman also argues, using Deleuze's concept of the refrain, that this is evident in the interludes: 'These repetitions mark the most overt "natural" material in the text. The interludes attest to the inhuman rhythms, the cosmological forces that in one sense stand outside of narrowly human or conventionally humanist preoccupations' (14). This corresponds with Beatrice Monaco's view: 'by way of the interludes [*The Waves*] contains the implication that there is much that is out of reach of human intelligence and perception.' Monaco 2008, p.160.

For Rohman, 'Jinny, while initially frightened by those forces, is nonetheless revealed as a character who becomes vibratory, or accepts her own becoming vibratory.'[83] As she notes, this view of Jinny is at odds with those readings which have reduced her to the sexual (although Rohman's description of a vibratory Jinny does perhaps have its own erotic aesthetic), including Jane Marcus' provocative labeling of her as a prostitute.[84] Rohman gives examples where Jinny's sense of creation is bound up with 'animality, the floral, and even to birdsong', and it is particularly salient that she emphasises the connection between human and inhuman in a similar sense to Haraway's 'naturecultures'. She picks out the following passage as a key example of 'divergent natural and cultural arenas' intermingling:

> In one way or another we make this day, this Friday, some by going to the Law Courts; others to the city; others to the nursery; others by marching and forming fours. […] The activity is endless. […] Some take train for France; others ship for India. Some will never come into this room again. One may die tonight. Another will beget a child. From us every sort of building, policy, venture, picture, poem, child, factory, will spring. Life comes; life goes; we make life. So you say. (W 145)

This passage reveals that '[w]e don't make art, or literature. We don't live life or experience life. We make life. We create life. Could Jinny be recognizing the becoming-artistic of life itself in its inhuman manifestations?'[85] We could also return here to Woolf's famous declaration in 'Sketch of the Past', discussed in my introduction to this thesis, 'that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work' (MB 85). When Woolf writes that 'we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself' (MB 85), it would not then be an endorsement of an exclusively human subjectivity, but of the ways in which creation is about the material intra-actions between human and nonhuman, that words and music do not exist in a higher realm apart from life as 'the thing itself'.

In *The Waves*, rather than the 'neat designs of life' that are often created by stories, the characters ('the living') are attuned to 'the panorama of life' in all its complex

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[83] Rohman 2011, p.17.
[84] See Jane Marcus. 'Britannia Rules *The Waves*.' *Hearts of Darkness: White Women Write Race*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2004, p.70.
[85] Rohman 2011, p.20

entanglements (W 202). By the end of the novel Bernard's vision is one whereby nonhuman forces are emphasised and his own sense of human subjectivity diminished:

> Lying in a ditch on a stormy day, when it has been raining, then enormous clouds come marching over the sky, tattered clouds, wisps of cloud. What delights me then is the confusion, the height, the indifference and the fury. Great clouds always changing, and movement; something sulphurous and sinister, bowled up, helter-skelter; towering, trailing, broken off, lost, and I forgotten, minute, in a ditch. Of story, of design I do not see a trace then. (W 200)

If there is individuation here, then it is individuation in the form of Deleuzian assemblage – what he refers to as 'haecceity',[86] as the creation of a new event formed of aggregates of bodies, objects, and spaces: 'consist[ing] entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected' (Bohrian Phenomena could therefore be viewed as a form of assemblage too – see section 5.1.3). Indeed, in *Dialogues* Deleuze refers to Clarissa's walk through London at the beginning of *Mrs Dalloway* as providing an example of haecceity, and its link to the question of life:

> On her stroll Virginia Woolf's heroine penetrates like a blade through all things, and yet looks from the outside, with the impression that it is dangerous to live even a single day ('Never again will I say: I am this or that, he is this, he is that…'). But the stroll is itself a haecceity. It is haecceities that are expressed […] in proper names which do not designate people but mark events, in verbs in the infinitive which are not undifferentiated but constitute becomings or processes. It is haecceity which needs this kind of enunciation. HECCEITY = EVENT. It is a question of life.[87]

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[86] 'Haecceity' was commonly used in scholastic philosophy, in particular by Duns Scotus, to refer to the individuating principle or 'thisness' of beings. Deleuze's own distinct use of this term is to designate 'an individuation which is not that of an object, nor of a person, but rather of an event (wind, river, day or even hour of day).' Deleuze and Parnet 2006 [1987], p.118, fn.9.

[87] Deleuze and Parnet 2006 [1987], p.68-69. Interestingly Deleuze focuses on Clarrisa's walk rather than Peter Walsh's, and my own examples below also include those of the female walker as well as the male, therefore offering a new perspective on the relationship between 'women, walking and writing' discussed by Bowlby in an essay of that title. See in Bowlby 1997, p.191-219. See also section 5.1.1 of this chapter.

In a diary entry from 27th February 1926, Woolf herself provides the perfect example of the event as haecceity when she recounts walking through Russell Square the previous night:

> I have some restless searcher in me. Why is there not a discovery in life? Something one can lay hands on and say 'This is it'? What is it? And shall I die before I can find it? Then (as I was walking through Russell Square last night) I see mountains in the sky: the great clouds, and the moon which is risen over Persia; I have a great and astonishing sense of something there, which is 'it' […] Is that what I meant to say? Not in the least. I was thinking about my own character; not about the universe. (D3 62)

This example is particularly revealing as at the very moment Woolf questions whether there is something determinate and fixed in life that she can find and grasp hold of, the 'it' of life transforms subject/object distinctions into the creation of an assemblage or haecceity, a becoming-cosmic.

Deleuze sees Woolf's attempt to 'saturate every atom' (D3 209) as a desire to 'eliminate all that is resemblance and analogy, but also "to put everything into it": eliminate everything that exceeds the moment, but put in everything that it includes – and the moment is not the instantaneous, it is the haecceity into which one slips and that slips into other haecceities by transparency […] Such is the link between imperceptibility, indiscernibility, and impersonality – the three virtues.'[88] In Woolf's short story 'A Simple Melody' (1985), written not long after *Mrs Dalloway*, we see another example of Woolf's writing on walking – this time in the countryside – as a 'haecceity' or Deleuzian 'event'. Here we read George Carslake's reflections on a landscape painting which leads him to describe precisely this becoming-imperceptible and becoming-impersonal, the saturation of every atom of air until 'walking thoughts were half sky', a phrase which perfectly captures Deleuze and Guattari's affirmation that 'walking is a haecceity':[89]

> to analyse this favourite theme of his – walking, different people walking to Norwich. He thought at once of the lark, of the sky, of the view. The walker's thoughts and emotions

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[88] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.309.
[89] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.290.

were largely made up of these outside influences. Walking thoughts were half sky; if you could submit them to chemical analysis you would find that they had some grains of colour in them, some gallons or quarts or pints of air attached to them. This at once made them airier, more impersonal.[90]

To be sure, these examples do not provide a straightforward distinction between individual and collective, but rather, as Deleuze and Guattari write in *A Thousand Plateaus*: 'haecceities, affects, subjectless individuation that constitute collective assemblages […] Nothing subjectifies, but haecceities form according to compositions of nonsubjectified powers or affects.'[91] Thus, 'the proper name brings about an individuation by 'haecceity', not at all by subjectivity […] Virginia Woolf designates a state of reigns, ages and sexes.'[92]

Returning to *The Waves*, in the following passage Bernard would then enter into composition with the 'undifferentiated chaos of life' which is not so much a homogenisation of difference, but the intra-acting, vital force of things including chiming bells, a 'girl on a bicycle' and even 'the corner of a curtain':

> while the fringe of my intelligence floating unattached caught those distant sensations which after a time the mind draws in and works upon; the chime of bells; general murmurs; vanishing figures; one girl on a bicycle who, as she rode, seemed to lift the corner of a curtain concealing the populous undifferentiated chaos of life which surged behind the outlines of my friends and the willow tree. (W 208)

Life may have 'surged behind the outlines' of Bernard's friends, but this does not mean we need to think of it as either separate from the living (that is, transcendent) or reduced to mere background. If we think of this as an example of Deleuzian haecceity, then

> [i]t should not be thought that a haecceity consists simply of a décor or backdrop that situates subjects, or of appendages that hold things and people to the ground. It is the

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[90] Virginia Woolf. 'A Simple Melody.' *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf (2nd Edition)*, ed. Susan Dick. London: Harcourt, 1989 [1985], p.206.
[91] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.294.
[92] Deleuze and Parnet 2006 [1987], p.89.

entire assemblage in its individuated aggregate that is a haecceity; it is this assemblage that is defined by a longitude and a latitude, by speeds and affects, independently of forms and subjects, which belong to another plane […] to become events, in assemblages that are inseparable from an hour, a season, an atmosphere, an air, a life.[93]

The final word in this quotation is crucial as 'a life' for Deleuze is a-subjective and pre-personal, as emphasised in his final essay 'Immanence, a life' which I will consider in the next section. Following Deleuze, Jane Bennett asks: 'can nonorganic bodies also have a life? Can materiality itself be vital?'[94] Her vital materialism is an attempt 'to articulate the elusive idea of a materiality that is *itself* heterogeneous, itself a differential of intensities, itself *a* life. In this strange, *vital* materialism, there is no point of pure stillness, no indivisible atom that is not itself aquiver with virtual force.'[95] This touches on one of the key challenges for Deleuzian philosophy, namely how to account for the concurrence of a flattening of hierarchical structures at the same time as the proliferation of heterogeneity – an issue which also speaks to my discussions of sexual difference and human-animal difference in previous chapters of this thesis. This chapter will now turn to the concepts of univocity and specifically Deleuze's 'pure immanence' to suggest that this might be what ultimately brings together Barad's philosophy-physics, Bennett's vital materialism and Woolf's *The Waves*, and might provide an ontology of life capable of creating such heterogeneity without hierarchy.

5.2.3 Pure Immanence

Absolute immanence is in itself: it is not in something, *to* something; it does not depend on an object or belong to a subject.[96]

Absolute or pure immanence takes us beyond the false dichotomy of the choice between heterogeneous hierarchy and homogeneous flatness. As Deleuze puts it in his final essay 'Immanence, a Life', '[w]e will say of pure immanence that it is A LIFE, and nothing

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[93] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.289.
[94] Bennett 2010, p.53.
[95] Bennett 2010, p.57.
[96] Gilles Deleuze. 'Immanence, a Life.' *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*, trans. Anne Boyman. Massachusetts: Zone Books, 2001, p.26.

else. It is not immanence to life, but the immanent that is in nothing is itself a life. A life is the immanence of immanence, absolute immanence: it is complete power, complete bliss.'[97] As Deleuze and Guattari put it in *What is Philosophy?*: 'Immanence is immanent only to itself and consequently captures everything, absorbs All-One, and leaves nothing remaining to which it could be immanent.'[98] Thacker's *After Life* illustrates that to fully understand Deleuze's concept of pure immanence – 'immanence as not subordinate to transcendence'[99] – it is important to recognise the influence of Scholastic philosophers on his thinking. Scholasticism, Thacker notes, is never far away from Deleuze's philosophy, specifically in terms of his long-standing engagement with the issues concerning the One, multiplicity and pure immanence. There are direct references to Scholastic thinkers in his work, too. Perhaps the most notable example comes in a passage from *Difference and Repetition* where Deleuze considers Duns Scotus' conceptualisation of 'univocity':

> There has only ever been one ontological position: Being is univocal. There has only ever been one ontology, that of Duns Scotus, which gave being a single voice. We say Duns Scotus because he was the one who elevated univocal being to the highest point of subtlety, albeit at the price of abstraction […] A single voice raises the clamour of being.[100]

As Thacker points out, Deleuze is wrestling here with a similar problem to Scotus: 'how to posit a univocity of being without flattening all distinctions within being'.[101] Thacker poses further questions to challenge the idea of pure immanence: 'If immanence is pure immanence, immanent to nothing but itself, then how can immanence also be a ceaseless creation and invention of the new? How can creativity emerge out of what is already fully actual?'.[102] This goes to the heart of a common difficulty with Deleuze's thought and in

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[97] Deleuze 2001, p.27.
[98] Deleuze and Guattari 1994, p.45.
[99] Thacker 2010, p.170.
[100] Deleuze 2004 [1994], p.44. This is the passage where Badiou takes the title of his scathing book on Deleuze. See Alain Badiou. *Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill. Mineapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999. For an excellent recent survey of the relationship between the philosophies of Deleuze and Badiou in relation to literature, see Jean-Jacques Lecercle. *Badiou and Deleuze Read Literature*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2010.
[101] Thacker 2010, p.137.
[102] Thacker 2010, p.213.

order to answer it we need to turn first to Spinoza.[103] If one of the problems for Scholastic thinkers was that univocity signals 'all relation' (therefore failing to account for differences or causation between individuated creatures) then Spinoza allows us to reimagine causality 'less in terms of a first cause or principle, and more in terms of a self-causality or auto-creation';[104] in other words, causality becomes fundamentally immanent. Moreover, Spinoza's emphasis on the generativity of univocity as affirmative becoming rather than neutral being (as in Scotus) allows Deleuze to think of univocity as creative. Univocity for the Scholastics 'denoted not difference but identity',[105] hence Thacker is correct to emphasise Deleuze's Scholasticism, via Spinoza, as heretical in a similar sense to his notorious formulation of the history of philosophy as a kind of 'buggery or (it comes to the same thing) immaculate conception […] taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous.'[106]

Taking up this concept of univocity as pure immanence, Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* sees it as central to his ontology of difference, of difference as primary, and against identity and representation:

> In effect, the essential in univocity is not that Being is said in a single and same sense, but that it is said, in a single and same sense, of all its individuating differences or intrinsic modalities. Being is the same for all these modalities, but these modalities are not the same. It is "equal" for all, but they themselves are not equal. It is said of all in a single sense, but they themselves do not have the same sense. The essence of univocal being is to include individuating differences, while these differences do not have the same essence and do not change the essence of being […] Being is said in a single and same sense of everything of which it is said, but that of which it is said differs: it is said of difference itself.[107]

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[103] For an excellent recent discussion of Deleuze and Spinoza see Jeffrey Bell. 'Between Realism and Anti-realism: Deleuze and the Spinozist Tradition in Philosophy.' *Deleuze Studies* 5:1 (2011). See also Gilles Deleuze. *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin. Massachusetts: Zone, 1992.
[104] Thacker 2010, p.138.
[105] Thacker 2010, p.141.
[106] Deleuze 1995, p.6.
[107] Deleuze 2004 [1994], p.45.

Monaco sees in Woolf's *The Waves* this role of 'difference itself' or a difference that is 'ontologically primary' rather than, as in Western philosophical rationalism, following from identity and essence:

> everything is derived from it. […] Difference *is* life, it is movement […] the differentiating process and substance of Being; it is univocal. Likewise, *The Waves* forms a differentiating substance and process, a univocity, simultaneously substantial and mobile. The difference (of the six characters) is used to synthesise a unity that is not fixed, but dynamic and 'living', and thus which implies community. That life *is* fundamentally communal, as opposed to being singular or individual, is the motivating concept of *The Waves*'.[108]

In order to expand on the confluence of difference and univocity in Deleuze's philosophy, Thacker draws attention to a lecture Deleuze gave at Vincennes in 1974 where he describes how 'univocity implies total interconnectedness', and thus we can see its influence on those terms we have encountered in this and preceding chapters: becoming, rhizome, assemblage, haecceity and so on. Here Deleuze also puts his finger on an important caveat in Scotus' philosophy whereby 'Scotus tempers his position of univocity between an assertion of being as "univocal metaphysically," and yet "analogical physically"'.[109] Deleuze notes in his Vincennes lecture that it was this important condition that saved Scotus: '"he was at the border of heresy, had he not specified metaphysically univocal and physically analogical, he would have been done for"'.[110] Without such concerns, Deleuze can go further; he can use univocity at its most radical to think of Creator/creature, divine/earthly, supernatural/natural, and Life/the living as 'fully immanent in relation to the other […] it requires thinking that which is "above" the human as equal to that which is "below" the human. The angel and the insect both exist immanently. As Deleuze notes, "God is a tick"'.[111] Viewing Scotist univocity in terms of immanence means that 'immanence would not be derived from transcendence,

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[108] Monaco 2008, p.175.
[109] Thacker 2010, p.147.
[110] cited in Thacker 2010, p.148.
[111] Thacker 2010, p.153.

but the inverse: the ontological priority of immanence'.[112] And for Monaco *The Waves* 'balanc[es] the material with the forces of life, providing a literary rendering of univocity'.[113]

Life as pure immanence is, therefore, the difference between 'a life' and 'the life'/'my life'. It is therefore intriguing that Jinny is the only character in *The Waves* to refer to 'a life' (and we will recall that she is the only character who never refers to 'my life'). This occurs when she is travelling north by train:

> "I sit snug in my own corner going North," said Jinny, "in this roaring express which is yet so smooth that it flattens hedges, lengthens hills. We flash past signal-boxes; we make the earth rock slightly from side to side. The distance closes for ever in a point; and we for ever open the distance wide again. The telegraph poles bob up incessantly; one is felled, another rises. Now we roar and swing into a tunnel. The gentleman pulls up the window. I see reflections on the shining glass which lines the tunnel. I see him lower his paper. He smiles at my reflection in the tunnel. My body instantly of its own accord puts forth a frill under his gaze. My body lives *a life* of its own. Now the black window glass is green again. We are out of the tunnel. He reads his paper. But we have exchanged the approval of our bodies. There is then a great society of bodies, and mine is introduced; mine has come into the room where the gilt chairs are. Look – all the windows of the villas and their white-tented curtains dance; and the men sitting in the hedges in the cornfields with knotted blue handkerchiefs are aware too, as I am aware, of heat and rapture. One waves as we pass him. There are bowers and arbours in these villa gardens and young men in shirt-sleeves on ladders trimming roses. A man on a horse canters over the field. His horse plunges as we pass. And the rider turns to look at us. We roar again through blackness. And I lie back; I give myself up to rapture" (W 49; my *emphasis*).

Jinny is here in the 'rapture' of 'a life' (recalling Orlando's 'rapture' in section 3.2 and 3.3), the material entanglement of her body with a 'great society of bodies' both human (the gentleman at the window, the man on horse) and nonhuman (the window curtains which 'dance', the horse). Her body does not live 'a life of its own' in the sense that it is

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[112] Thacker 2010, p.186.
[113] Monaco 2008, p.168.

possessed and fixed in its individuation, but in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari's 'singularisation':

> A body is not defined by the form that determines it nor as a determinate substance or subject nor by the organs it possesses or the functions it fulfils. [...] *a body is defined only by a longitude and a latitude*: in other words the sum total of the material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness (longitude); the sum total of the intensive affects it is capable of at a given power or degree of potential (latitude). Nothing but affects and local movements, differential speeds.[114]

That is, Jinny's body is de-personalised in this moment of bodily affirmation, again in a similar sense to that discussed in chapter three in relation to *Orlando* and desire (see section 3.1). Although this paragraph ends with a seeming return to the possessive – 'Life is beginning. I now break into my hoard of life' (W 50) – there is a sense in which this 'my', like Woolf's Susan's multiplicitous 'I', has been transformed by a 'hoard of life' that is always already intra-acting with the other human and nonhuman bodies mentioned above: 'The life of the individual gives way to an impersonal and yet singular life that releases a pure event freed from the accidents of internal and external life, that is, from the subjectivity and objectivity of what happens […] It is a haecceity no longer of individuation but of singularisation'.[115]

This move from individuation to singularisation is encapsulated in *The Waves* by the multiplicity of Bernard: 'They do not understand that I have to effect different transitions; have to cover the entrances and exits of several different men who alternately act their parts as Bernard . I am abnormally aware of circumstances. […] which of these people am I? It depends so much upon the room. When I say to myself, "Bernard", who comes?' (TW 61; 65) Bernard's heightened awareness of 'circumstances' – aligned with his rejection of individualism and letting go of possessions – shows that he is not partaking in a complete dispersal or flight from material reality (indeed he is hostile to the thought that his friends might think of him as 'evasive' or that he escape[s] their own

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[114] Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1988], p.287.
[115] Deleuze 2001, p.28.

world) (W 61); rather, there is a productive assembling: 'Once more, I who had thought myself immune, who had said, 'Now I am rid of all that,' find that the wave has tumbled me over, head over heels, scattering my possessions, leaving me to collect, to assemble, to heap together, summon my forces, rise and confront the enemy' (W 244). By scattering his possessions he now has to assemble something new, but this is not simply a re-piecing together the old order of things. What he has to 'collect', 'assemble' and 'heap together' has no object; the verbs are left floating and intra-acting with his 'forces', constructing assemblages of human/nonhuman as described above. Accepting that he has been unable to become 'immune' to everyday life,[116] he realises the enemy is not so much life as it is death. The nonanthropocentric assembling of materiality (as immanent life), is his answer.

This is not the individual battle of the living against death, but rather the very struggle not to fall into an easy opposition between the immanence of the living and a transcendent teleology: 'we shouldn't enclose life in the single moment when individual life confronts universal death. *A* life is everywhere, in all the moments that a given living subject goes through and that are measured by given lived objects: an immanent life carrying with it the events or singularities that are merely actualised in subjects and objects'.[117] Where literature is concerned, Deleuze, as Lecercle notes, is interested in 'the expression of life, not the individual or personal life of a character or an author, but *a* life, in its non-human, a-subjective and pre-personal development or becoming'.[118] As an example of such literature, *The Waves* then is ultimately about (re)generation and about (re)conceptualising life as immanent, material assemblages. In the face of the enemy, death (and especially any notion of death as divine), Woolf's novel moves away from life as something tied inextricably to a subject or object ('the living') that comes and goes based on a transcendent force ('Life'). Instead, we discover the intra-actions of human and nonhuman as the creative immanence of 'the emerging monster to whom we are attached' (W 51), a life.

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[116] For an incisive discussion of 'everyday life' in *The Waves* see Randall 2007, p.167-184.
[117] Deleuze 2001, p.29.
[118] Lecercle 2010, p.203.

Afterword: Contemporary Interceptions

> For it is an age clearly when we are not fast anchored where we are; things are moving
> round us; we are moving ourselves. (E4 429)

Transposing, becoming, queering, responding, intra-acting: all the forms of shared world-making that I have explored in this thesis point not simply to inter-relations and blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction, male and female, homosexual and heterosexual, human and animal, nature and culture, materiality and theory; rather, I have tried to explore some of the specific *intra*-relational entanglements we find in Woolf's texts which emerge in a more immanent and symbiotic, although never fixed and finally determinate, series of interceptions. Taking my focus on intra-actions in the final chapter, I would like to end by suggesting that just as intra-actions do not only describe a micro or quantum world as somehow separated from the macro or 'real' world, intra-acting is not only found by close textual analysis of Woolf's writings but can also describe the methodology of our reading. To read intra-actively is to become entangled in what Hilary Thompson has recently described as the 'interceptional time' of 'interhistoricising'. Reading Benjamin's 'messianic time' and his well-known call to 'blast open the continuum of history',[1] as well as Agamben's more recent discussion of messianism, alongside *Mrs Dalloway*, Thomson notes that Woolf's novel 'insists on spawning times out of times' so that its historically specific moment – the aftermath of the First World War – is 'crucial without having to be sovereign.' For example, the presence of Big Ben in the novel 'is not the commanding monolith one might assume. Time has been slackened, stretched out, reconfigured and saved'. Thompson's interceptional time allows us as readers and critics to be 'attuned to the critical "now-time" of each text's truth brought to light by their intertwining'[2] and therefore 'in the midst of historicizing, from time to time, we must interhistoricise.'[3]

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[1] Walter Benjamin. 'Thesis on the Philosophy of History.' *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt. London: Pimlico, 1999 [1968], p.254.
[2] Hilary Thompson. 'Time and its Countermeasures: Modern Messianisms in Woolf, Benjamin, and Agamben.' *Modernism and Theory: A Critical Debate*, ed. Stephen Ross. London: Routledge, 2009, p.94.
[3] Thompson 2009, p.94; p.98.

To interhistoricise here is not simply a case of giving the now or then precedence in a reading of what one text uncovers in another; rather a methodology of interhistoricising promotes reciprocity, a way to read Woolf's contemporary context as interpenetrating, or we might say intra-acting, with our own contemporary moment. As Caughie adds in her response to Thomson's essay, what this involves is placing 'texts beside each other to show how texts situated in different times may be responding to similar conflicts and concerns and thus read together not anachronistically or ahistorically but interceptionally.'[4] Using the example of Woolf's final novel *Between the Acts*, Caughie emphasises this positive potential:

> In confronting the possibility that outsiders may not come to share a social vision, Woolf was compelled to face what postmodernist theorists identify as the crisis of the collectivity. Such a crisis need not produce despair but rather can serve to create a willingness to tolerate the incompatibilities and discontinuities that any collective concept engenders. Fragmentation and discontinuity , suspended moments and odd juxtapositions, can be understood as elements of, not obstacles to, the reading of literature and history… To stage an engagement between modernism and theory, then, to read Woolf's fictional texts the same way we read theoretical texts rather than taking theory as offering explanatory paradigms for the fiction, is to change our *ways of reading*, not just our readings of Woolf.[5]

Considering Woolf's texts in relation to contemporary theory requires more than looking back to a prior context as though it is something already there and waiting to be recovered. The 'contemporary' t/here is in fact 'untimely', mixing texts and times in the perpetual intra-action of contexts (and concepts) through which we can and do read Woolf's writing. As Caughie urges then, we should be prepared to 'risk the untimely' in our readings of modernist texts.[6]

In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze argues that 'in the untimely there are truths that are more durable than all historical and eternal truths put together: truths of times to

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[4] Caughie 2009, p.104.
[5] Caughie 2009, p.102.
[6] Caughie 2009, p.100.

come.'[7] And in *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari bring together the untimely with 'becoming': 'Acting counter to the past, and therefore on the present, for the benefit, let us hope, of a future – but the future is not a historical future, not even a utopian history, it is the infinite Now […] the Intensive or Untimely, not an instant but a becoming.'[8] In the vocabulary of quantum physics, we are not simply observers cut off from the experiments which we record, but are intra-actively, that is materially-discursively, entangled within these experiments, within this interhistoricised, untimely 'contemporary' where, Barad reminds us, 'the past is never left behind, never finished once and for all, and the future is not what will come to be in an unfolding of the present moment':[9]

> It's not that the experimenter changes a past that had already been present or that atoms fall in line with a new future simply by erasing information. The point is that the past was never simply there to begin with and the future is not simply what will unfold; the "past" and the "future" are iteratively reworked and enfolded through the iterative practices of spacetimemattering […] all are *one phenomenon*.[10]

Contextualising Woolf is not only about looking at the events, ideas, people and texts contemporaneous to when she herself was writing that may have influenced her work, but also looking at how she is intra-acting with our own contemporary debates. Context itself is always and already a theoretical concept where theorising 'is not to leave the material world behind and enter the domain of pure ideas where the lofty space of the mind makes objective reflection possible. *Theorizing, like experimenting, is a material practice.*'[11]

Where the entanglement between Woolf and quantum philosophy-physics is concerned, for example, reading context interceptionally is to say that quantum

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[7] Deleuze 2006 [1983], p.100. Deleuze is here linking the untimely with the very continuation of philosophy: 'The succession of philosophers is not an eternal sequence of stages, still less a historical sequence, but a broken succession, a succession of comets. Their discontinuity and repetition do not amount to the eternity of the sky which they cross, nor the historicity of the earth which they fly over. There is no eternal or historical philosophy. Eternity, like the historicity of philosophy amounts to this: philosophy always untimely, untimely at every epoch.'

[8] Deleuze and Guattari 1994, p.112.

[9] Barad 2007, p.234.

[10] Barad 2007, p.315.

[11] Barad 2007, p.55.

mechanics does not just provide neat analogies and metaphors for literature,[12] nor have to adhere to 'the "influence model" of investigation';[13] rather it

> provides important theoretical tools needed to move conversations in science studies, feminist studies, and other (inter)disciplinary studies beyond the mere acknowledgement that both material and discursive, and natural and cultural, factors play a role in knowledge production by examining *how* these factors work together, and how conceptions of materiality, social practice, nature, and discourse must change to accommodate their mutual involvement.[14]

The various intra-actions I have focused on between Woolf's writings and those of Deleuze (and Guattari), Braidotti, Derrida, Haraway, Bennett, Thacker and the many others discussed in this thesis, can all be said to warn, with Barad, that 'the nature-culture dualism is not undermined by inviting everything into one category (man's, yet again). The point of challenging traditional epistemologies is not merely to welcome females, slaves, children, animals, and other disposed Others (exiled from the land of knowers by Aristotle more than two millennia ago) into the fold of knowers but to better account for the ontology of knowing'.[15] In my reading of Woolf's intra-actions with (t/here) contemporary debates concerning various facets of sexual difference, sexuality and desire, the animal and nonhuman, quantum materiality and life itself, my aim has been to demonstrate some of the ways in which her writing might continue to open up new theoretical conversations, crossing disciplinary boundaries of literature, theory and philosophy, and science, not to mention the potential intra-actions with many of the other topics I was unable to cover in this thesis. Whichever discipline or context gains our attention, Woolf is always on hand to remind us that '[t]he time approaches when these soliloquies shall be shared' (W 30).

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[12] Daniel Albright's *Quantum Poetics* is, for example, concerned with using science only to provide metaphors with which we can read modernist writers, rather than considering how they may be engaging with the philosophical implications of science. His discussion of 'the poetic atom' or 'wave aesthetics' and 'particle aesthetics' is the kind of analogy that Barad would take issue with. See *Quantum Poetics: Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and the Science of Modernism*. CUP, 1997, p.1; p.18-19.

[13] Barad 2007, p.94.

[14] Barad 2007, p.25.

[15] Barad 2007, p.378.

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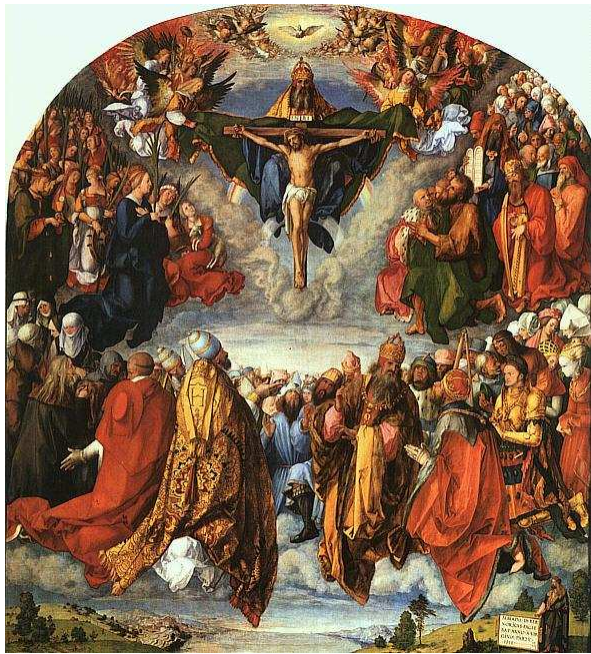Zwerdling, Alex. *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1986.

Appendix A

Fig 1: *Adoration of the Trinity* (1511),
Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)

Fig 2: *Melencolia I* (1514)
Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)