STRANGE INTIMACY: AFFECT, EMBODIMENT, MATERIALITY, AND THE NON-HUMAN IN VIRGINIA WOOLF AND JEAN RHYS

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Abstract

This thesis explores how the novels of Virginia Woolf and Jean Rhys – *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Between the Acts* (1941), *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* (1930) and *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) – despite being set in times of wars and social change that influence personal lives, maintain an attachment to and love for life. This thesis proposes that Woolf and Rhys 'locate' this attachment to life in the moments and atmospheres of 'strange intimacy' – in sensual, affective, and oddly intimate moments and settings where characters realise their bodily connection to the world of others, things, and places.

This work suggests that this love for life is cultivated when life is seen as 'a life' and selves as 'haecceities' in the Deleuzian sense, and when we consider modern life as enchanted, not disenchanted. To examine the love for life and strange intimacies further, this thesis rethinks the works of Hélène Cixous in the light of contemporary theories of affect and new materialism that are inspired by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's philosophies. This theoretical framework allows the examination of the complex ways in which intimacy, selfhood, and desire are portrayed in Woolf's and Rhys's modernist fiction. This thesis also demonstrates how post-structural feminism's focus on radical alterity and its emphasis on and (re)turn to materiality, the non-human, bodies, and affects, which are drawn together in the notion of *écriture féminine*, pre-figures the concerns of affect studies and new materialisms.

The reading of Cixous's, Deleuze and Guattari's, and Bennett's works performed in this thesis demonstrates how their theories of affect and the non-human help us to further our understanding of intimacy in the works of Woolf and Rhys and to reconsider the life-affirming, affective, and anti-Oedipal qualities of their modernism. Such an approach allows not only the discovery of a new understanding of Woolf's and Rhys's writings, but it contributes significantly to how we understand these theories and modernism in general.

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Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee / University Ethics Committee / external committee [please indicate as appropriate] on [date].

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 77, 419 words

Name:

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Introduction

Strange Intimacy in Virginia Woolf's and Jean Rhys's fiction

October appeared in puffs of air, in fragments, in sorrows, and I think that's the way one writes: discontinuously. Then, in a way, one cheats: one reassembles, pastes together, puts it all in order. That order doesn't come solely from outside, of course. What is order? It's a form hidden in disorder.

Hélène Cixous, *Stigmata*

Writing follows life like its shadow, extends it, hears it, engraves it.

Hélène Cixous, 'From the Scene of the Unconscious'

"Why waste sensation […] why waste a single drop that can be pressed out of this ripe, this melting, this adorable world?" wonders the narrator of Virginia Woolf's final novel, *Between the Acts* (1941), looking at Mrs Manresa sipping coffee on a June afternoon in a scenic old country house on the eve of the Second World War. This moment, like many other moments in the four novels by Virginia Woolf and Jean Rhys explored in this thesis, are full of invisible, yet bodily, attachments to the material world and between characters in the midst of times of personal and political disorder and change. Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *Between the Acts* (1941), and Rhys's *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* (1930) and *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) are full of intimate moments and strange encounters between unlikely characters and their environments, enhancing the characters' sense of being attached to life during uncertain times. It is thus not only writing that is discontinuous, but also life. Because writing, as Hélène Cixous (1998) indicates in the above quotations, follows life like its shadow, hearing it, engraving it, extending it, eventually making order out of disorder (p. 39). The main aim of this thesis is to explore how the novels of Woolf and Rhys, despite being set in times of war and social change that influence personal lives, maintain an attachment to and love for life. They show us how in life, like in writing, a certain order nevertheless emerges and remains in the seeming chaos and discontinuity. I propose that Woolf and Rhys each 'locate' this attachment to life precisely in the moments similar to Mrs Manresa's coffee-sipping – in

sensual, affective, and oddly intimate moments where characters realise their bodily connection to the world of others, things, and places.

Jane Bennett's tale of an enchanted modernity and her view on ethics as something affective and bodily in *The Enchantment of Modern Life* (2001) are central to exploring the attachments to life in Woolf's and Rhys's writings. Enchantment for Bennett (2001) "entails a state of wonder, and one of the distinctions of this state is the temporary suspension of chronological time and bodily movement. To be enchanted, then, is to participate in a momentarily immobilizing encounter; it is to be transfixed, spellbound" (p. 5). Inspired by Bennett's sense of enchantment, I argue that Woolf's and Rhys's writings too try to enhance the feeling of being attached to life. For Bennett, the sense that it's good to be alive and the atmosphere or mood of enchantment are formed in encounters amidst everyday, ordinary lives, not in the presence of something divine or in pristine nature (although they can happen there too). In the same way, Woolf and Rhys pay particular attention to ordinary, daily sites and encounters. Bryony Randall writes about the modern everyday in *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (2007), arguing that

> while the term 'everyday' is most commonly seen as describing a particular range of practices – cooking, washing, gossip, walking, and so on – a more appropriate description of the everyday might be a particular perspective on, a particular kind of attention paid to, the various practices that make life up as a whole (p. 11).

Two things from this quotation are important: first, that the everyday is a particular perspective, an attention paid to certain things and practices in life instead of certain daily activities. This description of the everyday depicts what critics working with affect such as Kathleen Stewart, Lauren Berlant, and Sara Ahmed do in their work. Stewart's *Ordinary Affects* (2007), Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* (2008), their co-authored *The Hundreds* (2019), and Sara Ahmed's *The Promise of Happiness* (2010) pay particular attention to things and practices that otherwise go unnoticed or get swept up in bigger events or narratives. The moments, glances, and gestures that they notice form an alternative story of what a good life means besides the heteronormative tales of happiness as marriage and family. These works, and the emphasis on the ordinary (where ordinary often actually gains the prefix extra), are influential to my thinking in this thesis. Although *Cruel Optimism* will be the only of

these works with which I engage in a comprehensive manner, this body of work is significant to my thesis not only because the authors write *about* affect, but because they *write affectively* and pay attention to the daily sites that enchant and affect us. In *The Hundreds* (2019) Berlant and Stewart explore "the partial yet precise points of contact in everyday life that register like a blip in the course of things" that make up a life (p. 100). They explore what happens with the knowledge that "here we are. This is it" (Berlant and Stewart, 2019, p. 101). I too examine how Woolf and Rhys 'deal' with their here and now, which, for us, is 'there and then'. I am interested in tracing the moments of what Berlant considers 'minor intimacies' in her 'Intimacy: A Special Issue' (1998). I am interested in the moments that have no life in heteronormative plots – glances, gestures, encounters, pauses – and which make up Woolf's and Rhys's characters' everyday. It is precisely in these moments that characters experience an enhanced sense of being attached to life.

Second, 'life as a whole' is at the centre of this thesis. In *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Woolf suggests that a writer who has gained freedom and courage can finally write about "the common life which is the real life and not [about] the little separate lives which we live as individuals" (1992, p. 146). She urges us to "see human beings not always in relation to each other but in relation to reality; and the sky, too, and the trees of whatever it may be in themselves" (Woolf, 1992, p. 146). In a letter to Francis Wyndham on 14 September 1959 Rhys writes that "when I say I write for love I mean that there are two places for me. Paris (or what it is to me) and Dominica […] both these places or the thought of them make me want to write" (1984, p. 171). Following this, I propose that Woolf and Rhys depict life not as daily lives of men and women with particular activities, but life as a whole, including human and non-human, animate and inanimate matter. Although this point is more explicit in Woolf's thinking in the above quotation, Rhys too seems to indicate that it is places, which always include life as a whole, that make her want to write, not individual people and their lives. Gilles Deleuze writes in 'Immanence: A Life' (1995/2002), that "a life is everywhere [...] an immanent life carrying with it the events and singularities that are merely actualized in subjects and objects" (2002, pp. 27-29). 'A life' for Deleuze is not a subjective life lived by an individual, but something asubjective and impersonal, something that always happens in an encounter in relation to other people and, most importantly, in relation to and among

the world of non-human – it is not a particular individual human life, but life as such. Throughout this thesis, when I refer to life, I always refer to 'a life' in the Deleuzian sense.

In 'Modern Fiction' (1921), Woolf tells us that the modernist writers aim to "get closer to life" (2008, p. 8). In this thesis, I too trace the desire to get intimate with life in both Woolf's and Rhys's writings. One of the central questions of this thesis is how Woolf and Rhys, and their characters, become (strangely) intimate with life. The thesis, then, has two major lines of inquiry. First, I engage with Woolf and Rhys's fictions in the context of theories that mark the material, affective, and/or post-human turn that the humanities has witnessed in the past twenty or so years. This entails reading their fiction with Jane Bennett, Lauren Berlant, Claire Colebrook, and Elizabeth Grosz, all whose works are, to different extents, inspired by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's philosophy. I particularly engage with the concept of desire in their work to emphasise how Woolf's and Rhys's fictions too ask us to see desire as life-affirming, multiple, and anti-Oedipal. This desire comes often across as strange, but it is also that which creates intimacy between characters, and also that which creates strangely intimate atmospheres.

Second, I bring Hélène Cixous's writings in dialogue with the abovementioned theories because reading Cixous's *écriture féminine* in the light of contemporary theories of affect and new materialism that are influenced by Deleuze and Guattari's philosophies allows us not only to discover new things in Woolf and Rhys's work, but contributes significantly to how we understand these theories and modernism in general. I propose that putting Cixous in dialogue with Deleuze allows us to demonstrate how post-structural feminism's focus on radical alterity and its emphasis and (re)turn to materiality, bodies, and affects, which are drawn together in the notion of *écriture féminine,* pre-figures the concerns of affect studies and new materialisms and explains Rhys's and Woolf's engagement with place and the non-human as the radical other in their writing. I propose that Cixous's concept of *écriture féminine* in 'Sorties' and 'The Laugh of Medusa', both written in 1975, lays a foundation for a theory of affective writing that emphasises the importance of materiality and the non-human she continues to develop through *Three Steps on the Ladder Writing* (1990/1993), *Rootprint*s (1994/1997), *Stigmata* (1998), and various

novels, such as *Hyperdream* (2006/2009) and *So Close* (2007/2009).[1] This writing creates a certain aesthetic which allows that which Berlant calls 'minor intimacies' to have a life.

The first section of this introduction gives an overview of Woolf's and Rhys's own ideas about affect, embodiment, and materiality in their writing that have inspired me to read their works in the theoretical framework I develop in this thesis. In this section, with the help of Woolf and Rhys, Deleuze and Guattari, and Cixous, I also define what I mean by affect. The second section explores the relationship between modernity, modernism, and affect. In the third section, I focus on Cixous's *écriture féminine* and propose that we should understand it as an affective writing of materiality, embodiment, and the non-human. In the fourth section, I explore notions of desire and what I refer to as 'strange intimacy', and how these can emerge from affective writing; and vice versa – how noticing various 'strange intimacies' can create affective writing. I begin to examine the ethics of desire and intimacy in the fourth section, and in the fifth section, I explore the ethical implications of being attached to a life, and how this attachment is ethical precisely because it engages with joy, desire, and wonder. Finally, I give a brief outline of the four chapters.

[1] Cixous and Deleuze were contemporaries and were certainly aware of one another. Cixous is familiar with Deleuze's work, referring to 'lines of flight' in one interview in 2005, for example (2008, p. 181). Line of flight, a term developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980/1987), might be relevant for Cixous because like the idea behind 'lines of flight', Cixous's work in interested in escaping oppressive social systems and creating new possibilities. Deleuze has written about Cixous's writing in *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953-1974* (2004), praising it as follows: "In my view, Cixous has invented a new and original kind of writing, which gives her a particular place in modern literature: writing in strobe, where the story comes alive, different themes connect up, and words form various figures according to the precipitous speeds of reading and association" (p. 229). Although these are just a few examples that Deleuze and Cixous admired one another's works, this admiration and influence is, as I will demonstrate, apparent in their thinking and writing more generally.

There is also some criticism available that puts their works into dialogue. Timothy Murray, for instance, in a roundtable discussion in 17 March 2014 on post-structuralism and/or new materialism has discussed *écriture féminine* and new materialism: https://openreflections.wordpress.com/2014/03/17/new-materialism-andor-post-structuralism/. Véronique Bergen's 'The powers of the outside in Deleuze and Cixous' (2013) considers materiality and the 'outside' in Cixous and Deleuze. However, Bergen positions her work within structuralist and post-structuralist theories. Also, although *Cixous after/ depuis 2000* (2017), the most recent collection of critical works on Cixous's writings up to date, does not read her with new materialist or affect theories *per se*. There is, however, a chapter on archives, and the material work done in literary criticism. I have written an article 'Philosophising in Plato's Cave: Hélène Cixous's Affective writing' (2019) on Deleuze and Cixous that is available in CAPACIOUS online journal.

Affective Woolf, Affective Rhys

There are plenty of theories we develop today about modernist affects as I will demonstrate shortly, but there are also theories developed during modernist times that allow us to understand the way in which modernist writers engaged with feelings, emotions, intimacy, and affect. Woolf has left us various essays, diaries, letters, and an autobiographical 'A Sketch of the Past' in *Moments of Being* (1976) where she describes her own thoughts about (modernist) writing. Although there is not as much life-writing or other personal sources left by Rhys, and the ones that we have are not so well studied as Woolf's, her *Smile Please* (1979) is an insightful source for understanding what writing meant for Rhys, and what role feelings and embodiment play in her work.[2] Woolf's unfinished autobiographical *Moments of Being* and Rhys's unfinished autobiographical *Smile Please*, therefore offer instances where the two authors discuss something that we might understand as writing affectively and writing *about* affect; looking at these works gives us ideas how Woolf and Rhys weave affects into writing.[3]

In an autobiographical essay 'A Sketch of the Past', written in 1939 and published in 1976 in *Moments of Being*, Woolf contemplates on what makes up the person under scrutiny in (auto)biographies. She concludes that writing biographies is a very difficult task precisely because biographers often leave out the person to whom things happened (2002, p. 137). People, Woolf notes, are influenced by "many other than human forces" (2002, p. 137). She writes that

> among the innumerable things left out in my sketch I have left out the most important – those instincts, affections, passions, attachments – there is no single word for them, for they changed month by month – which bound me, I suppose, from the first moment of consciousness to other people […] yet it is by such invisible presences that the 'subject of this memoir' is tugged this way and that every day of his life; it is they that keep him in position (2002, pp. 91-92).

2 See Kristin Czarnecki's 'Heritage, Legacy, and the Life-Writing of Woolf and Rhys' in *Virginia Woolf and Heritage* (2018) for a more detailed discussion of each writer's life-writing and the way their personal lives are received, and what impact it has on their criticism and canonising their work. See also Stef Craps' 'Braving the Mirror: Jean Rhys, Virginia Woolf and the Question of Autobiography'.

3 I have decided to focus on their autobiographical writings because I am interested in embodied affect, and how, although it is embodied in a self/ subject, it becomes something impersonal and asubjective through writing. What is more, there is something similar in the style, form, and structure of these autobiographies – both are a series of memories of places, people, sights, sounds, and other experiences, not a linear Bildungsroman style of narrative.

Here, Woolf seems to indicate that her-self is made up of "invisible presences", of "instincts, affections, passions, attachments", for which she says there is "no single word" (Woolf, 2002, p. 92). Perhaps what Woolf is trying to say is something akin to contemporary theories in affect and new materialism that follow the Deleuzian strand of affect studies – that human selves are constructed by and should be thought of in relation to the external world of various forces, percepts, and affects that influence human beings throughout their lives.

Similarly, *Smile Please* includes a section called 'The Trial of Jean Rhys', taken from her Black Exercise Books. In this imaginary dialogue between Rhys and a certain prosecutor, the former struggles to express in words what she feels about herself and her relation to life. 'The Trial of Jean Rhys' passage presents the following conversation:

> Prosecutor: How can you believe in human love and not in humanity?
> Rhys: Because I believe that sometimes human beings can be more than themselves….
> Prosecutor: What you really mean is that human beings can be taken over, possessed by something outside, something greater, and that love is one of these manifestations. Then, my dear, you must believe in God, or the Gods, in the devil, in the whole bag of tricks….
> Rhys: No, that is not what I mean […] I cannot say it. I have not the words.'[...] It is in myself [...]. All. Good, evil, love, hate, life, death, beauty, ugliness (Rhys, 1990, p. 145).

Rhys's denial of believing in God, or in humanity, and thinking that "human beings can be more than themselves" (Rhys, 1990, p. 145) refers to her moving away from humanistic ideas about selfhood towards something like more-than-human understanding of what is human. Her reference that there is something "outside, greater" and that it is at the same time "in [her]self", indicates a certain relation to, and the openness to being affected by the external world (Rhys, 1990, p. 145). Woolf and Rhys, then, seem to 'struggle' to express something that contemporary theories in affect and new materialism aim to demonstrate: that human beings are part of and influenced by forces and things that are not human. Their writings also predict the ideas Hélène Cixous (1997) puts forward when talking about the 'human' – that human beings are affective, material parts of the rest of the universe of things and matter, as I will demonstrate in more detail later.

Rhys's writing in the above quotation about "something outside, something greater" (Rhys, 1990, p. 145) also seems to tackle issues that are similar to what Woolf refers above as "invisible presences" that influence every human being who is alive (Woolf, 2002, p. 91). These passages bring to mind Woolf's much-quoted idea 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 (2002, p. 85).

This is what Woolf calls "her philosophy" or "intuition" (2002, p. 85), which she experiences during her "moments of being" – moments, when the "cotton wool" of daily life is lifted, and she sees a certain pattern that encourages her to see humans as "the thing itself" (2002, pp. 83-85).[4] Woolf's moments of being can be described as specific moments of revelation about life that she experiences amidst the everyday. These are the moments when a certain truth, or indeed what she calls a pattern, strikes her. She stresses that seeing this pattern "proves that one's life is not confined to one's body and what one says or does; one is living all the time in relation to certain background rods or conceptions" (2002, p. 85). Moments of being then, and the intuition or philosophy of Woolf's that she has developed from these moments, seems to emphasise, like affect theories, that life, and selves, are a compound of external non-human forces that influence humans.

Both Woolf and Rhys indicate that it is in their writing they can make sense of their experiences and 'reach' the abovementioned ideas I examined. In other words, as Cixous writes, making order in life is related to making order in writing, because writing follows life, or, as Woolf herself puts it, "fiction is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners" (Woolf, 2002, p. 53). Possibly because of the connection between life and art, writing is an activity that for both Woolf and Rhys is deeply embodied. Although

[4] See pages 83-85 in 'A Sketch of the Past' for the three specific 'moments of being' from her childhood Woolf describes – one positive when she realises that the flower she was looking at was connected to the rest of the earth, and other two negatives when she fights with her brother, realising there is no point in hurting other people, and one when she learns about death.

Woolf indicates that one's life is not confined to one's body, she realises this through embodied experience. In 'A Sketch', she writes that

> one day walking around Tavistock Square I made up, as I sometimes make up my books, *To the Lighthouse*; in a great, apparently involuntary, rush […] ideas and scenes which blew out of my mind, so that my lips seemed syllabling of their own accord as I walked (2002, pp. 92-93).

Although it is 'mind' not 'body' she refers to, the emphasis on involuntary rush, her lips trembling, and her walking as the source of making up *To the Lighthouse*, is also depicting writing as something bodily, affective, and coming to her through physical, embodied activity. In other words, the connection to the outside, or to invisible forces, is still a bodily, embodied connection. Woolf also explains that her intuition to make sense of her experiences in writing is "so instinctive that it seems given to me, not made by me" (2002, p. 85), indicating that her ability to write is strongly connected to her body (and mind) being able to be affected by the external world.

In *Smile Please*, Rhys describes the bodily sensations she experiences before writing: '"My fingers tingled, and the palms of my hands. I pulled a chair up to the table, opened an exercise book, and wrote "This is my Diary […] I wrote on until late into the night, till I was so tired that I couldn't go on, and fell into bed and slept"'(1990, p. 113). Writing is a physical act, which is inextricably linked to other material objects – chair, table, pen. Rhys claims that once she started writing, she wrote until she was physically unable to continue. This claim is strikingly similar to Cixous who stated in one of her lectures that she writes days upon days, having very short breaks. Woolf claims in 'A Sketch' that by writing she is doing "by far the most important thing" (Woolf, 2002, p. 86) she could do, and Rhys, in an appendix to *Smile Please*, taken from her diaries, says that "I must write. If I stop writing my life will have been an abject failure. It is that already to other people. But it could be an abject failure to myself" (Rhys, 1990, p. 147). Writing, for both Woolf and Rhys, is an intimate act, a strange encounter where it seems to be almost given to them, or coming to them from an external world and its forces, impressions, and affects. It is interesting to note here that Cixous develops a similar idea of writing as something that is strongly influenced by the external world in *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* (1993):

> The imund book is the book without an author. It is the book written with us aboard, through not with us at the steering wheel […] that drops the self, the

> speculating clever "I" […] The book that takes life and language by roots…how can it be written? With the hand running. Following the writing hand like the painter draws: in flashes. The hand leads to the flowers. From the heart where passions rise to the finger tips that hear the body thinking: this is where the Book (Alive)-to-Live (le livre Vivre) springs from (p. 156).

It is not to say that the author does not exist; it is rather to say that the author is not a 'speculative I' but someone who lets their body and their affects, which also embody past experiences, dictate their writing. Woolf and Rhys seem to write their books in a similar manner.

To put it differently, both Woolf's and Rhys's writings draw, to different extents and through different techniques, on their own experiences, as I have shown above. The above examples are taken from Woolf's and Rhys's autobiographical writings. In these examples, the two authors explore their lived experience and bodily sensation in relation to their writing. For these reasons, Cixous's work is insightful in explaining the embodied experience in relation to art without reducing the work's aesthetic value, as is often done in women's writing when autobiographical elements are explored.[5] In *White Ink* (2008), an interview with Aliette Armel conducted in 2004, Cixous explains that

> even if everything I have written is thought through from experiences I have had, I find myself relatively absent from my texts considered to be autobiographical. The essential part of what I have been is completely secret. I write from this tension between what comes about, that is, the book (p. 173).

Likewise, Rhys's protagonists are never straightforward portrayals of Rhys herself; they are not the generic Rhys-women but new characters in new situations.[6] In *Rootprints* (1997), Cixous argues that "the books [she] love[s] are not masterful narratives but journals of experience," or novels "that have kept the portion of a non-novel" (p. 69). Mairéad Hanrahan proposes in 'Of Altobiography' (2000) that many of Cixous's novels are not *auto*biographies but *alto*biographies – biographies of alterity(ies) of oneself.[7] Bearing in mind Cixous's altobiography, Woolf's and

[5] See Kristin Czarnecki's 'Heritage, Legacy, and the Life-Writing of Woolf and Rhys' in *Virginia Woolf and Heritage* (2018). See also *Who is Mary Sue?* (2018) by Sophie Collins for a wider context of women's autobiographical writing that have been belittled for centuries.

[6] Early criticism of Rhys used to treat her protagonists as Rhys-women. See, for example, Paula Le Gallez's *The Rhys Woman* (1990) for discussions about the female characters in Rhys.

[7] I have written about altobiography in an article on Deleuze and Cixous, published in CAPACIOUS, and how an alternative version of a self can encourage writing where characters are Deleuzian 'haecceities'. I will return to the sense of self and haecceity in Woolf's and Rhys's writings at the end

Rhys's personal perceptions and affections become percepts and affects in their writing. In *What Is Philosophy?* (1991/1994), Deleuze and Guattari write,

> Percepts are no longer perceptions; they are independent of a state of those who experience them. Affects are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them. Sensations, percepts, and affects are beings whose validity lies *in themselves and exceeds any lived*. They could be said to exist in the absence of man because man, as he is caught in stone, on the canvas, or by words, is himself a compound of percepts and affects. The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself (1994, p. 164).

In the same sense, Woolf's personal experiences of 'moments of being' become impersonal in writing. Similarly, Rhys's protagonists do not simply represent Rhys's personal experience but are literary compounds of percepts and affects that perhaps were inspired by Rhys's personal perceptions and affections. Their writings transform the affections and perceptions that the subjects of Woolf and Rhys experienced as persons into affects and percepts. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari write:

> affect is not the passage from one lived state to another but man's nonhuman becoming […]. It is a zone of indetermination, of indiscernibility, as if things, beasts, and persons. Life alone creates such zones where living beings whirl around, and only art can reach and penetrate them in its enterprise of co-creation (1994, p. 173).

In other words, art can capture a human's non-humanity, and a subject's (including an author's) various parts in relation to place, seasons, and other non-human elements, representing them as something impersonal and asubjective. As I will soon demonstrate, asubjectivity and impersonality are central to my understanding of affect. Because of the focus on impersonality in affect, I am interested in looking at Woolf's and Rhys's personal experiences through a filter of writing and how they make their affections and perceptions something shared, something we, the readers, can experience too.

Woolf's and Rhys's musings about writing, together with Cixous's writings, and affect theories inspired by Deleuze and Guattari, have helped me develop my own understanding of affect as I will define it in this thesis. Defining affect is, on the one hand, an impossible task because there are many possible definitions, as Gregory

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of this introduction. For a more thorough engagement with Deleuzian philosophy and Cixous's fiction, see my article 'Philosophising in Plato's Cave' (2019) in CAPACIOUS.

Seigworth and Melissa Gregg point out in *Affect Theory Reader* (2010).[8] On the other hand, this is precisely the reason why I want to clarify what it means in this thesis. Generally speaking, it is possible to distinguish between two main strands of affect theory: a philosophical strand influenced by Deleuze and Guattari's readings of Baruch Spinoza and developed by Brian Massumi; and a psychological/psychoanalytical strand coming from Silvan S. Tomkins' affect theories, which are taken up by Eve Kosofky Sedgwick. Although there are common traits and overlaps between these strands, I engage more particularly with the former in this thesis.In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980/1987), Deleuze and Guattari write, following Spinoza,

> We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body (2004, p. 257).

Many things are relevant from this quotation to my definition of affect. To begin with, what Deleuze and Guattari mean by a body's ability to affect and be affected in defining a body is that bodies are not defined by their external characteristics. They give an example that "a racehorse is more different from a workhorse than a workhorse is from an ox" (2004, p. 257). By thinking of what a body can do, a workhorse's 'horseness' diminishes and becomes more of an 'oxness'. This is important precisely because, as I will demonstrate further on, it allows us to see selves not as defined by their external attributes such as sex, race, and class, but by what bodies do and into which relationships they enter. Because it is 'a body', not necessarily a human body, "in composition with other affects" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 257), we have to bear in mind also the non-human, or 'more-than-human' part of affect.[9] In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari write that

[8] Many writers engage with the word 'affect' and write about its use and meaning. See for example Linda Zerilli's 'The Turn to Affect and the Problem of Judgement' (2015), Patricia Clough's *The Affective Turn* (2007), Ruth Ley's 'The Turn to Affect: A Critique' (2011), Sara Ahmed's afterword to the second edition of *Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014), Brian Massumi's *The Politics of Affect* (2015), Lisa Blackman's *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation* (2012), Kathleen Stewart's *Ordinary Affects* (2007), and Ben Highmore's *Ordinary Lives: Studies in the Everyday* (2011), as well as various authors like Jane Bennett (2001, 2010), Lauren Berlant (1998, 2012), and Julie Taylor (2015) with whom I engage more thoroughly in this thesis. All these writings address the various problems around defining and 'using' affect.

[9] See Lisa Blackman's *Loving the Alien* (2016) and Dorion Sagan's 'The Human is More than Human: Interspecies, Communities and the New "Facts of Life". Theorizing the Contemporary', (2011). Lisa Blackman (2016), following Sagan, uses the term 'more-than-human', indicating "a

"affects are precisely these nonhuman becomings of man" (1994, p. 169).[10] The focus on bodies, whether human or not, is the first point of contact I draw out between Deleuze and Guattari, and Cixous in this work.[11] In *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* (1993), in the final step, in the School of Roots, Cixous writes that

> If I have referred to these contiguities and over-flowings, it is to emphasise that none of this can be done without the body. Our body is the place of this questioning. And what about the flower part in our body? I'm planting this question here and I'll let it grow (p. 132).

Bodily, material, and not altogether human aspects are at the heart of Cixous's writings. In *Rootprints* (1997), she claims that it is not reason and science that dictate her thinking, but affects: "what [are of] interest to all human beings" (p. 68). And affects, for her, begin in the body, "from the heart where passions rise to the finger tips that hear the *body* thinking" (Cixous, 1997, p. 156, emphasis mine). For Cixous, it is also bodies that think, not just minds. As we can see from the above quotations, bodies, both human and non-human, are important both for her and for Deleuze and Guattari.

Affects are bodily also in Tomkins' strand of affect theory, and in the works of Sedgwick. However, for these writers, affects are often bodily manifestations of emotions. In my understanding, affects are something different – this is why Deleuze and Guattari's, and Cixous's emphasis on the encounter is relevant. In other words, coming back to the quotation from *A Thousand Plateaus*, "how [affects] can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body", (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 257) stresses the essentiality of an encounter with defining a body in that moment of an encounter. In Cixous's work, this encounter is highlighted by focus on 'in-betweenness'. In *Rootprints*, Cixous writes, speaking of affect, "the adventure […] is in the in-between for us, tormented humans […] we are

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particular form of posthumanism or more-than-humanism, which draws on concepts such as entanglement, commingling, co-habitation, co-evolution and co-enactment in order to describe just what we are doing when we are being human" (p. 7). I use more-than-human to keep the attention also on the human, which is central in Cixous's work, as I will demonstrate later on.

[10] See *A Thousand Plateaus* for various 'becomings' and the last section in *What is Philosophy?* for the relevance of becoming in terms of art. It is important to note that all Deleuze's and Guattaris' concepts such as 'becoming', 'multiplicity', 'haecceity', 'a life', 'rhizome' and 'Body Without Organs' among others are all in complex relations to one another and it is not the aim of this thesis to explore all these concepts, but to focus on their general ideas about the positivity of desire and their aim to define subjectivity not in Freudian psychoanalytical terms but in relation to the world as such via various human and non-human encounters.

[11] See my article in CAPACIOUS on Cixous's affective writing in her *Hyperdream* (2006/ 2009) and how this novel echoes a Deleuzian sense of 'a life' and a sense of self as an 'haecceity'.

particles without depth in the scene of the present. The deep effects arise in the aftermath. The roots grow afterward, first the shock, then the nerves" (1997, p. 68). First, this quotation echoes Deleuze and Guattari's notion of affect as something that happens between bodies (1987, p. 257, pp. 287-290). Affect, as Lauren Berlant (2011) reminds us, also following Deleuze, "emerges not in the nervous system of persons but worlds" (p. 14). Cixous too indicates that affects are not contained within individuals, but shared between humans and the world. Second, the ideas of roots growing and deep effects arising in the aftermath refer to the fact that affect happens before it is named; before we can make sense of what emotions it forms itself into. Accordingly, following Deleuze and Guattari and Cixous, emotion is something rather different from affect – it is not contained within an individual and it is more complex than one single emotion.

Affect, in short, is something experienced in bodies and shared among bodies, creating a certain atmosphere, or moments in which certain intimacies and desires that otherwise go unnoticed gain prominence. I am interested in how Woolf and Rhys 'catch' these atmospheres and moments of affect in writing. As demonstrated above, Woolf and Rhys both get hold of certain moments, sensations, emotions, and experiences in their writing, and as I have suggested, by putting these instances into writing, make what was personal rather impersonal and, accordingly, affective. In the chapters that follow I examine those moments and atmospheres, and how Woolf and Rhys use silence and heat, for instance, to slow down the narrative and absorb their characters as well as their readers to these affective moments and atmospheres. Looking at affects *in writing* is also the reason why Cixous's work is insightful. She writes in *Rootprints*:

> If one could x-ray-photo-eco-graph a time, an encounter between two people of whatever sex they might be, by some extraordinary means; and if one could consume the radiation of this encounter in a transparent sphere, and then listen to what is produced in addition to the exchange identifiable in the dialogue – this is what writing tries to do: to keep the record of these invisible events […] all that will not have been pronounced but will have been expressed with means other than speech – that can be taken up in the web of writing (1997, p. 48).

As Cixous indicates, because we do not have this magical x-ray-photo-eco-graph of an encounter, the closest we can get to examine this encounter is in writing. It is precisely this encounter between two or more people, or between a human and a

thing, that is taken up in the web of writing of Woolf and Rhys; a text that develops from personal experience but in the course of writing becomes impersonal and asubjective. It is a kind of writing that is, as I will soon demonstrate, affective, anti-Oedipal, and inclusive of that which we consider feminine in Western cultures.

Modernism and the Turn to Affect and Materiality

Woolf's and Rhys's fiction explores the zones of life where experiences become impersonal, and where humans meet the non-human world. Reading their fiction with new materialist and affect theories, and particularly with authors like Jane Bennett, Hélène Cixous, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, allows me to maintain the focus on affect (as I defined it above), embodiment, materiality, and the non-human in their fiction. By reading Woolf and Rhys in this framework, I situate my thesis within a larger theoretical turn in the humanities and social sciences. Namely, since around the mid-1990s, the affective, materialist, and post-human turn has been manifest in many disciplines across the humanities, including literary studies.[12] These turns are central to forming the argument in this thesis. I am

[12] Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg in *The Affect Theory Reader* (2010) offer an overview of the many strands in affect theory, In literary studies, critics such as Jonathan Flatley (2008), Kirsty Martin (2013), Pieter Vermeulen (2015), Sanja Bahun (2013), Julie Taylor (2015), Rachel G. Smith (2015), Derek Ryan (2013) and Abbie Garrington (2016), Jean-Michel Rabate (2016), Stephen Ahern (2019), Heather Love (2007), Mario DiGangi (2017), Erica L. Johnson and Patricia Moran (2017), Justus Nieland, (2008), and Marta Figlerowicz (2017), to name a few, offer affect-oriented readings of various literary texts. See Stephen Ahren's (2019) edited collection to read about the tendency to explore affect especially in modernist and post-modern literature.

The affective turn goes hand in hand with the materialist turn. A common interest is how affect resides in bodies and materiality, whether human or non-human. Dominic Pettman (2017) talks about the meaning of the post-human turn. Samantha Frost and Diane Coole (2010) outline the main objectives of new materialist criticism. Generally speaking, new materialism thinks "anew about the fundamental structure of matter" (Coole and Frost, 2010, p. 5), which accordingly allows a reconsideration of some of "modernity's most cherished beliefs about the fundamental nature of existence and social justice" (Coole and Frost, 2010, p. 5). New materialism and post-humanism does not place human and animate life on a higher pedestal than inanimate life and matter – it develops an understanding of ethical coexistence, and even an underlying entanglement, of human life with the animate and inanimate non-human world. This thesis, although also working against hierarchies, maintains a radical difference between what is human and what is not human, as well as a difference between human individuals and things.

Woolf's and Rhys's engagements with bodies, embodiment, materiality, the non-human, and affect has also (re)drawn wide attention to these aspects of Rhys's and Woolf's fiction. Villy Karagouni, Marly Lou Emery, Erica L. Johnson, Delia Caparoso Konzett, Elaine Savory, and John J. Su's work is brought together in *Twenty-First Century Approaches to Jean Rhys* (2015) and they study Rhys's work through the lens of affect studies, new materialism, and post-humanism, focusing on the role emotions, affects, and bodies play in her fiction. Laura Oulanne (2018) reads Rhys through new materialist studies, looking at things in her fiction. Scholars like Derek Ryan, Beatrice Monaco, Claire Colebrook, and Laci Mattison offer Deleuzian readings of Woolf in the 2013 special issue in Deleuze Studies as well as in their separate monographs and articles. These critics place importance

particularly interested in the debates around the continuity between post-structuralism and the contemporary affective, material, and post-humanist turns. For this reason, I also read this thesis with Cixous and Deleuze and Guattari, who, in one way or another, belong to the French post-structuralist tradition. Julie Taylor's *Modernism and Affect* (2015), for example, addresses the problem of seeing the affective turn as a turn away from post-structuralism.[13] As Taylor (2015) points out, authors such as Brian Massumi, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, "the authors of the two 1995 essays whose appearance is signalled as 'the watershed moment' by Seigworth and Gregg position their work in response to the apparent deficiencies of post-structuralism and deconstruction" (p. 6). It can be said, then, that there is an assumption that affect and new materialist theories turn away from post-structuralism.

Yet, there is also work that examines the continuity between these theories. As Taylor (2015) argues, "Rei Terada (2001) has complicated this opposition by arguing that deconstruction has much to tell us about emotion, revealing a surprising continuity in discourse (if not ideology) between classical theories of emotion and post-structuralist linguistic philosophy" (p. 7). In *Feeling in Theory* Terada (2001) explains why post-structuralism, besides being concerned with language, is an apparent 'opposite' to affect theories. Post-structuralism, Terada reminds us, heralds the death of the subject, and since emotions are associated with subjects, one might indeed conclude that once the subject is dead, the emotion too is dead. It is not my aim here to dwell on whether or not the subject really was dead for post-structuralists. Rather, for this thesis the idea that emotions are associated with subjects is relevant. Terada (2001) argues against the death of emotion precisely because she says emotions are not necessarily tied to human subjects (pp. 2-5). She writes that "it is time to consider the possibility that post-structuralism is directly concerned with emotion. In order for this to be so, emotion would have to be non-subjective" (Terada, 2001, pp. 2-3). Interestingly, she is against drawing a clear

on the development of the subject in relation to external world of various encounters instead of seeing the formation of a subject in Freudian psychoanalytical, or Lacanian psycholinguistic, Oedipal terms. I situate my work in dialogue with theirs.

[13] Taylor's edited collection offers a comprehensive insight into the background of modernism's relation to affect – both in terms of how modernist writers, thinkers, and philosophers have theorised affect in their contemporary settings, and how critics read modernist writings in the light of affect theories today

distinction between affect and emotion (Terada, 2001, pp. 2-5). Yet, the non-subjectivity of emotion is exactly one way of explaining the difference between affect and emotion. As I have already demonstrated, in my reading, the distinction between affect and emotion does exist, and this distinction can be made precisely because affects are impersonal, whereas emotions are personal. To put it differently, post-structuralism, then, might be concerned with affect. Leaving aside the questions of naming and definition, what is important from Terada's work is that she demonstrates the continuity between post-structuralism and affect theories – a continuity that I also aim to emphasise.

My work contributes to this debate by bringing in Cixous's work on intimacy and affect, and by putting her work in dialogue with Deleuze and Guattari (and theories inspired by their work) who, despite belonging to the French post-structuralist tradition, are central to theories of affect, new materialism, and post-humanism. To be precise, by putting Cixous's work in dialogue with the turns to affect, materiality, and post-humanism, I demonstrate how these turns are not turns away from older theories more explicitly concerned with the psyche and linguistics, but rather a shift in focus. In particular, I propose that there is a link between feminist post-structuralism and theories in affect and new materialism. It is my aim precisely because, first, academic thinking should not be seen as a series of breaks, but a process, and second, because there is so much in the work of Cixous that contributes not only to affect and new materialist studies but also to the way we understand modernism's relationship to theory.

Claire Colebrook's work (2012) is key to my understanding of 'theory', and especially to understanding the relationship between French thought and modernist literature.[14] Colebrook argues that French post-structuralism, which primarily focuses on thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva, has created an Oedipal reading *of* modernist literature, because these thinkers have also drawn that theory *from* modernist literature, particularly that of James Joyce.[15] By reading Woolf with Deleuze, Colebrook proposes an anti-Oedipal theory of modernist writing which Deleuze and Guattari develop in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and*

[14] The link between post-structuralism and modernist literature is well known as writers such as Kristeva, Derrida, and also Cixous and Deleuze examine modernist, sometimes Anglo-American, literature to develop their theories.
[15] See Colebrook's 'Woolf and Theory' in *Virginia Woolf in Context* (2012).

Schizophrenia (1972/1977), and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980/1987), the last of which I will engage with throughout this thesis.[16] I aim to develop Colebrook's ideas further by bringing in Cixous's work. An anti-Oedipal reading of modernism and theory, I propose, is also a way to emphasise the continuity between post-structural French feminist thought, and contemporary theories in affect, new materialism, and post-humanism. Providing anti-Oedipal writings and readings is a common aim of certain strands of these theories, as I will demonstrate throughout this introduction. To clarify my understanding of anti-Oedipality, I distinguish between two 'layers' of anti-Oedipality. First is the linguistic or textual level, wherein characters' selves 'reside'. About this, Colebrook (2012) writes that unlike in Oedipalised thinking, in anti-Oedipal thinking,

> language is not the way in which speakers are subjected to signifiers, beyond which they cannot think. Rather, in the beginning are perceptions from which subject positions are formed, but which are not yet privatized. There is a perception of 'x', and it is from that perception or affection that there emerges something like a subject who speaks (p. 73).

Strictly speaking, this indicates that selves are not 'made' because they can be signified by categories such as 'mother', 'father, and 'child', linguistically, but because they are in a perpetual relationship to the external world which affects them, and this should be captured in language. Secondly, there is a more explicit concern with sexuality and the Oedipal desire for the mother and the death of the father. Colebrook (2012) writes that

> there is a direct relation between desire and sexual difference but this is a difference that is neither human or gendered nor subjective. Genders and subjects are generated from desire and difference: in the beginning is a force that encounters another force (p. 73).

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[16] Interestingly, Colebrook associates Oedipal readings with post-structural French thought, especially with Kristeva and Derrida. Yet, her anti-Oedipal theory is developed by focusing on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who are also French and post-structuralists. It seems that Colebrook is not 'writing against' post-structuralism but rather offers a post-structuralism that is different from the widely known one. Also, it seems that it is the Freudian psychoanalytic element in post-structural theory that she takes most trouble with.
To put it differently, Deleuze and Guattari's work *is* post-structuralist, while also being highly influential for various people working with affect studies and new materialisms today, including Brian Massumi, Jane Bennett, Kathleen Stewart, Lauren Berlant, Claire Colebrook, and Elizabeth Grosz, to name a few. Derek Ryan in 'The Reality of Becoming' (2013) explains that Deleuze, while being a post-structuralist, has also been neglected in literary studies as a post-structuralist because "he does not fetishize language" (p. 14). I would like to emphasise then, that it is not post-structuralism as theory that Colebrook sees as Oedipal, but that part of post-structuralism that draws on Freud and Jacques Lacan's readings of Freud.

The two layers are, of course, related. The first layer is about how to express certain desires, characters, sights, and sounds in text – this concern is relevant throughout this thesis and I will explore this further in the next section of this introduction. The second layer is, strictly speaking, more concerned with how selves are made in, or rather, outside familial relations – an issue that is primarily studied in Chapters One and Three.

The view of modernism as Oedipal forms a certain position that encourages seeing modernism as concerned with loss or lack. Colebrook ties Oedipal readings of modernism to French post-structuralism in general, and particularly to Kristeva and Derrida. Colebrook (2012) suggests,

> we might say, then, that one of the dominant ways of thinking about 'theory' and modernism, or language and modernism, has been oedipal: the subject must submit to a system of signs which 'he' regards as lawful or punishing (and which prohibits his desire). From that submission he posits that there must have been some desired 'beyond' that he can now intimate only from within language. Modernism would then be a critical phenomenon: mourning an outside, plenitude, unity or a beyond that could be intimated (or gestured towards) only from within signs (p. 72).

Oedipal readings that mourn a lost unity with mother (when we think of Kristeva's writings, for instance) create a sense of modernism that is always concerned with a loss that cannot be regained. To put it differently, an Oedipal narrative of modernism sees modernism as a loss or lack of something. Jane Bennett (2001) focuses on a similar tale from a more historical and philosophical, not post-structural or psychoanalytical, view. She emphasises that the tale of modern life being disenchanted produces a certain narrative of loss. Bennett (2001) writes,

> this narrative is a tale of loss, though not always of woe: disenchantment is sometimes described as the destruction of a golden age when the world was a home, sometimes celebrated as the end of a dark age and the dawn of a world of human freedom and rational agency, and sometimes presented as a mixed blessing. But in each of these cases, it is agreed that disenchantment describes contemporary condition (p. 33).

Bennett (2001) suggests that to reenchant the modern life, one needs to acknowledge that her tale is "not a tale of a man wronged, but of a civilisation somehow wronged because it has been 'disenchanted'" (p. 7). Bennett (2001) explains that the disenchantment tale is particular to modernity, and "the disenchantment tale figures nonhuman nature as more or less inert 'matter'; it constructs the modern West as a

radical break from other cultures; and it depicts the modern self as predisposed toward rationalism, scepticism, and the problem of meaningless" (p. 7). I will turn to the problem of matter as inert shortly. For now, it is important to emphasise that the Oedipal readings are related to what Bennett calls the tale of disenchantment of modernity. With the tale of disenchantment of modern life, and with more Oedipal interpretations of this disenchantment on an individual level, we also get theoretical readings of modernism that pick up traces from the text that confirm these interpretations.

Even the affective readings of modernist literature, then, tend to focus on negative affects and loss. While we could say that post-structuralism was concerned with signs and language, then, affect theories aim, as Taylor (2015) puts it, "to put feeling at the heart of our thinking as we theorise modernism and modernity" (p. 2). It seems that engagement with affect, however, has primarily put negative feelings at the heart of modernism. The alienation in urban environments, technological improvements that were often used for disastrous ends, and international travel are, as Lorraine Sim and Ann Vickery (2014) point out, a trigger for the new feelings that modernist literature examines. These new feelings are indeed negative, as Sim and Vickery (2014, p. 6) point out, and as Taylor reminds us (2015, p. 11). Sim and Vickery (2014), referring to Heather Love's (2007) study, name "nostalgia, regret, shame, despair, resentment, passivity, escapism, self-hatred, withdrawal, bitterness, defeatism, and loneliness" as the most common affects that various critics engage with (qtd. in Sim and Vickery, 2014, p. 6). It is not my aim here to argue that readings that explore negative feelings, emotions, or affects in modernism are false. Far from it, these readings are helpful and interesting. Rather, I want to point out that they too come from a theoretical standpoint, and in turn reproduce a worldview that encourages seeing modernity, and modernism, as concerned with loss and disenchantment. The focus on negative feelings seems to be more intrinsic to affect theories that are concerned with Oedipalised readings. When we look at some of the readings of Woolf and Rhys, we can also trace the tendency to focus on negative feelings and affects. In terms of Woolf, these readings are not concerned with affect or materiality *per se*, but examine negative feelings in a sense of trauma.[17] Rhys's

[17] There is no systematic reading of negative affects in Woolf's work as there is in Rhys's. However, there is a monograph by Patricia Moran, *Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys, and the Aesthetics of Trauma*

work, when considered through the affective lens, is often concerned with negative feelings and atmospheres. For instance, John S. Ju (2015), Delia Caparaso Konzett (2002) and Elaine Savoury (2009) all examine dislocation and disorientation in Rhys's novels.[18]

There are, however, also already readings that examine joy, desire, and otherwise pleasant feelings or atmospheres in modernist writings. For instance, Anna Abramson (2015) examines the advantages of being absorbed in atmosphere. There are various readings of Woolf with Deleuze that focus on joy and desire (2013) and Aberheen Hai (2015) looks at affective intimacies between Christophine and Antoinette in Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. There is also new criticism on Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914), a typical text of modernist paralysis, that is now being rethought in the light of liberation, hope and freedom.[19] There is then an emerging body of work (some of which is strongly indebted to Deleuze and Guattari) that engages with what is enchanting and life-affirming in modernist works. This work, I propose, is precisely concerned with theory and modernism as anti-Oedipal. These readings, I suggest, are what allows us to enchant modern life. Bennett describes her enchantment as different from Kant's and Paracelsus's, which are either divine or natural. She sketches her own, a marvellous Deleuzian world,

> where wonders persist in a rhizomatic world without intrinsic purpose or divinity […] assuming telos or God […] for [Deleuze] enchantment resides in the spaces where nature and culture overlap: where becomings happen among humans, animals, and machines. Deleuze brings out the wondrous qualities of late modernity's admixtures (Bennett, 2001, p. 34).

(2007), that explores their childhood abuse through a psychoanalytical lens, performing a thoroughly Oedipal reading of Woolf's and Rhys's works.

[18] For instance, John S. Ju (2015) examines the sense of feeling out of place and out of one's body in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. According to Ju, disorientation is a major factor influencing and defining the 'fate' of Rhys's characters, including Antoinette and her husband in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Delia Caparaso Konzett (2002) similarly suggests that "[the] sense of homelessness and dislocation, so pervasive in Rhys's works, challenges not only colonial models of master nations and narrations, with their unquestioned ontologies of belonging but, more importantly, a concomitant mythology of the white race" (p. 128). Elaine Savoury (2009) too, focusing on post-colonial aspects of Rhys's fiction, notes that "one vital aspect of postcolonial ecology is to reimagine the displacement between people and place through poetics" (p. 87), suggesting that Rhys's fiction expresses this "pained connection often as displacement, between people and place with her characteristic originality and awareness" (2009, p. 87). I agree that in most of Rhys's interwar novels dislocation is indeed a prominent affect. However, as I will demonstrate, Antoinette knows exactly where she belongs. Therefore, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the shifting narrative voice and complex collision of different worldviews rather functions as disorientation for the reader, as Su has pointed out, but not, as I will propose, for the characters (2015, p. 184).

[19] See *Rethinking Joyce's Dubliners* (2017), edited by Claire A. Culleton and Ellen Scheible.

Bennett's focus on nature and culture overlapping, and on animals and machines in relation to humans places her work within the post-human, affective, and material turns, while her reference to Deleuze also confirms that these aspects were part of a certain strand in French post-structural thinking. With this focus in mind, modernism is not necessarily a tale of disenchantment and loss, a tale stuck in its own already known Oedipal desires and signifiers, but a tale of possibility. To put it differently, this thesis suggests that anti-Oedipal readings that see modernism as enchanted, and selves as complex compounds of various relations, also produce readings that allow us to see positive modernist affects.

This thesis also extends this life-affirming, anti-Oedipal narrative beyond the high modernist period. Because *Wide Sargasso Sea* is, strictly speaking, not modernist in terms of when it was written (mid-twentieth century) and when it was set (early nineteenth century), it is also important to pause for a moment on why I read *Wide Sargasso Sea* with modernist novels and 'modernist' affects. While *To the Lighthouse*, *Between the Acts*, and *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* are rather conveniently classifiable as high modernist, or perhaps late modernist in the case of *Between the Acts*, then *Wide Sargasso Sea* is usually considered post-colonial. Yet, with the emergence of the new modernist studies, critics take transnational and post-colonial context into account when exploring modernist fiction.[20] Rhys's work is now understood as not simply modernist or post-colonial, as critics become more and more interested in how her modernist aesthetics are influenced by her own experience as a white Creole moving from the West Indies to European metropolitan centres in the early twentieth century, and inhabiting these centres at the height of the modernist movement.[21] Both Woolf's and Rhys's oeuvres, as I will demonstrate

[20] See Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz's 'The New Modernist Studies' (2008) for a longer discussion about what the new modernist studies entail.

[21] Many critics take Rhys's West Indian origins seriously now, complicating the earlier readings that focused more exclusively on capitalism and consumerism, and/or psychoanalysis. What is shared by most these readings is, again, the interest in dislocation in Rhys's fiction and how this dislocation is triggered by complex issues regarding race, colonialism, imperialism, and patriarchy. What also interests me from these various strands and possibilities of 'locating' or 'dislocating' Rhys's writing is what Delia Konzett (2002) and Erica L. Johnson (2015) have traced in their different ways – post-humanism and affect. Johnson (2015) explains that Konzett has examined post-humanism from the post-colonial perspective focusing on race, and on how post-humanism was first and foremost a critique to liberal European humanism, drawing attention to the limited view of subject European liberalism offers. Johnson's article points out various instances throughout Rhys's oeuvre where the non-human becomes a source of identification. My reading, however, radically differs from Johnson's because unlike her, I do not see Rhysian characters' identification with the non-human as their escape to numbness and indifference (p. 213).

in Chapters Two and Four, offer examples of how various modernist themes, such as the problems relating to Empire, nationalism, gender roles, social hierarchies and convention of any kind, are already present in modernist fiction, which is also concerned with how to aesthetically present these topics. Urmila Seshagiri (2000) argues that already in *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) Rhys explored what we now consider as post-colonial issues, shifting the focus perhaps from more overtly modernist concerns with form and aesthetics to historical and social context. Seshagiri emphasises that there is no "stark polarity [that] divides modern and post-colonial literature" (2000, p. 492), pointing out that who we consider modernist writers (for example, Woolf and Conrad) have devoted as much time to colonial issues as post-colonial writers have to artistic form.

One way of focusing on the commonality between modernist and post-colonial literature is in fact focusing on affective intimacies. Su (2015) points out that

> transformations in post-colonial studies over the past decade offer the opportunity to rethink *Wide Sargasso Sea* and its relationship to Rhys's other work. The shift away from the centre-periphery model of post-colonial theory toward more multilateral, multinational analyses of globalisation among theories of post-colonialism open up possibilities for more nuanced readings of a writer who never fits terribly well within the categories of modernist, feminist, or post-colonial authorship (p. 171).

The shift in post-colonial theory that Su mentions offers a possibility to trace the affective intimacies in post-colonial literature more generally, and importantly also in my reading of Rhys's final novel. Critics like Phanuel Antwi, Sarah Brophy, Helene Strauss, and Y-Dang Troeung (2013) working with post-colonialism suggest that a change in focus in post-colonial studies is needed to turn its attention to tracing and taking affects and intimacies seriously (p. 2). These authors follow affect theorists such as Ann Cvetkovich and Kathleen Stewart and they shift the focus from what John Ashcroft (2012) calls 'Grand Theory' (institutionalised, political and wide-scale forms of oppression) to lived experiences of race, colonialism, and oppression.[22] I too am interested in the lived experience of various political regimes. To put it differently, it is not my aim to periodise or categorise the novels I study in

[22] See their article 'Post-colonial Intimacies: Gatherings, Disruptions, Departures' (2013) to understand in more detail how they engage with the affective turn in post-colonial studies. I will return to pos-tcolonialism in the context of affect and new materialist studies in the fourth and final chapter on *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

this thesis, but to trace certain intimacies that these novels engage with and the atmospheres, feelings, and moods they trigger. I trace intimacies that Woolf and Rhys were interested in throughout their lives not because they were either modernists, late modernists, or post-colonial writers, but because they found these intimacies worth noticing.

There is also a certain understanding of historical context that modernist studies can gain from looking at materiality, embodiment, and the non-human besides language, form and strictly human relations. Angeliki Spiripolou's seminal monograph on history and modernity, and more specifically on Virginia Woolf and Walter Benjamin, *Virginia Woolf, Modernity and History: Constellations with Walter Benjamin* (2010) offers a novel understanding of the role of the past and the new in modernity and modernism. She talks of the shift in criticism towards exploring social and cultural implications of Woolf's work besides aesthetic qualities that began in the 1970s with feminist and post-colonial criticism. As demonstrated, critics have now established that Woolf and Rhys engage with social, cultural and political issues through their aesthetics. The material, affective theories allow the examination of how they engage with these matters intimately. Lauren Berlant (2011), who also follows Deleuze in her work, suggests that central to an understanding of any era or time is the capture of "the affective sensorium […] of the historical present" (p. 53). Berlant (2011) contends that "affective responses may be said significantly to exemplify shared historical present" (pp. 14-15). Similarly, Taylor (2015), referring to affective criticism of literary modernism, suggests that "recent works within modernist studies have suggested foundational links between affect and the structure of the modern itself" (p. 2). She refers to Jonathan Flatley's *Affective Mapping* (2008) and his claim that "the 'nowness' of modernity implies a sense of anteriority that links it fundamentality to loss" (qtd. in Taylor, 2015, p. 2) and also to Heather Love who similarly looks at the backward feeling of queer modernism. Taylor (2015) suggests that "in such understandings, then, the 'modern' emerges as an affective orientation towards history: affect is central to its constitution, its claims to newness and its ties to the past" (p. 2). In other words, affect offers us insights into certain historical moments, including those of the modernist period, which is itself an affective relation to that which came before and to that which might come after.

Anna Jones Abramson in 'Beyond Modernist Shock: Virginia Woolf's Absorbing Atmosphere' (2015) makes a similar claim. Like Flatley, for instance, she places emphases on atmosphere. She offers a reading of *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) wherein, instead of looking at shock, which is common in "theorizing urban modernism", she proposes that "Woolf moves beyond the matter of how the psyche absorbs shock and trauma to consider how the urban atmosphere itself functions as a shock absorber, a kind of affective repository for the past" (Abramson, 2015, p. 39). Like myself, Ambramson (2015) aligns her work with Berlant and Stewart who "have argued for the need to look at how history plays out at the level of everyday" (p. 44). On this everyday level, Abramson, like many affect theorists, is interested in the atmosphere, not in the individual psyche, because, as mentioned, affect is not so much concerned with the individual as it is with atmosphere. Accordingly, the disenchantment tale, as Bennett (2001) argues, really is a tale of civilisation, not of a man wronged, as the trauma is absorbed in the atmosphere (p. 7).[23] There is, however, as I will demonstrate, much more than just trauma in the atmosphere. There is also joy, wonder, and attachments to life in specific historical moments, which might otherwise seem chaotic, disorderly, and even dangerous when we think of the sweeping social change and wars in the early twentieth century.

The shift from the individual psyche to a shared atmosphere allows us to rethink not only the concept of history but of how we think of modernism and theory. I would like to return to the continuity between post-structuralism and the turns to affect, new materialism, and post-humanism here, and how Cixous's work can illustrate this continuity. Cixous (1975), for instance, writes about how history is a narrative of great men's lives, and how this is a direct outcome of the general tendency of Western cultures to produce phallocentric narratives (1976, p. 892). To move beyond the phallocentric writing that focuses on the ego, the self, and identity, which Cixous associates with Freudian psychoanalysis, she urges writers in 'The Laugh of Medusa' to "break out of the circles; don't remain within the

[23] The shift from psyche to atmosphere makes it possible to contemplate the idea that shared spaces offer collective experience to characters who have not individually experienced certain events, such as war. The characters in *To the Lighthouse* and *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie,* therefore, feel the impact of the First World War and the changes it brought without being at the battlefield, or without any of these changes being explicitly spelled out, and *Between the Acts* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* explore how affective resonances of history affect the characters' sense of self and belonging. As Abramson (2015) writes, "the affectively charged residue of the past often materialises in the air, rather than as a dredged-up memory […] the atmosphere, too, is a kind of affective repository for history" (p. 49).

psychoanalytic closure. Take a look around, then cut through!" (1976, p. 892). As we see from the above quotation by Cixous, she already urges to turn away from Freudian psychoanalysis as early as 1975, because, as she writes, psychoanalytical theories often produce phallocentric and Oedipal narratives not just of history but of life. Colebrook's anti-Oedipal readings, then, should not be considered as readings against the whole of French post-structuralist thinking, but against that part of French thought which is Oedipal, and which often produces readings that focus on negative affects. As we can see from Cixous's quotation, Oedipal readings are closely associated with Freudian psychoanalysis, which we know was influential for Jacques Lacan in developing psycholinguistic theories, which the 'French' feminists, including Cixous, are also associated with, and which I will explain in more detail in the following section. Alternatively, drawing on Colebrook's Deleuzian anti-Oedipal reading of modernism, I demonstrate how Cixous's *écriture féminine* in fact encourages us to write a way out of Oedipal narratives by focusing on bodies, materiality, and the (non-human) other.

Écriture Féminine as Affective Writing of Materiality

Écriture féminine demonstrates the continuity between post-structural psycholinguistic feminism and new materialist and affect studies. *Écriture féminine* is a writing that is essentially anti-Oedipal, anti-patriarchal, and perhaps anti-masculine. However, *écriture féminine*, as it is associated with 'French' psycholinguistic feminism, is often considered as incitement of biological essentialism, a kind of writing that pays particular attention to biologically female bodies.[24] By emphasising the materiality and embodiment as such, and by putting Cixous in dialogue with Deleuze and Guattari, and prospectively with affect and new materialist theories that follow the latter's work, I aim to show how *écriture féminine* is not biologically essentialist. The starting point of dialogue for Cixous and theories of affect and new materialism is, as I pointed out above, in defining something we may call affect, and how it resides in human and non-human bodies. I focus on *écriture féminine*, and then on Deleuze's concept of 'becoming-woman' and

[24] See the seminal work by Toril Moi *Sexual/ Textual Politics* (1985) for an overview of criticism against 'French feminism'. See also Christine Delphy's 'The Invention of French Feminism: An Essential Move' (2000).

'majoritarian' and 'minoritarian' identities, to demonstrate that Cixous, and Deleuze and Guattari associate a mode of writing as well as being in the world that is anti-Oedipal with femininity and women. I focus on *écriture féminine* because there are already many readings of 'becoming-woman' and other Deleuzian thinking with contemporary, new materialist and affect-oriented feminist studies.[25] More importantly, I focus on Cixous because, first, as demonstrated above, her writings resonate with Woolf's and Rhys's ideas on affective, embodied writing, and second, Cixous's writing seems to be, as she herself claims in *Hyperdream* (2006/2009), on the side of life, affirming the attachment to it. Her work in dialogue with Deleuze's, therefore, allows us to see the side of post-structuralism that is already also concerned with embodiment, materiality, and the (non-human) other – aspects that are related to creating anti-Oedipal, life-affirming narratives. Third, as I will demonstrate in more detail towards the end of this introduction, she keeps humans at the centre of her attention despite her focus on the non-human – an aspect that is also central in Woolf and Rhys.

Cixous's *écriture féminine* shares the same desire as many new materialist, post-humanist, and affect theorists such as Lauren Berlant (2011, 2019), Kathleen Stewart (2007, 2019), Jane Bennett (2001, 2010), and Rosi Braidotti (1993, 1994, 2013), to name a few: a wish to develop a writing that is affective; includes everyday sensorial, embodied experience; the non-human and materiality, and does so by moving away from strictly rational or philosophical discourses. Cixous first introduces the concept *écriture féminine* in her 1975 essays 'Sorties' and 'The Laugh of Medusa'. In both essays, she sees writing 'the feminine', writing the body, and writing the other as possible alternatives to the Western philosophical canon (Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hegel, to name a few) and the critical writing and thinking that stems from the aforementioned philosophers' works and produces phallocentric, xenophobic, and misogynist narratives. Cixous's writing is informed by that which is considered feminine in the Western philosophical thought. While Cixous questions binaries her idea of *écriture féminine* engages with the qualities that are on the right of the binary oppositions outlined in 'Sorties': Head/Heart, Intelligible/Palpable,

[25] See Claire Colebrook's 'Modernism without Women' (2013), and Elizabeth Grosz's 'A Thousand Tiny Sexes' (1993), for example. There is a monograph *Deleuze and the Schizoanalysis of Feminism* by Cheri Carr and Janae Sholtz on the topic of Deleuze and feminism to be published later in 2019 when this thesis is already finished.

Logos/Pathos, Mind/Body. Cixous explains what she means by feminine writing in an interview with Louis de Rambures in 1976, published in English in *White Ink* in 2008. She says: "I am not trying to create a feminine writing but to let into writing what has always been forbidden up until now, knowing the effects of femininity. I am still at the research stage" (Cixous, 2008, p. 52). She stresses the same point again in another interview, saying, "I do not say feminine writing. I talk of femininity in writing, or I use heaps of quotation marks, I speak of 'so-called feminine' writing. In any case, femininity – to define it – also exists in men, it does not necessarily exist in women" (Cixous, 2008, p. 22). Instead of associating femininity with biologically female bodies, Cixous positions femininity as a certain quality to be found in many bodies.

Femininity for her is "a certain type of generosity, a certain type of capacity to expend without fear of loss, without calling loss 'loss'" (Cixous, 2008, p. 22). Rather, 'loss' in 'femininity' for Cixous stands for the loss of a certain set of values that are associated with patriarchy and masculinity, and this is not a negative loss. Cixous goes on to say that to lose

> could be a way of working with life, that defensive rigidity is not perhaps best defence […]there are a thousand ways of perceiving this style of behaviour which is in relation to a libidinal economy, that is to say with the conservation of the self, the expenditure of the self, the relation to the other (2008, p. 22).

As seen in these quotations, femininity for Cixous marks a different notion of the self, and the self's relation to the other, and also a different system of values. Her concept of femininity, and positioning loss not as loss but another way of relating to the world and to others bears comparison to Colebrook's claim that anti-Oedipal theory and literature do not mourn for some sort of original loss that cannot be recovered. Colebrook (2012) writes, referring to Woolf,

> Like Deleuze and Guattari, Woolf's project of writing is to descend from the composed generalities of the present world, to intuit the forces from which the world of 'subject, object and the nature of reality' is composed […] Deleuze and Guattari agree that at present we are 'subjected' to the signifier and are thoroughly oedipalised, but this is a consequence of a long political history. Further – and this is crucial for a reading of Woolf and its implications for what has come to be known as 'theory' – this universal history that ends with capitalism is sexualised and racial. The only way life manages to compose individuals from the 'intense germinal influx' is by generating relatively stable relations and terms from initially complex and

> unbounded forces. *Something like a figure of 'man' in general has been formed in order to present a humanity for whom there is a world; what needs to be considered is the historical and political emergence of the figure of man from forces that are initially far too sexually and racially multiple to compose anything like 'man'* (p. 71; emphasis mine).

This passage resonates throughout this thesis as it sums up the aim of anti-Oedipal writing: "to descend from the composed generalities of the present world" (Colebrook, 2012, p. 71). In this writing there is no ultimate signifier for a universal 'man', or other categories that could accommodate 'majoritarian' identities defined by class, sex, gender, and race, which, strictly speaking, compose the generalities of the present world. To resist writing in the way that reinforces the already existing generalities that are presented via patriarchal historical and social narratives, Colebrook suggests that there is a mode of writing that is anti-Oedipal, and that in this writing, the various forces and desires that make up selves and their lives are taken into account. This writing is also associated, importantly, with concepts such as 'woman' and 'femininity'.

To understand why 'woman' and 'femininity' are important, it is necessary to pause over the concept of 'majority' from the above passage. Colebrook uses the word 'majority' from Deleuze and Guattari's work, which, for the latter two, is represented by a figure of man who "is the average adult-white-heterosexual-European-male-speaking a standard language" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 106). They explain that "it is obvious that 'man' holds the majority, even if he is less numerous than mosquitoes, children, women, blacks, peasants, homosexuals, etc. […] Majority assumes a state of power and domination, not the other way around" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 106). Against this majoritarian white European male, Deleuze and Guattari develop a concept of minority mostly through 'becoming-woman' to challenge this standard male Oedipalised speaking subject and see

> the majoritarian as a constant and homogeneous system; minorities as subsystems; and the minoritarian as a potential, creative and created, becoming […] 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 they themselves must enter; this is a becoming-woman affecting all of humankind, men and women both (2004, p. 107).

It is this minoritarian identity, a becoming-woman, that is of interest in this thesis and that is a constant point of focus in all four novels explored. As Colebrook (2013)

and Elizabeth Grosz (1993) remind us, Deleuze and Guattari use the word 'woman' to indicate that what is 'man' is already defined by Oedipal systems. 'Woman', on the other hand, is free to form various affective becomings where subjectivity is not understood in Oedipal terms but in relation to various human and non-human encounters. To come back to the quotation from Colebrook, what she indicates is that the majoritarian categories and the figure of man have been generated to create some sort of order in life where the figure of 'man' is the standard against which the orderliness of life is measured. 'Man' is the already defined historical signified. However, as mentioned before, in Woolf's and Rhys's writing, order is not imposed through these majoritarian categories but rather is found by noticing intimate, affective encounters. In other words, their fiction, and their characters, are a play of "initially complex and unbounded forces" that cannot be composed of the already existing "generalities of the world" (Colebrook, 2012, p. 71).

Because these unbound forces are positioned as the opposite of 'man', Deleuze and Guattari, and Cixous associate them with femininity and women, where neither of these words marks biologically female bodies. One of the most difficult tasks of this thesis, and more generally of producing feminist discourses, is the balance in maintaining the focus on femininity and women, while, at the same time, demonstrating that femininity is not something specific to women and that women are not a concrete, unchanging category.[26] I am less interested in defining 'woman' than I am interested in exploring what 'femininity' marks in the work of Woolf and Rhys, and I suggest this can be explored via understanding femininity in Cixous's work. Following Cixous's thoughts on femininity, I propose that in her work, femininity marks radical alterity, engagement with lived experience, materiality, and the non-human, and 'functions' as a possibility for noticing the sites in the world that make space for minorities. Both Woolf and Rhys, especially and explicitly the former, associate femininity with new ways of writing, new genres, and new language as well as new ways of being in the world. Although femininity is not something confined to women, in Woolf's and Rhys's fiction, because of their historical moment, it is female characters who suffer most from the suppression and marginalisation of femininity, and who are associated with feminine qualities.

[26] See works on feminist theory such as Rosemary Putman Tong's various editions of *Feminist Thought* (2009, 2013 etc.), Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985), and Sneja Gunew's *Feminist Knowledge* (1990).

'Becoming-woman' is often 'placed' in female figures in Woolf and Rhys, and female artists like Lily and Miss La Trobe might represent something like *écriture féminine*. For these reasons, it is important to look briefly at the history of femininity in writing, and how different theorists have engaged with femininity in Cixous's works, and why I see new materialist and affect studies as an extension of this concern.

Elizabeth Grosz discusses the history of femininity in philosophical discourse in a chapter in Sneja Gunew's *Feminist Knowledge: Critique and Construct* (1990).[27] Grosz (1990) looks at post-structural feminists, including Luce Irigaray and Michèle Le Dœuff, claiming they are concerned with altering the style and content of writing in order to change the status of femininity (pp. 162-166). Grosz's engagement with their work, which she considers to be radical feminism, offers a ground for focusing on the stylistics as well as content of traditional philosophical and academic discourse. She explains that the modern style for philosophical discourse is based on its separation from poetry and myth. She notes that Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* embody philosophical, psychological, poetic, theological, and narrative features. In other words, she claims that it was not until the fifth and the third centuries BC that philosophical discourse gained specific standards and style, and lost the poetic, theological, and narrative features that were present in Homer's texts (Grosz, 1990, p. 154). It was then when

> its propositions gain precise, unambiguous formulation and a truth-function; only, that is, when philosophy carefully controls language, clears up 'poetic' ambiguities, is cast into a propositional form, placed within the structure of the logical syllogism and assessed in terms of truth and validity will a statement become philosophical (Grosz, 1990, p. 153).

The project of post-structural feminism, with its focus on poetics, rhythm, and sensory experience, has been to revolt against this traditional, masculine philosophical discursive style. It has been, in other words, a fight to restore the poetic in the philosophical.

Traditional philosophical discourse is based on rationality, which is associated with masculinity. As Grosz (1990) points out, the Pythagoreans

[27] I have also written about the same issue briefly in my article 'Philosophizing in Plato's Cave: Hélène Cixous's Affective Writing' (2019) in CAPACIOUS. See pages 147-149 in particular for the discussion of femininity in Cixous's work.

introduced the following table of philosophical oppositions, a list of paired terms that are mutually exclusive and exhaustive: limit/unlimited, even/odd, one/many, right/left, male/female, rest/motion, straight/curved, light/dark, good/bad, square/oblong (p. 153). In these binary pairs, the first term represents a positive value, and the second a negative, or a lack of the first. Importantly, the first side of the binaries is associated with masculinity, the second with femininity. When the first signifies reason, harmony and order, then the second threatens it and should be avoided or supressed. As these binaries influenced Plato and Aristotle, whose thought is the cornerstone of Western philosophy and theory, including Freudian psychoanalysis, most philosophical and theoretical writing is, whether unconsciously or consciously, informed by the assumptions about masculinity and femininity that arise from the Pythagorean binaries. Modernist writing too can be explored in this masculine/ feminine, rational/affective binary. As Julie Taylor (2015) explains, modernism's fascination with Thomas Mann's idea that "art is a cold sphere" also has gendered implications (p. 2). Engaging with Susanne Clark's work, Taylor writes that "we can put feelings back into modernism, Clark suggests, by including writers whom the anti-sentimental bias excludes" (p. 2). However, Taylor is careful to not associate feelings with women's fiction only, emphasising the centrality of embodied affect to Adorno's understanding of aesthetic experience (p. 2). In the same sense, I am not interested specifically in women's writing, although I look at female writers. Rather, I am interested in the aspects of their writing that are associated with femininity: the inclusion of the radical other, of poetic style, of the non-human, and of embodiment and materiality.

Thinking of some of the major concepts of twentieth-century French philosophy such as 'becoming-woman' and *écriture féminine*, we can see that there is a clear tendency to associate the experimental discourses that digress from the established norms in critical and philosophical writings with femininity, with that which is 'other'. Various feminist discourses, including that of Cixous, challenge the notion of how it is proper to write philosophy and theory, and what forms the proper content for philosophising and theorising. Many critics working with theories in affect theory and new materialism seem to share the same aim. Dominic Pettman (2019), speaking of post-humanist theories in an online journal, suggests, naming writers like Kathleen Stewart and Lauren Berlant, that "there is an emerging wave of

writing from academics who feel enervated by the same intellectual – well – gestures; and who seek to import new voices, strategies, conceits, and genres into our discursive worlds" (Pettman, 2019). As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Stewart and Berlant, Bennett, Cixous, and Deleuze and Guattari, write affectively. Their theories and philosophies draw from personal experience, engage with the non-human, and are influenced by art and literature. What contemporary theories in affect and new materialism share with post-structural feminist theories, then, is the desire to conceptualise subjectivities in anti-Oedipal terms, and write in a way that includes the non-human, affect, embodiment, and materiality.

Although the aim to include femininity in writing is supposed to make (literary, philosophical and theoretical) writing more varied and inclusive, the focus on femininity has nevertheless received criticism. First, Cixous's work is often read as post-structural difference feminism, and what was termed 'French' psychoanalytical feminism, the latter term being largely constructed by Anglo-American critics. Cixous's work is placed alongside that of Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, whose feminism is often criticised by being far removed from social and political issues, and of being inaccessible, too poetic, and biologically essentialist.[28] The criticism against biology is, to an extent, ironic because, as Sara Ahmed in 'Imaginary Prohibitions: Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the "New Materialism"' (2008) points out, there is a tendency among new materialist critics to present their work as something novel and 'accuse' older feminist theories from fearing biology and not engaging with it.[29] I agree with Ahmed that there is a

[28] See seminal works such as Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985). See also Chris Weedon's *Feminist Practice and Post-structural Theory* (1987) and Rosemarie Putman Tong's *Feminist Thought* (2009, 2013 etc.) for more contemporary discussions.

[29] See Ahmed's 'Imaginary Prohibitions: Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the 'New Materialism' (2008). Ahmed (2008) is concerned about the way in which new materialist theories engage with previous feminist work. She takes issue with the fact that many new materialist thinkers position previous feminist work as a tradition that has neglected biology. She points out that this argument is made without close "attention and care" to previous feminist work, while many "male writers (who are usually dead and white) are engaged with closely" (Ahmed, 2008, p. 30). I agree with her that critique is "after all a labour of love" (Ahmed, 2008, p. 30), and hence engagement with other feminist work, in contrast to a sweeping generalised rejection, is of utmost importance for the future of feminist theory (p. 350). Cixous's work, although it is in fact accused of biological essentialism, makes an interesting contribution to this debate about continuity and presumed neglect of biology.

Sara Irni addresses these problems in her article 'The Politics of Materiality: Affective encounters in a transdisciplinary debate' (2013), and points out how 'new' materialist feminism (sometimes new materialism for it is also conflated with feminism) should be seen as a continuation of work already done by post-colonial and post-structural feminists. She addresses the issue of 'politics of materiality' suggesting that sometimes even feminists who work with science studies think

tendency to theorise new materialism, and affect studies that are concerned with materiality, as something novel and new that older feminist theories can benefit from.[30] Putting Cixous's work into dialogue with new materialism allows us to see the continuity between these new theories and older, post-structural feminist theories.

I am by no means the first to further develop Cixous's writings and her concept of *écriture féminine*.[31] However, what my work with *écriture féminine* contributes is precisely emphasising this continuity between post-structuralism and contemporary theories in affect and new materialism. Many critics have developed

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that 'materiality' is only worth considering when it is understood in scientific terms. She is against such hierarchy of definitions in materialisms.

Also, Clare Hemmings in 'Telling Feminist Stories' (2005) takes a somewhat similar issue to Ahmed about the feminist genealogy, saying that it is problematic to see the history of Western feminism as linear. She also takes issue with the dominant idea that post-structural feminism (she considers Butler, Haraway and Spivak as post-structuralist) as turning somehow radically away from older, more essentialist feminists (p. 125). See her article for references and debate. In short, there is no straightforward rule for saying who exactly is post-structural feminist.

When Hemmings, Irni, and Ahmed emphasise the need to trace continuities between feminist thinking, then there are also responses to their writing, especially concerning new materialism, that 'defend' new materialism. See various articles that criticise Sara Ahmed. For instance, see Iris van der Tuin's 'Deflationary Logic: Response to Sara Ahmed's "Imaginary Prohibitions: Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the New Materialism"' (2008). Van der Tuin criticises Ahmed's own approach as reductive in a way that she reduces feminist science studies to just feminist biology. Noela Davis in 'New Materialism and Feminism's Anti-Biologism: A Response to Sara Ahmed' (2009) also criticises Ahmed's own tendency to make caricatures of some of the feminist work she criticises. There is then a debate surrounding material feminism (race, class, sexuality, economics and the living conditions of women) and materialist feminism, science studies, and the mutual transdisciplinary engagements between those disciplines.

[30] For example, Elizabeth Grosz's 'A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics' (1993) and Claire Colebrook in 'Modernism without Women: The Refusal of Becoming-Woman (and Post-Feminism)' (2013) look at the relevance of new materialism, and more specifically of Deleuze, for feminist theories but do not explore what feminist studies have 'given' to new materialism. Braidotti's work, however, very clearly traces the continuity between post-structural feminism (she cites Luce Irigaray the most) and post-structuralism in general (Deleuze and Guattari). My work too is indebted to the post-structuralist, French psycholinguistic feminism of Irigaray, Kristeva, and especially Cixous.

[31] Many theorists have taken up and developed Cixous's concept of *écriture féminine*. Most directly inspired by Cixous's *écriture féminine* is Joanna Zylinska, who introduced the concept *décriture féminine* in *On Spiders, Cyborgs, and Being Scared: The Feminine and the Sublime* (2001). In a chapter 'Décriture feminine: The Discourse of the Feminine Sublime', Zylinska discusses the ethical implications of *écriture féminine*, also emphasising the open relationship with otherness. There are also other projects concerned with demonstrating the radical possibilities embedded within the feminine. For instance, Barbara Claire Freeman's *Feminine Sublime* (1995), does not so much see the feminine sublime as an aesthetic category but a "crisis in relation to language and representation that a certain subject undergoes" (p. 2). Following Kristeva and Cixous, her feminine sublime is also rather an inclusion of radical alterity and excess in the sublime rather than its appropriation. Griselda Pollock in *Mother Trouble: The Maternal-Feminine in Phallic and Feminist Theory in Relation to Bracha Ettinger's Elaboration of Matrixial Ethics/Aesthetics* (2009) talks about the feminine and the maternal as allowing new discourses. What unites all those works is their desire to develop new ideas about subjectivity, the subject's relation to the other to create better ways of being in the world.

écriture féminine in different ways, and I am interested in reading it in relation to Cixous's other writings to emphasise that the different notions of a self, of self's relation to other, and a different way of being in the world necessarily include an ethical and intimate engagement with materiality and the non-human in Cixous's work. In an interview in 1976 with Christiane Makward, Cixous claims that an important aspect of femininity is bodies and materiality. In the School of Roots, which is the last step on the ladder of writing in *Three Steps of the Ladder of Writing* (1993), Cixous focuses on materiality and embodiment and develops and further explains her ideas about writing the body that she introduced in 'The Laugh' and 'Sorties'. Her ladder of writing does not reach for the sky but remains on the ground and goes deep into the earth, where humans meet animals, vegetables, and other non-human animate and inanimate matter. Cixous (1993) writes,

> It is my way of indicating the reserved, secluded, or excluded path or place where you meet those beings I think are worth knowing while we are alive. Those who belong to the birds and their kind (these may include some men), to writings and their kind: they are all to be found – and a fair company it is – outside […] (p. 113).

When Cixous refers to the beings who are worth knowing when we are alive, she brackets that these may include some men, also indicating that it is rather minorities (not majorities and the figure of 'man' in the Deleuzian sense) who can enable us to see which is feminine and anti-Oedipal.

Referring specifically to Clarice Lispector's work, Cixous explains that conventions ask people to repress materiality not only in life but also in writing. She writes,

> [Clarice Lispector] returns the ability not to forget matter, which we don't notice: which we live, which we are. Clarice descends the ladder to the point of returning to think over matter. We are unable to think matter because we consider it to be invisible. We are made of assemblings that hide their truth, their atomic side, from us. We dislike matter, that is, ourselves, because we are destined to matter, because anonymous matter is called: death. Perhaps it isn't matter we dislike, perhaps it is anonymity. The anonymity to which we are destined – the loss of name – is what we repress at any price (Cixous, 1993, p. 113).

The above quotation again demonstrates the importance of matter in Cixous's work as it draws attention to the fact that we often forget matter because it is an encompassing part of our existence, that matter is us and our life. She says that

writing about matter requires the writer to go through their own bodily matter. In fact, she does not really want to call a body "a body" because she means various small complex parts of various matter (cells, nerves, tissue, bone, blood etc.) that make up the body (Cixous, 1993, p. 118). Cixous does not fear the anonymity of matter which she refers to in the quotation. On the contrary, she embraces it because for her our physical bodies remind us that humans are a part of the rest of the universe of things. She asks us to think of our lives, and write, in relation to the non-human world of animate and inanimate things that we inhabit side by side with plants, animals, and even microbes. This predicts Samantha Frost and Diane Coole's (2010), and Jane Bennett's (2001, 2010) writings about new materialism, which emphasise that new materialism does not place human and animate life on a higher pedestal than inanimate life and matter – it develops an understanding of ethical coexistence. It is precisely part of Cixous's work to undermine the hierarchies by emphasising the relevance of matter. Reading Cixous's *écriture féminine* with her own more recent writings about affect and materiality allow us to really see the feminine in *écriture féminine* as an affective, anti-Oedipal writing of materiality that is life-affirming.

Desire, the 'Other', and Strange Intimacy

From this affective, anti-Oedipal writing that challenges majoritarian categories, I develop a concept I call 'strange intimacy'.[32] 'Strange intimacy' (re)shapes characters, or at least has the potential to do so. It is a moment in which boundaries of the self and the other are lost or redefined, a moment when the concept of selfhood changes and becomes an encounter, forming and reforming itself depending on that encounter.[33] In strange intimacy, selves become affective and open: for example, when Julia in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* takes walks in Paris, when Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* is alone with her knitting, and when Antoinette is absorbed in the West Indian nature in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In other words, selves become 'haecceities'. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980/1897) Deleuze and Guattari write that

> there is a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance. We reserve the name haecceity for it. A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date have a perfect individuality lacking nothing, even though this individuality is different from that of a thing or a subject. […] You have the individuality of a day, a season, a year, a life (regardless of its duration) – a climate, a wind, a fog, a swarm, a pack (regardless of its regularity) (2004, p. 289).

Deleuze and Guattari give an example of Clarissa from Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) as an haecceity (2004, p. 262). I will demonstrate throughout this thesis how Rhys too writes her characters as haecceities – Julia and Antoinette *are* the impressions, forces, and affects of the external world. Because selves are open to be affected and affect in Woolf and Rhys, various strange intimacies can emerge in the stories we will read in the following chapters.

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[32] The word strange, according to Oxford Dictionary means "from elsewhere, foreign, unknown, unfamiliar, unusual, unfamiliar, curious; distant; inhospitable". Importantly, its Latin root can also add "external" to its meaning. According to Oxford English Dictionary, in the seventeenth century, the word 'intimacy' was associated with 'sexual intercourse'. The adjective, 'intimate', however, referred to 'make known, announce, impress', coming from Latin *intimus* 'inmost, innermost, deepest'. It is this second sense that I follow – strange intimacy is bodily but not necessarily sexual, although it can also be that. It is something that externally impresses on the characters while having a deep effect on them. Strange intimacy is something stirred in senses and body but not exactly sexual. When thinking about the etymology of 'strange', which can signify something external, and the 'intimacy' as something innermost and deep, then strange intimacy expresses exactly the tension between external and internal. Indeed, intimacy in strange intimacy is not something contained within an individual but something external in the environment, in the atmosphere, between different bodies.

[33] Beatrice Monaco (2013) and Derek Ryan (2013) see subjectivities in a similar way.

In an interview with Mireille Calle-Gruber, Cixous makes a similar observation about selfhood: "I am this compound of observations, admirations, uncertainties" (2008, p. 34) and in an interview with Susan Sellers, she says, "[a human being] is an emerald set in the silver seas of the scenes of the world. It's a tiny precious stone, but it sends and receives – its extensions and depths are the whole world. The human being is a world" (2008, p. 152). When Cixous refers to admirations, observations and uncertainties, and when she says that human beings are sending and receiving – that is exchanging – information with the rest of the world, she also seems to say that our subjectivities and selves are constantly made and remade based on this exchange. We can assume from these quotations that according to Deleuze and Guattari, and Cixous, selves are not contained within persons but are a wire of connections to the outside world of non-human elements.

Subjectivity in this model is not unchanging but always open and in relation to specific situations, environments, and others, enhancing ethical relations. Erinn Gilson (2011), Daniel W. Smith and Nathan Jun (2011), and Elizabeth Grosz (1993) argue that this kind of subjectivity is ethical. [34] Grosz (1993), for instance, suggests that

> Deleuzian ethics do not privilege the human, autonomous, sovereign subject, or the independent other, and the bonds of communication", but is concerned with what psychoanalysis calls "partial objects, organs, processes, flows, which show no respect for the autonomy of the subjects (p. 172).

Cixous's and Deleuze and Guattari's work indicates that ethical relations require subjectivity that is relational and open to the world shared with humans and non-human alike: for instance, with the specific attributes of a day, the weather, or a season. This concept of selfhood is ethical precisely because it is aware of the other in the 'construction' of self.

An important role in this conception of self is placed upon the 'other' whom the self meets in the encounter. It is vital here to pause on Emmanuel Levinas's work briefly. One of the central tenets of this thesis is indebted to Levinas's philosophy: we are defined by the radical other, and it is only when we are faced with this radical

[34] Critics like Nathan Jun and Daniel W. Smith, and Erinn Gunniff Gilson, among others, also point out the connection between Deleuzian and feminist ethics, emphasising the attention to particular situations and the political nature of ethics in Deleuze and various feminist ethics. See more in their book *Deleuze and Ethics* (2011).

otherness that an ethical being in the world can emerge. In *Totality and Infinity* (1961), he writes, "a calling into question of the same—which cannot occur within the egoist spontaneity of the same—is brought about by the other. We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics" (p. 43). The presence of the other, however, does not seem to be enough for ethical relations in Woolf's and Rhys's works – there also has to be a certain desire to know the other, and to get intimate with the other. Sara Crangle (2010) focuses on the importance of desire in Levinas's work.[35] It is interesting to point out, thinking back to the discussion of anti-Oedipality and the figure of a man, that, as Crangle (2010) writes, "Levinas believes it is precisely this masculine approach to the self that should be deferred in a privileging of otherness" (p. 15). Crangle (2010) explains that the idea of a more ethical relation to the other than the masculine one depends on seeing desire as different from how it is seen in the Western philosophical tradition from Plato to Lacan (pp. 14-17). The desire for the other is then more present in the feminine, or anti-Oedipal, approach to selfhood. She writes,

> Because [desire] is inevitably directed beyond the self, desire is not solipsism. Nor is it love, a word to which Levinas has an aversion as it promotes an overly romanticized view of the self as a fusion or confusion with the other. Levinas insists on the separateness of self and other crucial to the maintenance of desire and its attendant responsibility (Crangle, 2010, p. 15).

This indicates that the desire for the other is not a desire to consume the other as the same. This desire for the other is precisely maintaining the otherness of the other, and a curiosity and desire to know the other.

In interview with Mireille Calle-Gruber, Cixous says that "life is to desire the other" (2008, p. 34). For Cixous, curiosity and wonder toward life begins from not knowing, from wanting to learn, to discover. This curiosity and wonder towards life can be seen as strange intimacy; a relation to something already seemingly familiar, where nevertheless an affective space opens up where the potential for more ethical relations with others and one's surroundings resides. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, Woolf's and Rhys's writings almost always border on the line between the self and the other (whether human or non-human) – it risks the

[35] See Sara Crangle's introduction to *Prosaic Desires* (2010) for a discussion of Levinas's ideas on desire, otherness, and ethics.

disappearance of the self, and it gives way to the unknown, to the stranger, whether human or not. In this sense, Woolf and Rhys locate intimacy in the realm of the unfamiliar and unknown; in their works, what matters and what triggers intimacy is the unknown, and the desire to know that springs from this: not to know the other, but to acknowledge the existence of the other, and their otherness. In other words, it is desire to know the other in their work that keeps the characters and narrative moving forwards.

Desire, when seen not as a lack, and not as entirely human, paves the way to intimacy. If Levinas focuses on the human other, then this thesis also focuses on the non-human other. For this reason, I come back to Deleuze and Guattari. Derek Ryan (2014) writes that the very first of Spinoza's affects is desire which is also "a central tenet of Deleuze's onto-ethics […] 'desire is man's very essence' as it leads him 'to do something' – it is 'any of man's strivings, impulses, appetites, and volitions, which vary as the man's constitution varies'" (p. 165). In other words, Deleuze and Guattari allow desire to be anything and become anything. They write about the multiplicity of desire:

> desire is present wherever something flows and runs, carrying along with it interested subjects […] Our question was: what is the nature of relations between elements in order for there to be desire, for these elements to become desirable? I mean, I don't desire a woman – […] I also desire a landscape that is enveloped in this woman, a landscape that, if needs be – I don't know – but that I can feel (2004, p. 49).

We can gather from this quotation that for Deleuze and Guattari, desire is a compound of various elements and flows that enter into relations with one another. Elizabeth Grosz (1993) and Claire Colebrook (2012), following Deleuze, see desire not as a lack, but as productive. [36] Colebrook writes that "desire is not some human set of embodied interests that must be repressed or articulated through language; desire is the multiplicity of forces of life as such, which is diminished and

[36] Elizabeth Grosz in 'A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics' (1993) makes a similar point to Crangle (2010) who points out that desire in the Western tradition has been seen as a lack. Grosz writes: "It has been plausibly argued that in the tradition reaching from Plato to Lacan and beyond, desire has been understood largely as negative, abyssal, a lack at the level of ontology itself […] .a lack in being which strives to be filled through the (impossible) attainment of an object […] For Hegel, 'for woman to have desire is to posit her on the same ontological level as man' – a theoretical impossibility in phallocentric texts, hence the enigmatic and perpetual question of woman's desire: what does woman want?" (p. 171). Colebrook (2012, 2013) puts forward similar ideas.

impoverished when represented as human" (p. 67). Rosi Braidotti (1993), a leading scholar working at the interstices between feminist and post-humanist theory makes a similar claim about desire. She writes that desire is "not just libidinal desire, but rather ontological desire, the desire to be, the tendency of the subject to be […]" (p. 6). This desire to be, is, essentially, a desire to live, a desire to be alive and to enjoy life, and to be able to be curious about life. In the same sense, in Woolf and Rhys, we see how (female) protagonists struggle with desiring heteronormative ways of being a wife and a mother. Rather, their desire is a desire for life and the ability to follow their various small, multiple desires in life that may or may not be heteronormative and conventional.

Lauren Berlant's work on intimacy, love, and desire is helpful regarding the above thoughts. Her work allows us to understand how desire can create intimacy and how it is not a desire for Oedipal love plots of happiness. According to her, (conventional) intimacy is an "aspiration for a narrative about something shared, a story about both oneself and others that will turn out in a particular way" (Berlant, 1998, p. 281). Berlant in *Desire/ Love* (2012), however, suggests that love is just one aspect of desire that can take various forms. Love, for Berlant (2012), is often imprisoned in what she calls major narratives of intimacy – it is "bound up in institutions like marriage and family, property relations, stock phrases" (p. 7), and patriotism (Berlant, 1998, p. 285). Instead, Berlant is interested in the minor intimacies, in desire that may form into love, but not into major love plots. In the same sense, strange intimacy registers that which conventional intimacy leaves unregistered. In this respect, it shares something with what Berlant calls 'minor' intimacies, which she distinguishes from the conventional intimacies that often exist between romantic partners, parents and children, and siblings. She calls for the need to look at the minor intimacies, at those desires for intimacy that bypass the couple or the life narrative, because these

> intimacies have no alternative plots, let alone few laws and stable spaces of culture in which to clarify and to cultivate them. What happens to the energy of attachment when it has no designated place? To the glances, gestures, encounters, collaborations, or fantasies that have no canon? As with minor literatures, minor intimacies have been forced to develop aesthetics of the extreme to push these spaces into being […] in order to have a life (Berlant, 1998, p. 285).

Glances, gestures, and encounters that have no canon or that do not form any major life narratives are also what are prevalent in the four novels studied in this thesis. These novels are full of desire of all sorts. In these novels, like for Deleuze and Guattari, desire is not lacking but life affirming, life producing (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 60). It is capable, as Deleuze and Guattari write, "of calling into question the established order of a society […] it is revolutionary in its essence" (2004, p. 51). To put it differently, Berlant and Deleuze and Guattari seem to indicate that unnoticed or unconventional desires have the capacity to challenge heteronormative or otherwise conventional stories of intimacy. I propose that Woolf's and Rhys's novels do the same.

Woolf made it clear in her various essays, including *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938) that her art is her means of resistance to fight against imperial and patriarchal order. Although Rhys's political views, or indeed any personal views, are not very clearly expressed anywhere, and her feminism is ambivalent, her fiction clearly stresses the limiting and constraining effect of a patriarchal, imperial system on individuals of both genders. Minor, anti-Oedipal (both between family members and strangers), strange intimacies (that have a life because of the recognition of a multiplicity of desires) in Woolf's and Rhys's fiction can therefore represent a resistance to patriarchal power and order by creating an affective atmosphere that enhances the sense of being attached to life that is experienced in various moments of strange intimacy.

The intimacies in the four novels studied in this thesis resist time, space, race, class, and gender. For instance, the intimacy between Antoinette and her almost life-long nurse Christophine is written into *Wide Sargasso Sea* implicitly: it is in the stories that Antoinette remembers from Christophine, in Christophine's singing, and in the way Christophine dresses, smells, speaks, and cooks. In the same way, Lily remembers Mrs Ramsay through her phrases and through glimpses of her in her daily tasks in *To the Lighthouse*. In *Between the Acts*, it is a poetic desire between William and Isa, and the more carnal desire of Giles and Mrs Swithin. It is also a desire to paint in Lily, and a desire to create stories, lift people out of their subjectivity in Miss La Trobe. None of these intimacies have any 'outcome' in terms of marriage or an otherwise conventional happy ending. Yet, these strange intimacies expressed in glances and gestures have a life because Woolf and Rhys depict them in

their writing. And often these intimacies are exactly what maintain the attachment to life where major narratives (of love plot, of national belonging, of career) are too dismal to keep that attachment intact.

Strange intimacy is not, however, impossible within Oedipal relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children in Woolf and Rhys. Rather, strange intimacy is also the attention paid to anti-Oedipal desires that exist *within* Oedipal relations. Ryan (2013), quoting Deleuze, points out that "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 around the Oedipus complex" (qtd. in Ryan 2013, p. 115). Non-Oedipal love is this attention paid to glances and gestures that also exist within familial relationships and within patriotic narratives. This assumes maintaining the radical otherness of the family member in the relationship, rather than considering them as 'my' mother, daughter, or father. We can notice the moments, for instance, between Lucy and Bart in *Between the Acts*, between Mr and Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, and between Julia and her sister Norah in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*. Jessica Stiff Berman (2004) points out that,

> there is a growing body of work that seeks to reconcile Levinasian ethics with the question of intimacy. This problem has been of particular concern to feminist ethicists seeking to move beyond the essentializing aspects of a feminine 'ethos of care' without discounting the insight that women's private ethical experience has rarely figured into the ethical scenarios of philosophers (Levinas included) (p. 152).

Noticing strange intimate moments between familial characters can help to extend the aims of these feminist ethicists: for example, Luce Irigaray and Tina Chanter (Berman, 2004, p. 152).[37] My work too aims to confirm that ethical intimacy is indeed possible within Oedipal relations. However, I also maintain that for the relation to remain ethical, the familial other needs to be considered as a radical other, not as a 'my' someone.

Woolf's and Rhys's characters' capacity for ethical behaviour resides precisely in strange intimacy, which is the awareness of being connected to all (living) bodies; to the body of the other, of the stranger, and to the material world,

[37] See Berman's 'Ethical Folds: Ethics, Aesthetics, Woolf' (2004).

not just to familiar bodies (and acknowledging the strangeness of familiar bodies). The moments I am interested in in the coming chapters – instances between Lily and Mr Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, Julia and her sister and their mother in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, the community of characters in *Between the Acts*, and Antoinette and Jamaica in *Wide Sargasso Sea* – all explore the encounters between self and other. Within these moments, time slows down, human speech becomes minimal or poetic, and the world of non-human gains prevalence. It is importantly the uncanniness of those moments, or strangeness, and yet at the same time their familiarity and everydayness, where something is revealed that the characters have not noticed before. It is intimacy that emerges from a different attention paid to the world, people, and things that surround us. Strange intimacy emerges in an atmosphere, or in a state of mind where one feels absorbed in one's environment, as Abramson (2015) writes – it is losing oneself in a moment, becoming part of the environment which one inhabits (p. 45). In a sense, strange intimacy itself is a (positive) affect; a general atmosphere or mood of enchantment, wonder, and affirmation of the fact that life, under however disorderly conditions, is worth living.

The Ethics of Being Attached to a Life

To draw this introduction to a close, I want to return to the concept of life. Specifically, to the idea of 'a life', which I will also explore in close detail in Chapters Two and Three. Deleuze in 'Immanence: A Life' (1995) writes,

> A life is everywhere […]: an immanent life carrying with it the events and singularities that are merely actualized in subjects and objects […] The life of the individual gives way to an impersonal and yet singular life […] The life of such individuality fades away in favor of the singular life immanent to a man who no longer has a name, though he can be mistaken for no other (2002, pp. 27-28).

A life is not an individual's life but a network of things, places, sights, sounds, and impressions, which nevertheless 'belong', or make up that individual who experiences those impressions. Woolf and Rhys's characters are attached to life exactly in this sense – not necessarily to their individual private lives, but to a life as such. Bennett (2001) writes that "if popular psychological wisdom has it that you have to love yourself before you can love another, my story suggests that you have to love life before you can care about anything" (p. 4). And from this primary love for

life, ethical behaviour towards any other, human or non-human, emerges in Woolf's and Rhys's fiction. And if this love is not there, neither is there intimacy between characters because strange intimacy between characters cannot emerge before characters are in love with life. Speaking of enchantment, Bennett (2001) writes that one of the ways to cultivate the sense of enchantment that affirms the love for life is to resist the story of modernity as disenchanted (p. 4). The disenchantment tale, as I have suggested above, is one of the main reasons why modernist literary studies are so prone to focus on the negative affects – because the modern world is supposed to be disenchanted, a story which has continued also into our contemporary lives. The attachment to life, which is cultivated by strange intimacy and which in turn encourages strange intimacy, is therefore important not only for the modernist period and the novels I explore, but also because our contemporary moment witnesses climate crisis, the rise of authoritarian regimes in Europe, and far-right, nationalist, conservative politics. These are all aspects that diminish many people's attachment to life and create the need to pay attention to things that could restore that attachment.

But how, then, is the seemingly apolitical, asubjective mood or atmosphere of strange intimacy ethical? The works of Deleuze and Guattari, Cixous, and Bennett are central to my understanding of the ethical potential within strange intimacy. What Cixous, Deleuze and Guattari, and Bennett's ethics share is their engagement with the other, be it human or non-human, the life-affirming quality of desire, the sense of joy and wonder, and the singularity of situation. For instance, Cixous speaks of being unclean with joy, and central to Deleuze and Guattari is the affirmative, world-making qualities of desire and imagination. Bennett sees sensations and embodiment as central for the love for life that propels ethical behaviour. In her bodily, affective model of ethics, she follows Schiller, Foucault and Nietzsche. She writes,

> Schiller's notion of the aesthetic makes important contributions to the model of ethics with affect that I endorse. First, he makes a persuasive case for the ethical insufficiency of intellect. Recent history, in particular the French Revolution, had forced him to ponder the disturbing coexistence of rational enlightenment and ethical barbarism (Bennett, 2001, p. 139).

In other words, an abstract ethical code to follow does not necessarily end up in ethical behaviour in Bennett's model. Instead, Bennett proposes that for ethical

behaviour, joyful attachment to and "affective fascination" with the world are necessary (Bennett, 2001, p. 139). Joyful attachment and affective fascination both depend on the ability to see the modern Western world as enchanted, as sites that are worth wondering about, being curious about and being intimately attached to. Bennett (2001) suggests that this attachment to life cannot be abstract but has to come from an embodied sense of belonging to the world of other material things (pp. 131-156). Following these ideas, it can be argued that strange intimacy with the world and life itself is ethical in a sense that it enhances the feeling of belonging to the world and being part of it – a feeling that should also propel the desire to engage ethically with this world and the beings in it. There are many moments in the novels I explore that can be read with this model of ethics, the most obvious of which is *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Antoinette's embodied sense of belonging to the West Indies and her deep love for that place.

This model of ethics, as Bennett is aware, also invites criticism of elitism, as joy and wonder are often considered as things accessible only for the privileged. Bennett (2001) resists this idea and writes that if it were true that enchantment is accessible only for the privileged, it gives "all the more reason for privileged intellectuals to develop that capacity. For, if enchantment can foster an ethically laudable generosity of spirit, then the cultivation of an eye for the wonderful becomes something like an academic duty" (p. 10). However, her story of enchantment is not restricted to sites accessible only to the elite. Instead, her model of enchantment, as already stated, is daily. It is worth mentioning Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* (2011) here as she too claims there that "even those whom you would think of as defeated are living beings figuring out how to stay attached to life from within it, and to protect what optimism they have for that, at least" (p. 10). To put it differently, it can also be said that the criticism of elitism itself actually fuels patronising attitudes towards lives that are not 'elite' when in reality these lives can contain just as many sites and moments that enhance wonder and attachment to life. Also, being an academic or an intellectual does not necessarily mean having a privileged and secure life as much academic labour in these days is indeed precarious and more than anything, a labour of love, not a labour that earns proper 'living'. In other words, Bennett and Berlant, and, also Sara Ahmed in *The Promise*

of Happiness (2010) reconsider the generic, 'American dream'-like ideas that are widely considered as a 'good life', who has it and how it is lived.

All protagonists in Rhys's interwar novels fall under the category of not elite. In Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs McNab is the embodiment of the 'not elite' who nevertheless maintains the attachment to life through daily sites of enchantment. I will focus on Mrs McNab in closer detail in Chapter One. For now, it is worth mentioning that in her old age, having spent most of her life working for others in physically tiring conditions, with her toothless mouth and her shabby clothes, she sings, laughs, and smiles at herself in the mirror while breathing life into an old house. With her work and care, Mrs McNab undoes the damage inflicted by the First World War, and more generally, by the passing of time on the Ramsay house and family – she not only makes her own life worth living but also the lives of the Ramsays, who, in the context of *To the Lighthouse*, could be considered the elite. In a similar manner, although the landlady in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* thinks of Julia's life as "the life of a dog" (Rhys, 1997, p. 11), Julia keeps on living, finding attachments to life in sharing specific intimate moments with her sister, and in being immersed in the atmosphere of the city. In short, despite life being seemingly far from marvellous from a normative point of view, these characters cultivate intimacy with life and the world around them through maintaining joy in daily tasks and sites. To illustrate Bennett's point then, the sites of wonder and enchantment are by no means restricted to the 'elite', at least not in Woolf's and Rhys's fiction.

A criticism to be taken more seriously is, however, that of "naïve optimism", as Bennett notes (2001, p. 10). This criticism points out the danger of losing sight of 'real' oppression and violence when focusing on aesthetic and affective properties of life. Here, it is helpful to consider how Anna Abramson (2015) responds to the potential dangers of becoming absorbed in atmosphere. Abramson is aware of how the sense of being absorbed can be confused with being inattentive to the surrounding world and its issues. Yet, she suggests that the result of this absorption is not going inward but going outward – of realising one's own dependence on others and also one's role in affecting others and one's environment, and accordingly becoming more critical towards one's own actions (Abramson, 2015, pp. 45-46). Similarly, although characters are present in the atmosphere of strange intimacy, they are nevertheless aware of themselves, their actions, and their relations to others.

This attention makes it possible to contemplate their choices and actions, thereby propelling their ethics. Even if this contemplation leads to no major social change, it is still that which makes space for the minor intimacies to exist, which, accordingly, maintain the attachment to life.

I would also like to point out here that new materialist critics, Bennett among them, receive similar criticism about whiteness, Eurocentrism, and privilege from Indigenous studies scholars as they do from feminist scholars. Critics like Peta Hinton, Tara Mhrabi, and Josef Barla (2014), Nicki Sullivan (2012) Juanita Sundberg (2014), and Alison Ravenscroft (2018) criticise new materialism's ignorance of the work that has already been done in the field of Indigenous studies. [38] In this sense, this criticism is similar to that made by feminist critics who take issue with new materialist work, which positions itself as a break from earlier feminist work, as I have already outlined when introducing Cixous into the new materialist tradition. For example, Ravenscroft (2018) explains that

> Sara Ahmed among others has argued [that] new materialism's founding gestures are possible only by excluding earlier feminist materialisms. But at least as urgent is the exclusion of Indigenous materialism and through this the recentring of the Western-centred discourses that these theories aim to depose (p. 354).

What these criticisms take issue with is not *what* new materialists do but *how* they do it – mostly white scholars focusing on Western, often Eurocentric thought. Regarding this, and focusing specifically on the work of Bennett, who is the central new materialist thinker of this thesis, I suggest that Bennett's aim is precisely to demonstrate that Western thought can be challenged from within. In other words, Bennett's engagement with white Western philosophers such as Kant, Paracelsus, Lucretius, Foucault, and Deleuze is there to demonstrate that Western thought itself is not that different from, say, Australian Indigenous thought, but that the idea of matter as lively, non-human as part of and entangled with the human, is also there already in the Western tradition. In short, the aim of new materialism seems to be to challenge the Western thought from within.

[38] See Peta Hinton, Tara Mhrabi, and Josef Barla in 'New Materialisms/ New Colonialisms' (2013), Juanita Sundberg in 'Decolonizing Post-humanist Geographies' (2014), and Alison Ravenscroft in 'Strange Weather' (2018).

Some of the criticism against new materialism addresses issues around how to define 'human', and around entangling the human with the non-human. For instance, Carine M. Mardorossian (2015) warns against flattening out the differences between human and the non-human:

> no matter how much philosophers, cultural theorists and political scientists strive to emphasise interconnectedness in the name of saving the environment, insofar as they highlight this 'mesh' by relying on their consciousness of humanity's dependence on and imbrication with the environmental Other, they cannot challenge what ultimately drives anthropocentrism, namely the certitude that our depth and self-reflexivity, ability to critique and debate is what places us above the 'shallowness' of the surfaces we discuss as the environment, the Other, and the non-human (p. 111).

She is, in short, against what Simon Choat (2018) calls 'flat ontology' that eradicates the differences between humans and the non-human. Although Mardorossian somewhat flattens out the differences between new materialist thinkers, I do take seriously her idea that the non-human should remain a radical other. In other words, with Levinasian ethics in mind, the non-human, as any other to the self, does remain a radical other in this thesis.

Ravenscroft (2018), however, criticises the use of the word 'human' in new materialism and post-humanism regarding sexual, racial, and class differences. She writes that "post-humanism and new materialism (and some feminist critiques of both) risk leaving the Western liberal human intact, making the 'human' in 'post-human' stand in for all of 'us'" (p. 354). Yet, as I have already emphasised, it is precisely the aim of new materialism to demonstrate that human beings should not be narrowly defined and categorised by their external attributes but rather by focusing on the place and affects they share. In *Rootprints*, Cixous addresses the question, 'what is human'?

> the word human is very important. When I say "more human", I mean: progressing. I ought to say: better human. This means, while being human, not depriving oneself of the rest of the universe […] After all, what do we do? We live, but why do we live? I think: to become more human: more capable of reading the world, more capable of playing it in all ways. This does not mean nicer or more humanistic. I would say: more faithful to what we are made from and to what we can create (1997, p. 30).

But what are we made from and what can we create? She has a potential answer for the former question, suggesting that humans are made of "the rest of the universe"

(Cixous, 1997, p. 30), which perhaps indicates that humans are not separated from the rest of the world of animate and inanimate matter. This realisation is precisely what propels humans to become 'more' human. In other words, it helps to enhance ethical relations to that which is not-human. Birgit Mara Kaiser (2013) explores affective corporeality in Cixous's work, and suggests that human for Cixous is not associated with rational subjectivity and universal humanism. Instead, materiality for Cixous, or "the rest of the universe" (1997, p. 30), as we see in the above quotation, is there to remind us that human subjects are not abstract but embodied, carnal beings in the world among other beings and things. This model of ethics that focuses on the non-human other and its entanglement with the human is also, as argued by Ryan (2015), particular to modernism. He suggests that if there is a common ethics to modernism, it is post-human ethics. Ryan (2015) proposes that "reorienting modernist ethics alongside post-humanism [opens] possibilities for a modernist ethics founded on what is often in the background, on what turns its back to us, in modernist texts" (p. 290).[39] What seemingly turns back to us is matter and the non-human, and in Cixous, these aspects are taken into account.

Keiser (2013) argues that humanity then has a double-meaning for Cixous – on the one hand, it is material, embodied and related to the world of the non-human; on the other hand, this same realisation also allows transformation and creations of other, more ethical ways of being in the world. Keiser (2013), following Irving Goh (2010), suggests that Cixous's engagement with the animal is a "manoeuvre to move away from a vision that orders and classifies, names and hierarchizes" (p. 492). As Keiser (2013) writes,

> Human is precisely the term that permits Cixous both the refusal of being enclosed into segregated communities, clearly separated species, or sexes or cultures and the demand of a work of learning, of reading what we witness and undergo, whom we encounter and affect, and what touches us, in order to inhabit the world in ways that are less harmful to ourselves and others and more adequate to the diffracted and corporeal beings that we are (p. 499).

[39] Ryan (2015) addresses the criticism of the impossibility to write from any other than a human perspective. Although all attempts to look at non-human life through human words are anthropomorphised, as Ryan notes, he also acknowledges that "Woolf and Lawrence demonstrate a nonanthropocentric anthropomorphism. It is an anthropomorphism that comes after the non-human, an anthropomorphism that seeks to follow the snake and the moth in order to find a conception of life that is not centred on human subjects" (p. 294).

In other words, the word 'human' for Cixous is a possibility to be more-than-human, and to see the human not in terms of race, sex, gender, ethnicity or other 'majoritarian' identity, as Deleuze and Guattari would put it, but to see humans as affective beings in relation to other humans and non-humans. Thinking of Kafka's deathbed notes on flowers, Cixous (1993) writes,

> It's the extraordinary courtesy of a man who has nothing left to live. The other exists! In these moments of extremity, perhaps we do admit to having a relationship with the vegetal, which is as intense, as embodied, as fleshy […] Perhaps it is because we discover at this point that flowers lead – […] - by their way of getting through the earth, with their roots, to the core of the matter […] They lead us back to the origins, where we become obviously one family (pp. 152-154).

For Cixous, human is extended to the world of non-human, and the non-human to the human world. Accordingly, if modernist ethics are indeed post-humanist, as Ryan suggests, Cixous's work, with its emphasis on materiality and embodiment and the non-human, can open up very interesting avenues for exploring this ethics, while also maintaining the critical, and still necessary, focus on the gendered implications on embodiment and materiality.

What makes strange intimacy strange, then, is never purely human, or what we understand as human. In *White Ink* (2008), in an interview with Rene de Ceccatty, Cixous writes that there is

> nothing more intimate, they say, than love, than where one makes love. But what does one make love of, as human and animal being? [...] it's the one [question] that subverts, that haunts all the scenes in which we move, which all seem professional, external, 'extimate', political, etc. For me, it is always about a questioning of love (p. 26).

Cixous puts the question of love to the forefront, suggesting that every other issue is related to that of love. It is important to note here that she does not tell us what love is, or what one, as an animal or as a human, or rather as a human-animal, "makes love of'" (Cixous, 2008, p. 26). Rather, I would like to suggest that she opens up the concept of love to a wider definition than romantic, purely human love, like she opens up the concept of human, as demonstrated above.

Dominick Pettman in *Creaturely Love* (2017) contemplates love along similar lines to Cixous, although he is more interested in romantic love, suggesting that "love makes us both more and less than human. Whether it is the texture of the

beloved's skin or hair, their singular scent, the way they drool in their sleep […] we love the creaturely in the other, as much as their humanity" (p. xi). If (strange) intimacy is affect, then, following Deleuze and Guattari's idea that affects are the non-human becomings of man, and bearing in mind Cixous's quotation about what does one make love of, as a human or an animal, we also see that what creates intimacy, what makes us lovable and what makes us love other(s) is the non-human in us and them. Pettmann continues, echoing Deleuzian ideas on singularity, that it is not a question of reducing humans to animals or animals to humans or flattening the differences between different human and animal individuals (or perhaps singularities is a more fitting word), but "it is to rejoice in the miraculous singularity of the being that one is with, while also understanding the profound universality represented by his or her presence: the fact that the embraced body is but a temporary refuge for a universe of generic, genetic materials" (Pettman, 2017, p. 8). Strange intimacy, is, in part, dependent on the realisation that we are, in our singularity, only parts of universality, which is not entirely human. Pettmann (2017) continues that "we all suspect, at various levels of consciousness, that we are not really human. Or not only human. And it is that twilight between love and lust known as desire that we unmask the pretension of species-being […]" (p. xi). Intimacy, he suggests, is not pure love, which he associates with humans, or more animal-like lust – it is an odd combination of both. It is not just being in love with, or desiring the human other, but desiring and being in love with a whole network of non-human things associated with the person. In other words, it is not simply a desire for another human being, but a desire for and an attachment to a life as such.

Chapter Outlines

I have established, following Bennett, Cixous, and Deleuze and Guattari, that the following chapters will argue that in Woolf's and Rhys's fiction, there exists in characters a primary love for life as such, a strange intimacy towards their environment, and this is what enhances intimacy between the characters in the novel, or at least has the potential to do so. Intimacy between characters can, however, in turn also enhance the general mood or atmosphere of attachment to life, which is ethical. This love for life, I argue, is cultivated when life is seen as 'a life' in a Deleuzian sense, when modernity, and accordingly modern life, is seen as enchanted,

and when there is room in this life for narratives of intimacies and desires that exist outside the conventional plots of the couple and marriage. The works of Cixous and Deleuze and Guattari, and Colebrook's readings of the latter's works, have inspired me to see this affective engagement with the world as an anti-Oedipal reading that depends precisely on seeing life as 'a life', selves as 'haecceities' in relation to this common life, and on noticing joy, desire, and various intimacies. Woolf's and Rhys's writings, I argue, capture these strange intimacies between characters, and also the general atmosphere of strange intimacy. My argument about a love for life through strange, embodied intimacy with the material world of the non-human will proceed as follows in the coming chapters: I suggest that Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Rhys's *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* focus more on individual selves and their relations. These novels, and accordingly Chapters One and Three that explore them, address issues related to how individual selves are made inside and outside familial relations, by exploring the anti-Oedipal desire in female characters especially. While individual selves are prominent in *To the Lighthouse* and *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, then *Between the Acts* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* are more concerned with exploring communal elements of identity such as ethnicity and the sense of national belonging, and how it is formed in relation not only to other humans but in relation to the world of the non-human. These issues will be explored in Chapters Two and Four. The thesis is organised by authors in order to maintain the uniqueness of each author and emphasise how their oeuvres have developed over years. Yet, Chapter One on *To the Lighthouse* and Chapter Three on *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, and Chapter Two on *Between the Acts* and Chapter Four on *Wide Sargasso Sea* can be read as pairs.

Chapter One, "The Sense of Wonder in *To the Lighthouse*", focuses on the nature of intimacy itself, and on the complex interplay between distance and proximity in the formation of intimacy in this novel, which is most explicitly concerned with intimacy, and how it emerges between people. The novel looks at intimacy as knowledge that emerges from the sense of wonder, and the ability to keep wondering about the other – a notion where the verb and noun forms of wonder melt into one another and create intimacy, both in atmosphere and within and between people. When Lily wonders about knowledge, it is not just any knowledge but embodied knowledge, which is clearly associated with femininity in *To the*

Lighthouse. In other words, I propose that it is a specific kind of knowledge that intimacy holds – that of embodiment and senses. Intimacy, I demonstrate, is also dependent on being able to keep wondering about the other. I propose that cultivating the kind of thinking-wondering which is rooted in embodied experiences is encouraged in *To the Lighthouse* through art, not through the discipline of philosophy. Lily's painting and Woolf's writing is affective, but in order for it to become affective, that which is feminine has to be embraced, celebrated, and included. Only then can the atmosphere of wonder and strange intimacy emerge. I propose that their art is an entanglement of the nearness/distance, femininity/masculinity, immanence/transcendence, and non-human/human binaries, where the left sides represents that which is feminine. In this chapter, I focus mostly on Deleuzian concept of 'haecceity' and Bennett's concept of wonder.

In Chapter Two, "A 'Whizzing, Whirring, Buzzing' History in *Between the Acts*", I explore what I consider to be the most mischievous, playful, and self-indulgent novel of this thesis. I examine how Woolf, by focusing on sensual, bodily intimacies on the one hand, and poetic, ephemeral ones on the other, creates a collective atmosphere of the present moment that can be seen as 'defining' the historical period of late modernism. Woolf, through the woman artist and an affective sense of Englishness offers an alternative to patriarchal and patriotic narratives of English history and identity. I demonstrate how Woolf's 'we' is similar to Deleuze's 'a life' and propose that history in *Between the Acts* becomes 'a history'. I turn to Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* to explore the affective present moment and how this affective present also creates a different sense of history than, say, narratives that focus on politics and eminent historical figures. I propose that history in *Between the Acts* is something that Hélène Cixous calls 'time's horizon line' where everyday lives of ordinary people are depicted and *felt*. What is important is not the linear historical narrative of England but how the stories that make up history influence what is perceived as Englishness, or the affect they produce and which becomes associated with Englishness. Then again, I show how events, and indeed stories, produce affects, so stories do matter, including the story of the past, which essentially is history – *a* story about *a* past. But stories can be told very differently using different language, and this is Woolf's aim in *Between the Acts*: to tell different stories, or to tell the same stories from new perspectives by using language

in a different way, in a way that depicts multiple desires and intimacies, blending together colloquial gossip and poetic soliloquies, fact and fiction, to beget different affects and most importantly, to construct a different kind of history, based on a different kind of 'we', which includes village idiots, people with 'suspicious' ethnic backgrounds, animals, and nature.

Chapter Three, "Anti-oedipal Desire in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*", explores desire and intimacy, or rather, the lack of desire and intimacy in female characters. I propose that this lack draws critical attention to the fact that the non-existence of intimacy between women is a direct result of how the majoritarian concept of 'woman' is created in Freudian, Oedipal psychoanalytical narratives. *After Leaving Mr MacKenzie*, albeit in a different manner, puts forward an idea that is also central in *To the Lighthouse*: that women should not be defined by their 'motherness', 'daughterness', or 'wifeness', all majoritarian, conventional identity categories. On the other hand, Rhys suggests a woman, or any self for that matter, is impossible to define as a constant but is in perpetual becoming in relation to the world of the non-human. I suggest that we cannot understand Rhys's protagonists if we try to understand their desires, and desire in general, in solely psychoanalytical frames, whether Oedipal or pre-Oedipal, as scholars like Ann B. Simpson, Sylvie Maurel, and Patricia Moran have done. Besides working with Deleuze and Guattari's texts, I use Claire Colebrook's understanding of Deleuzian anti-Oedipality as a reference for explaining Rhys's modernism in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* to demonstrate that Rhys's writing, like Woolf's, is anti-Oedipal. To do so, I explore the importance of animal imagery, places, and to a lesser extent, the importance of childhood in this novel along Deleuzian concepts of 'becoming-animal', and 'becoming-woman'.

In Chapter Four, "The Embodied Aesthetics of Place in *Wide Sargasso Sea*", I propose that Antoinette's embodied relation to place that is and is not her native land complicates any straightforward notions of national belonging and ethnic identity. *Wide Sargasso Sea* tackles the problems of embodiment, and the complex relations and entanglements between the human and non-human worlds. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the detailed focus on flowers, forests, waterfalls, animals, furniture, and various other aspects of non-human world presents life from the point of view of new materialisms and affect studies. At the centre of the novel is a love story

between Antoinette and Jamaica. I suggest that Rhys presents us with embodied aesthetics of place that results in ethical awareness of the animate and inanimate non-human world precisely because Antoinette is aware of the vitality of her surrounding non-human world because she is embodied in it. Positing embodiment as the primary source of knowledge is also a critique of Cartesian disembodied epistemology, and can be read as a part of Rhys's feminist, anti-Oedipal, affective writing and ethics that function as anti-imperial critiques. I explore the importance of childhood in this novel, along with Deleuze's concept of 'becoming-child' or childlike thinking in general. I address the criticisms of new materialism in terms of race and from Indigenous studies scholars by aiming to demonstrate that *Wide Sargasso Sea* maintains the focus on majoritarian identity categories marked by race, class, and sex, while also indicating that these categories create patriarchal, patriotic and imperial sentiments and prohibit the happiness and freedom of the characters.

Chapter One

The sense of wonder in *To the Lighthouse*

What art was there, known to love or cunning, by which one pressed through into those secret chambers? What device for becoming, like waters poured into one jar, inextricably the same, one with the object one adored? Could body achieve it, or the mind, subtly mingling in the intricate passages of the brain? or the heart…? for it was not knowledge but unity that she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge[…].
Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

Of the four novels studied in this thesis, *To the Lighthouse* (1927) is the most thoroughly concerned with questions about knowing oneself, knowing the other, and cultivating and understanding intimacy between humans as well as between the human and non-human worlds. The novel provides a compelling opening chapter as we can start to explore the nature of intimacy itself, examining both its conventional forms and its stranger expressions. Characters, notably Lily when thinking about Mrs Ramsay, wonder about intimacy throughout the novel: "How then did it work out, all this? How did one judge people, think of them?"; "It was painful to be reminded of the inadequacy of human relationships, that the most perfect was flawed"; "How then, [Lily] asked herself, did one know one thing or another about people, sealed as they were"; "Who knows even at moments of intimacy, This is knowledge?" (Woolf, 2016, p. 28, p. 45, p. 58, p. 193). Lily's agony about intimacy, however, becomes most apparent in the opening quotation, when she desires to know Mrs Ramsay but is failing to do so: "Could body achieve it, or the mind, subtly mingling in the intricate passages of the brain? or the heart […]? for it was not knowledge but unity that she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge" (Woolf, 2016, p. 57). As these wonderings demonstrate, there is a constant questioning about what intimacy is and how to achieve it. There are also contradictory ideas of intimacy as knowledge and intimacy as something opposed to knowledge, when, in the novel, there is both knowledge in intimacy, and intimacy in knowledge – a specific

affective, embodied knowledge of bodies and senses, that, I propose, is associated with femininity in *To the Lighthouse*.

This intimate, embodied knowledge about the world and the other is induced by wonder, which is central to the novel, both as a verb and as a noun – wonder as an activity of thinking, and wonder as an experience. To be struck by wonder, and to wonder about something in *To the Lighthouse* means being affected and being able to experience (strange) intimacy. There is a distinction then between the verb, 'I wonder' as something we primarily understand in cognitive terms, and the noun, 'wonder', as an affective experience. This distinction, however, is not as clear-cut in *To the Lighthouse* because *thinking* is not a rational, calculating activity only, but also *wonder*ing, wherein wonder maintains its more affective state. As we can see from the above quotations, wonder is often centred around the figure of Mrs Ramsay. By locating the wonder-inducing figure of Mrs Ramsay at the centre of the novel, *To the Lighthouse*, like Jean Rhys's *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* (1930), is, among other things, concerned with providing a broader definition of intimacy than those offered by Freudian psychoanalysis, which focuses on vertical relationships within families. If the mother is central to *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, implicitly, as I will demonstrate in Chapter Three, then *To the Lighthouse* explicitly looks at Mrs Ramsay, the mother, or the mother-figure. Lily wants to see Mrs Ramsay with 50 pairs of eyes, knowing that even this "[was not] enough to get round that one woman with" (Woolf, 2016, p. 222). The central place that Mrs Ramsay takes in the novel, however, does not reinforce the idea that mothers are crucial as mothers *per se*. Rather, the novel explores the role of a mother when she is seen as a complex self in an assemblage of various relations, both familiar and non-familiar, human and non-human. In other words, it is not her 'motherness' that is relevant but her 'Mrs Ramsay-ness', of which motherness is only a part.

Woolf explores the communal or family feeling that Mrs Ramsay as an (almost) conventional Victorian mother creates, and tries to highlight that it is always something extra in the conventional stories associated with Victorian motherhood and femininity that create the atmosphere of belonging and family feeling. Mrs Ramsay muses,

> Not as oneself did one find rest ever, in her experience […], but as a wedge of darkness. Losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir; and there

> rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity (Woolf, 2016, p. 71).

Here, Mrs Ramsay sinks away from her identity as a mother, a wife, and a host; in relation to the external world, she makes peace with the fleetingness of life, finding peace, rest, and eternity. I propose that it is through the predominantly feminine, domestic figure of Mrs Ramsay that Woolf draws our attention to the importance of conventional intimacy. It is through the same figure, however, that she also demonstrates that intimacy, when it is truly intimate, almost always derives from its conventional forms. Although characters wonder about Mrs Ramsay as a host, a mother, and a wife, she herself thinks that she never finds peace and rest when she is seen as fitting into one of those categories. In other words, not knowing Mrs Ramsay enhances an atmosphere of wonder that is present throughout *To the Lighthouse*.

In what follows, I begin by examining the nature of intimacy, and the role distance, proximity, and the non-human play in establishing (strange) intimacy. I draw on Sara Crangle and Emmanuel Levinas to establish that *To the Lighthouse* celebrates distance within intimacy while also putting forward the idea that distance only feels like distance when there is closeness. I then move to examine wonder, which is the central concept of this chapter. I examine wonder both as a verb and as a noun to propose that wonder has ethical implications that are triggered by 'short-sighted', acute attention to the other and one's surroundings in 'The Window'. I look at how wondering and the sense of wonder create the feeling of things persisting and remaining in the otherwise chaotic modern world and human relations, focusing specifically on 'Time Passes' and the figure of Mrs McNab. I then examine the verb form of wonder, and how wondering complicates various binaries, including that of masculine/ feminine. I propose that *To the Lighthouse* induces *the sense of wonder* by a specific kind of *wondering* that is affective, embodied, sensory, and associated with femininity. Finally, I look at how Woolf in her writing, and Lily in her painting, make order out of disorder without losing the sense of chaos in their embodied, sensory art. I suggest that in turn, this sort of art can enhance the sense of wonder and strange intimacy.

Self and Other, Proximity and Distance, Human and Non-Human

The general affect, or mood, or atmosphere of the novel seems to be that of (strange) intimacy and wonder that is achieved through the focus on loss, beauty, and the fragility of human relationships. Yet, there is also the resilience and ability of the human relationships to adapt to change, no matter how sweeping the change may be that adds to the wondrous atmosphere. This resilience in the face of loss, change and chaos becomes apparent through a nuanced play between proximity and distance, which is present in the form of the H shape or the butterfly wings of the novel.[40] 'The Window' partly focuses on domesticity and proximity, seemingly zooming into the house that is located on a remote place in Scotland. The 'Time Passes' section, although still focused on the house, is no longer concerned with the human relationships but with life as such, caught in the view of deep time. The final part, 'The Lighthouse', zooms in on human relationships again, but also keeps the necessary distance for intimacy always in view. However, neither distance nor proximity is privileged in the novel – their intricate entanglement is what makes intimacy possible, and the overall sense of the novel reflects that. Although the novel has three different parts, it is a whole, like Lily's painting, which has "a line there, in the centre" (Woolf, 2016, p. 235). I will come back to the seemingly chaotic aesthetic entanglement of opposites and their feminist implications at the end of this chapter. For now, I want to keep the focus on the interplay between proximity and distance to explore the nature of intimacy in *To the Lighthouse*.

In this novel, intimacy is not something straightforward and easy. We can see this in Lily's fruitless attempts to establish intimacy with Mrs Ramsay, and in Mrs Ramsay and Mr Ramsay only being capable of exchanging somewhat awkward affectionate glances and bodily gestures instead of using conventional phrases and deeds, such as 'I love you' or bringing flowers, that express love. We can see strange manifestations of intimacy also in Lily and Mr William Bankes and various other characters often sharing intimate moments in silence, being absorbed by the views and sensations the external world offers. Regarding Mr and Mrs Ramsay, James Krasner (2004) goes as far to argue that it is not until Mrs Ramsay's death that Mr Ramsay expresses his love, reaching his arms out, which remain empty, longing for

[40] See Jane Goldman's *Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf* for a detailed study of *To the Lighthouse* and its formal qualities in relation to feminist aims.

the missing body of Mrs Ramsay. Their love, however, and intimacies between other characters in *To the Lighthouse* are found in moments that are often conventional (dinner table, walks) but that always also contain something that is strange. This strangeness is often reflected in the narrator's descriptions of or characters' thoughts about the external non-human world. I follow Kristina K. Groover (2014) in seeing intimacy in *To the Lighthouse* as something daily and embodied while at the same time being transcendent, much like Kathleen Stewart (2007) indicates that ordinary affects are *extra*ordinary, and like Lauren Berlant (1998, 2008) locates intimacy not in conventional love plots but in minor exchanges and glances.

The affections of the characters in *To the Lighthouse*, and the intimacy the reader can cultivate with the text depends on a carefully considered balance between distance and proximity in what happens on the story level, and how the novel is structured. While 'The Lighthouse' is explicitly concerned with physical distance, 'The Window' is concerned with physical proximity. In strange intimacy, however, physical distance and proximity do not simply equate to emotional distance and proximity. Critics such as Patricia Ondek Laurence (1991), Randi Koppen (2001), Beatrice Monaco (2013) and Derek Ryan (2013) note the relevance of distance in 'The Lighthouse' as more important and more ethical than proximity. The limiting effect of closeness is emphasised in the much-quoted passage that I emphasised at the beginning of this chapter where Lily desires to know Mrs Ramsay, and through that, the nature of knowledge and intimacy itself:

> What art was there, known to love or cunning, by which one pressed through into those secret chambers? What device for becoming, like waters poured into one jar, inextricably the same, one with the object one adored? Could body achieve it, or the mind, subtly mingling in the intricate passages of the brain? or the heart […]? for it was not knowledge but unity that she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge. […] Nothing happened. Nothing! as she leant her head against Mrs Ramsay's knee. And yet, she knew knowledge and wisdom were stored in Mrs Ramsay's heart (Woolf, 2016, p. 57).

There is much to say about this passage in terms of different ways of knowing – with heart and head, and body and mind; ways which have traditionally been seen as binaries associated with femininity and women on the one hand, and masculinity and men on the other. I will return to the issue of gendered knowledge, and how this knowledge can be expressed in art towards the end of this chapter, but for now it is

important to focus on how, when Lily is physically as close as possible to Mrs Ramsay – she presses her head (container of rational knowledge?) against Mrs Ramsay's body (container of emotional knowledge?) – nothing happens. If the reader does not learn anything else about intimacy from this passage, she does learn that intimacy is not achieved merely through physical proximity between two human beings.

In a way, intimacy is the desire to bridge that distance between the self and the other. Sarah Crangle in *Prosaic Desires* (2010) argues that in many modernist writers, including Woolf, "longing becomes a conduit to considerations of individuals defined by an endlessly unknowable and desirable other" (p. 6). I am interested in how desire too creates intimacy, precisely because it is the desire to know while acknowledging that it is impossible to know any other. As I outlined in the introduction, Emmanuel Levinas's ideas about radical alterity are resonant throughout this thesis. Especially his idea that "the Other remains infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign; his face, in which his epiphany is produced and which appeals to me, breaks with the world that can be common to us, whose virtualities are inscribed in our nature and developed by our existence" (qtd. in Crangle, 2010, p. 195). While Levinas values face-to-face encounters, *To the Lighthouse* demonstrates that physical proximity, as demonstrated in the case of Lily and Mrs Ramsay, does not lead to intimate knowledge of another person. Or, to put it differently, Lily assumes that her closeness to Mrs Ramsay will result in a complete knowledge of the latter, and, accordingly, is intimacy. Yet, as "nothing happened" (Woolf, 2016, p. 57), we can assume that Woolf puts forward an idea that echoes that part of Levinas's argument that emphasises the necessity of radical otherness in ethical relations. In Woolf, for an ethical relation to emerge, however, distance is needed, and when this distance is embraced and the other is a radical other, certain strange intimacy can emerge. To put it differently, the desire to know is itself intimate, and not knowing creates that intimate desire to know. There are moments in the first section of the novel that already bring distance into view, and portray a certain desire to maintain as well as bridge the distance. Mrs and Mr Ramsay go for walks in the garden looking over the sea; there are eloquent silences between Mrs Ramsay and Mr Ramsay as they sit across the table from one another, or in different ends of the room and when Cam dashes off into the openness of the

countryside; and by the third part, Lily thinks that "so much depends then […] upon distance" (Woolf, 2016, p. 216).[41]

The importance and ethics of distance, however, only make sense when also explored side by side with the short-sighted vision of Mrs Ramsay that zooms in on family life, personal relationships, and also on the non-human world – flowers, stockings, and fruit (Woolf, 2016, p. 232). Hélène Cixous describes in *Stigmata* (1999) how her extreme short-sightedness in her childhood 'forced' her to see the world differently – if she really wanted to see and understand what something was, she had to go very close to it. That, she writes, encouraged her to examine the world with extreme detail in her later life and express this in her writing. This attention to detail is stylistically present in her writing, which is often very slow and repetitive, taking rounds and turns to examine the same thing or phenomenon from various angles, much like the narrator examines the Ramsays and their house. The narrative voice in 'The Window' draws the readers' attention to ordinary, daily objects and sights with Mrs Ramsay's short-sighted vision in mind. For example, we see stockings, magazine cuttings, and fruit. One the one hand, as critics have noted, this can be associated with Mrs Ramsay's conventionality and narrow-mindedness.[42] On the other hand, it is also a sign of care as it looks at the characters, situations, and the non-human world with extreme scrutiny. Hence, I first demonstrate how these readings are accurate but then complicate them by focusing on the ethical potential of short-sighted attention to things.

Although *To the Lighthouse*, and this chapter accordingly, predominantly focuses on human relationships to explore how selfhood is constructed via new avenues, the non-human is already an important part in the entanglement of humans, their intimacy and in the sense of distance. *To the Lighthouse* demonstrates that if

[41] I have chosen to focus on the 'The Window' and 'The Lighthouse' parts when exploring the interplay of distance and proximity in intimacy because in these parts we encounter the same characters in relation to one another and their surroundings. These sections are also explicitly concerned with the human rather than the non-human, whereas 'Time Passes' introduces two new characters vaguely and centres on the non-human. I will focus on 'Time Passes' section later in relation to the question that remains.

[42] Critics such as Beatrice Monaco and Derek Ryan suggest that 'The Window' captures Mrs Ramsay's consciousness the most, suggesting that 'The Window' is somewhat like a dated, less desirable, and oppressing way of life. The Lighthouse part, in contrast, is represented through Lily's consciousness and offers a less conventional view of the world. To a large extent, this interpretation is true and 'The Window' indeed displays a pre-war society with much stricter gender roles. However, to dismiss the value of the domestic happiness and (feminine) attention to quotidian life also dismisses Woolf's point about the relevance of both distance and proximity.

human relationships are to be intimate, this intimacy needs more than only human presence. Fily and William are in the open nature, by the sea, and they look at and discuss Lily's painting; Mrs Ramsay reads to James – there is a story they share and book they hold; and Mr and Mrs Ramsay also feel comfortable in their silence when they are either both absorbed in the texts they read, or when they look at the view together. Intimacy in *To the Lighthouse* is then often more than just an encounter between two people; intimacy is the whole environment of things and other people and stories where the encounter happens. Mrs Ramsay, for example, is "made aware […] of human relations, how flawed they are, how despicable, how self-seeking, at their best" (Woolf, 2016, p. 47). Human relations in *To the Lighthouse*, whether distant or proximate, become almost always more meaningful when they are examined in relation to the world of the non-human.

Gillian Beer (1996), Louise Westling (1999), Gabriella Moise (2015), Cara Lewis (2014), Derek Ryan (2015), Laci Mattison (2011), and Carrie Rohman (2011), to name a few, have focused on the emphasis on the non-human world in Woolf's fiction. Lewis (2014) argues that still life (the house, the painting, furniture, arrangement of the dinner table) is not a pure aesthetic emotion, but a fully human emotion that animates the narrative, that the still life encourages the shifts in human affect (p. 445). The aforementioned critics have explored the importance of still life and objects in *To the Lighthouse* via various different theoretical and philosophical strands such as psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and affect. I read the novel with Jane Bennett's *The Enchantment of Modern Life* (2001), as the latter book is specifically interested in the complex human and non-human entanglements and how the non-human has a power to enchant and strengthen human attachment to life. In *To the Lighthouse*, materiality, still life, and nature work as sites of enchantment, that is, as sites of affective attachment to the world, to borrow Bennett's phrase. Bennett suggests that despite the predominant narrative of modernity as disenchanted, the modern world does offer attachments that enhance the love for life. In the moments of intimacy that occur in *To the Lighthouse*, the same sort of attachment to life and people is apparent via things.[43] It is the enchanted mood that is

[43] See the introduction for a more thorough discussion of modernism, modernity and enchantment, or see Jane Bennett's introduction to *The Enchantment of Modern Life* (2001).

triggered and an atmosphere created by objects, nature, and humans together that enhances the feeling of strange intimacy between characters.

In one of Mrs Ramsay's musings when she drifts off to distance herself from her role as a mother, a wife, and a host, she muses,

> It was odd, she thought, how if one was alone, one leant to things, inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers; felt they expressed one; felt they became one; felt they knew one, in a sense were one; felt an irrational tenderness thus (she looked at that long steady light) as for oneself" (Woolf, 2016, p. 72).

Here, Mrs Ramsay finds an attachment to the world when she has oddly dropped 'her self' and sunk into an intimate relationship with trees, streams, and flowers, and associates herself with the final stroke of the lighthouse light, which some critics read as her having a final say through her silence.[44] Here, Mrs Ramsay becomes something like what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call 'haecceities'. They write that,

> There is a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance. We reserve the name haecceity for it. A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date have a perfect individuality lacking nothing, even though this individuality is different from that of a thing or a subject. They are haecceities in the sense that they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected (2004, p. 261).

Mrs Ramsay in a sense also becomes an haecceity – her sense of self depends on the environment she is in: what she sees, feels, and experiences. Here, she drops her individuation in the psychoanalytical or conventional sense where she is recognised as a mother, a wife, and a hostess. When the reader too recognises Mrs Ramsay beyond these individuations, we can begin to understand the strange elements that surround her and enhance the sense of wonder about her.

[44] See Ann Banfield's 'Time Passes: Virginia Woolf, Post-Impressionism, and Cambridge Time' (2003). See also Mary Jacobus's 'The Third Stroke': Reading Woolf with Freud' in *Virginia Woolf* (1992) and Patricia Ondek Laurence's *The Reading of Silence: Virginia Woolf in the English Tradition* (1991). Ondek discusses three types of silences in Woolf's work. Much has been written by other critics, such as Monaco, on silence in Woolf, and particularly Mrs Ramsay's silence as her way of passive resistance to Mr. Ramsay. In a sense, silence is also what creates a certain distance, as it does not 'intrude' upon the other's boundaries.

Similarly, although in one another's presence, Lily and William too become something different when absorbed in the external world. When they stand together, the narrator expresses a strong need in them to be near the sea:

> They came there regularly every evening drawn by some need. It was as if the water floated off and set sailing thoughts which had grown stagnant on dry land, and gave their bodies even some sort of physical relief. [Lily and William Bankes] smiled standing there. They both felt a common hilarity, excited by the moving waves; then by swift cutting race of a sailing boat […] looked at the dunes far away […] felt come over them some sadness – because the thing was completed partly, and partly because distant views seem to outlast by a million years the gazer and to be communing already with a sky which beholds an earth entirely at rest (Woolf, 2016, pp. 23-24).

The view the sea offers to Lily and William standing together in silence triggers the sense of distance and the triviality of human lives, which is reflected in the vast skies that witness deep time. If this is so for Lily, then interestingly, in William, the view triggers thoughts not about the faraway in time and space, but about the near – his (somewhat failed) friendship with Mr Ramsay. Both Lily and William, however, are embedded in a common feeling of some kind of sadness and hilarity that is triggered in them by the boat, the dunes, the waves, and the sky (Woolf, 2016, p. 24). It is the external world of things that they see from a distance and that draws them together, makes them wonder about who they are and what their relations to others are, and allows them to find certain peace and a common emotion, which essentially is affect.

The most famous example of the external world of objects drawing humans together and creating a strangely intimate, somewhat enchanted atmosphere is the otherwise conventional dinner scene in 'The Window'. It is the change of light and the arrangement of fruit that draws the characters together beyond physical proximity, a sense of feeling that is again mediated, like most of the feelings in 'The Window', via Mrs Ramsay's (short-sighted) consciousness:

> and to her pleasure (for it brought them into sympathy momentarily) she saw that Augustus too feasted his eyes on the same plate of fruit, plunged in, broke off a bloom there, a tassel here, and returned, after feasting, to his hive. That was his way of looking, different from hers. But looking together united them […] Now all the candles were lit, and the faces on both sides of the table were brought nearer by the candlelight, and composed, as they had not been in the twilight, into a party round a table, for the night was now shut off by panes of glass, which, far from giving any accurate view of the outside world, rippled it so strangely that here, inside the room, seemed to be order and dry land; there, outside, a reflection in which things wavered and

> vanished, waterily […] *Some change at once went through them all, as if this had really happened, and they were all conscious of making a party together in a hollow, on an island; had their common cause against that fluidity out there* (Woolf, 2016, pp. 108-109; emphasis mine).

Interestingly, there is a contradiction between the above quotation and the one where Lily and William enjoy the view: when Lily and William are outdoors (also looking together but seeing differently – Lily the cosmic, William the quotidian), the narrative voice muses on how the fluidity of the waves offered something that dry land could not. Now, the sea, the distant outside world, is presented as a chaotic fluidity out there, which is separated by panes of glass that can never give any accurate view of the outside world. But indoors by candlelight, the party is safe together on orderly dry land and proximity, in an atmosphere created by non-human objects that render meaningful human relations that 'surround' the dinner table. In this sense, the house in a remote place, in which there is a dinner party, is contrasted to the fluidity of modern life and the coming war. In other words, Mrs Ramsay, through a specific set of non-human objects, finds and shares a communal feeling of belonging. Through her consciousness, the reader gets an impression that human proximity in a conventional setting can resist the chaos and change of the distant outside world.

In 'Time Passes', the sense of deep time triggered by natural forces such as air, wind, rain and the sounds of the sea, and the fragility and fleetingness of human lives and human-made things, such as furniture, is emphasised. Charles M Tung (2016) suggests that the

> zooming out at the beginning of the twentieth century […] not only served to critique the myopia of the short term, the close-up immersion in the momentary that we often take as aesthetic modernism's primary focus; the big-historical lens also generated a new and bewildering sense of heterochrony, a clash of multiple timescales (p. 518).

Tung gives, albeit very superficially, Woolf's interest in the distant view in *To the Lighthouse* as an example, claiming that the "desire to scope out from the illusions of the now was informed by the rise of the large telescope", that "allowed for the perception of faraway things, while the latter provided the experience of seeing everyday things from far away" (Tung, 2016, p. 526). Tung follows Holly Henry (2003) to show how big telescopes contributed to Woolf's long-range aesthetics, her "modernist human decentring and re-scaling" (Tung, 2016, p. 526). Although the

sense of deep time that natural forces engender in 'Time Passes' is important, Tung makes it sound as if the everyday moment was somehow of lesser value in the face of the grand scale of time and space in *To the Lighthouse*. Yet, it is precisely the idea that the distant and the large only have meaning when juxtaposed or examined in relation to everyday life and the human scale of things. In other words, Mrs Ramsay's 'family feeling', the atmosphere of domestic bliss she triggers is valuable precisely because it gives meaning to human life in deep time.

In the third part, 'The Lighthouse', physical distance replaces proximity, and the material world of what is inside the window is replaced with the material world outside the window. In the 'The Lighthouse' section, the space outdoors – the non-human world of natural forces and nature – becomes a positive site for change, whereas in 'The Window', it was indoors – the furniture, jewellery, and cutlery, where Mrs Ramsay found comfort. Nina MacLaughlin's thoughts in her *Novembrance* column in *The Paris Review* offer an interesting illustration to what *To the Lighthouse* might indicate:

> once death has been inserted into the mind, the magnificence of the mountain range registers in a different way, and what's sensed instead is its gaping indifference, the nothingness of one's flicker of existence in comparison. Managed nature gives not only the illusion of control, the comfort of our efforts to contain and command the life and growth of things, but also […] reveals the evidence of another human hand. In the tulip rows, the pathway fenced and mowed, we see the evidence of tools and work. Not only is there control to be had, but also, the managed landscape says, you are not alone (MacLaughlin, 2018).[45]

In a similar manner, the sense of human-made objects as sites of comfort is very clear in 'The Window' as it was in furniture, created by human hand, in which Mrs Ramsay found comfort. Moreover, seeing wilderness as a reminder of indifference and decay also speaks to the elegiac nature of *To the Lighthouse* – 'The Window' was haunted by the coming war and the deaths of the Ramsay family members, and 'Time Passes' is a section where death is 'inserted'. This part is empty of human life and there is a strong sense of the non-human being out of human control, reminding the reader of the inevitability of the end of the human life by bracketing it and placing it against the background of vast landscapes of natural forces and scenes.

[45] See MacLaughlin's article in The Paris Review. Retrieved from https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2017/11/15/the-alchemy-of-november/

In ‘The Lighthouse’, however, when time has passed, it is the flowing, the fleeting, and the spectral from outside the window that provide continuity and a sense of the future going on. In short, wild nature does not enhance anxiety in this section. At first, when Lily has arrived back in the house, we can see her still dwelling on the loss of Mrs Ramsay and the attachment to life the latter managed to create in conventional domestic settings:

> […] sitting alone among the clean cups at the long table she felt cut off from other people, and able only to go on watching, asking, wondering. The house, the place, the morning, all seemed strangers to her. She had no attachment here, she felt, no relations with it, anything might happen, and whatever did happen, a step outside, a voice calling, was a question, as if the link that usually bound things together had been cut […] how aimless it was, how chaotic, how unreal it was, she thought, looking at her empty coffee cup (Woolf, 2016, p. 166).

Although the usual link binding things together, Mrs Ramsay, has disappeared, Lily soon finds new links, wondering about the questions she already wondered about in ‘The Window’, but she is now able to dwell on her own answers, standing in the open air in front of her painting, undisturbed by the male gaze: in ‘The Lighthouse’ human relationships have moved from indoors to outdoors, embedded in distance. Looking at the Ramsays sailing towards the lighthouse, Lily muses that “distance had extraordinary power; they had been swallowed up in it, she felt, they were gone for ever, they had become part of the nature of things” (Woolf, 2016, p. 212). Part of the nature of things and distance here are signified by the external non-human world of sea, sky and lawn. In other words, the external world of nature not that of comfortable, human-made objects, triggers the sense of distance, and importantly, enhances Lily’s sense of intimacy towards the Ramsays, William, and Mr Carmichael.

A similar embracing of distance in intimate relationships can be said to develop in the boat between Mr Ramsay and his children. There are parts of Mr Ramsay that are unknown to his children. They know practical facts about him “but what might be written in the book which had rounded its edges off in his pocket, [Cam] did not know. What he thought none of them knew” (Woolf, 2016, p. 215). Unlike Lily in the first part considering Mrs Ramsay, the children here accept that it is impossible to ever know the other person fully, no matter how close they are. Yet at the same time the children are feeling “they alone knew each other” (Woolf, 2016,

p. 218). This intimacy comes from being able to acknowledge the Levinasian idea that we cannot fully know the other. Only when the children acknowledge the radically unknown part of Mr Ramsay can they begin to develop some sort of intimacy with him.

This acknowledgement too is enhanced by the presence of the non-human world. Being in the middle of the sea, away from land, allows the children to understand that distance is required within proximity if intimacy is to develop. Cam is thinking,

> Already the little distance they had sailed had put them far from [the shore] and given it the changed look, the composed look, of something receding in which one has no longer any part. Which was their house? She could not see it […] She was thinking how all those paths and the lawn, thick and knotted with the lives they had lived there, were gone: were rubbed out; were past; were unreal, and now this was real; the boat and the sail with its patch; Macalister with his earrings; the noise of the waves – all this was real (Woolf, 2016, pp. 187-188).

The reality of the dinner-table in 'The Window' has gone and is replaced here by that which is outside the window – the fleeting, the flowing, the spectral – which here takes the form of potentiality and freedom, not chaos. Distance rubs away certain feelings, as Cam thinks people do not feel a thing on the shore. Pain is imagined to be with us, and somehow places far from us seem free of pain. This seems to complicate the view that physical proximity is not needed for intimacy, because Cam cannot imagine the pain of others who are far from her. Yet, when we think of Lily, who also sees the sea as a space of non-pain for her as she is situated on a shore, it seems that distance between places and people the characters associate with pain, are seen not as painful when they are seen from distance (Woolf, 2016, p. 206). To put it differently, seeing the boat and Mr Ramsay from a distance creates intimacy in Lily whereas physical proximity caused discomfort in her. Distance, in other words, also helps to see people in relation to the wider 'picture': the boat, the sea, the wind. In other words, characters are not seen solely in their roles as fathers, children, and old family friends but perhaps more like 'haecceities' in the Deleuzian sense; they are seen from a distance in relation to the outside world, changing in relation to the external world.

It is the movement of the sea and the wind outdoors that alleviates the tensions between characters. When the wind stands still, Cam feels,

> Everything became very close to one […] there they came to a stop, flapping about waiting for a breeze, in the hot sun, miles from shore […] everything in the whole world seemed to stand still […] the sun grew hotter and everybody seemed to come very close together and to feel each other's presence, which they had almost forgotten (Woolf, 2016, p. 206).

This passage echoes the motor car incident in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), and how it draws people together and makes them pause. If in *Mrs Dalloway*, this absorption in the moment has a potential ethical implication, then here the drawing together in the sun is rather dangerous for the ethics of intimacy – people become dangerously close and stagnant in this proximity that Woolf gives us by increasing heat and emphasising silence. And then she brings movement to rescue them from the stillness as,

> at that moment the sail swung slowly round, filled slowly out, the boat seemed to shake herself, and then to move off half conscious in her sleep, and then she woke and shot through the waves. The relief was extraordinary. They all seemed to fall away from each other again and to be at their ease (Woolf, 2016, p. 211).

Again, the wind that seemed threatening in 'Time Passes', and the sea that was a source of anxiety for Mrs Ramsay as she was worried about the children getting back, here provide relief.

The final part of the novel further explores proximity and distance, and conventional forms of intimacy and its stranger representations. In 'The Window', Lily wonders at the dinner table when a feeling of togetherness reigns:

> Such was the complexity of things. For what happened to her, especially staying with the Ramsays, was to be made to feel violently two opposite things at the same time; that's what you feel, was one; that's what I feel was the other, and then they fought together in her mind, as now. It is so beautiful, so exciting, this love, that I tremble on the verge of it, and offer, quite out of my own habit, to look for a brooch on a beach; also it is the stupidest, the most barbaric of human passions, and turns a nice young man with a profile like a gem into a bully with a crowbar in the Mile End Road (Woolf, 2016, p. 114).

Here Lily thinks of Paul and Minta's engagement, of them being in love. Lily knows that while it is beautiful and exciting, it is also a beginning of a conventional family life. Yet, she sees the beauty and excitement also of romantic love. In 'The

Window', the conventional values were in binary opposition with the freedom to not marry, not to have children. In 'The Lighthouse', the opposites coexist peacefully, making new patterns – Lily is unmarried and follows her passion to paint, and Paul and Minta remain married on their own terms. Julia Briggs (2005) indicates that although Woolf was indeed aware and critical of the roles Victorian conventions imposed on women, she nevertheless valued the sense of community Mrs Ramsay created. To put it differently, although *To the Lighthouse* explores conventional scenes of intimacy between family and friends, it always locates intimacy in a complex interplay between the near and the far, familiar and the strange, human and non-human, and this is what creates the sense of wonder.

The Affective Ethics of Wonder

Mrs Ramsay's short-sightedness also has another value – it encourages one of the central concepts of the novel – wonder. Her near-sightedness encourages her to keep wondering about the other that is distant and unknown. When Lily thinks back to a picnic she had with Mrs Ramsay, the children and Charles Tansley, she remembers Mrs Ramsay's short-sightedness and her inability to make out what it was in the distance on the sea, which made Mrs Ramsay *wonder* about the object she could not see. As emphasised, Mrs Ramsay's short-sightedness is often read as her traditionally feminine concern with the domestic sphere and conventional values. I would briefly like to turn to Cixous's references in *Stigmata* (1999) to her own short-sightedness in her childhood that made her examine the world with extreme care and pay close attention to human and non-human life that surrounded her. In the same sense, Mrs Ramsay's short-sightedness creates a sense of wonder, which can be ethical as wonder induces curiosity about the other one is engaged with, whether near or far; short-sightedness can create a positive affective atmosphere of wonder that propels ethical engagement with the other as it maintains the other as radically other. To put it differently, Mrs Ramsay's short-sightedness also serves as a reminder to be curious about what distance holds: to keep wondering about the other that is distant or in the distance, and to keep that wonder even in proximity.

Wonder, as thinkers as diverse as Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, and Alfred North Whitehead have acknowledged, is the starting point for philosophers and poets alike.

Predrag Cicovacki in *The Analysis of Wonder: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicolai Hartmann* (2014) argues that for Aristotle, "the actual impulse to philosophize lies in the desire 'to escape ignorance'" (p. 9). Cicovacki (2016) also continues that Aquinas, "seems to agree, adding that, 'because philosophy arises from awe, a philosopher is bound in his way to be a lover of myths and poetic fables. Poets and philosophers are alike in being with wonder'" (qtd. in Cicovacki, 2016 p. 9). Alfred North Whitehead (1938) has argued that "philosophy begins in wonder", adding that, "at the end, when philosophic thought has done its best, the wonder remains" (p. 232). The sense of wonder in *To the Lighthouse* seems to be similar – Mr Ramsay and Charles Tansley, the philosophers, can be done with their work, and even if they seemingly settle the discussion about going to the lighthouse and 'killing' wonder, the novel keeps the wonder that surrounds the trip to the lighthouse present all the way through the story. The atmospheric wonder is present in the novel already on the first page – we learn that the possibility that the weather will be fine produces "extraordinary joy" in James, and it was "the wonder to which he had looked forward" (Woolf, 2016, p. 5). Wonder in *To the Lighthouse* then, seems to be central both as a verb and as a noun. W*o*ndering in *To the Lighthouse* is like w*a*ndering around – not physically, but mentally, in one's mind. In other words, the 'action' of wondering triggers the sense of wonder. As it is something all the characters do, it also complicates the gendered binaries of active and passive, male and female, public and domestic – a point to which I will return shortly when I examine the verb form of wonder and its relation to the activity of thinking. For now, I want to focus on the noun; on the atmosphere of wonder *To the Ligthouse* has in general, and how many things also seem to begin from wondering and wonder in this novel.

From all these musings on wonder, I am most interested in Bennett's writing on wonder when exploring *To the Lighthouse*.[46] For Bennett (2001),

> enchantment entails a state of wonder, and of the distinctions of this state is the temporary suspension of chronological time and bodily movement […] it is to participate in a momentarily immobilizing encounter […] enchantment

[46] There are many writings about things that induce wonder in Woolf's fiction. For example, Louis Westling's 'The Flesh of the World' (1999) seems to wonder about the non-human. Also, Bill Brown in 'The Secret Life of Things' (1999) starts by 'wondering' about object-world. However, there is no research on the word 'wonder' as such in Woolf's oeuvre. And yet, the general atmosphere of *To the Lighthouse* seems to be that of wonder, albeit sometimes anxious.

> is not only a property of the natural world – it is also the joyful human mood that results from a *special way of engaging with that world*. Enchantment as a mood requires a cultivated form of perception, a discerning and meticulous attentiveness to the singular specificity of things (p. 5; emphasis mine).

Aren't the affective atmosphere over the dinner table, the moments shared between Lily and Mr Bankes, between Mrs Ramsay and Mr Ramsay also moments when these characters are enchanted precisely because they pay meticulous attention to their non-human environment and to one another within it? Don't they engage with the world in a special way? One could say that in these moments, the characters put on Mrs Ramsay's short-sighted vision to pay attention to the world and to one another, and then recognise the necessity of keeping the distance between the self and the other for ethical interactions. In these moments, *To the Lighthouse* gives us literary examples of that which Bennett calls enchanted mood.

Like for Bennett's enchanted mood, the appreciation of beauty and aesthetics seems to be important in enhancing wonder in *To the Lighthouse*. For example, the arrangement of fruit on the dinner table, the view Lily and Mr Bankes enjoy, and Mr Ramsay's desire to pay "homage to the beauty of the world" (Woolf, 2016, p. 41). However, as with intimacy, there is also always something that 'disrupts' the conventional scenes of beauty. Like for Bennett, beauty in *To the Lighthouse* never simply appears in traditional forms – it is not written about as Romantics would write about it, or depicted as Greek sculptures would depict it. For Bennett, strangeness is part of beauty. In a similar way, Mr Bankes, for instance, thinks of Mrs Ramsay's beauty:

> She clapped a deer-stalker's hat on her head; she ran across the lawn in galoshes to snatch a child from mischief. So that if it was her beauty merely that one thought of, one must remember the quivering thing, the living thing (they were carrying bricks up a little plank as he watched them), and work it into the picture; or if one thought of her simply as a woman, one must endow her with some freak idiosyncrasy; or suppose some latent desire to doff her royalty of form as if her beauty bored her and all that men say of beauty, and she wanted only to be like other people, insignificant (Woolf, 2016, p. 34).

Mrs Ramsay's beauty is not the transcendental beauty of Greek sculptures or Romantic poets, but a strange, "quivering, living thing […] freak idiosyncrasy" (Woolf, 2016, p. 34). Her beauty, because it is lively, vibrant, and unconventional, an assemblage of her and the thing she does and wears in specific environments,

creates a sense of wonder and curiosity about her.[47] In other words, her beauty is as much dependent of Mrs Ramsay as it is dependent on her entanglement with the world and things around her. One can also say, following Deleuze and Guattari and their concept of 'haecceity', that Mrs Ramsay (and her beauty) *is* what she does, and her relation to the world around her. This passage illustrates the general atmosphere of the novel that enhances strange intimacy and wonder – a conventional scene of beauty and/or intimacy is always quivering with things unconventional – galoshes and deerstalker hats, the outside world haunting the peace of the dinner, Lily's painting, her independence, and her 'Chinese' eyes.

But there is more than beauty that induces wonder in the novel. As demonstrated, the novel already begins with an atmosphere of wonder that surrounds the trip to the lighthouse. Throughout the novel, wondering that references specific atmospheres of wonder in the three sections of the novel continues – Mrs Ramsay wonders about what Cam is feeling when she wants to dash off all the time; Nancy wonders why Minta cries and why all of them feel like crying when Minta loses her grandmother's brooch; Cam and James wonder about their father; Mr Ramsay wonders about reaching the letter Q; Mrs Ramsay wonders about the core of darkness in oneself and about her children's futures; Lily wonders about intimacy; and Mrs McNab wonders about how life, despite all suffering, will always endure (Woolf, 2016, p. 61, p. 87, p. 215, p. 45). From these wonderings different affective atmospheres of wonder are conjured. The wonder in each of the three parts of the novel has a different sense. In 'The Window', wonder is often an anxious wonder about the future and about people and interpersonal relationships; in 'Time Passes', it is a metaphysical wonder about what life is, articulated in a daily manner via Mrs McNab; and in 'The Lighthouse', the wonder has become a force that is positive and affirming, carrying life onwards.

[47] There is also a sense of wonder about Mrs Ramsay as a mother. Prue looks at her mother in awe (Woolf, 2016, p. 103), and Mrs Ramsay herself thinks of her role: "What was the reason, Mrs Ramsay wondered, standing still to let her clasp the necklace she had chosen, divining, through her own past, some deep, some buried, some quite speechless feeling one had for one's mother at Rose's age. Like all feeling that one had for oneself, Mrs Ramsay thought, it made one sad. It was so inadequate, what one could give in return; and what Rose felt was quite out of proportion to anything she actually was" (Woolf, 2016, p. 92). The question of motherhood is not, however, reduced to the Oedipal role of the mother but weaved into larger questions about the constitution of a subject.

In ‘The Window’, the sense of wonder is related to time, especially to the future. Many critics have examined time in *To the Lighthouse*, including Ann Banfield (2000, 2003), Jane Goldman (1998), and Gillian Beer (1988). I disagree with Banfield’s (2003) suggestion that in *To the Lighthouse*, “the characters remain ignorant of time’s passing – that is the point. They are within the moment, where all is still; time’s movement is imperceptible” (p. 503). Quite the contrary, Mrs Ramsay is always aware of time passing, of her children growing, and a sense of things coming to an end for human individuals. This is what causes the desire in her to make something permanent, to be in the moment and to hold life still in that moment. In ‘The Window’, the sense of wonder is related to the uncertainty about the future, and the reader gets the sense of death being already very present in life in the first section, both in the sense of individual deaths, but also because of the sense of the war coming. There is a classic image of death, the skull wrapped in a beautiful green scarf which unfolds in ‘Time Passes’, perhaps referring to the fact that in this second section the moments of intimacy and domestic warmth that were created to postpone death in ‘The Window’ now unfold and death has its way. As Gabriella Moise (2015) has suggested, the skull wrapped in a shawl is a physical manifestation of Mrs Ramsay’s pessimism that life is nothing but death wrapped up in the beauty and warmth that humans try to create while they are alive. This ominous atmosphere reigns in the first part of the novel, so the sense of wonder in the first part is always somehow anxious.

The sense of wanting to make time stand still comes from this anxiety of knowing that time is passing, and the appreciation of beauty and domestic warmth is strong precisely because there is this sense that all this will come to an end. Accordingly, Mrs Ramsay “never wanted James to grow a day older or Cam either. These two she would have liked to keep for ever just as they were, demons of wickedness, angels of delight, never to see them grow up into long-legged monsters. Nothing made up for the loss” (Woolf, 2016, p. 56). We can see here that Mrs Ramsay is acutely aware of time passing and her children growing up – an awareness, which makes her fear the passing of time. Importantly, this knowledge is what also creates intimacy and attachment to life in the present moment. Precisely because of this awareness, Mrs Ramsay places great value in moments experienced over dinners, as it draws characters together, and seems to pause time for a moment,

as I will soon demonstrate. The sense of time passing and taking characters towards their own end is therefore strongly present in 'The Window', albeit covered up with life, like the skull within the folds of a scarf.

The anxiety or uncertainty about the future, when not soothed away by art, attention to the external world, or by some repetitive, daily task at hand, is explicit in the following passage from 'The Window':

> [t]he monotonous fall of the waves on the beach, which for the most part beat a measured and soothing tattoo to her thoughts and seemed consoling to repeat over and over again as she sat with the children the words of some old cradle song, murmured by nature, 'I am guarding you – I am your support', but at other times suddenly and unexpectedly, especially when her mind raised itself slightly from the task actually at hand, had no such kindly meaning, but like a ghostly roll of drums remorselessly beat the measure of life, made one think of the destruction of the island and its engulfment in the sea, and warned her whose day had slipped past in one quick doing after another that it was all ephemeral as a rainbow – this sound which had been obscured and concealed under the other sounds suddenly thundered hollow in her ears and made her look up with an impulse of terror (Woolf, 2016, p. 19).

The sound of the sea is soothing when Mrs Ramsay is immersed in a daily task (reading to children or knitting), but when this daily task is dropped, she is reminded of her own triviality and fleetingness, causing her terror and anxiety, and adding to the ominous atmosphere that is prevalent in the first part of the novel. It is this very same atmosphere, however, that also creates the desire to 'capture' time, and hold on to certain moments.

In the 'Time Passes' section, Mrs Ramsay's sense of life being ephemeral finds affirmation. In the middle section, life has become almost empty of human touch and warmth, and the bracketed parts demonstrate that elsewhere, outside the house, war is happening and the Ramsays are dying. The middle section of *To the Lighthouse* illustrates Peter Slotderjik's (2002) point that "the unprecedented nature of twentieth-century war and technology stemmed from its assault on atmosphere rather than an individual target" (qtd in Abramson, 2015, p. 48). In the same way, it is not a single individual that suffers in the 'Time Passes' section – it is the general atmosphere of the house that has changed and suffered because of the war that we know is happening while the house is decaying. Yet, at the end of the second section,

there is also a positive affirmation (via a figure of an old woman, as I will demonstrate shortly in the next section) that things will endure.

In the third section, the sense of wonder has become something affirmative. For instance, Cam wonders in 'The Lighthouse',

> it was the sense of adventure and escape that she wanted, for she was thinking, as the boat sailed on, how her father's anger about the points of compass, James's obstinacy about the compact, and her own anguish, all had slipped, all had passed, all had streamed away. What then came next? Where were they going? […] an unthinking fountain of joy fell here and there on the dark […] (Woolf, 2016, pp. 213-214).

The unknowability of the future here has become exciting, as it is full of new possibilities. In this section, the joy and wonder of the unknown are most explicit. Lily too, "[sitting] alone among the clean cups at the long table felt cut off from other people, and able only to go on watching, asking, wondering" (Woolf, 2016, p. 166).

The curiosity and desire for the new is what has inspired Deleuzian readings of Woolf by Laci Mattison (2013), Beatrice Monaco (2008), and Derek Ryan (2013). Ryan (2013) reads grass and lawn in the third part as a specific place for the formation of these new possibilities and intimacies. He follows Deleuze and Guattari to suggest that the figure of the tree in *To the Lighthouse* is associated with Victorian conventions and Oedipal relations, whereas grass, which is dominant in the last section, is a rhizomatic assemblage of new possibilities. Ryan (2013) writes, following Deleuze, "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'" (pp. 84-85). He associates grass, a non-human 'thing', with inclusion, saying that "ultimately, her grass becomes an inclusive space in which no one is locked out or locked in" (Ryan, 2013, p. 85).[48] The emphasis on the inclusiveness of grass is what is relevant for my thinking here: grass, an outdoor space, can be seen as creating the ethical potential of

[48] A rhizome, Deleuze and Guattari explain in *A Thousand Plateaus*, "has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance…the fabric of rhizome is the conjunction, 'and…and…and…' … American literature, and already English literature, manifest this rhizomatic direction to an even greater extent; they know how to move between things, establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings" (2004, pp. 27-28). Rhizome, generally speaking, marks a relation that is unpredictable, changing, and open for freedom and possibilities.

wondering and wonder, which is clear in the third part where Lily stands on the grass, wonders about her friendship with William Bankes, her intimacy with the Ramsays and Mr Carmichael himself. The final 'The Lighthouse' part embraces this rhizomatic being most clearly, and moves away from Oedipal narratives (marriage, children, families, pairs) towards all kinds of affections. In addition, the children, as demonstrated already in the previous section, accept the fact that they can never fully know other people, including their father. This realisation does not, however, happen on the grass, but on the sea, where water itself might function as a symbol for movement and change. In other words, the 'The Lighthouse' part embraces the distance that is always present in intimacy, and finds joy and wonder precisely in not knowing, in continuing to wonder. Woolf makes that inclusion of distance apparent by focusing on spaces and 'things' outdoors: grass and the sea.

Wonder, then, functions as a positive affect in *To the Lighthouse* despite the fact that loss, and coming to terms with it, is a central topic explored in the novel. Jane Goldman (2015) examines various monographs that focus on loss in Woolf's fiction.[49] It is not my aim to undermine the relevance of these readings. However, I do want to stress that in one of her most elegiac novels, the sense of wonder is also prevalent, and, to an extent, loss creates the sense of wonder because characters are forced to wonder how to move on and be in the world after the loss. This new way of being, as we can see when comparing 'The Window' and 'The Lighthouse', often brings characters freedom, and with it, joy. In a sense, loss (perhaps also loss of good eyesight) triggers a scrutinising attention to the world; an attention, which can propel a new, more ethical way of being in the world. As Cristina Bacchilega (2014) puts it,

> it is our responsibility and privilege to attend to this insistent and emerging poetics and politics of wonder, one that questions established lines between history, fiction, and science, between the natural and the supernatural; one that embodies counterhegemonic perspectives; and does so to help us imagine and act together to bring about better futures (p. 14).

[49] Goldman examines *Hellenism and Loss in the Work of Virginia Woolf* (2011) by Theodore Koulouris, *Virginia Woolf and the Migrations of Language* (2011) by Emily Dalgarno, *Visuality and Spatiality in Virginia Woolf's Fiction* (2012) by Savina Stevanato, and Lecia Rosenthal's *Mourning Modernism: Literature, Catastrophe, and the Politics of Consolation* (2011).

A Desire to Create Something Permanent

There is a specific wonder in the novel through all the sections – a question about what will endure. This is not, however, a desire to have children and continue the familial bloodline but a more general desire for making sure that life itself endures. Lily wonders whether her painting will be hung in the attics, Mrs Ramsay wonders about human relationships and happiness, Mr Ramsay of his work, and interestingly, Mrs McNab in 'Time Passes' is the most metaphysical wonderer of them all. The general contemplation of what will last, however, is present also in 'The Window', and even here it is not an Oedipal desire to continue familial lines. Rather, it is a more general wonder about how life as such will last. For example, over dinner, someone pulls Mrs Ramsay back into conversation with the phrase "ah, but how long do you think it'll last?' […]" (Woolf, 2016, p. 118). Who asked this? How long will what last?

For Mrs Ramsay, it is a certain communal feeling that seems to last. It is after the dinner, after the candles have been lit and fruit arranged, that Mrs Ramsay is satisfied, when she looks at her children and thinks: "life stands still here" (2016, p. 31). Mrs Ramsay, like Lily at the end of the novel with her painting, has her vision at the end of the dinner, when people are brought together and embedded in common emotion. The dinner table again is the ultimate symbol of continuity for Mrs Ramsay:

> There it was, all round them […]; there is coherence in things, a stability; something, she meant, is immune from change, and shines out (she glanced at the window with its ripple of reflected lights) in the face of the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral, like a ruby; so that again tonight she had the feeling she had had once today already, of peace, of rest. Of such moments, she thought, the thing is made that remains for ever after. This would remain (Woolf, 2016, p. 116).

Here, for Mrs Ramsay, what matters and holds power against the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral is what Groover (2014) calls a 'family feeling' – the sense of community and warmth and belonging. Mrs Ramsay is assured that "they would, she thought, going on again, however long they lived, come back to this night; this moon; this wind; this house: and to her too" (Woolf, 2016, p. 125) – as indeed they do in the final section. Mrs Ramsay, going up the stairs, thinks,

> All that would be revived again in the lives of Paul and Minta […] 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 hers, were theirs, it did not matter whose, and Paul and Minta would carry it on when she was dead (Woolf, 2016, p. 126).

The community of emotion Mrs Ramsay thinks of is perhaps more a human and non-human assemblage than it is a certain family line that Mrs Ramsay desires to continue. Chairs, tables, maps, china, fruits, food – all everyday things, homely things at that, which will continue to exist and continue to bring communal feeling among people when families sit together with friends. Already, here, Mrs Ramsay herself does not list her self as the first thing that the characters at the dinner will come back to, but the non-human things that created the atmosphere – the moon, wind, the house, chairs, and maps. It is not her family or Minta and Paul's future family that Mrs Ramsay is necessarily concerned about continuing – it is life itself, which, of course is not entirely separate from human life.

Critics such as Ryan (2013), Mattison (2013) and Groover (2014) have noted that there is a certain dialogue between the human and the non-human scales of time and space. I would like to take this idea further by saying that the non-human and human entanglement is what triggers wonder and strange intimacy, and accordingly creates a sense of something permanent in the midst of the fleetingness of life. While 'The Window' and 'The Lighthouse' are centred around humans and their relations, 'Time Passes' gives voice to the large scales of non-human time and space, and asks what will endure:

> Only through the rusty hinges and swollen sea-moistened woodwork certain airs, detached from the body of the wind (the house was ramshackle after all), crept round corners and ventured indoors […] questioning and *wondering*, toying with the flap of hanging wall-paper, asking, would it hang much longer, when would it fall? [...] and questioning (gently, for there was time at their disposal) the torn letters in the wastepaper basket, the flowers, the books, all of which were now open to them and asking, Were they allies? Were they enemies? *How long would they endure*? (Woolf, 2016, pp. 140-141; emphasis mine).

The bracketed part about the house being ramshackle is a reminder of Mrs Ramsay's premonition in the first part. Through the narrative voice that represents the voice of the natural forces, which are also "wondering, questioning, toying" (Woolf, 2016, p. 140), the natural world and indoor furniture are brought together and the question is

asked whether they are allies. The narrative voice, through the outside world, seems to ask whether humans and all they have made will remain, or whether they have the resilience to remain against the forces of the 'natural' non-human world that is indifferent to human will.

Bearing in mind the analysis at the beginning of this chapter, wild nature and human-made furniture are rather like enemies in the first section of the novel, which is mostly mediated through Mrs Ramsay's consciousness. For instance, the world outside the window during the dinner is hostile, unknown, and dangerous. By the third section, however, they become more like allies. Cara Lewis (2014) argues that the sea wind asking the empty house in 'Time Passes' whether the objects will perish and fade introduces the inevitable decay of both the human and object worlds. Yet, this is not exactly the case when we follow the dialogue of the wild and human-made object-world, as, a little further on, the question whether still life will remain is answered:

> Loveliness and stillness clasped hands in the bedroom, and among the shrouded jugs and sheeted chairs even the prying of the wind, and the soft nose of the clammy sea airs, rubbing, snuffling, iterating, and reiterating their questions – 'Will you fade? Will you perish?' – scarcely disturbed the peace, the indifference, the air of pure integrity, as if the question they asked scarcely needed that they should answer: we remain (Woolf, 2016, p. 145).

Although it is slightly uncertain of whom and by whom the question is asked 'will you remain?', it seems as though it is indeed directed by the forces of nature to human-made still life. The latter confirms, and Woolf indicates that it is obvious, that it will remain, just like Mrs Ramsay thought it would.

The forces of nature and the sense of deep time are certainly dominant features of 'Time Passes' that have inspired many critical readings: for example, by Tung (2016) and Banfield (2003). Interestingly, there is still human consciousness present in 'Time Passes', without which, I suggest, the uttering of "we remain" (Woolf, 2016, p. 141) by the still life against the forces of nature would be impossible. The only humans mentioned outside the square brackets in 'Time Passes' are Mrs McNab and Mrs Bast, two elderly women, probably close to not 'enduring' much longer themselves. There is not much criticism focusing closely on these two figures, who are nevertheless very important to the narrative and the overall meaning of the novel. Julia Briggs (2005) stops at them briefly, seeing them

indeed as forces who breathe life back into the house. Briggs is interested in them from a class perspective, suggesting that they are working-class characters whom Woolf fails to depict realistically and instead creates stereotypes. Instead of focusing on their class only, I want to do something like Bennett does in *The Enchantment of Modern Life*: to pay attention to those characters who are seemingly not central to the story. I am interested in their relation to one another, and their relation to and entanglement with their surroundings: that is, with the decaying house of the Ramsay family.[50] I am, in other words, also interested in Mrs Bast and Mrs McNab as 'haecceities', in the entanglement of Mrs Bast and Mrs McNab and the house and everything that is in the house, and what can become of this entanglement.

Of the two, Mrs McNab is portrayed more intimately and accordingly provides a better ground for exploring her crucial impact on the house and the story *To the Lighthouse* tells us. Like the forces of nature, she wonders about the same question – what will endure?

> [this question] coming from a toothless, bonneted, care-taking woman, was robbed of meaning, was like the voice of witlessness, humour, *persistency itself, trodden down but springing up again*, so that as she lurched, dusting, wiping, she seemed to say how it was one long sorrow and trouble, how it was getting up and going to bed again, and bringing things out and putting them away again. It was not easy or snug this world she had known for close on seventy years. Bowed down she was with weariness. How long, she asked, creaking and groaning on her knees under the bed, dusting the boards, how long shall it endure? (Woolf, 2016, p. 146; emphasis mine).

A toothless, bonneted woman is herself a sign of a time that has passed – her bonnet, and also the fact that she, a woman, is taking care of and cleaning (someone else's) house, belong to a pre-war society. Having probably cleaned someone else's houses for her whole life, she still endures, and keeps enduring, creaking and groaning,

[50] Without reducing or belittling the class elements in this passage, I would like to consider this passage beyond that. Woolf as a white upper-middle-class woman who herself had servants writing about the enchantment and wonder surrounding her servants is of course problematic. Yet, Aberheen Hai (2015) has looked into intimacy between women and their servants in modernist fiction, and also points out female rather than male novelists focused on these domestic intimacies across hierarchies (servants and the family members). It is possible to see Woolf's writing about her servants as her choice to acknowledge the hard work they do for her. She gives immense importance to those two figures in *To the Lighthouse*, breathing life back into the Ramsay house which is undoubtfully the centre of the story, without which the story would not exist. Also, as Berlant and Stewart point out, we do not know what happiness means to other people. Thinking about working-class life and work as miserable is also patronising. Therefore, the portrayal of these two figures here is much more complex than Woolf being patronising as it demonstrates a certain respect and even intimacy she might have had towards people who worked (for her).

bowed down with weariness of day to day life. The 'it' that will endure in the quotation is possibly life and the world, and also perhaps the question about how long will female workforce cleaning someone else's house 'endure'. Perhaps the answer to the first part of the question is that life in some form or another will endure despite life itself; despite war, death, and the frustration of daily, repetitive activities, life itself endures in different shapes and forms over time, and the figure of a bonneted, elderly woman belonging to a time that has come to an end is an odd sign of the continuity of life. Mrs McNab is indeed a figure of persistency itself, springing up again from having been bowed down with weariness, attaching herself and the Ramsays, by enlivening their house, to life.

Life shall thus endure and remain, and Mrs McNab and Mrs Bast dust off the emptiness and bring human life back to the house, singing and working at the same time. It is Mrs McNab and Mrs Bast, themselves almost perished, who save the house from perishing. To come back to Bryony Randall's (2007) idea of the everyday as not a specific set of activities, but as a certain attention paid to life, Mrs McNab and Mrs Bast are important precisely not because of what they do, but because of the attention paid to what and how they do. The fact that Woolf chooses to focus on these figures and makes them the ones who breathe life back into the house is itself an ethical act of paying intimate attention to that which otherwise goes unnoticed – the daily labour of women. Even in the 'Time Passes' section then, the distant view of deep time and the space that is only full of indifferent forces of nature, is accompanied by that which is daily and near. Woolf in *To the Lighthouse* seems to suggest that life, when stretched out over time is either ungraspable for the human mind or is weariness and dull repetition, but certain intimate moments give meaning to existence. In the middle of the toils of their work, Mrs McNab and Mrs Bast drink tea, pick flowers, and chat. Although being bowed down with weariness, Mrs McNab

> stood and gaped in the glass, aimlessly smiling, and began again the old amble and hobble, taking up mats, putting up china, looking sideways in the glass as if, after all, she had her consolations, as if indeed there twined about her dirge some incorrigible hope. Visions of joy there must have been at the wash-tub, say with her children, at the public-house, drinking; turning over scraps in her drawers (Woolf, 2016, p. 147).

With Mrs McNab and Mrs Bast Woolf gives authority and influence to elderly women and to the activity of feminine caregiving and the power of the repetitive acts of daily lives. Woolf acknowledges the hardness of Mrs Bast and Mrs McNab's work and life, but she also tries to endow them with power in giving them joy and persistence. In fact, Woolf renders their work and being so powerfully that against chaos and war, it is the feminine labour of care and repetitive daily tasks that save the house, and what the house represents, from perishing. Accordingly, Woolf gives power and voice to that which we consider feminine and affective, that which is perhaps immanent to daily life.

Feminine, Affective Thinking-Wondering

Most of the positive things, including the sense of wonder in *To the Lighthouse*, are associated with women and femininity: for example, with Mrs Bast and Mrs McNab, who breathe life back in to the house; with Lily who follows her desire to paint; and with Mrs Ramsay, who manages to create moments that draw people together in intimacy, and who keeps the possibility of going to the lighthouse intact. Yet, not all men are evil and women good in *To the Lighthouse* (or elsewhere). Rather, Woolf offers us an examination of the complex ways in which masculinity and femininity manifest themselves in different characters and phenomena. For instance, Mrs Ramsay's views are also stagnantly patriarchal, imposing conventional gender roles on people around her, and men such as William Bankes, Mr Carmichael the poet, and young James exhibit qualities associated with femininity – consideration of others' feelings, passivity, and vulnerability. With the issues of gender in mind, the verb form of wonder becomes relevant for examining the feminine/masculine and other binaries related to it. As already mentioned above, w*o*ndering in *To the Lighthouse* is like w*a*ndering around, not physically, but mentally, in one's mind. As all the characters in their different ways do it, it complicates the binaries associated with masculinity and femininity. More precisely, it complicates the idea that women are inherently passive and feminine, and men inherently active and masculine. Wondering also complicates what activity and passivity entail. In her diary entry from 1939, Woolf notes "[t]his idea struck me: the army is the body; I am the brain. Thinking is my fighting" (1972, p. 285). And it is a specific, marvellous and enchanting kind of thinking, perhaps thinking-wondering, that is associated with

femininity, affect, and intimacy, and that is emphasised in *To the Lighthouse* and allows us to focus on the human and non-human entanglements, and various kinds of intimacies. In other words, the 'action' of wondering triggers the sense of wonder, which, accordingly, can have ethical implication because the sense of wonder enhances care towards the other and the surrounding environment.

Bennett (2001) suggests that thinking can lead to being enchanted. She challenges Kant's notion that thinking is a thoroughly rational enterprise, writing that "Kant was inattentive to this site of enchantment, for he pictured thinking as having a natural talent for order and a natural affinity for what is true" (p. 52). Instead, Bennett (2001) follows Deleuze because for him, thinking is enchanting,

> Deleuze figures thinking as a novelty machine, an arcanely complex, idiosyncratic machine out of which sometimes emerges a surprising idea, a weird alternative, an unsettling association. Thinking as a kind of bubbling limbus soup internal to human bodies. Out of thinking, enchanting novelties and strange becomings are always being born (p. 52).

For Bennett and Deleuze, it is our "senses that force us think" (Bennett, 2001, p. 53), and sense perception is enhanced by the material world and the attention humans pay to it. Thinking, then, is not a rationalising, calculating activity of the mind only, but also something that is enhanced and inspired by the senses and the body via contact with the external world. Enchanted thinking is Mrs Ramsay's musings about the core of the self, Mrs McNab's dusting and singing, and Lily's moments with her painting. It is not, however, Mr Ramsay and Charles Tansley's mode of thinking, which kills all joy and wonder.

Mrs Ramsay in particular, is attentive to daily life and domestic detail. To all this, to the daily activities, to flowers, to the material world, Mr Ramsay, and the masculine knowledge he represents, is ignorant. Mrs Ramsay wonders,

> All sorts of horrors, seemed not to depress him, but to cheer him […] indeed he seemed to her sometimes made differently from other people, born blind, deaf, and dumb, to the ordinary things, but to the extraordinary things, with an eye like an eagle's […] did he notice the flowers? No. Did he notice the view? No. (Woolf, 2016, p. 78).

Mrs Ramsay goes on to contemplate that if only Mr Ramsay was little more like other people (Woolf, 2016, p. 53), if he too could notice the ordinary things, both of them would perhaps be happier. As the narration progresses, the emphasis falls on the idea that because philosophy is so removed from daily life, as is the figure of Mr

Ramsay, William Bankes thinks that this was the reason why "the young don't read Carlyle. A crusty old grumbler who lost his temper if the porridge was cold, why should he preach to us?" (Woolf, 2016, p. 53). In the same way, Mr Ramsay loses his temper over an absurd detail when Mr Carmichael asks for another bowl of soup and feels like the whole world needs to stop and attend to him when he hurts his finger. Indeed, why should people follow ideas from philosophy that are so far removed from their experience and written by people ignorant of others and their feelings? These inner thoughts emphasise the idea that philosophy, or any knowledge, should grow from life and lived experience in the world among the human and non-human. It should be, as Cixous (1993) proposes, that the ladder of writing should not ascend but descend – it is not only transcendental heights that hold knowledge, but embodied, affective experience on the ground, among material beings and things.

Essentially, then, it is the understanding of thinking as merely rational that is questioned in Bennett and Deleuze, and Woolf draws attention to the gendered aspects of it. Bennett (2001) writes,

> a rationalizing culture encourages a particular style of thinking – the kind used in mathematics and scientific experimentation (that, unlike magic, is a "means of reliably controlling experience")[…] One learns to relate to things by seizing upon their structure or logic, upon the principle of their organization, rather than, say, by discerning their inherent meaning as parts of a cosmos or by engaging their sensuous appeal in a world alive with animate bodies large and small. To residents of a disenchanted world, there is a significant difference between what a thing is in experience and what can be done to it in principle […] in a disenchanting world, the principle of calculability tends to overrule, even if it does not always overpower, experience (p. 59).

In the same way, Mr Ramsay's and Charles Tansley's harsh remarks about the weather not being fine make James aware that "life is difficult; facts uncompromising […]" (Woolf, 2016, p. 6). Mr Ramsay's and Charles Tansley's calculated, rational view of the world kills the wonder that James feels about going to the lighthouse. Because these two men are "incapable of untruth; never tampered with fact; […]" (Woolf, 2016, p. 6), their declaration that there is no going to the lighthouse tomorrow with the wind "due west" (Woolf, 2016, p. 7) disenchants not only James's world but the world itself. Mrs Ramsay, of course, tries to keep James's wonder and joy that surrounds the trip alive by reassuring that there still is a

possibility of going, that "it may be fine" (Woolf, 2016, p. 6). It is, essentially, the clashing of these two worlds in *To the Lighthouse*: one enchanted, one disenchanted; one ruled by calculating and measuring the world around oneself, one by experience. It is the kind of thinking that leads to wonder, enchantment, and, accordingly, intimacy that is privileged in *To the Lighthouse*, and associated with femininity – the kind of thinking Mrs Ramsay practices in the lighthouse debate. In other words, what *To the Lighthouse* celebrates is, as Bennett (2001) puts it, "thinking [that is] a producer of that which could not be anticipated, [this kind of thinking] is a marvel" (p. 52). The kind of thinking that is privileged in *To the Lighthouse* is not thinking that leads necessarily to order and rationality, but to possibilities and marvel; the kind of thinking that acknowledges that no matter how much we measure the world, there will always be something mysterious the world has to offer, whether pleasant or not. It is a kind of thinking that is not concerned with knowledge and knowing, but acknowledging that various possibilities and forces exist. Thinking-wondering emphasises that *how we think* is more important than *what we know*. In other words, it is a kind of thinking that sees modern life as enchanting and puts (positive) feeling back into modernism.

This kind of enchanted thinking is that which Beatrice Monaco (2008) calls 'positive passive', and associates with femininity and affectivity.[51] The positive passive, according to Monaco, is a feminine way of being in *To the Lighthouse*. Monaco (2008) writes,

> The positive passive (or the action of the plane of immanence) is the force that enables life to function: in Bergsonian composite terms the positive passive is the relaxation as opposed to active contraction, the necessary counterbalance to extension. It is one of the dynamic dualities, and perhaps one of the most fundamental because it concerns forces of life. […] The force of the positive passive that is being set up by Woolf here, which applies to

[51] The active/ passive, masculine/ feminine binaries is a well-examined topic in Woolf's oeuvre in general and also particularly in *To the Lighthouse* via Mr and Mrs Ramsay. In "'Nothing is simply one thing': Woolf, Deleuze and Difference'" (2013), Monaco (2008) notes that "the study of the relationship of the Ramsays is now well-traversed thematic critical ground in Woolf studies, as are the strategies, both structural and symbolic, by which Woolf undoes the external 'masculine' world and shows us the view 'from below'" (p. 49). In *Machinic Modernism* (2008), she points out that "eminent readings of the novel tend to explore transcendent/immanent tension in terms of the strongly demarcated sexual roles of the central couple, Mr and Mrs Ramsay" (p. 23). She points to readings by Hermione Lee and Daniel Ferrer and departs from them, problematising "these readings somewhat by suggesting that the gender roles in the novel cannot be seen as nearly so clear cut (Monaco, 2008, 24). Indeed, the gender roles are not binary in *To the Lighthouse*; feminine is not intrinsic to women, and masculine to men. And the ability to wonder in both genders also complicates this binary.

> both the narrative and to people, is enormously important in the process of life in balancing the outward force of extension (that which constructs the world) with a restful gestational state of creation and difference (pp. 38-39).

Monaco associates the positive passive mostly with Mrs Ramsay, Lily, and Mr Carmichael and their silences, which mark the feminine, affective, and immanent knowledge or way of being. Monaco (2008) suggests that

> the novel is reconciling and validating the empirical epistemological enquiry concerning an alternative model of knowledge based on deferral, sense/intuition, and immanence (as opposed to transcendence) that has been occurring throughout […] As Mrs Ramsay knew, and Lily comes to know, wordless relationships can be the most profound (p. 50).

To add to that, the figures of Mrs McNab and Mrs Bast, especially the former, also represent the counterbalance to the active (masculine) ways of being. Mrs McNab, although actively working, is not active in a way that she is dominant, asserting, or fighting and winning wars. She works silently, occasionally singing or humming, and wonders about life and what remains. Owing to the silent, often invisible and unpaid work of women, the other characters are able to return, largely being drawn back by another figure who represents this positive passivity, who herself actively wonders and is wondered about – Mrs Ramsay.

Monaco (2008) explains the relevance of sensory, immanent, and affective experience in *To the Lighthouse* through three steps. She writes, "For Bergson, as for Mrs Ramsay, our important seeing and consciousness is through our bodies and senses, as much as it is through our eyes and intellect" (p. 44). Monaco (2008) links the sensory to the plane of immanence, which, accordingly, are, as she explains, related to "human experience in at least two ways: firstly, that the plane can be seen as a way of formalising or generating a model of what is otherwise known as intuition or instinct, and secondly, that it transmits information to us principally through our senses" (p. 27). The affective dimension of immanence, which Monaco opposes to transcendental (masculine) knowledge, is related to daily life and common human experience. Monaco (2008) suggests that through the plane of immanence, "liberated autonomy of consciousness" (p. 27) is achieved through three steps: firstly, through liberation from the Oedipal and homogeneous time and space (as we saw in the instances of strange intimacy between various characters through a complicated balance between distance and proximity, and also, importantly, in the ability to wonder about different ways of being); secondly, the narrative as liberated

from human activity (the world on non-human is crucial for the development of the plot); and thirdly, art as liberating, which happens through a female artist and creator (Lily, and through her, female desire can express alternative ways of being).[52] In other words, for a new, more liberated system of being in, and relating to the world, that which is feminine, sensuous, and material has to be acknowledged and embraced.

Woolf's writing in *To the Lighthouse*, Lily's painting, Mrs Ramsay's attention to personal detail, and Mrs McNab all represent the affective, feminine, and immanent way of being. As outlined in the introduction, this knowledge, or way of being in the world and relating to the world, or discursive mode, is searched for in many theories and concepts.[53] Gabriella Moise (2015) argues that in *To the Lighthouse*, "textual replicas highlight the underlying power of alternative expressive modes, resulting in alternative uses of language by the marginalised characters of the (female) painter, the androgynous poet, and Mrs Ramsay, the housewife" (p. 108). Along similar lines, many recent Deleuzian readings of Woolf examine the concept of becoming-woman and becoming-animal, to look at alternative ways of being and expressing oneself. These critics include Colebrook (2012, 2013), Ryan (2013), Mattison (2013), and Monaco (2008, 2013).[54] Their works depart from the psychoanalytical and Oedipal readings of *To the Lighthouse*, looking instead at Deleuzian philosophies of the self, subjectivity, desire, and becoming, to also search for alternative modes of reading, writing and being than those offered by traditional (masculine) discourses.

But why, then, should we associate that which is sensory, affective and material with femininity? As proposed in the introduction, and as is articulated throughout this thesis, embodied, sensory, and affective experiences are often associated with that which we see as feminine and are often considered of lesser value than abstract knowledge associated with the mind and masculinity. Although

[52] For a longer discussion of subjectivity, and planes of immanence and transcendence in Deleuze, see Monaco's *Machinic Modernism* (2008).
[53] These include the works of Hélène Cixous, Elizabeth Grosz, Luce Irigaray, Joanna Zylinska, Simon O'Sullivan, Rosi Braidotti, Jane Bennett, Kathleen Stewart and many other critics and philosophers associated with feminist, post-structuralist, new materialist, and affect studies. For a full list of these names, see the introduction to this thesis.
[54] For different explanations of what 'becoming-animal' and 'becoming-woman' are, see Elizabeth Grosz (1993), Derek Ryan (2013), and Claire Colebrook (2012, 2013).

the recent works on Woolf and Deleuze, brought together in the special issue of Deleuze and Guattari Studies in 2013, move somewhat beyond gender, the contributors to the issue still explore why gender-specific terms such as 'becoming-woman' were introduced in the 1970s and are still worked with today.[55] For example, Ryan (2013) writes about becoming-woman, saying that the term should

> 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 deterritorialization of subjectivity and the creation of 'molecular', multiplicitous, non-hierarchical attachments (p. 71).

'Molar' and 'molecular' are other concepts from Deleuze and Guattari that are aligned with 'majoritarian' and 'minoritarian' identities which I discussed in the introduction. Ryan stresses here again the central idea for this thesis from Deleuze and Guattari's work – that identities are not merely those 'molar' or 'majoritarian' identities of being a mother, a wife, a dinner host, but that identity that is 'minoritarian' and formed via various attachments to both human and non-human worlds. Because the first kinds of identities are associated with patriarchy and masculinity, Deleuze and Guattari use the term 'becoming-woman'. Catherine Driscoll (2000) too suggests that 'woman' stands for "an infinitive, a process or event, a speaking position perhaps but not an identity" (p. 80). In other words, femininity is that which is not yet explored and therefore allows to dwell on possibilities of different ways of being and living.

Hélène Cixous's work is of help when trying to understand what femininity implies in *To the Lighthouse*. In an interview with Henri Quere, published in English in 2008 in *White Ink*, Cixous explains, "when I talk of femininity in writing, or I use heaps of quotation marks, I speak of 'so-called feminine' writing. In any case, femininity – to define it – also exists in men, it does not necessarily exist in women" (p. 22). For Cixous (2008), femininity is

> a certain type of generosity, a certain type of capacity to expend without fear of loss, without calling loss 'loss', but rather what is situated in another system of values […] to lose could be a way of working with life […] there are a thousand ways of perceiving this style of behaviour which is in relation

[55] See Elizabeth Grosz's (1993), Derek Ryan's (2013) and Claire Colebrook's (2012, 2013) writings for further discussion on why the term 'becoming-woman' includes the word 'woman'.

> to a libidinal economy, that is to say with the conservation of the self, the expenditure of the self, the relation to the other (p. 22).

In short, the feminine is that which contains new possibilities because it represents a different set of values, including valuing the lived and embodied experiences and sensory and affective knowledge alongside that of intellectual and rational knowledge. To use Deleuzian explanations of becoming-woman, words 'woman' and 'feminine' allow for that which is not yet defined and thus leave open various possibilities, whereas 'man' and 'masculine' have been theorised and defined in strict terms. Another important idea from the aforementioned quotation by Cixous is that of loss. Cixous's focus on loss speaks also to *To the Lighthouse*, which, as an elegy, is concerned with loss. But this loss is not merely loss; it is also gaining something – a new possibility, a new freedom, a new way of life, especially for women. This is explicit in Lily being able to remain single and create her art. But the notion of loss as not purely negative is also more implicit in Mrs McNab, a toothless woman having lost her youth and with it many other things, still finds power and enchantment in life. What she has lost has also given her strength; there is inspiration in her weariness. And perhaps most poignantly, in losing Mrs Ramsay and her values (significantly, the oppressive side of these values), Lily gains her freedom.

Chaotic, Embodied Art

Cultivating the kind of feminine thinking-wondering which is rooted in embodied experiences is encouraged in *To the Lighthouse* through art, not through the discipline of philosophy. Lily's painting and Woolf's writing is affective, but in order for it to become affective that which is feminine has to be embraced, celebrated, and included. Only then can the atmosphere of wonder and strange intimacy emerge. Their art is an entanglement of the nearness/distance, femininity/masculinity, immanence/transcendence, and non-human/human binaries, where the left sides represent that which is feminine. Their art, in other words, makes order out of disorder without losing the sense of chaos the characters experience in the novel. In turn, they can enhance the sense of wonder and strange intimacy.

The final part of the novel emphasises that the atmosphere of wonder is often chaotic. In the same sense, what makes Bennett's modern world enchanting is not embracing the divine teleological order of the pre-modern world but paying attention

to enchantment that is available in the undesigned, chaotic universe (Bennett, 2001, p. 52). All characters in *To the Lighthouse* go through the chaos of war, and because of it, lose family members and friends. This chaos, however, is also a source of wonder, and Lily makes sense of this chaos largely through her art. Mattison (2013), explaining a Deleuzian notion of neo-Baroque within Woolf's work, looks at an event in Woolf's fiction through which she argues that

> chaos can be understood not as a contradiction to order and/or art, but as the originary material out of which order and art continually de- and re-compose. With this understanding, we recognize that art does not create order; rather, the modernist artist, through a creative vision, sees chaos and order as two sides of the same fabric (p. 97).

Similarly, Cixous writes in *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (1998) that all writing is originally disorderly, as is life, from which it springs. But then, "in a way, one cheats: one reassembles, pastes together, puts it all in order. That order doesn't come solely from outside, of course. What is order? It's a form hidden in disorder" (1998, p. 60). Thinking of Woolf, Mattison (2013) too argues that it is in the

> moments of creative vision, [that] the artist sees not order in contradiction to chaos, but as part of that same chaos, which can then be re-ordered through the unfolding of the fabric, so that a new order might rise to the surface (p. 99).

Indeed, Lily has her vision of a new order where all kinds of affections and friendships are embraced, and expresses this in her painting, which, we might assume, is chaotic with its green and blues and a line in the middle (Woolf, 2016, p. 235).

Having returned to the house, Lily muses in the final section of the novel: "'How 'you' and 'I' and 'she' pass and vanish; nothing stays; all changes; but not words, not paint" (Woolf, 2016, p. 201), after which she nevertheless thinks that it is not the painting *per se* that will remain, but rather what it attempts. What does the painting attempt, then, and what is it that will remain? Lily's eyes fill with tears at these thoughts, which are ultimately about Mrs Ramsay and how she, with her feminine, affective, short-sighted attention to domestic and personal detail created the moments in life that endured. Lily's thoughts here are rather nostalgic. After finishing *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf indeed was concerned that the novel was too sentimental. Julie Taylor (2015) draws attention to the tendency in both modernist writers such as T.S. Eliot, and also in critics writing about modernism, to associate

emotional writing with the Romantics, and sentimental literature as inferior literature aimed at female readers, whereas high-modernist form was free of (personal) feeling (p. 2). However, this is a false dichotomy, as Taylor (2015) points out. For example, for Adorno, "kitsch and sentimentality are problematic [but] embodied affect is quite central to his understanding of the aesthetic responses produced by modernist art" (p. 4).[56] What remains from Lily's painting is not necessarily the form of the painting but the affective registers the painting triggers as well as the lived experiences and personally felt emotions and feelings that initiated the painting. In other words, embodied affect is central to Lily's creation where form derives from life, and often from that which is affective, feminine, and personal in life.

Randi Koppen (2001) refers to how the idea for art often begins from an affect of a body, as Lily's tears are a reaction to thinking of Mrs Ramsay. Cixous expresses a similar idea of how form is created by affect which begins in the body. She writes in *Rootprints*: "Writing begins from the fingertips, from the body", which "also has a thing or two to say" (Cixous, 1997, p. 41). In the same sense, Lily also thinks that "it was a body feeling, not the mind" (Woolf, 2016, p. 200). Cixous suggests the answer is to listen to the experience that the body has received from living and sensing. Isn't Lily also listening to her body when she stands on the lawn, thinking of Mrs Ramsay, her friendship with William Bankes, and her strange, wordless connection to Mr Carmichael? Koppen reads Lily's stroking rhythm on canvas as a rhythm of a physical body. Yet, he fails to draw attention to Lily's specifically female body, and the different ways it experiences pleasure and how this difference is possibility differently registered in art. Lily is standing in front of the painting, remembering the words of Charles Tansley and thinking,

> Can't paint, can't write, she murmured monotonously, anxiously considering what her plan of attack should be. For the mass loomed before her; it protruded; she felt it pressing on her eyeballs. Then, as if some juice necessary for the lubrication of her faculties were spontaneously squirted, she began precariously dipping among the blues and umbres, moving her brush hither and thither […] as if it had fallen with some rhythm which was dictated to her […] by what she saw, so that while her hand quivered with life, this rhythm was strong enough to bear her along with its own current (Woolf, 2016, pp. 179-180).

[56] See Julie Taylor's introduction to *Modernism and Affect* (2015) for a longer discussion and more specific examples about the complex 'status' of affect and emotion in prominent modernist writers such as T.S. Eliot.

This passage is highly visceral – pressing on her eyeballs, lubrication of some faculties, dipping among blues and umbers, hand quivering with life – there is carnal pleasure in this passage. Although her hand quivering with life is opposed to the rhythm of art, which has its own current, the two are still connected. It is female desire that carries the new possibilities of both living and making art. The desire to live and express things in a new way, peculiar to one's own vision, not to that of tradition, which has been largely dominated by men, Lily thinks of her painting

> […] that was how Paunceforte would have seen it. But then she did not see it like that. She saw the colour burning on a framework of steel; the light of a butterfly's wing lying upon the arches of a cathedral […] (Woolf, 2016, p. 55).[57]

To put it differently, Lily's art comes from her chaotic lived experience, which, through painting becomes affective and impersonal, encouraging us to wonder about the painting, and what the painting aims to depict.

In Lily's tears, and in her passive anger against the canonical masculine way of painting, we see the melancholy and the revolutionary meeting – the passive becomes positive. In her use of her own, feminine, affective, and caring way of seeing and thinking, and in her being a woman living her life as she pleases, her art also includes a politically feminist statement. Goldman's 'From *Mrs Dalloway* to *The Waves*: New Elegy and Lyric Experimentalism' (2010) looks at the role emotion, subjectivity and poetry play in Woolf's formal aesthetics, and how her aesthetics reflect ethical, political, and historical issues and are not simply 'art for art's sake' (p. 50). Urmila Seshagiri (2004) makes a similar point about racial politics, with emphasis on Lily's 'Chinese' eyes. She suggests,

> privileging the completion of Lily's painting over mending broken familial structures, Woolf creates a racially differentiated model for modern English subjectivity that holds itself separate from patriarchal and imperialist hierarchies. Lily Briscoe's vision signals a new English femininity that, paradoxically, employs Orientalist creativity to conceive of itself apart from Englishness rooted in the colonialist domination of non-white races (p. 78).

As stressed, I do not agree that Woolf privileges art over family relations – she sees both as important. Yet, it is important to emphasise here the political aspects of

[57] Jane Goldman (1998) has written about the suffragist colour tropes and symbols in *To the Lighthouse*, and Woolf's references to the liberating potential her sister Vanessa Bell's art held for Woolf and how she depicted it through the figure of Lily.

Woolf's work. There are many other critical works on Woolf that examine the political aspect of her fiction, a tradition perhaps beginning with Jane Marcus's reading of *The Waves* (1931) in her 'Britannia rules *The Waves*' (1988), and its reconsideration in *Hearts of Darkness: White Women Write Race* (2004). Important for my point here is the fact that the concern with the political and social is, in other words, a concern with the lived experience of specific bodies of specific sex, gender, class, and ethnic background. It is thus Lily's, a woman's, fight against the patriarchal tradition.

The affective, immanent and daily dimension of the material world becomes most clearly articulated by Lily's thoughts and her desire to express the intimate atmosphere in her art that Mrs Ramsay created:

> But what she wished to get hold of was that very jar on the nerves, the thing itself before it has been made anything […] it was a miserable machine, an inefficient machine, she thought, the human apparatus for painting or for feeling; it always broke down at the critical moment; heroically, one must force it on (Woolf, 2016, p. 218).

Does Lily wish here to get to affect, to a root of emotion before it is emotion, before it has been given a name? Cixous writes in 'Love of the Wolf' (1998) that,

> one day […] it was decided to call love a set of strange, indescribable physical phenomena, is it pain? – but from the moment that the name is given to that burning in one's breast, the violence of the strangeness is interrupted and the ancient horror, hidden behind the new word, begins to be forgotten. Let's go back to before language […] (p. 112).

Although in the quotation about Lily it was not intimacy or love she was agonising about specifically, Cixous's idea still speaks to Lily's concern – how do we get to the root of various feelings and by which means can we express them? It is a well-established view in criticism on Woolf that her textual silences and her use of visual aesthetics is her way of demonstrating the shortcomings of language.[58] Perhaps for the same reason, Lily's medium is paint not words.

Although Lily is aware how humans are incapable of fully capturing the thing itself, or the root of feeling, she nevertheless forces it on in her art, realising, like Mrs Ramsay did, and as Monaco points out, that the most profound form of connection resides in silence. Just as Mrs Ramsay loses herself in moments of

[58] See Patricia Laurence (1991) and Makiko Minow-Pinkney (1987), for instance.

silence by herself in 'The Window', Lily loses herself when she paints, for "certainly she was losing consciousness of outer things" (Woolf, 2016, p. 180):

> And now she had put [her brush] right, and in so doing had subdued the impertinences and irrelevances that plucked her attention and made her remember how she was such and such a person, had such and such relations to people, she took her hand and raised her brush [...] Here she was again, she thought, stepping back to look at it, drawn out of gossip, out of living, out of community with people into the presence of this formidable ancient enemy of hers – this other thing, this truth, this reality, which suddenly laid hands on her, emerged stark at the back of appearances and commanded her attention (Woolf, 2016, pp. 178-179).

This passage brings to mind Simon O'Sullivan's idea that in art, and precisely in affective art, we lose our subjectivity. Lily's painting does not depict concrete objects or scenes. It is abstract; it plays with impressions and feelings. Lily's painting breaks with the tradition and conservative forms. In the above quotation, the embodied nature of affect is also explored – although it may seem that art requires, or encourages, leaving our bodily selves and daily lives behind, as Lily felt that

> before she exchanged the fluidity of life for the concentration of painting she had a few moments of nakedness when she seemed like an unborn soul, a soul reft of body, hesitating on some windy pinnacle and exposed without protection to all the blasts of doubt (Woolf, 2016, p. 179).

This loss of subjectivity is indeed tied to the loss of a body, meaning that our body and its relation to other bodies and environments makes us who we are. If we lose our body momentarily, we also lose our self. But we also find ourselves anew after emerging back to the level of daily experience.

The affective art that begins from the body, and from the root of emotion, embeds disorder in which order is hidden, and in which the binaries entangle and add to one another. To put it differently, art that takes into account lived, embodied experience has to be somewhat chaotic because lived experience too is chaotic. In a similar way, the colours in Lily's painting are entangled: "all its green and blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something" (Woolf, 2016, p. 235). In the novel's final part, although the order that the pre-war society held is lost, and the orderly gender roles are no longer in place, there is freedom and new order in this seeming disorder, in these human and non-human assemblages. Selves are not formed according to a role assigned to one through Oedipal relations (a mother, a

wife) but through being mingled with life of all sorts. Throughout the novel, however, that which remains and endures is the intimate act of care towards the other, the curiosity to know the other and be intimately attached to the world. In other words,

> It was love, [Lily] thought, pretending to move her canvas, distilled and filtered; love that never attempted to clutch its object; but, like the love which mathematicians bear their symbols, or poets their phrases, was meant to be spread over the world and become part of the human gain. So it was indeed. The world by all means should have shared it, could Mr Bankes have said why that woman pleased him so; why the sight of her reading a fairy tale to her boy had upon him precisely the same effect as the solution of a scientific problem, so that he rested in contemplation of it, and felt, as he felt when he had proved something absolute about the digestive system of plants, that barbarity was tamed, the reign of chaos subdued (Woolf, 2016, p. 54).

It is love, but not a conventional love, but a kind of impersonal, yet strange, intimate feeling as one would have for a painting, that is enhanced by the freedom to live as one pleases that subdues the seeming chaos. If in 'The Window', it seemed as if intimacy only exists in familial forms, then 'The Lighthouse' makes explicit that intimacy also grows from creating art and diverse non-romantic friendships. Lily, with her certain foreignness, her artistry, and her freedom, creates these new ways of being, taking something from Mrs Ramsay, but perhaps directing the affective, feminine care towards new possibilities beyond Oedipal frames. With an intimate attention to the strange workings of human intimacy and human entanglement with the non-human, *To the Lighthouse* creates an atmosphere of constant wondering and strange intimacy. Accordingly, it enchants both its characters and its readers. In the 'The Lighthouse' section, Lily realises that Mrs Ramsay, the mother-figure, was central to the atmosphere of belonging and family feeling all characters despite their differences felt at the dinner in the Window section. Lily also realises, however, that a communal feeling, or a sense of being embedded in the world, does not only come from the familial relations that Mrs Ramsay praised, but also from various kinds of affections and attachments to both human and non-human life.

Instead of exploring grand narratives of intimacy, *To the Lighthouse* explores "unclassified affections of which there are so many" (Woolf, 2016, p. 115), and which can come across as strange. For instance, Lily as a single female artist, valuing the non-romantic friendship of William Bankes as one of the greatest

pleasures of her life, renders different the means by which intimacy is achieved and understood (Woolf, 2016, p. 215). The story in 'The Lighthouse' is mediated through Lily's consciousness which shifts towards different shapes of love and intimacy, for "love had a thousand shapes" (Woolf, 2016, p. 217). There is no longer just one shape of love dominating: the domestic and romantic love, but different affections and shapes of love and the different shapes a person can wear (Woolf, 2016, p. 219), are taken into account. These affections indeed include conventional models of intimacy, but always expose that these intimacies contain something odd, which is mostly non-human. In the end then, what remains is the sense of wonder about the realisation that intimacy has many chaotic forms.

Chapter Two

A 'whizzing, whirring, buzzing' history in *Between the Acts*

They were talking – not shaping pellets of information or handling ideas from one to another, but rolling words, like sweets on their tongues; which, as they thinned to transparency, gave off pink, green, and sweetness.

Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts*

In *Between the Acts* (1941), Woolf gives the reader both the Woolf of *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and the Woolf of *Orlando* (1928) – she mixes poetic, abstract musings with mischievous humour and playful sensations. In Woolf's final novel, we see the continuation of many themes explored in *To the Lighthouse,* such as the role of family and marriage, women's freedom, and the importance of art and female artists, but here, as in the opening quotation, the air the novel gives off, even if mixed with the terror of the coming war, is that of sweetness and pleasure. Knowledge here is certainly not Mr Ramsay's disenchanted reasoning, but something that is felt in character's bodies; language in this novel is not a tool to communicate abstract ideas but to express what it feels like to have a body, be alive, and acknowledge other bodies. Woolf's attention to sensations in her last novel is explicit:

> [Mrs Manresa] looked before she drank. Looking was part of drinking. Why waste sensation, she seemed to ask, why waste a single drop that can be pressed out of this ripe, this melting, this adorable world? Then she drank. And the air round her became threaded with sensation. Bartholomew felt it; Giles felt it. Had he been a horse, the thin brown skin would have twitched, as if a fly had settled. Isabella twitched too. Jealousy, anger pierced her skin (Woolf, 2000, p. 36).

Here, Woolf takes further the idea of a future of freedom for women; here, Woolf gives her female characters bodies that desire, sense, and indulge without shame. *Between the Acts* is the most sensual of Woolf's novels, and it is so without guilt. In this novel, we see many instances where an affective thread hangs between bodies, and sometimes violently draws them together as "all was sun now" and "their mind and bodies were too close, yet not close enough" (Woolf, 2000, p. 41). The idea that they are physically very close to one another in heat, but yet feel that they are not

close enough, echoes the distance and proximity debate explored in the previous chapter – physical closeness does not necessarily provide grounds for (ethical) intimacy in Woolf's novels. *Between the Acts*, like *To the Lighthouse*, is concerned with what intimacy is, but in a more communal sense of the word. The otherwise sensual, pleasurable novel is haunted by a phrase "dispersed are we" (Woolf, 2000, p. 59, p. 60, p. 63, p. 116, etc.), a slightly more positive version of *To the Lighthouse's* "we perish, each alone" (Woolf, 2016, p. 167, p. 186, p. 215, etc.). Against perishing alone, and against being dispersed, Woolf gives us a hot summer evening splashed with refreshing rain, a scenic old house, and cows, and, above all, she gives us ordinary people, sharing a common present moment. In this novel, Woolf explicitly asks her readers to pay attention to that which her characters share in space and time, not to the differences between them, because common place and time seems to be the one thing that creates some sense of togetherness and meaning in the world that is otherwise "scraps, orts and fragments" (Woolf, 2000, p. 112).

In what follows, I begin by exploring various intimacies that attach people to one another and to life. I explain how we can distinguish between at least two types of intimacies in the novel: one more physical and 'fleshly'; and the other more poetic. I then show how intimacy is often atmospheric and therefore not merely human. I then explore how, via these strange intimacies, *Between the Acts* offers a Cixousian sense of history: not a linear narrative of great men's lives, but "time's horizon line" (Cixous, 2009, p. 11), a here and now shared by common people, where what Gilles Deleuze terms as 'a life' is laid out. I suggest that Woolf's version of history and Englishness can be understood with Deleuze's concept of 'a life', as this allows us to see history as 'a history', and Englishness as not a fixed identity but something fluid, depending on a present moment shared with specific people, and the intimacies that "tingle and tangle" (Woolf, 2000, p. 12) in that moment. I follow Lauren Berlant to suggest that Woolf's sense of historical time is affective. I also demonstrate how we can distinguish between two versions of Englishness, and why in Woolf, and in various readings of her works, the affective version of Englishness and history writing is associated with femininity. Finally, I explore how in *Between the Acts* a Cixousian affective language, or what Gillian Beer (1993) calls "earth-bound and sacred" language (p. 3), is evoked to emphasise the idea that humans, as well as non-humans, are embedded in the material world they share together, and

how this creates a historical affective present moment. Via this language, history and Englishness also become an intimate and strange wire that attaches people to one another and to their environment.

Tingling, Tangling, Vibrating Intimacy

Intimacy in *Between the Acts* is a network, a wire between bodies that draws them together. *Between the Acts* is void of figures like Charles Tansley in *To the Lighthouse* who "with his acid way [peels] the flesh and blood off everything", indicating that his cold reasoning kills the joy of being alive and experiencing sensations (Woolf, 2016, p. 10). In Woolf's final novel, on the contrary, Mrs Manresa has "complete faith in flesh and blood [...]. And aren't we all flesh and blood? And how silly to make bones of trifles when we're all flesh and blood under the skin – men and women too!" (Woolf, 2000, p. 26). Similarly, the elderly siblings of the Oliver family – Lucy Swithin and Bartholomew Oliver – represent quite different worldviews as I will show later, but are nevertheless united by blood. Woolf writes, "brother and sister, flesh and blood was not a barrier, but a mist. Nothing changed their affection; no argument; no fact; no truth. What she saw he didn't; what he saw she didn't – and so on, *ad infinitum*" (Woolf, 2000, p. 18). We may think, in line with the general ambivalence of this novel, that this can also indicate the danger of fascism, of celebrating a certain kind of blood and flesh. Yet, Mrs Manresa, a stranger to the family, musing about how all are flesh and blood, and beneath our differences, people are the same, places emphasis on the fact that our bodies, very generally speaking, are all human flesh and blood. Because "family is not a family in the presence of strangers" (Woolf, 2000, p. 31), *Between the Acts* entertains the idea that ethical relations within familial ties are possible, first, because family members are also infinitely and radically other to one another, as I already demonstrated in the previous chapter. Jessica Stiff Berman (2004) has written about Levinasian ethics in Woolf's *The Waves* (1931) and how Woolf, like many feminist critics, renders different, Levinasian ideas about the ethics of care and radical alterity. Where Levinas sees familial relations as void of ethics and radical alterity, Woolf places emphasis on the ethical potential of close relations. The relation between Bart and Lucy, for instance, is an example of that. Despite their differences, they find a way of caring for one another.

Second, and more importantly for this chapter, flesh and blood is important because it allows the bodies to experience sensation that can draw those bodies together. From this approach, intimacy too becomes something bodily and sensational. In this model, intimacy is almost the same as desire – intimacy does not assume an in-depth knowledge of another person but a simple desire to know another person in the shared time and space in *Between the Acts*.[59] Woolf creates an image of physical sensation when dwelling on characters' desires. Isa, for example, "drew the comb through the thick tangle of hair" (Woolf, 2000, p. 11), and then

> she returned her eyes in the looking-glass. 'In love,' she must be; since the presence of [Rupert Haines's] body in the room last night could so affect her; since the words he said, handing her a teacup, handing her a tennis racquet, could so attach themselves to a certain spot in her; and thus lie between them like a wire, tingling, tangling, vibrating – she groped, in the depths of looking-glass, for a word to fit the infinitely quick vibrations of the aeroplane propeller that she had seen once at dawn at Groydon. Faster, faster, faster, it whizzed, whirred, buzzed […] (Woolf, 2000, p. 12).

We see here how love, or passion, or some sort of affect – the wire "tingling, tangling vibrating" (Woolf, 2000, p. 12) – is exactly what encircles people and forms a string between them. It is not something that is simply attached to two people and can be expressed in one word, but it includes others, and things like grass, teacups and tennis rackets. It might be interesting to consider here that modern tennis comes from England, but the origins of the game are also in France. Tea, in the same way, is considered a very English beverage although largely imported from Asia, Africa, and India. Perhaps the objects that 'hold' Isa's desire towards Mr Haines then indicate that this desire is not exactly proper according to Victorian courtship values.

To express the bodily nature of modern desire and intimacy, the narrative voice needs a contemporary object, such as an aeroplane propeller. Gillian Beer (1987) writes that "*Between the Acts* opens with the new aerial perspective of the aeroplane, which unmasks history never before observed in the landscape".[60] Perhaps an aeroplane propeller as a symbol of desire also indicates that we see desire

[59] For these reasons, I will treat desire and intimacy as almost equivalents in this chapter. The intimate atmosphere in *Between the Acts* is an atmosphere loaded with desiring – desire seems to create intimacy, and this strange intimacy seems to create more desire, but not simply desire as a sexual desire for another person, but desire as such – desire for drinking water, for poetry, for looking at the view. See the introduction for a longer discussion about desire.

[60] See her review of monographs on Woolf: https://www.lrb.co.uk/v09/n08/gillian-beer/what-about-the-aeroplanes

as it has not been seen before because of courtship conventions wherein the man is the active part, expressing a desire for a woman, women's desire has normally been repressed.[61] To express this, Woolf chooses a modern technological object such as an aeroplane propeller to draw an image of desire and intimacy. This might indicate that desire and intimacy cannot be understood in conventional (Victorian) models of courtship anymore, and that women, too have desire.

In this sense, Isa's feeling towards Rupert Haines, the gentleman farmer, is not very different from what goes on between Mrs Manresa and Isa's husband, Giles Oliver. Isa, seemingly the opposite of "over-sexed" (Woolf, 2000, p. 27) Mrs Manresa, experiences passion with and towards the gentleman farmer just like Mrs Manresa experiences it towards and with Isa's husband. For example, Mrs Manresa "looked over her coffee cup at Giles, with whom she felt in conspiracy. A thread united them – visible, invisible, like those threads, now seen, now not, that unite trembling grass only, at cricket match" (Woolf, 1941, p. 36). And Isa has this silent thread hanging between her and Mr Haines, the gentleman farmer as "in his ravaged face she always felt mystery; and in his silence, passion" (Woolf, 1941 p. 6). Just as Isa is aware of the affect between her husband and Mrs Manresa, so "Mrs Haines was aware of the emotion circling [her husband and Isa], excluding her. She waited, as one waits for the strain of an organ to die out before leaving church" (Woolf, 2000, p. 6). Both Mrs Manresa and Isa are aware of their own desire. There is perhaps a slight difference in the fact that Manresa is more explicit in her sexuality and desire. It is interesting here also to note that Mrs Manresa looks at Giles "over her coffee cup" (Woolf, 2000, p. 36), while it is the teacup Mr Haines hands to Isa (Woolf, 2000, p. 12) – tea, although not from England, is something very English, while coffee is more continental or American. Perhaps this indicates that Isa's desires are still more like the Victorian courtship– reserved, suppressed, conventional, while Mrs Manresa, with her coffee cup, signals a more liberal look on desire.

[61] Many critics acknowledge Woolf's fascination with technology and the opportunities, as well as catastrophes, it might bring. Technology is sometimes associated with fascism in *Between the Acts*. See for example Michele Pridmore-Brown's '1939-40: Of Virginia Woolf, Gramophones, and Fascism' (1998). Other times, however, it is associated with new possibilities and feminism: for example, in Gillian Beer's chapter in *Virginia Woolf* (1992), 'The Island and the Aeroplane: The Case of Virginia Woolf'.

Importantly, these desires create an atmosphere that extends beyond Mrs Manresa and Isa. Towards the end of the novel, Isa sees "Giles attached to Mrs Manresa" (Woolf, 2000, p. 123) until Mrs Manresa drives away in the car. What binds many characters in *Between the Acts* together is the largely bodily sensation that creates intimacy – shared space and time that is filled with shared affect. It is not just Giles and Mrs Manresa who are involved in this charged atmosphere, but Isa too sees them attached to one another. Earlier, the narrator wonders, when Mrs Manresa sips from her coffee-cup, "Then she drank. And the air round her became threaded with sensation. Bartholomew felt it; Giles felt it. Had he been a horse, the thin brown skin would have twitched, as if a fly had settled. Isabella twitched too. Jealousy, anger pierced her skin" (Woolf, 2000, p. 36). The reader too can almost feel this, or can at least very well imagine the feeling of a fly settling on her skin and the sensation, the goose bumps it produces on the body. In order to feel this sensation then, having a body is essential. At the centre of this shared affect seems to be Mrs Manresa; perhaps she is the body here that affects other bodies the most – producing pleasurable sensations in men and jealousy and anger in Isa. All people involved can feel it because they are embodied in a shared moment in the same place, sensing and desiring. Similarly, towards the end of the novel, Isa thinks again about Rupert Haines and "the flesh poured over her, the hot, nerve wired, now lit up, now dark as the grave physical body" (Woolf, 2000, p. 123). The words such as 'nerve wired', 'hot', 'physical body', and 'attached', all create an intense atmosphere of strange intimacy that is full of desire; an atmosphere that is not just involving two people between whom this particular wire might hang, but something that charges all characters. This can be seen as strange intimacy, because odd people, strangers, are drawn together by nothing else than being made of flesh and blood, and inhabiting the same place and time, which because of their affectively charged encounter, also binds them together momentarily.

The passage when Mrs Manresa drinks coffee is loaded with brief physical intimacy, but it is not intimacy in the sense of having knowledge of another person. Despite the fact that no one involved knows anything 'substantial' about her,

> Her hat, her rings, her finger nails red as roses, smooth as shells, were there for all to see. But not her life history. That was only scraps and fragments to all of them, excluding perhaps William Dodge, whom she called 'Bill' publicly – a sign perhaps that he knew more than they did. Some of the

> things that he knew – that she strolled the garden at midnight in silk pyjamas, had the loud speaker playing jazz, and a cocktail bar, of course they knew also. But nothing private; no strict biographical facts (Woolf, 2000, p. 26).

Mrs Manresa's life history is just scraps and fragments to everyone in the present moment. That does not mean, however, that Mrs Manresa is unknowable. On the contrary, the sensational, affective knowledge is also an important way of knowing. Oddly enough, it is William Dodge who seems to know Mrs Manresa beyond her fingernails. Dodge, who is a natural conspirator of Lucy and Isa, sharing poetic musings and peaceful, non-sexual wondering with them (as I will show shortly), is also intimate with someone who seems to present values opposite to him. Intimacy in *Between the Acts* can be formed between unexpected pairs: between Mrs Manresa and Dodge, and between the people on the terrace, feeling Mrs Manresa's very bodily presence.

A similar strangely intimate, albeit suffocating, wire hangs between the pageant audience. Before the play starts and when the audience assembles,

> They were silent. They stared at the view, as if something might happen in one of those fields to relieve them of the intolerable *burden of sitting silent*, doing nothing, in company. Their minds and bodies were too close, yet not close enough. We aren't free, each one of them felt separately, to feel or think separately, nor yet to fall asleep. We're too close; but not close enough. They fidgeted. The *heat had increased*. The clouds had vanished. *All was sun now*…the cows were motionless; the brick wall, no longer sheltering, *beat back grains of heat* (Woolf, 2000, p. 41; emphasis mine).

Like in the above passages, characters experience the uncomfortable togetherness, and this is expressed in narrative by the increase of heat and silence. [62] Like in the boat in *To the Lighthouse*, and like the motor car incident in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), silence combined with heat are familiar techniques Woolf uses to draw attention to the invisible threads that pull people together. Woolf's interest in silence in writing in *Between the Acts* serves as a technique, especially when coupled with heat, to create a strangely intimate atmosphere in which her characters are absorbed. The violence in *Between the Acts* is not just that of the rape that happened in London (Woolf, 2000, p. 15), or that of fascism, war, and patriarchy, but the violence of having a body that senses and forms invisible yet strongly felt threads with other

[62] Woolf is known to be a great novelist of silence, as Patricia Ondek Laurence and Mark Hussey (2012) note among many other critics. For a longer discussion of different layers of silence, see Laurence's *The Reading of Silence: Virginia Woolf in the English Tradition* (1991).

bodies. Threads, which sometimes indeed may lead to actual violence such as rape, or war.

Within this atmosphere wherein characters feel the presence of other bodies acutely, it is possible to distinguish at least two versions of intimacy and desire that sometimes melt into one another: one that is explicitly physical, fleshly, and almost violent, as in the above passages; and the other more poetic, peaceful, and perhaps less bodily. Among the more explicitly bodily and romantic desires and intimacies, there are also more poetic desires and intimacies, like those between Isa and Dodge, and Lucy and Dodge, and Mrs. Sands and Isa, which nevertheless also depend on the material world around the people involved. These intimacies are, in a sense, less violent and resemble the intimacy in *To the Lighthouse*. These intimacies offer a more peaceful and intuitive way of being drawn together. For example, "Mrs. Sands fetched bread; Mrs. Swithin fetched ham. One cut the bread; the other the ham. It was soothing, it was consolidating, this handwork together" (Woolf, 2000, p. 23). Here, the cutting of bread and ham binds them together. It is not just them, but something external, non-human, that allows the affect to emerge between them. This is also true of other instances: for example, Isa and Dodge establish an intimacy with their common interest in art and literature:

> 'I had a father,' said Dodge beneath his breath to Isa who sat next him, 'who loves pictures.' 'Oh, I too!' she exclaimed. Flurriedly, disconnectedly, she explained. She used to stay when she was a child, when she had the whooping cough, with an uncle, a clergyman; who wore a skull cap; and never did anything; didn't even preach; but made up poems, walking in his garden, saying them aloud.
> 'People thought him mad,' she said. 'I didn't…' (Woolf, 2000, p. 33).

Dodge's father and Isa's uncle are also included in this intimacy. It is also, importantly, literature and stories that bind them, songs and words murmured from the past, carried on to them by 'odd' relatives. Perhaps this highlights the fact that intimacies within families are more ethical when they are not simply there because of blood ties, but because there is something common, an external interest not an internal bloodline, that they share. In another instance in the greenhouse, Isa and Dodge have the external world around them from which they are apart, sitting under vine leaves, putting flowers in each other's pockets. And

> then they talked as if they had known each other all their lives; which was odd, she said, as they always did, considering she'd known him perhaps one

> hour. Weren't they, though, conspirators, seekers after hidden faces? That confessed, she paused and wondered, as they always did, why they could speak so plainly to each other. And added: '*Perhaps because we've never met before, and never shall again*' (Woolf, 2000, p. 70; emphasis mine).

We do not learn about the things they speak of exactly, but we know there is an intimacy between them. This intimacy is cultivated precisely because they are strangers and shall never meet again; there is an odd distance between them that creates proximity and allows them to be intimate. After Isa's claim that their intimacy is driven by their strangeness, the sound of someone practising for the play reaches the greenhouse, for they had left the door open, and Dodge is then reminded of the "doom of sudden death hanging over us" (Woolf, 2000, p. 70). They continue to sit, but the intimacy in the greenhouse is not the same because their present moment is interrupted by the voices that come in from the world outside that they are only half part of now, with the open door being the connection. There is, in a sense, a future interrupting of their intimacy which is rooted in present moment and place.

Earlier, Lucy and Dodge experience a similar moment when Lucy shows Dodge the house. In a way, all these strange pairs of intimacies exist in a different time – they exist in-between; they resist time, slow time down, and they seem to exist outside what is happening in the surroundings. For instance, Lucy and Dodge see from the house that "the audience was assembling. But they, looking down from the window, were truants, detached. Together they leant half out of the window" (Woolf, 2000, p. 45). They are only half part of the assembling audience, drawn together by Miss La Trobe's art and a story of English history, which is, in itself already an alternative to the grand historical narrative. But the intimacy they experience outside the pageant is even more radical break in the history offered by books than that offered by the pageant and Miss La Trobe: Lucy and Dodge are indoors (just like Isa and Dodge were in the greenhouse), separated by others, forming odd intimacy by choice, coming together by their own initiative. The audience, although also there to see the pageant voluntarily, are drawn together by Miss La Trobe, the playwright. Lucy and Dodge are half detached from this, half out of the window, half part of the audience. These various moments of strange intimacy and desire are moments when characters are willingly embedded in the present moment, where time slows down and they are able to see what goes on around them from a certain distance, allowing space for critical evaluation, perhaps – hence

Dodge's sense of doom and the future crashing into present in the greenhouse. All these intimacies, whether romantic or non-romantic, form larger nets of intimacies, including teacups, tennis rackets, fingernails, straw hats, and grass. Intimacy of any sort in *Between the Acts* is not something that simply happens to two human individuals, but is something that happens in between them where the external world of things, animals, and nature is as important as the two or more people involved.

Intimacy in *Between the Acts* is a network, or a wire, tingling, tangling, vibrating, whizzing, whirring, buzzing. Woolf explains how human bodies experience it while also indicating that it cannot be understood in solely human terms; hence the aeroplane propeller metaphor to explain what intimacy and desire feel like in Isa's body, and the animal references when the characters see and feel Mrs Manresa sipping her coffee in heat. It is also a more poetic, intellectual encounter between Isa and Dodge, and Lucy and Dodge. Intimacy in *Between the Acts* is like how Cixous writes in *Rootprints*:

> If one could x-ray-photo-eco-graph a time, an encounter between two people of whatever sex they might be, by some extraordinary means; and if one could consume the radiation of this encounter in a transparent sphere, and then listen to what is produced in addition to the exchange identifiable in the dialogue – this is what writing tries to do: to keep the record of these invisible events […] all that will not have been pronounced but will have been expressed with means other than speech – that can be taken up in the web of writing (1997, p. 48).

Between the Acts too captures "a radiation of this encounter" (Cixous, 1997, p. 48) and that which goes on in silence (and heat) in these encounters and is not expressed in dialogue. While Cixous wishes we had a means to "x-ray-photo-eco-graph" (1997, p. 48) to capture the intimacy that happens in an encounter, Woolf similarly uses an object that is 'possible' because of technological progress to capture the nature of (modern) desire and intimacy that tingles, tangles, and buzzes.

More Than Human Intimate Atmosphere

Choosing an aeroplane propeller as a symbol of desire and intimacy indicates that intimate atmospheres do not simply emerge between humans, but that an intimate atmosphere is dependent on humans being embedded in the external world – hence the importance of the heat of summer days, of various objects, and the sensation of

coffee. Within these moments, desire it is not necessarily personal, and not necessarily directed towards humans, although it sometimes is. Isa desires Mr Haines not just as Mr Haines but who Mr Haines is in particular situations and settings, which are all made up of the non-human world. Because desire is not always personal, it does not tie characters simply to one another but to life. As already stressed in the introduction, and as demonstrated by exploring the desire to create something that lasts in *To the Lighthouse*, desire in Woolf's work, and other works explored in this thesis, is not simply human. Claire Colebrook (2012) writes that, "desire is not some human set of embodied interests that must be repressed or articulated through language; desire is the multiplicity of forces of life as such, which is diminished and impoverished when represented as human" (p. 67). Seeing desire as not just human might also be the reason why Woolf gives us the aeroplane propeller as a symbol for intimacy and desire, and why this tingling and tangling wire then hangs not just between Isa and Mr Haines, and Gilles and Mrs Manresa, but between the objects they share, the environment they inhabit, and the other characters they share space and time with.

I established in the previous chapter that characters, especially Mrs Ramsay and Lily, are haecceities in the Deleuzian sense. Here, we too see how characters' selves are created in the moments they experience within their environment with other people. However, it is not individual characters that Woolf explores here primarily, but rather the non-human atmosphere and through that, the historical moment they share. Quite early in the novel, Lucy Swithin thinks: "'But we have other lives, I think, I hope,' she murmured. 'We live in others, Mr…We live in things.'" (Woolf, 2000, p. 44). Woolf here more explicitly gives us the idea, which she already developed in *To the Lighthouse*, that selves are constantly made and remade in relation to the external non-human world of sensations, impressions, and sights.

There are many readings that explore the importance of the material world, and the importance of the non-human in Woolf's writing. For instance, critics such as Bonnie Kime Scott (2013), Christina Alt (2010), and Gillian Beer (1996) have looked at nature, ecofeminism, and the material world in Woolf. More important for this thesis and chapter are the Deleuzian readings of Woolf as well as Rasheed Tazudeen's work (2015), wherein she specifically reminds us that "Lucy's 'we'

refers less to the group of individuals than to the human species as a whole" (p. 500).[63] Lucy's 'we' that is both human as well as non-human is particularly relevant because it allows us to understand the emergence of intimate atmospheres and, as I will soon demonstrate, how these atmospheres depict a different concept of Englishness and history.

First, however, we need to look at the various instances when Woolf engages with the world of the non-human. Some of it is simply represented via careful and intimate detail to nature and environment. For instance, the narrator pays close attention to the surrounding landscape:

> Beyond the lily pool the ground sank again, and in that dip of the ground, bushes and brambles had mobbed themselves together. It was always shady; sun-flecked in summer, dark and damp in winter. In the summer there were always butterflies; fritillaries darting through […] (Woolf, 2000, p. 37).

During the pageant, the cows take their part in, and the rain fills in the awkward silences (Woolf, 2000, pp. 107-109).[64] An important passage that demonstrates the diversity and 'silent' presence of the non-human life takes place in the barn, before the audience goes there to have tea. The narrative voice claims that "[t]he barn was empty" (Woolf, 2000, p. 62). Yet, the following sentence also immediately demonstrates that

> mice slid in and out of holes or stood upright, nibbling. Swallows were busy with straw in pockets of earth in the rafters. Countless beetles and insects of various sorts burrowed in the dry wood. A stray bitch had made the dark corner where the sacks stood a lying-in ground for her puppies" (Woolf, 2000, p. 62).

The barn is not empty; on the contrary, it is full of life – life, which offers many different perspectives: "All these eyes, expanding and narrowing, some adapted to light, others to darkness, looked from different angles and edges" (Woolf, 2000, p. 62). Woolf does not depict just human life but life *per se*.

In a similar manner, people outdoors cannot hear Isa knocking on the window because they are so embedded in their environment: "the drone of the trees

[63] There is a whole issue (2013) of Deleuze studies dedicated to Woolf and Deleuze in which Laci Mattison, Claire Colebrook and Derek Ryan offer Deleuzian, new materialist readings of Woolf's work; and various conferences have hosted panels on Woolf and the material world, one being organised in 2020 in Seattle: "Virginia Woolf and Grossly Material Things".
[64] See Derek Ryan's 'Territory of the Cows' (2013) for a more detailed contemporary interpretation of animals in *Between the Acts*.

was in their ears; the chirp of birds; other incidents of garden life, inaudible, invisible to her in the bedroom, absorbed them" (Woolf, 1941, p. 11). Here, Woolf demonstrates how from a distance – as Isa looks from the window, paying attention to how her son walks with the nursemaids, she misses all the other life that the characters experience outside. On the other hand, characters who are outside, are absorbed in the non-human life and its sounds outside the window, and are embedded in the material world. Woolf shows us how intimate atmospheres are made of the non-human life which often goes unnoticed by human eyes that pay attention to human life only – a fact which is nicely illustrated by Isa who looks only at her son, and taps on the window-glass which separates her from the non-human noises and life outside. In a similar manner, the attention to the lily pool, to the cows, the view, the various animals in the barn, and the rain all implicitly indicate that human intimacies and desires are always embedded in the world of the non-human.

Derek Ryan (2013) suggests that by "blurring the boundaries between human and nature in order to refuse any fixed concept of human nature, Woolf, is providing a natural-cultural picture of intra-action which rejects the notion of hierarchical distinctions between human and nonhuman, culture and nature" (p. 369).[65] It is important to note here, however, that although the hierarchy is indeed strongly undermined, *Between the Acts* nevertheless places a certain responsibility on humans and keeps a distinction between human and non-human – Woolf does not flatten out differences between the two. The instance where Isa is separated from the world outside by glass, and when the barn is initially described as empty indicate that it takes a certain attention to even notice the non-human, not to mention seeing it on the same level with humans. Although humans are entangled in the world of non-human, *Between the Acts* places certain responsibility on humans towards the non-human. The narrator muses: "The fire greyed, then glowed, and the tortoiseshell butterfly beat on the lower pane of the window; beat, beat, beat; repeating that if no human being ever came, never, never, never, the books would be mouldy, the fire out and the tortoiseshell butterfly dead on the pane" (Woolf, 1941, p. 13). It is the human activities of dusting, of lighting fires, of airing the rooms and opening windows to free butterflies that can aid preserving that which is not human, just like

[65] For a longer discussion of intra-action, a phrase coined by Karen Barad, see Ryan's article in *Virginia Woolf in Context* (2013).

Mrs McNab and Mrs Bast helped to preserve life in the Ramsay house in *To the Lighthouse*. In other words, Woolf emphasises the responsibility humans have in recognising the otherness of the non-human, and, at the same time, their own dependence on this otherness.

We can see this dependence in the discussion about the weather. Like in *To the Lighthouse*, the weather is an important topic discussed in relation to whether certain human activities can take place in *Between the Acts* (Woolf, 2000, pp. 16-17). Isa thinks that "[e]very summer, for seven summers now, Isa had heard the same words; about the hammer and the nails; the pageant and the weather. Every year they said, would it be wet or fine; and every year it was – one or the other" (Woolf, 2000, p. 16). While Mr Ramsay and Charles Tansley in *To the Lighthouse* tried to predict weather, in *Between the Acts* we simply have a discussion that does not really try to predict but that accommodates the human activity to the weather – if it is wet then the pageant will be in the barn; if it is fine, then it will be outside. In either case, human activity nevertheless depends on nature's 'activity'. Echoing the discussion about the direction of the wind in *To the Lighthouse*, Bart asserts a similar knowingness about the distance from the sea in Woolf's final novel. Unlike Isa's more intuitive guess, Bart knows exactly how far the sea is: "'Thirty-five [miles] only,' her father-in-law said, as if he had whipped a tape measure from his pocket and measured it exactly" (Woolf, 2000, p. 20). The language Woolf uses is almost violent as Bart 'whips' his measuring on the world. Tazudeen (2015) suggests that part of the fascism and violence in *Between the Acts* is also the violent conceptual meaning that human consciousness tries to force on the non-human world. Tazudeen writes that "the fascism Woolf critiques would not only be the overt violent aggression of Hitler's armies engulfing Europe, but also the protofascism of belief in the superiority of human consciousness and the drive to reduce all things to conceptual order" (p. 502). Controlling weather is an example of this 'protofascism' in *Between the Acts*. To avoid that kind of fascism, Woolf keeps the otherness of the nature and the non-human intact precisely because the human mind can never really capture and understand the non-human. For this reason, there is a certain responsibility and humility shown towards the non-human.

Perhaps Woolf indicates that the largest non-human 'thing' that suffers the most from human conceptual order and meaning being imposed on it is land. By

shifting the focus to the non-human elements of land in *Between the Acts*, Woolf is able to depict land as different from the way it is depicted in history books. In *Three Guineas* (1938), written a few years before *Between the Acts*, Woolf explains how history is built on the oppression of the 'other', where the other is normally women, other countries than one's homeland, and other nationalities. In this book-length essay Woolf demonstrates that history, as it is written in the many books, biographies, and speeches she references, is really a history "of phallocentrism, history of appropriation: a single history. History of an identity: that of man's becoming recognised by the other (son or woman)", as Cixous writes in 'Sorties' (1986, p. 204). Woolf argues, referring to various eminent figures such as Winston Churchill, Charles Gore, and Lord Frederic Hamilton, that the way in which their lives are depicted in biographies creates patriarchal and patriotic narratives.[66] Woolf shows us how, when history is written down *by* eminent men, *about* eminent men leading eminent empires, patriarchal and patriotic narratives glorifying white European men are created. Similar to her questioning what a biographer should do in 'A Sketch', Woolf also questioned history-writing as a narrative about the glory of different states, led by eminent male figures.

Woolf, on the contrary, tries to imagine history without patriotism, patriarchy, and glorification of the 'fatherland'. For this reason, Lucy is obsessed with prehistoric land; she wonders how the land will be there when we are not, and her favourite book is the outline of history. She is particularly caught up in the idea of prehistory, when the land of England was still connected to the continent and inhabited my mammoths and rhododendron forests. She thinks: "'once there was no sea,'[…]'No sea at all between us and the continent. I was reading that in a book this morning. There were rhododendrons in the Strand; and mammoths in Piccadilly'" (Woolf, 2000, p. 20). Surely this passage is important also because it questions the boundaries between England and continental Europe – of the political conflicts there and their relevance to England as a nation on the eve of the Second World War.[67]

[66] For the list of separate books, speeches, biographies, and literary sources Woolf engages with in *Three Guineas*, see the bibliography included in the appendix of *Three Guineas*. Some of the sources Woolf engages with there include books about English history such as G. M. Trevelyan's *History of England* (1926), G. L. Prestiges's *The Life of Charles Gore - A Great Englishman* (1935), and Lord F. Hamilton's *The Days before Yesterday* (1920).

[67] See Jed Etsy (2003), and various articles such as Alex Zwerdling 'Between the Acts and the Coming of War Novel' (1977), Hena Maes-Jelinek's *Criticism of Society in the English Novels*

However, what is important for my discussion is that prehistoric land as such is a space free of concepts such as nation and borders.

In other words, prehistoric land offers an option to depict land simply as land, which is essentially an attempt to imagine land free of humans and their imposed concepts. It can be argued that humans living on the land in a way that imagines a certain piece of land belonging to a certain group of people (or individuals) is itself a form of occupation. Woolf, then, tries to imagine a different form of being on the land – a way that is not subjugating the land merely to human control but rather a sort of symbiosis where humans acknowledge the life-giving properties of the land. This idea is also emphasised when the pageant ends, and Miss La Trobe goes to the pub, has a drink, and a vision for her next play,

> She raised her glass to her lips. And drank. And listened. Words of one syllable sank down into the mud. She drowsed; she nodded. The mud became fertile. Words rose above the intolerably laden dumb oxen plodding through the mud. Words without meaning – wonderful words" (Woolf, 2000, p. 125).

Tazudeen (2015) interprets this muddy, fertile land as "the site from which new sensuous and nonconscious modes of inhabiting the earth might emerge [...] La Trobe's vision is of a language born out of the earth itself, the replanting of human 'words' into the living world from which they have emerged" (pp. 508-509). Similarly, Gillian Beer (1996) suggests that "for Woolf the common reader and the common ground are at once earth-bound and sacred, as near as she ever gets to the language of faith or patriotism" (p. 3). For Woolf, common ground depends on a common moment shared in a specific place, as demonstrated in the previous section. Woolf depicts a land where a history can be created and written on the one hand, but more importantly, a land that also influences how and what kind of history can be written on that land. For instance, it is "nature [that] had provided a stretch of turf half a mile in length and level" (Woolf, 2000, p. 9) that *men* used for building a house.[68] The land, however, determines which house will be built, which materials will be used, and what kind of life can be lived there. Focusing on the non-human

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Between the Wars (1970), and David Shackleton's 'The Pageant of Mutabilitie: Virginia Woolf's Between the Acts and The Faerie Queene' (2017).
Most of these critics explore the relevance of the prehistoric in relation to human social history in Woolf's own time. All these works are relevant and insightful. However, I am interested in exploring the role of land simply as a land, as much as this is possible.

[68] Woolf writes how "man" built a house on that land (2000, p. 9), indicating that the specific kind of life and history created on the land is largely man- not woman-made.

life on the land of England and referring back to a time when there was no human life on that land at all is a device that Woolf uses to create a language, and a narrative that is directly related to the earth it comes from.

An Affective History, An Affective Englishness

Julia Briggs (2005) argues that for Woolf the English landscape was inextricably bound up with English literature. She writes that in April 1926, Virginia and Leonard spent five days in Iwerne Minster, a village in Dorset close to Cranborne Chase. Woolf describes this holiday as follows: "we stole off and were divinely happy […] in a country, for a moment, which really made one almost ashamed of England being so English; and carpeting the woods, and putting cuckoos on trees, and doing exactly what Shakespeare says" (qtd. in Briggs, 2005, p. 192). Briggs (2005) suggests that

> being in an old country makes [Woolf] feel that poetry, like landscape, can bring back the past. But Woolf's pleasure in the countryside was always disturbed by knowing that during the war such obvious 'Englishness' had been exploited for patriotic propaganda (p. 192).

Instead of associating the woods and cuckoos specifically with romantic stories of the English countryside, Woolf in *Between the Acts* presents us with all kinds of non-human life, and a pageant that does not include the army, but a picture of Englishness that depicts daily lives and the atmospheres of certain historical epochs.[69] More importantly, she gives us the historical present of late modernity in the moments that happen *between* the acts. *Between the Acts* can be seen as Woolf's attempt to save England from patriotic propaganda, as well as from her own somewhat clichéd conception of what England is. Instead, she offers an idea of Englishness that is not defined by flags, armies, and great men by depicting history as 'a history' and Englishness as 'an Englishness' without entirely getting rid of scenic English landscape, old country houses, and other things that may be seen as typically English, such as teacups and tennis rackets.

[69] It is interesting to note here that the Bloomsbury Group, including Woolf, was criticised by Wyndham Lewis and people involved with the Vorticist movement about being upper class and not 'modern' enough. Part of that criticism was that the Bloomsbury set reinforces the idea of England and Englishness as upper class, conservative, and effeminate. Woolf's writing here proves the contrary.

At the centre of *Between the Acts*, in the midst of the many human and non-human intimacies, is a village pageant, telling the story of English history. But it is not a history of great men's lives, or of major political events, or of wars. In the novel, the mayor, having come to see the pageant, asks his wife: "Why leave out the British Army? What's history without the Army, eh?" (Woolf 1941, p. 94). Miss La Trobe, Woolf's playwright, leaves out the army to create a version of history that is not violent, hence questioning the legitimacy of patriarchy and patriotism. Instead, history in this pageant is constructed from English Literature – the audience within the novel, and we, the readers, see Elizabethan drama, Restoration comedy, Victorian melodrama, and the present day. The pageant is not presented factually, but rather affectively. In a diary entry of 14 October 1938, Woolf noted about *Pointz Hall*, the working title of *Between the Acts*, that she wanted to gather all literary notes that come to her mind and "to collect, even bind together, [her] innumerable T.L.S notes: to consider them as material for some kind of critical book: quotations? Comments? Ranging all through English literature as I've read it and noted it down in the past 20 years" (Woolf, 1972, p. 305). Depicting history as represented in specific examples in English literature's scattered phrases allows Woolf, and her playwright Miss La Trobe, to critique the idea of history as a series of lives lived by great men leading armies. Instead, as Julia Briggs (2005) and Matthew Webber (2017) point out, Woolf in the novel, and Miss La Trobe in the pageant, imagine a collective English past. History in *Between the Acts* ceases to be a vertical line and becomes what Cixous calls "time's horizon line" (2009, p. 11) on which the daily lives, intimacies, and desires of ordinary people, as well as the non-human world in which these intimacies are embedded, is depicted. Time's horizon line depicts history as time embedded in living people, or the environment around people "on which are painted or deposited the physical effects of what we happen to live. Of what happens to us, living" (Cixous, 2009, p. 11). It is these horizontal bonds and intimacies that I examined above, then, that interest Woolf and Miss La Trobe in exploring the historical narratives and concepts of history and Englishness these narratives create.

History becomes affective – it becomes horizontal, not linear and focused around the lives of great men. In 'Sorties', Cixous writes that "History [is a] history of phallocentrism, history of appropriation: a single history. History of an identity:

that of man's becoming recognised by the other (son or woman)" (1986, p. 204). Woolf is aware of how history as a history of great men's lives produces the narrow, often over-romanticised image of what Englishness means. As her diary entry from 2 February 1940 indicates, her 'patriotism' and her love of England does not depend on the victories won by Great Britain, but on a sense of sharing a certain place and time with people beside her, and the atmosphere these places and people create:

> Odd how often I think with what is love I suppose for the City: of the walk to the Tower: that is my England: I mean, if a bomb destroyed one of those little alleys with the brass bound curtains and the river smell and the old woman reading, I should feel – well, what the patriots feel (1972, p. 325).

If patriots feel what they feel because of the glory that armies led by great men bring to the Britain in battles, then Woolf loves 'her' England because she shares this with other people, together creating a specific atmosphere in a specific place with specific sights, sounds, and smells. In other words, Woolf wants to construct a history of England and a sense of Englishness without losing her modernism, feminism, and socialism. But then the question remains how to do that without becoming patriotic? Jed Etsy asks in *A Shrinking Island* (1993),

> how could Woolf, an intellectual pacifist, respond to the growing menace of fascism? […] What stance could a lifelong Outsider—a woman artist who cherished her idiosyncratic and dissenting freedoms—take in relation to the wagon-circling patriotism of the late 1930s? Woolf had always been suspicious of British nationalism (linked as it was to patriarchy, imperialism, and xenophobia), yet in the end she wanted to find ways to express her affinity for England and to assert the value of English traditions (p. 86).

I too am interested in how Woolf combines her love for England with her modernism and feminism without reproducing patriotic and patriarchal narratives.

One possible way to do that is to write a book that depicts the atmospheric, affective part of history; a book that sees history as time's horizon line, a book where all the tingling, tangling, whizzing and buzzing intimacies are recorded – intimacies that indeed create so many of the moments that will be history for ordinary people. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari write, "[t]he ideal for a book would be to lay everything out […] on a single page, the same sheet: lived events, historical determinations, concepts, individuals, groups, social formations" (2004, p. 10). *Between the Acts* is not a single page – it is still a traditional book with a story in linear order between covers. Yet, in content, Woolf entertains the idea that

history is not simply a linear narrative. Her playful mixing of genres, of fact and fiction, of poetry and colloquial language, and her fitting English literary history into a few hours of pageant while also depicting the present moment of the audience seems to be a similar attempt to present history as a time's horizon line, not a linear narrative. Gillian Beer (1996) proposes a very similar idea: "much of the wit of the book depends upon its turning aside any notion of development as implying improvement […] the novel is a spatial landscape, not a linear sequence" (p. 20). Woolf attempts to write a novel that constructs history from scattered phrases from all over English literature, as it is remembered by Isa and Dodge, for example. She includes village gossip and depicts the lives of ordinary people as well as the famous figures remembered by English literature to gather up these phrases. This method allows us to see history, and with it the sense of Englishness as something horizontal, scattered in space and time, creating the sense of a book that lays out everything on the same sheet.

History in *Between the Acts* is then similar to Gilles Deleuze's concept of 'a life', becoming 'a history'. In "Immanence: A Life" (1995/2002), Deleuze writes about a life that is not subjective, but is impersonal and asubjective, proposing that life is an assemblage of all things, animate and inanimate, natural and artificial. He writes,

> We will say of pure immanence that it is A LIFE, and nothing else. [...] A life is everywhere [...]: an immanent life carrying with it the events and singularities that are merely actualized in subjects and objects […]The life of the individual gives way to an impersonal and yet singular life […]This indefinite life does not itself have moments, close as they may be one to another, but only between-times, between-moments; it doesn't just come about or come after but offers the immensity of an empty time where one sees the event yet to come and already happened, in the absolute of an immediate consciousness (Deleuze, 2002, 27-29).[70]

Woolf's final novel too depicts a life as it happens to be experienced by many characters in the novel, some of them sensing the threat of war in the air, and some of them taken out of their subjective lives for a moment by the pageant and encounters with other audience members. None of the characters is more prominent than the others, or more prominent than the non-human environment, or the

[70] 'Plane of immanence' is, as Berlant succinctly reminds us in an endnote in *Cruel Optimism*, "Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's term for the absorption, embeddedness, and consistency of life as it moves" (2011).

historical pageant. The novel's resistance to offer any substantial personal histories of the characters, and its lack of patriarchal linage in the Oliver family, who "couldn't trace their descent for more than two or three hundred years" (Woolf, 2000, p. 21), allows seeing history in *Between the Acts* as *a* history, a history not of a certain country or an eminent, symbolical figure, but a history of a life experienced as a 'we', both human and non-human.[71]

Woolf's own ideas around working with the novel also support such an approach. In a much-quoted diary entry from 26 April 1938 about *Pointz Hall, Between the Acts'* working title, Woolf wrote,

> a centre: all lit[erature] discussed in connection with real little incongruous living humour; & anything that comes into my head; but 'I' rejected: 'We' substituted: to whom at the end there shall be an invocation? 'we'…composed on many different things … we all life, all art, all waifs and strays – a rambling capricious but somehow unified whole – the present state of my mind? And English country; & a scenic old house – & a terrace where nursemaids walk? & people passing – & perpetual variety & change from intensity to prose. & facts – & notes; & – but eno'" (1972, pp. 289-290).

What Woolf seems to suggest here is very similar to another of her ideas, which is also recorded in her other famous quotation from 'A Sketch of the Past' that I already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Woolf's idea that "we are the words, we are the music, we are the thing itself" (Woolf, 1979, p. 85) and how there are no great individuals, is very similar to Deleuze's idea of a life, a moving immanent life made of many different things, yet somehow unified. This idea is also expressed in *Between the Acts* through Mrs Swithin, vaguely gazing at the view:

> She was off, they guessed, on a circular tour of the imagination – one-making. Sheep, cows, grass, trees, ourselves – all are one. If discordant, producing harmony – if not to us, to a gigantic ear attached to a gigantic head. And thus – she was smiling benignly – the agony of the particular sheep, cow, or human being is necessary; and so – she was beaming seraphically at the gilt vane in the distance – we reach the conclusion that all is harmony, could we hear it. And we shall. Her eyes now rested on the white summit of a cloud (Woolf, 2000, p. 104).

[71] Also, Woolf wrote the novel during the war, knowing that the war did happen. The novel, however, is set in June 1939, in an ambivalent atmosphere of not knowing. We can therefore consider the war as the event that is yet to come and already happened, and the characters somehow exist in empty time, somehow sensing it coming in their bodies, like the audience sitting together passively, the characters looking at the view, and Dodge feeling the sense of doom in the greenhouse, that somehow binds all the characters together by invisible threads (Woolf, 2000, pp. 37-38, p. 34, p. 70).

Lucy's one-making that includes all in the living world echoes both Woolf's idea of a 'we' and predicts Deleuze's idea of a life. Although individuals themselves in their private lives may not realise their collective roles, it is nevertheless possible to notice that harmony through Woolf's writing, especially through her attention to the strange intimacies experienced in the atmosphere that the non-human environment creates. This approach to history and Englishness allows us to see both as inclusive, in motion, and essentially made up of a web of connections between humans and their environment in the historical moment they share.

The notion of history as a history, of life as a life depends on being immersed in the present moment with all senses, as demonstrated above in the intimate, desiring moments. Lauren Berlant (2011) reminds us that "affect emerges not in the nervous systems of persons but worlds […] because atmospheres are shared, not solitary, and bodies are continuously busy judging their environments and responding to the atmospheres in which they find themselves" (p. 14). In other words, the intimate moments in Woolf that allow us to see history as time's horizon line that depicts the ordinary stories of a collective 'we', depend also on the non-human environment, as I emphasised above. This atmosphere is also what creates a sense of the historical present moment. Berlant (2011) puts forward the idea that history does not happen in great events or figures, but happens in atmospheres, and moods, and how people are embedded in these atmospheres and moods (p. 65). Woolf's 'historical method' in *Between the Acts* is very similar to Berlant's (2011) method for examining how "aesthetically mediated affective responses" create a "shared historical sense" (p. 5). In *Between the Acts*, Miss La Trobe, by presenting the mirrors to the audience in the end, expresses what Berlant does in *Cruel Optimism* – examining the historical present moment from within that moment, while thinking about how that came to be and where it might lead. Berlant (2011) writes,

> One of [*Cruel Optimism*'s] central claims is that the present is perceived, first, affectively: the present is what makes itself present to us before it becomes anything else, such as an orchestrated collective event or an epoch on which we can look back […] If the present is not at first an object but a mediated affect, it is also a thing that is sensed and under constant revision, a temporal genre whose conventions emerge from the personal and public filtering of the situations and events that are happening in an extended now

> whose very parameters (when did "the present" begin?) are also always there for debate (p. 5).

Isn't the filtering of ongoing events and situations in the present moment also what goes on in Woolf's final novel? And isn't *Between the Acts* also concerned with affective registers of time, of how history *feels*? When the play within the novel reaches its end, the audience reads from the programme that now it is the present moment, and people then wonder,

> 'Ourselves …'[…] But what could [Miss La Trobe] know about ourselves? The Elizabethans, yes; the Victorians, perhaps; but ourselves; sitting here on a June day in 1939 – it was ridiculous. 'Myself' – it was impossible. Other people, perhaps […] Cobbet of Cobbs Corner; the Major; old Bartholomew; Mrs. Swithin – them, perhaps. But she won't get me – no, not me (Woolf, 2000, p. 106).

Miss La Trobe is not claiming any objective knowledge of history, but she is creating an affective intuition about the times she depicts, based on literature that these times have 'left behind'. The Elizabethan time represents certain glory, Victorian time domestic values and the power of the Empire, and then with the mirrors, the audience is asked to think about their own role in history, and the way they experience their present moment, and the way they perceive themselves and others in this moment. What Miss La Trobe, and Woolf through her, might be indicating is the fact that the atmosphere that people share in their present moment makes up history, and defines a certain Englishness.

Claire Colebrook (2012) explains, following Deleuze, that "the intensity of experience is impersonal, and for that reason something like a moment or a force that transcends any specific individual can be experienced" and that "the present that is experienced by any self is possible only because there are forces, waves, particles, colours, intensities from which this actual world is composed" (p. 70). The moment of intimacy, for example, in the veranda when Mrs Manresa sips coffee is also a moment composed of various forces and intensities such as the heat and stillness of the summer air, and Mrs Manresa's body sending out signals of pleasure from sipping hot coffee. There is nothing personal known about Mrs Manresa by the characters or by the readers. Yet, for all the characters involved, the experience of this moment is intense, as they can all feel the forces from it on their bodies. In the same way, the other intimate moments are built upon a certain common shared moment and experience, and from these moments, a historical affective present also

emerges. History in *Between the Acts*, then, is not a linear narrative of the patriarchal identities that should make up Englishness and English history, but rather a history that is experienced as an affective charge of "forces, waves, particles, colours" (Colebrook, 2012, p. 70). Englishness in *Between the Acts* is not simply certain ethnicity but something much less tangible – it is an assemblage of various characteristics, of clothes, of people from various ethnicities (Miss La Trobe's assumed Russian background), of teacups, of tennis rackets, of land, and everything found on that land, human and non-human. Tennis rackets and teacups, things that I paid attention to at the very beginning of this chapter, and the history of these things in a context where history is a compound of many different things, are worth highlighting again: although tennis and tea are considered very English things, their origin is not England. This indicates that history and Englishness in *Between the Acts* really are a compound of various objects and intimacies, not some grand narrative of pure Englishness.

A Feminine and a Masculine Englishness?

The notion of history as a history, and Englishness as a fluid, horizontal bond between people and their environment in *Between the Acts* is associated with femininity. As many critics, including Jed Etsy (2003), have pointed out, the elder siblings at Pointz Hall, Lucy Swithin and Bart Oliver "represent competing versions of Englishness: one pastoral and insular, one barbaric and expansive […] Bart's aggressive imperialism threatens the peace of Lucy's insular humanism, just as Lucy's mad devotion to pastoral and aesthetic values fester Bart's utilitarianism" (p. 88). Etsy writes that "the novel's political tension is driven precisely by Woolf's awareness that she might not be able to prize apart these two nationalisms, that it might not be possible to celebrate the right kind of English civilization without fuelling the wrong kind of British patriotism" (Etsy, 2004, p. 90). Gillian Beer (1996), Julia Briggs (2006), Ashley J. Foster (2016), Nora Eisenberg (1981), Alice Wood (2013), and many other critics agree that, as Foster (2016) puts it, La Trobe's "parodic version of England's cultural and social history is a critique of the patriarchal narrative of masculine national identity" (p. 61).

The version of Englishness associated with Lucy and Isa, on the other hand, depicts history not as a sequence of great men's lives but as time's horizon line that depicts a life, or a history. As already mentioned, Cixous writes that "History [is a] history of phallocentrism, history of appropriation: a single history. History of an identity: that of man's becoming recognised by the other (son or woman)" (1986, p. 204). To move beyond the phallocentric history writing that focuses on the ego, the self, and identity, Cixous wants to create a new writing. She seeks a new mode of writing via *écriture féminine* that could write the myriad ways through which selfhood and subjectivity, and beyond and through that, also historical narratives are written. There is a body of work that reads *Between the Acts* in the French feminist tradition: for instance, Emily M. Hinnov's (2007) reading of the discourse in the novel in relation to Kristeva's semiotic 'chora' and Galia Benziman's (2006) reading of *Between the Acts* as casting Miss La Trobe as the lost mother who can offer the nation a new way of growing up.[72] Melba Cuddy-Keane (1997), Rachel Bowlby (1997) and Angeliki Spiropoulou (2010) have explored the re-writing of history from

[72] Benziman (2006) has drawn attention to Miss La Trobe as a symbolic mother figure thanks to whom England and its inhabitants have a chance to grow up (p. 62) and create a better world. Nora Eisenberg in "Virginia Woolf's Last Words on Words: *Between the Acts* and 'Anon'" (1981) and Emily M. Hinnov in "'Each is Part of the Whole: We Act Different Parts; But Are the Same': From Fragment to Choran Community in the Late Work of Virginia Woolf" (2007) both read *Between the Acts* with Kristeva's idea of semiotic chora; a novel full of anti-patriarchal language. Hinnov writes how

> Woolf draws fascism, patriarchy, and militarism together under the category of a 'history' defined as master narrative and tool of oppression whose form relies upon notions of progress and teleology. Her understanding of counter-history to fascism, as represented most explicitly in her later work through textual choran community, advocates for more personal, creative, and eventually communal narratives rather than authorized versions of history as told by fascist and/or patriarchal institutions of power (2007, p. 2).

These readings perform a Lacanian and Winnicottian psychoanalytical readings, which, indeed speak a lot to what is happening in *Between the Acts*. However, I depart from these readings as I offer a Deleuzian, Cixousian reading that pays attention to the non-human and life as such under the concept of 'femininity'. For the clarification of 'chora', Colebrook explains in 'Woolf and Theory' in *Virginia Woolf in Context* (2012) that Kristeva's chora is "the 'semiotic' dimension of language: not language as communication or sense, but the dynamic differences of sounds that enabled a sensible, bodily, fluid and directly revolutionary exploration of the borders of language" (p. 66).

Further, critics such as Jed Etsy (2004), Michele Pridmore-Brown (1998), Julia Briggs (2005), Melba Cuddy-Keane (1990), Karen Schneider (1989), Galia Benziman (2006), Patricia Kliendienst Joplin (1989), and Andrew John Miller (2001) all explore the relationship between 'we' and 'I', between community and individual, and between art and society. All of them argue, in their different ways, that *Between the Acts* offers a vision of collective (national) identity that is open to difference, as opposed to fascist communal sameness, and as John Whittier-Fergusson (2011) and Matthew Weber stress, her aesthetics of suspension of historical time marks her pacifism. To different extents these articles also tie her collective 'we' to her feminist resistance to a fascist 'we'.

feminist perspectives, and the role of history and historiography in Woolf's works.[73] Spiropoulou (2010) points out how

> Woolf's modernist work proves to be not only deeply implicated in the historical actuality of modernity but at the same time a means of critically (re)doing historiography. Indeed, one of the main arguments of the book is that in her prose, the nature of modernity is mainly brought into relief by means of historiography, either through modernity's contrast with the past or through a reactivation of aspects of history which in turn highlight the ailments, the opportunities and the emancipatory demands of the modern present (p. 2).

Between the Acts (re)does historiography by highlighting the aspects of history that have often gone unnoticed, aspects which are often associated with femininity and women's lives. What is important from the above readings in relation to Woolf's engagement with history, then, is the emphasis on and inclusion of that which is feminine – that which affect, new materialist, and post-humanist theories include and work with, that which, as I explained in the introduction, makes up Cixous's affective writing.[74]

Although there are no binaries in the sense of what is essential to women and what is essential to men (Mrs Manresa is allied with Bart and Giles, and William Dodge is allied with Isa and Lucy) in *Between the Acts*, there is nevertheless a very clear distinction between masculinity and femininity. Isa's poetic musings are an example of that femininity:

> 'Where do I wander?' [Isa] mused. 'Down what draughty tunnels? Where the eyeless wind blows? And there grows nothing for the eye. No rose. To issue where? In some harvestless dim field where no evening lets fall her mantle; nor sun rises. All's equal there. Unblowing, ungrowing are the roses there. Change is not; nor the mutable and lovable; nor getting nor partings; nor furtive findings and feelings, where hands seeks hand and eye seeks shelter from the eye.' […] 'Where we know not, where we go not, neither know nor care,' she hummed. 'Flying, rushing through the ambient, incandescent, summer silent…' […] 'There to lose what binds us here,' she murmured (Woolf, 2000, p. 93. p. 12).

[73] See Bowlby's *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf* (1997) and Cuddy-Keane's 'Virginia Woolf and the Varieties of Historicist Experience' in Beth Carole Rosenberg and Jeanne Dubino's *Virginia Woolf and the Essay* (1997). See also Angeliki Spiropoulou's *Virginia Woolf, Modernity and History: Constellations with Walter Benjamin* (2010) for a thorough discussion of the role of history, historiography, and art in Woolf's oeuvre.

[74] For a longer discussion of femininity, French feminism, and affective writing in Woolf's and Rhys's fiction, and why it is still relevant to stress the association of certain general human characteristics with femininity, see the introduction.

What binds us here? And where is here? Presumably, here is England, and what binds Isa is her marriage and her role as a wife to her brute husband, Giles, who, with his violence, distaste for otherness, and love for convention, represents imperial power, just like his father Bart. Isa's 'there' comes across as an alternative to 'here'; a changeless place where all is equal, free of feelings, and perhaps free of any human relations that tie people to one another. It is indeed tempting to imagine this place as what Kristeva's semiotic chora would look like. Yet, what is important is that this 'there', no matter how stagnant, to an extent, also represents common life as 'all' is equal there, and the references to wind, fields, and summer indicate that this all refers to life beyond the human.

Importantly, Isa's musings do not simply end 'there'. Her wanderings are also related to a wider context, as Isa thinks of the past, and the burden it has laid on her in a way that offers more direct references to the relevance of remembering the collective past, seeing life as a common life:

> How am I burdened with what they drew from the earth; memories; possessions. This is the burden that the past laid on me, last little donkey in the long caravanserai crossing the desert. 'Kneel down,' said the past. 'Fill your pannier from our tree. Rise up, donkey. Go your way till your heels blister and your hoofs crack.' 'That was the burden,' she mused, 'laid on me in the cradle; murmured by waves; breathed by restless elm trees; crooned by singing women; what we must remember; what we would forget' (Woolf, 2000, p. 93).

What must we remember, what ought we forget? And who tells us that? And who are these 'they' that drew the burden from the earth, and what does Isa have to pick up and carry from the tree? At first glance, what she seems to remember is the burdensome history associated with imperialism, and the communal element of the past seems to be forgotten, as she is like a donkey (a domesticated animal), kneeling down, bearing her burden which is being a wife to a husband who represents brutal imperialism. It is interesting to note here that the donkey is depicted as a loyal serving animal in the Bible, which, accordingly, is the book that has laid a foundation for patriarchy, as Cixous notes in her various works, including 'The Laugh of Medusa' (1975/1976) and *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* (1993). In addition, the image of a tree is prevalent here as she is supposed to "fill her pannier from our tree" (Woolf, 2000, p. 93). Following Deleuze and Guattari, trees are always, in contrast to rhizomes, associated with families, which are the smallest units

of patriarchy, as I already demonstrated in the chapter on *To the Lighthouse*. Ryan (2013) explores grass and trees in *To the Lighthouse*. Following Deleuze and Guattari, he proposes that Woolf too depicts trees as stagnant, representing patriarchal values, whereas grass is rhizomatic, a possible site for change and endless new connections (pp. 83-89). Here, the tree and its fruit also seem to be associated with the burden that Isa carries as a donkey: "She had come into the stable yard where the dogs were chained; where the buckets stood; where the great pear tree spread its ladder of branches against the wall. The tree, whose roots went beneath the flags, was weighted with hard green pears" (Woolf, 2000, p. 93). It is when Isa looks at "cracked flags between beneath which the roots spread" (Woolf, 2000, p. 93) and touches the pear, when she feels the burden the most. The image of Isa as a donkey kneeling before a tree might then indicate a woman kneeling before patriarchy.

Nevertheless, Isa chooses to stumble on, away from the tree with its roots. As a rebellion then, Isa also thinks, despite what the past says to her:

> On, little donkey, patiently stumble. Hear not the frantic cries of the leaders who in that they seek to lead desert us. Nor the chatter of china faces glazed and hard. Hear rather the shepherd, coughing by the farmyard wall, the withered tree that sighs when the Rider gallops; the brawl in the barrack room when they stripped her naked; or the cry which in London when I thrust the window open someone cries […] (Woolf, 2000, p. 94).

Here we see how, instead of listening to the history of great men's lives, Isa's musings acknowledge the importance of listening to one another, to the daily joys and toils of common folk. By encouraging hearing the cough of a shepherd, the cry someone cried in London, and the brawl in the barrack room when a girl was gang-raped by royal guards (an incident that happened and was reported by newspapers), the narrative voice encourages seeing all the sounds, including sounds of violence and rape, as parts of Englishness and English history. The reverend in *Between the Acts* acknowledges that even "[the idiot] too […] is part of ourselves. But not a part we like to recognize […]" (Woolf, 2000, p. 115). Isa's musings then, and the novel as a whole, represent the kind of Englishness and historical narrative that is inclusive of otherness and difference. Because this inclusion is associated with femininity in many critical traditions, including that of French feminism, and because Woolf herself associates patriotism, war, and violence with patriarchy and masculinity – for example, in *Three Guineas* (1938) – it is important to emphasise that, in *Between the*

Acts, it is femininity rather than masculinity that allows us to imagine history as a history and Englishness as an Englishness.

Affective Storytelling

To draw this chapter to a conclusion, I want to turn to art, first on the story level by focusing on Miss La Trobe and her pageant, and then on Woolf's affective language. Miss La Trobe's pageant, like Woolf's writing, can be seen as an example of *écriture féminine*, or rather, what I call affective writing, taking into consideration also Cixous's more recent works in the light of contemporary theories of affect and new materialism. Like in *To the Lighthouse*, art has an important role in mediating certain affects and unravelling emotions in *Between the Acts*; like in *To the Lighthouse*, here we also have a female artist who differs from the rest of the people, herself thinking that "nature had somehow set her apart from her kind" (Woolf, 2000, p. 125). Earlier, Miss La Trobe's ethnic origin is questioned, and she is associated with Russia (Woolf, 2000, p. 37), and Lily has Chinese eyes. Miss La Trobe however, is more mature and confident about her own talents as well as about her way of life than Lily was. She offers a critical version of English history to the audience, and the audience, through the play, has a potential to unlearn and learn, to see history without the army, to experience historical epochs as specific atmospheres. As Deleuze and Guattari, and critics working with art and affect following them, argue, art has the potentiality to take us out of our subjectivity. The audience in *Between the Acts* too feels, "how could one put it – a little not quite there. As if the play had jerked the ball out of the cup; as if what I call myself was still floating unattached, and didn't settle. Not quite themselves, they felt" (Woolf, 2000, p. 90). The audience

> sat exposed […] All their nerves were on edge […]The machine ticked. There was no music. The horns of cars on the high road were heard. And the swish of trees. *They were neither one thing nor the other; neither Victorians nor themselves. They were suspended, without being, in limbo* (Woolf, 2000, p. 106; emphasis mine).

Surely, Woolf quickly adds humour to it: "Or was it simply that they were clothes conscious?" (Woolf, 2000, p. 90). Indeed, the pageant hints that clothes from a different era could be all it takes to take one out of one's subjectivity and act a different role.

However, I would also like to suggest that it really is art as such that enables the characters to 'lose' their selves. Mrs Swithin tries to tell Miss La Trobe that the latter has given her something she cannot exactly express in words: "She gazed at Miss La Trobe with a cloudless old-age stare. Their eyes met in a common effort to bring a common meaning to birth. They failed; and Mrs. Swithin, laying hold desperately of a fraction of her meaning, said: 'What small part I've had to play! But you've made me feel I could have played … Cleopatra!'" (Woolf, 2000, p. 92). What Lucy means is that Miss La Trobe, or rather her art "stirred in [her] [her] unacted part" (Woolf, 2000, p. 92). And Miss La Trobe silently adds,

> 'You've twitched the invisible strings,' was what the old lady meant; and revealed – of all people – Cleopatra! Glory possessed her. Ah, but she was not merely a twitcher of individual strings; she was one who seethes wandering bodies and floating voices in a cauldron, and makes rise up from its amorphous mass a re-created world. Her moment was on her – her glory (Woolf, 2000, p. 92).

Besides having the ability to take people out of their daily lives and roles, Miss La Trobe thinks she had, with her art, a certain control over a collective impersonal affect.

Accordingly, one of the central questions, articulated through Miss La Trobe, is the question of art in times of political upheaval, and whether art and artists can make any change. To be more precise, she questions whether art can change the way we construct collective identities, particularly that of the patriotic, patriarchal sense of Englishness, and whether there are links between an artist who imposes meaning on the audience and a political dictator. As demonstrated, different, perhaps more organic, forms of intimacy, albeit on a much smaller scale, go on between the acts between individuals such as Lucy and Dodge, Isa and Dodge, Isa and Mr Haines, and Mrs Manresa and Giles. The drawing together by art, by play, is thus somewhat artificial. This summoning positions Miss La Trobe as a dictator – people do not come together from their own accord but are called by the gramophone voice. Similarly, they are seemingly dispersed when the gramophone voice says so. Rather, it was at the intervals that people formed voluntary attachments and the intimacies between individuals emerged. Or did the intimacy emerge between Lucy and Dodge, and Isa and Dodge, because of what they saw in the play? In a way, Miss La Trobe shows the complexity of this: her power indeed has fascist leanings – she summons

and disperses people, and yet, she does give people the ability to think beyond their personal lives and identities without imposing any single meaning on them, or telling them who they are and what their roles are.

It is *how*, then, Miss La Trobe draws her audiences together – by emphasising that which is ordinary, daily, and shared between 'common' people, in short, is also that which is considered feminine in the Western patriarchal societies. Unlike a fascist dictator, Miss La Trobe conjures a communal intimacy based on difference and multiplicity, including village idiots, people with a foreign background and queer identity like herself, and the non-human world. Woolf too in her writing emphasises the same thing through Isa's reference to hearing the voice of the shepherd, by giving us various ordinary and strange intimacies, and by paying close attention to the non-human. In 'Anon', an essay written in 1940, Woolf writes, "save for Anon singing his song at the back door the English might be a dumb race, a race of merchants, soldiers, priests; who left behind them stone houses, cultivated fields and great churches, but no words" (Woolf, 1979, p. 383). It is Anon's song that Woolf, and La Trobe, encourage others to hear – the song that represents common people and their songs of toil and joy, of love and hate. Ashley Foster (2016) argues that Woolf's "writing has the power to 'change us – not because of what it says or means but because of the habits of mind that it cultivates as we experience it'" (p. 66). In the same manner, Melba Cuddy-Keane (2016) suggests that *Between the Acts* creates "this particular kind of writing [that] for her [establishes] a different system of values from the mentality that leads to war", instead of writing about a specific subject or creating a plot that avoids war explicitly (p. 66). In *Between the Acts*, the narrative voice muses, itself an important aspect of choosing no one in particular to utter this, that "it didn't matter what the words were; or who sang what. Round and round they whirled, intoxicated by the music" (Woolf, 2000, p. 58). It is a kind of language that the nursemaids use: "they were talking – not shaping pellets of information or handling ideas from one to another, but rolling words, like sweets on their tongues; which, as they thinned to transparency, gave off pink, green, and sweetness" (Woolf, 2000, p. 9). It is not the words forming informative phrases but it is what they give off: sweet, pink, green. What they convey is certain affects and feelings. By presenting language as affective, Woolf

aims to depict it as how Anon's song for the common people, about the common people, would look like when it is written down.

In this language, what matters more than the actual historical events depicted is the atmospheres, moods, and affects that surround and emerge from these events, or from which these events emerge. At some point, a narrative voice wonders in *Between the Acts*: "Did the plot matter? […] The plot was only there to beget emotion. There was no need to puzzle out the plot […] Don't bother about the plot: the plot's nothing" (Woolf, 2000, p. 56). What is important is not a linear historical narrative of England but how the stories that make up history affect what is perceived as Englishness; or the affect they produce and which becomes associated with Englishness. Then again, events, and indeed stories, produce affects, so stories do matter, including the story of the past, which essentially is history – *a* story about *a* past. But stories can be told very differently using different language, and this is Woolf's aim in *Between the Acts*: to tell different stories, or to tell the same stories from new perspectives by using language in a different way, in a way that depicts multiple desires and intimacies, blending together colloquial gossip and poetic soliloquies, fact and fiction, to beget different affects and most importantly, to construct a different kind of history, based on a different kind of 'we', which includes village idiots, people with a 'suspicious' ethnic background, animals, and nature. This 'we' in *Between the Acts* is, through Isa's poetic musings, a feminine, affective 'we' that includes otherness and creates a whizzing and buzzing history with all the tingling, tangling and vibrating intimacies and desires experienced by ordinary people in their daily lives.

Chapter Three

Anti-Oedipal Desire in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*

She walked on towards the quay, feeling serene and peaceful. Her limbs moved smoothly; the damp, soft air was pleasant against her face. She felt complete in herself, detached, independent of the rest of humanity.
Jean Rhys, *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*

At the centre, both figuratively and structurally, of *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* (1930) is the thought and image of the protagonist Julia Martin's mother:

> Julia sat there remembering that when she was a very young child she had loved her mother. Her mother had been the warm centre of the world […] And from being the warm centre of the world her mother had gradually become a dark, austere, rather plump woman, who, because she was worried, slapped you for no reason that you knew. So that there were times when you were afraid of her; other times you disliked her (Rhys, 1997, pp. 106-107).

The image of Julia's dislikeable, not entirely human mother, as she makes noises like "dogs howling" and looks like a "wild animal" with "bloodshot, animal eyes" (Rhys, 1997, pp. 97-100), informs the other themes in the novel, such as the lack of intimacy between women, anti-Oedipal desire, the concept of self in relation to the world of the non-human, and the role of art. I suggest that *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* takes the same place in Rhys's oeuvre that *To the Lighthouse* (1927) does in Virginia Woolf's.[75] Both novels are organised into three parts, and the second part is a space of change or at least a potential for change. While in *To the Lighthouse* the middle part is the shortest and most empty of human presence, in Rhys's novel the

[75] Also, Woolf claims in her diary entries that after writing *To the Lighthouse*, she was able to let the thought of her mother go. Similarly, Rhys writes in *Smile Please* (1979): "Gradually I came to wonder about my mother less and less until at last she was almost a stranger and I stopped imagining what she felt or what she thought" (p. 30). Whether this is true is, of course, questionable in both Woolf and Rhys, but it is very possible that writing these novels functioned as a sort of aid in understanding the role of their mother in their own lives.

I have chosen to read *Mackenzie*, not, say, *Voyage in the Dark* with *Wide Sargasso Sea* because *Mackenzie* also already portrays the attention to place and the non-human. Instead of post-colonial elements that are normally compared to and examined when reading *Voyage* and *Sargasso*, I want to offer a new materialist, affective reading of *Mackenzie* and *Sargasso* to show that there is a variety of continuities in Rhys's themes and styles in her late *Sargasso* and modernist fiction. Also, the focus on family allows us to put it in a very interesting dialogue with *To the Lighthouse* and Virginia Woolf. Therefore, as mentioned briefly in the introduction, although I have structured the thesis by authors, it can also be read by pairs of novels.

second part most thoroughly dissects the problems related to families, women, and desiring. *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, albeit in a different manner, puts forward an idea that is also central in *To the Lighthouse*: that women should not be defined by their 'motherness', 'daughterness', or 'wifeness', all majoritarian, conventional identity categories.[76] On the contrary, Rhys suggests a woman, or any self for that matter, is impossible to define as a constant but is in perpetual becoming in relation to the world of the non-human. For these reasons, I have chosen *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* for opening the part of thesis that closely examines Rhys's fiction in the light of Deleuze-inspired affect theories and new materialisms while also offering an interesting parallel reading to the chapter on Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*.

In this chapter, I trace intimacies other than those of familial ones, and how these intimacies keep people who have been pushed "outside the circle of warmth" (Rhys, 1997, p. 79) attached to life. To trace these intimacies, I offer a Deleuzian anti-Oedipal reading of *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*. I begin by demonstrating that the seemingly dismal atmosphere of the novel is caused by the lack of intimacy between women. I suggest that we cannot understand Rhys's protagonists if we try to understand their desire, and desire in general, in solely psychoanalytical frames, whether Oedipal or pre-Oedipal, as scholars like Ann B. Simpson (2005), Sylvie Maurel (1998), and Patricia Moran (2007) have done. Besides working with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's texts, I use Claire Colebrook's understanding of Deleuzian anti-Oedipality as a reference for explaining Rhys's modernism in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* to demonstrate that Rhys's writing, like Woolf's, is anti-Oedipal. I then move to trace references to the animal world and the importance of places and things to demonstrate that in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, the world of the non-human explicitly gains more and more importance in the formation of selves in Rhys's fiction – a notion that is also central to *Wide Sargasso Sea*, as the next chapter shows. Finally, I examine how art, and Rhys's writing itself embodies the affective potential to open up alternative ways of being in the world. I offer the anti-Oedipal, Deleuzian frame for understanding the novel to demonstrate how Rhys's

[76] See the Strange Intimacy section in the introduction to this thesis for a lengthier explanation of Deleuze and Guattari's terms such as 'majoritarian' and 'minoritarian', and 'molar' and 'molecular' as well as 'micropolitics'. In short, and relevant for this chapter, what I indicate by these terms is the fact that Julia cannot be understood as, and is not portrayed as fitting any of the molar or majoritarian identity categories such as mother, child, or sister.

writing as such functions as an example of Cixous's affective writing that lets the other speak in the text. By doing so, I demonstrate that the absent, haunting presence of the dying, animal-like mother is not at the centre of the novel to teach the reader a moral lesson about the relevance of motherhood, but functions as a reminder that Julia's mother, like Mrs Ramsay, or any other (female) figure cannot be understood only through identity categories such as a mother, a daughter, or a wife.

The Lack of Intimacy Between Women

From the first pages of the novel, we learn that the protagonist Julia Martin has to live in a cheap hotel, described as a "lowdown sort of place", smelling of cats (Rhys, 1930, p. 9). We also learn that she lives there because it is all she can afford on the 'allowance' her ex-lover has left her after leaving her. We then learn that Julia's landlady thinks Julia's existence

> was extraordinary […] not to be believed. 'Always alone in her bedroom. But it's the life of a dog.' Then she had decided that Julia was mad, slightly pricked. Then […] she had ceased to speculate and had gradually forgotten all about her" (Rhys, 1997, p. 11).

Not too long afterwards, we learn that Mr Mackenzie, Julia's latest ex-lover, considers her condition grim. He muses that Julia's life was bearable only because she had created illusions about herself:

> As far as he could make out she had a fixed idea that her affair with him and her encounter with [a lawyer] Maitre Legros had been the turning-point in her life. They had destroyed some necessary illusion about herself which had enabled her to live her curious existence with a certain amount of courage and audacity (Rhys, 1997, p. 31).

Even Mr Horsfield, a new lover initially interested in Julia, thinks after their first encounter that Julia "has a rum existence" (Rhys, 1997, p. 45), where 'rum' does not seem to indicate a good strangeness. It is no wonder then that critics, if they look at *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, look for an explanation, for a tragedy in Julia's life that has caused her to live such a grim life.[77] Conveniently, the reason is ready at hand in

[77] See Patricia Moran's *Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys, and the Aesthetics of Trauma* (2007), and Ann B Simpson's *Territories of the Psyche: The Fiction of Jean Rhys* (2005), for psychoanalytical readings. See Helen Carr's *Jean Rhys: Writers and their Work* (2012), Sylvie Maurel's *Jean Rhys* (1998) and Elaine Savoury's *The Cambridge Introduction to Jean Rhys* (2009) for an overview of (psychoanalytical) criticism in Rhys's fiction. Also, it has to be noted that *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* is one of the least explored novels in Rhys's oeuvre, as Jason R. Marley (2017) notes. He

the middle of the novel where we learn that Julia's mother has not been a 'good' mother (Rhys, 1997, pp. 106-108). The centrality of the mother-figure who failed to offer love and be the warm centre of the world has inspired readings – for example, by Ann B. Simpson (2005) and Patricia Moran (2007) – that interpret Julia's inability to live a happy life and form long-lasting healthy relationships with her fellow humans as a direct result of Julia's mother's failure as a mother.

Interestingly, all the above examples of Julia's seemingly unpleasant life are, however, not given by Julia herself but by characters who encounter Julia. I therefore want to offer a different reading: one that sees Julia's life not through the eyes of the people Julia encounters, but through the moments when Julia feels attached to life and does not blame her mother. Right after the landlady thinks that Julia's life is not to be believed, we learn that "Julia was not altogether unhappy. Locked in her room – especially when she was locked in her room – she felt safe. She read most of the time" (Rhys, 1997, p. 11). We also know that although the hotel room is cheap, it is nevertheless clean and Julia likes that (Rhys, 1997, p. 9), and the effect of the wallpaper is "oddly enough, not sinister but cheerful and stimulating" (Rhys, 1997, p. 10). Towards the end of the novel, when the policeman thinks Julia is about to commit suicide, she tells him: "I haven't the slightest intention of committing suicide, I assure you" (Rhys, 1997, p. 183). Although we cannot take Julia's words for granted, I would like to take seriously the idea that she indeed has no intention to end her life. First, because she is a character and in this sense will live forever in the novel. Second, and more importantly, because, as will be demonstrated, there is a certain attachment to life present in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, and this attachment cannot be discovered if we try to understand happiness in terms of Mr Mackenzie and other characters who represent what Julia calls the "organized society" (Rhys, 1997, p. 22). On the contrary, by giving us hints of moments when Julia does feel

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writes that "seemingly lacking the complexity and depth of her later writings, it is perhaps unsurprising that Rhys's second novel captures so little interest. Like many of her early works, the novel is centred on an aging single woman who spirals into depression and poverty, yet it is not overtly experimental, like *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), nor does it explicitly confront questions of race and immigration, as does *Voyage in the Dark* (1934). As such, critics have frequently dismissed the novel for its seeming simplicity, choosing instead to focus on Rhys's other works" (2017, p 1). For example, he refers to Veronica Marie Gregg's *Jean Rhys's Historical Imagination: Reading and Writing the Creole* (1995) as dismissive of *Mackenzie*. Although Marley argues that the narrative voice of Mackenzie is unique and needs attention, he offers a reading that explores "the trauma of cosmopolitan life" (Marley, 2017, p. 3) for an individual's subjectivity, following rather humanistic, Enlightenment ideas of what constitutes a subject and individual. For this reason, his work does not resonate much with mine.

content, such as when she takes walks, looks at streets and rivers, and self-ironically thinks she is quite happy when she is locked up reading (Rhys, 1997, p. 12, p. 15, p. 11), Rhys presents a critique of what Lauren Berlant calls heteronormative ideas about good life and happiness; Rhys undermines the idea that a life revolving around marriage and reproduction will bring everyone bliss. In 'Intimacy: A Special Issue' (1998), Berlant distinguishes between major narratives of intimacy (heteronormative family relations) and minor narratives of intimacy (brief gestures, glances, and silences among people, including strangers).[78] Berlant is interested in the minor intimacies in order to give a chance to intimacies that otherwise go unnoticed in capitalist and patriarchal societies. In Rhys's novel too, we have to look at glances and gestures between Julia and her sister, for example, and between Julia and the non-human world, if we want to discover traces of intimacy and attachment to life. Importantly, these intimacies and attachments demonstrate a resistance to and criticism of patriarchy, capitalism, and heteronormative ideas about how women, or anyone, should live their lives.

Despite the minor intimacies and attachments, to which I will turn shortly, the overall atmosphere of *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* is that of lack of intimacy, especially between women. Women are depicted as competitors in the market with the ticking clock – a notion that is seen in jealousies between Norah and Julia, and between women on the street and on screen, and in the lack of understanding and communication in female relationships. Watching a film in London, Julia thinks how

> the girls were perky and pretty, but it was strange how many of the older women looked drab and hopeless, with timid, hunted expressions. They looked ashamed of themselves, as if they were begging the world in general not to notice that they were women or to hold it against them (Rhys, 1997, p. 70).

Julia is also constantly concerned about how old she looks, and whether men notice her age – an anxiety that has its culmination at the end of the novel in a scene when a young man follows Julia until he sees her face in lamplight (Rhys, 1997, p. 188). Rhys draws a link between women's value in social systems at that time: when a woman is young and pretty she has value as she is marriageable, but when she is old, she should be ashamed of herself, and of the fact that she is a woman. Norah, too,

[78] See the introduction to this thesis or Berlant's article (1998) for a longer discussion of minor and major intimacies.

unable to fall asleep, looks into the looking-class in her nightdress, touching her lips and hair, smiling at her reflection, thinks how she has wasted her best years: "My life's like death. It's like being buried alive. It isn't fair, it isn't fair" (Rhys, 1997, p. 103). Norah, at the age of 26, is worried about her value as a woman as time passes, as she knows that she will be unable to compete with others on the market sooner or later, as the clock ticks for her: "You're young yet – young yet – young yet" (Rhys, 1997, p. 139).

Valuing women based on age and looks is directly related to women not being able to form intimacies with one another in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*. They gaze at one another with envy or contempt: "The girl standing next to [Julia] in the lift stared at her persistently. [Julia] grew angry and thought: 'Well, I can stare too, if it comes to that'" (Rhys, 1997, p. 119). Then the narrator describes the girl very precisely, being aware of Julia's envy of the girl's youth and the girl's value in the eyes of "some male fool-counterpart with round eyes and a little button mouth" (Rhys, 1997, p. 120). Here we see how the obsession with youthful looks is related to how women are perceived by men – how much chance, in other words, they have in finding a partner and committing to heteronormative ways of life. What is more, women perceive one another as competitors in the fight for men who can grant them this heteronormative way of life.

Not only is there lack of intimacy between strangers, but also Norah and Julia envy one another. Although both Norah and Julia are aware of their similarly entrapped situations as young women, they are incapable of doing something about it. Norah has been taking care of their ill, dying mother for the most of her young adult life. Her friends and family have congratulated her for submitting to the care-taking role, as it is appropriate for a woman: "You're wonderful, Norah, you're wonderful. I don't know how you do it" (Rhys, 1997, p. 104). An important thing that keeps Norah going is the admiration she gets from friends and family for caring for her mother. The narrator explains this as "the feeling that one was doing what one ought to do, the approval of God and man. It made you feel protected and safe, as if something very powerful were fighting on your side" (Rhys, 1997, p. 104). It is the feeling of safety and approval that comes from succumbing to heteronormative conventions that encourages Norah to suppress her own desire to do something else with her life and time, although she dreams of a different life with "some money of

her own [to] be able to do what she liked" (Rhys, 1997, p. 105). The approval from God and man, both figures who represent the organised patriarchal society, is what makes Julia envy Norah for her relatively secure situation as she has a house to stay in and good relationships with her family. Norah has the security that Julia lacks and now desires. Norah, on the other hand, seems to envy Julia for the freedom the latter has. She thinks that Julia is "better dressed" than she is (Rhys, 1997, p. 74). Although Norah thinks that "[Julia] doesn't even look like a lady now" (Rhys, 1997, p. 73) and "it seemed to her that in the last three years her sister had indisputably changed for worse" (Rhys, 1997, p. 73), there is nevertheless a certain regret expressed on Norah's part that she, out of the two sisters, has been the one who has had to take care of their dying mother while Julia has been living as she pleases.

Interestingly, Norah's contempt and rebellion for her own situation are aroused in her after Julia's return: "It was as if meeting Julia has aroused some spirit of rebellion to tear her to bits" (Rhys, 1997, p. 106). The sight of her sister makes Norah feel alive: "[Norah] hated [Julia], but she felt more alive when her sister was with her" (Rhys, 1997, p. 106). Both Norah and Julia become more aware of their own entrapped situations when they see each other's lives, but they fail to communicate their problems to one another, or possibly not even to themselves, as we learn that

> [e]verything about [Norah] betrayed the woman who has been brought up to certain tastes, then left without the money to gratify them; trained to certain opinions which forbid her even the relief of rebellion against her lot; yet holding desperately to both her tastes and her opinions (Rhys, 1997, p. 74).

This passage clearly demonstrates how women are trapped in the system they have been raised to admire. What unites them is the fact that both of them are stuck in societal conventions that proscribe them as young women. Because of their jealousies and anger, they are unable to come together to fight the oppression. As both sisters have not been able to pursue their dreams and desires, intimacy cannot really develop between them because they see each other as reasons for their own misfortunes.

Not only are there societal expectations that women have to live up to on the story level, but critics also often reproduce the idea that characters should indeed in the story conform to the societal expectations if they want to find happiness. When

Julia and Norah might blame one another, and, as mentioned, critics sometimes blame their mother. For instance, there is a passage in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* when Julia thinks of her childhood, and her childhood happiness (Rhys, 1997, pp. 157-162). When thinking of her childhood, Julia describes how she felt safe in the shadows, but was "afraid in the sun" (Rhys, 1997, p. 160). Simpson (2005) reads the image of sunlight, and Julia's fear of it, as a metaphoric reminder of the warm centre of the world that had been Julia's mother (p. 56). Simpson (2005) explains that the light became "harsh and menacing, as the mother's dominance [gave] way to the uncle's and the 'huge' thing stalking young Julia is the predatory, sexually intent male" (p. 56). In other words, Simpson indicates that there is a connection between Julia's mother neglecting her child, and the fact that Julia might have fallen prey to sexual abuse, and that this connection is hinted at by a sunlight that is harsh and menacing.[79] This passage, however, with the light and shadow, can also be read when considering the role of light and shadow in the Hegelian binaries, where the sun, and hence the sunlight, is associated with masculinity, the sun being the ultimate symbol of masculine subjectivity, as Jane Goldman (1998) points out, following the Cixousian binaries that I also explained in the introduction.[80] Perhaps the light is not just menacing because the mother as such is no longer the warm centre of the world, radiating protective light, but because femininity, and feminine guidance and companionship are lacking and suppressed by patriarchal conventions. It is therefore not only the mother as a biological mother who is absent, but femininity, and the freedom to follow female desire and establish intimacy between women that is absent yet hauntingly present in *After Leaving Mr MacKenzie*.[81]

The desire for intimacy between women is always present in Rhys's fiction, where women do reach out for one another, although sometimes in odd ways and

[79] See Ann B. Simpson (2005) and Patricia Moran (2007) to further explore the readings of trauma in Rhys's childhood, and especially the case about her family friend molesting her in the Botanic Gardens in Dominica.

[80] See the introduction for a lengthier discussion of the role of that which is female in both society and writing, and how Cixous encourages writers to embrace that which is feminine (feelings, bodies, materiality, emotions, not knowing the other).

[81] I use also the term feminine desire following my discussion in the introduction and other chapters to indicate that an alternative to the patriarchal and capitalist system is, in the theories I use, and in the fiction of Rhys and Woolf, associated with femininity. Femininity is also primarily ascribed to female characters, but both writers also demonstrate that a strict gender binary does not manifest itself in sexes, but applying it to femininity and masculinity is 'present' to different extents in all characters. In other words, acknowledging and embracing *women's* desire is one way of challenging the system, but another is embracing femininity.

places. For instance, Norah has hired a woman named Wyatt to help her, and Julia looks for intimacy with a "slim, nice-breasted woman" in a bar in Paris, wanting to tell her all about why she (Julia) "felt unhappy" (Rhys, 1997, p. 184) as well as the story of her life, just like she wanted to tell this to a woman who painted her (Rhys, 1997, p. 51). We find those moments of strange intimacy, or the desire for that intimacy also elsewhere in Rhys's fiction; in *Good Morning Midnight*, Sasha likes Lisa, with whom she laughs and cries, and Christophine and Antoinette are perhaps the only pair in the entirety of Rhys's oeuvre that demonstrate a long lasting bond that transcends age, race and class. In *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, intimacy between women is also found in glances and gestures between Norah and Julia – glances and gestures that linger but have no life, as Berlant puts it.

One of those strange moments of intimacy occurs when both Julia and Norah seek companionship in one another. When they meet again for the first time in three years, Julia

> made an awkward gesture. Her eagerness made her awkward. She had been longing for some show of affection […] she wanted to say: do you remember the day I took off my shoes and stockings when we were paddling and carried you because the pebbles hurt your feet? Well, I've never forgotten that day (Rhys, 1997, p. 73).

She helped her sister when she was in need, even if this was a minor need like crossing pebbles. Between Norah and Julia, it is the bodily presence that gives hints of intimacy – them being in the same room, and Julia indicating with a hand to move closer: "Julia said: 'That chair's awfully uncomfortable. Won't you sit on the bed near me, and let's talk?' *She made an awkward gesture*" (Rhys, 1997, p. 73; emphasis mine). Even though this moment does not lead to the grand narrative of intimacy – quite the opposite, the sisters drift apart – it is still a moment, a gesture of intimacy that, by its telling, leaves a trace. After the fight between Norah and Julia, at their mother's funeral, Julia is unwilling to leave on her own accord and Miss Wyatt has to give "her a slight push" (Rhys, 1997, p. 138) to get her out of the house. On the one hand, we see how a third party, also a woman, instead of reconciling the sisters, quite literally pushes them away from one another. But on the other hand, we see the remainder of intimacy in both sisters, as Norah too, "in a hysterical voice", says that "we can't send [Julia] away like that. I don't believe she's got any money" (Rhys, 1997, p. 138). Although it is seemingly Julia's financial situation that Norah

worries about, it is clearly also more than that, as already at their first meeting, Julia states: "Oh, God!...But it wasn't money I wanted" (Rhys, 1997, p. 75). It is not money Julia wants or Norah desires to give – it is a female bond they seek to establish, and through that, another way of being in the world.

There is another intimate moment between Julia and Norah in a passage with a reference to a cart-horse. When Norah and Julia meet for the second time, there is a moment of relief and silence between them, followed by a half-laugh, when they realise that neither of them has really done well in the eyes of the other, or rather, that the world is not a world that is kind to women (Rhys, 1997, p. 100). When Norah tells Julia about how their mother called Norah Dobbin, a name of an old cart-horse that the family used to have in Norah and Julia's childhood, they both laugh hysterically, because Norah was able to relate to the old cart-horse who worked himself to death (Rhys, 1997, p. 101). Here, both sisters realise how unfair life is towards women; how the world for women might indeed look like the world looks for an old, over-worked cart-horse. Before leaving her sister, Julia "stopped because she was unable to put her emotion into words. At that moment her sister seemed to her like a character in a tremendous tragedy moving, dark, tranquil, and beautiful, across a background of yellowish snow" (Rhys, 1997, pp. 101-102). Although it is their childhood memory and a reference to the past that unites them, the sight of Norah as a stranger moving in a tragedy is also what binds them together – Julia sees Norah as simply another woman suffering who has not been able to live her life freely.

Instead of Julia seeing Norah as *her sister*, with all the family history, seeing her as a stranger who shares time, space, and perhaps also misery with her could establish a connection between the two women.[82] Here we see the complex interplay

[82] This novel too, then, presents ethics in Levinasian sense. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas writes that "the Other remains infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign" (1961, p. 195), or at least, it should remain so for ethical interactions. It is this radical otherness that resists 'killing' the other, as Levinas writes that "there is here a relation […] with something absolutely other: the resistance of what has no resistance – the ethical resistance" (1961, p. 199). Jessica Berman (2004) further explains that "Levinas's ethical thought rests upon the stark division within the moment of ethical awareness between the self and the face of the other—startling in its otherness, compelling in its demands upon the self. His writing insists upon the other as "infinitely foreign" (Levinas, 1961, p. 194, qtd. in Berman, 2004, p. 155). Berman, following others working within feminist ethics, offers a reading that also allows us to see relations between lovers and family members as ethical, something which Levinas does not. When I have demonstrated in the previous chapters in this thesis that in Woolf's fiction ethical relations are possible between people who are intimate also in conventional terms, then in Rhys's fiction, intimacy more likely requires radical otherness in the Levinasian sense. See the

between intimacy and radical otherness within family members that I have already addressed in the previous chapters. It does not mean that Norah is not Julia's sister, rather, she is not simply her sister. This is why the intimacy is strange – her sister is also a stranger. The encounter with her sister, although it does not lead to a reconciliation, gives Julia some willingness to live, as she "had lost the indifference to her fate, which in Paris had sustained her for so long. She knew herself ready to struggle and twist and turn" (Rhys, 1997, p. 77). However, she is not ready to struggle because she feels longing for her family, but because some part of her senses that she and Norah suffer in the same way. Seeing Norah as another woman creates a strange sense of intimacy between them. The moments between Julia and her sister, although just moments, have already left a trace of alternative ways of living and creating intimacy. These moments are not dependent on Julia and Norah recognising a familial relation between one another but rather an acknowledgement of sharing the same time, space, and oppressed condition. We can only see this when we look at the small glances and exchanges, and the physical sensations and emotional responses they trigger in and between the characters.

Anti-Oedipal Desires

These moments are also moments when we see traces of repressed desire in women, a desire that is anti-Oedipal.[83] Deleuze and Guattari write in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1970) that Freud's greatness

> lies in having determined the essence or nature of desire, no longer in relation to objects, aims, or even sources (territories), but as an abstract subjective essence – libido or sexuality. But he still relates this essence to the family as the last territoriality of private man – whence the position of Oedipus, marginal at first in the *Three Essays*, then centering more and more around desire…at least it won't go further than the family! (1988, p. 270).

After Leaving Mr Mackenzie can be seen as a critique of Oedipal narratives and Freudian psychoanalysis as it radically challenges how Freud perceives desire,

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introduction to this thesis for a longer discussion about radical Otherness and its relevance to strange intimacy.

[83] By anti-Oedipal I mean that, as Colebrook puts it "language is not the way in which speakers are subjected to signifiers, beyond which they cannot think. Rather, in the beginning are perceptions from which subject positions are formed, but which are not yet privatized. There is a perception of 'x', and it is from that perception or affection that there emerged something like a subject who speaks" (2012, p. 73). Although Colebrook refers to Woolf's modernism as anti-Oedipal, Rhys's is also explicitly so.

especially desire in women. The novel demonstrates how the idea that desire is always a desire for a family member or a desire to be a family member is a direct reason why there is sometimes no intimacy between women. As partly already demonstrated above, it does so by first showing the reader how little intimacy there is between women if society tells them to identify themselves and one another within the narrow categories of a daughter, a mother, and a wife, the latter two largely dependent on whether they have good enough looks to become wives and then mothers. Ann B. Simpson (2005) suggests that the narrative focus on the mother-daughter dyad in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie's* indicates Rhys's refusal to write about "conventional and male-inscribed claims about the appropriate contents for aesthetic discourse: traditionally masculinized renditions of Oedipal conflict" (p. 64). Rhys's refusal to write in masculinised renditions of Oedipal conflict often means for critics that Rhys's fiction is read in pre-Oedipal terms. Indeed, her aesthetics are tempting to read as a discourse on the pre-Oedipal which reflect "the blurriness between 'us' and 'them'" (Simpson, 2005, p. 10).

Yet, the pre-Oedipal already predicts the Oedipal; it entails that there will be Oedipal relations. But *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* cannot be understood in either pre-Oedipal or Oedipal structures, as the pre- already assumes that there will also have to be the Oedipal phase.[84] Norah says to Julia: "The fact is […] that there is something wrong with our family. We're soft, or lazy, or something" (Rhys, 1997, p. 102). Although this can be seen as a failure to conform to Oedipal models and the characters' anguish about this failure, the phrase might also indicate that the members of their family simply cannot be understood in Oedipal terms. Turning

[84] *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, like many other Rhys's novels, has prompted many readings, which examine the mother from a psychoanalytical point of view, seeing her as a primary object of identification and the primary lost object that triggers much of the later trauma in Rhys's fiction. In *Territories of the Psyche* (2005), Anne B. Simpson reads Rhys's fiction, including *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, through Kleinian psychoanalysis, focusing on the mother-daughter dyad and pre-Oedipal subject-formation. Although Simpson provides many useful insights into Rhys's works and criticises Freudian psychoanalysis and egalitarian feminism, her work nevertheless tries to understand Rhys's work in psychoanalytical, (pre-) Oedipal terms. Other predominantly psychoanalytical criticism include Sylvie Maurel's, *Women Writers: Jean Rhys* (1998).

Helen Carr's *Jean Rhys* (1996, 2012) gives an overview of different issues in Rhys but the psychoanalytical tone remains underlying. Also, Patricia Moran's relatively recent work on *Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys, and the Aesthetics of Traum*a (2007) offers a comprehensive overview of the role childhood abuse played in Rhys's and Woolf's aesthetics.

For a thorough overview on different strands of criticism on Rhys's fiction see Elaine Savory's *Jean Rhys* (1998) and in *The Cambridge Introduction to Jean Rhys* (2009). Savoury offers a nuanced overview of various kinds of criticisms (post-colonial, race studies, feminist criticism, psychoanalytical).

from Oedipal and pre-Oedipal interpretations to an alternative, non-Freudian understanding of the formation of the self and the self's intimacy with others is important because, among other things, it allows us to see the different routes desire can take. Accordingly, seeing women's desire as more complex than a desire to be a wife and a mother enables us to move away from seeing mothers as what Griselda Pollock (2009) calls "ready-made mother monsters" (p. 3). In *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, we have a ready-made mother monster, who is both central and absent, who on the one hand is seen as a missing mother-figure, and on the other hand her absence is what makes her so present. Delia Caprasso Konzett (2002) suggests that "there is no Oedipal fantasy, the father dream is left behind in *Good Morning, Midnight* [but] in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, [Rhys] still tackles with it fruitlessly" (p. 160). I would not say that Rhys tackles the Oedipal fantasy fruitlessly but rather that her critics have tried to tackle it, because *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* is the novel that most obviously demonstrates how reductive it is to try to understand Rhys's characters only in terms of successful or unsuccessful completion of the Oedipal phase.[85]

For this reason, I read the novel with Deleuze and Guattari's 'becoming-woman' and 'becoming-animal' and examine the concept of desire in these becomings. Deleuze and Guattari write in *A Thousand Plateaus* about the restrictive way in which desire is understood in Freudian psychoanalysis, and how seeing desire in Freudian, Oedipal terms is directly related to keeping the established, capitalist and patriarchal social order intact:

> it is a desire for the mother and for the death of the father […] only because it is repressed, it takes a mask on under the reign of the repression that models the mask for it and plasters it on its face […] the real danger is elsewhere. If desire is repressed, it is because every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of calling into question the established order of a society: not that desire is asocial; on the contrary. But it is explosive; there is no desiring-machine capable of being assembled without demolishing entire social sectors (2004, p. xxiii).

If we approach desire from the same view, we can trace or at least imagine the paths women's desire takes in *After Leaving Mr MacKenzie* because desire as such is

[85] I would, however, also not say that critics have tackled it fruitlessly because psychoanalytical insights still offer significant understanding about trauma, memory, and women's roles in Rhys's work. The more materialist and affected-oriented interpretations today would not be possible without the earlier work done by critics who engaged with psychoanalytical interpretations.

productive and has the possibility to shape the world and challenge the established order of society, which, in Rhys's fictional worlds, is patriarchal and capitalist. Desire in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* would allow the characters to establish intimacy and companionship between women, as this could alter the patriarchal power relation where women are always subjugated to men and depicted as competitors against one another. In other words, any desire that is outside the familial relations is also repressed in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* because it threatens the social order.

In the above quotation, Deleuze and Guattari write that "if desire is repressed, it is because every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of calling into question the established order of a society" (2004, p. xxiii). The idea that a desire can undermine the order of society resonates with Rhys's writing in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*. Julia's desire, which is "like iron" (Rhys, 1997, p. 51), indicating the materiality of, as well as strength of desire, has the capacity to challenge the existing social norms where seemingly only boys have desire. Early in the novel, after Mr Mackenzie stops Julia's monthly allowance, she follows him to a restaurant, and sitting opposite him, despising him, she thinks, "[t]ogether [Mr Mackenzie and his lawyer] perfectly represented organized society, in which she had no place and against which she had not a dog's chance" (Rhys, 1997, p. 22). Against Mr Mackenzie and his lawyer, who represent the organized society and what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as 'majority', Julia stands like the 'minority'. In *A Thousand Plateaus* they write,

> The notion of minority is very complex, with musical, literary, linguistic, as well as juridical and political, references. The opposition between minority and majority is not simply quantitative. Majority implies a constant, of expression or content, serving as a standard measure by which to evaluate it. Let us suppose that the constant or standard is the average adult-white-heterosexual-European-male-speaking a standard language […] It is obvious that "man" holds the majority, even if he is less numerous than mosquitoes, children, women, blacks, peasants, homosexuals, etc. […] Majority assumes a state of power and domination, not the other way around. That is why we must distinguish between: the majoritarian as a constant and homogeneous system; minorities as subsystems; and the minoritarian as a potential, creative and created, becoming (2004, p. 196).

Rhys's protagonists, who are all women, stand against and outside the society which they try to fit into without really desiring to fit in.[86] Her protagonists represent the minority who struggle against majoritarian characters, such as Mr Mackenzie, Uncle Griffiths and Mr James – all white, heterosexual European male adults. Uncle Griffiths, for instance, is described as "solid and powerful", and Julia feels "a great desire to please him" (Rhys, 1997, p. 81). When Julia is back in London, short of money, and goes to her Uncle Griffiths, the latter refuses to give her anything beyond one pound because "[Julia] always insisted on going [her] own way. Nobody interfered with [her] or expressed any opinion on what [she] did" (Rhys, 1997, p. 84). He refers to the fact that Julia is "outside the circle of warmth" (Rhys, 1997, p. 79), that she does not belong to society, to the majority. Uncle Griffiths says to Julia, "[y]ou deserted your family" (Rhys, 1997, p. 84), indicating that Julia made the choice to live a life that does not conform to the standards that would give her access to money and power. In other words, it is impossible to please Uncle Griffiths, the representation of the majority, without conforming to the standards of majority, which Julia does not do.

We may ask then, why did Julia want to go her own way, and how is going her own way any resistance to the society that Uncle Griffiths and other male figures represent? Although there are not many instances in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, or in Rhys's fiction in general, where we can see female desire, there are still some moments, including the one where Julia narrates the story of her life to a woman named Ruth who paints her portrait. These instances give us hints why Julia might have wanted to go away. Although the reader knows from the story that Julia asked a question about understanding her desire to get away from Ruth directly, we also know that by retelling the story, she asks this again from Mr Horsfield. By repetition, the narrative voice addresses the following question seemingly to no one in particular, so also to everyone, therefore rendering it important for everyone to consider it:

> I wanted to go away with just the same feeling a boy has when he wants to run away to sea – at least, that I imagine a boy has […] You understand,

[86] Antoinette tries to make her marriage with her English husband work, Sasha tries to find work in various posts, Marya tries to fit into a society she enters via a couple who 'help' her while her husband is in jail, and Anna tries to make England her home.

> don't you? Do you understand that a girl might have that feeling? I wanted to get away. I wanted it like – like iron" (Rhys, 1997, p. 51).

The above quotation is central to understanding the desire to escape not just elsewhere, to the sea, or to another country, but rather as a general desire to escape the patriarchal and capitalist system. Ironically, Julia knew her only way to follow her desire was, in a way, repressing that desire – she had to marry. She explains, "[s]o I did get away. I married to get away" (Rhys, 1997, p. 52). Right after Julia admits that she did get away, the narration goes no further in terms of what happened when she got away. This passage demonstrates that there is a strong desire present in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* that is anti-Oedipal, but it has no life, because social conventions expect women to conform to their roles as wives and mothers, or carers, as Norah does. Regardless, even if this desire does not develop into a major plotline, the traces of it undermine the power and authority of characters like Uncle Griffiths.

Although it is indeed women who suffer the most in the 'organized society' that is designed to favour white adult men, it is important to emphasise here that Rhys does not offer us a simple binary of oppression and power where women are subjugated to men. Rather, as I have demonstrated in the previous chapters, the novels examined in this thesis engage with the issue of undervaluing that which we consider feminine in Western cultures. Accordingly, it is insightful to consider Deleuze and Guattari's concept 'becoming-woman'. They write that

> [w]omen, 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 they themselves must enter; this is a becoming-woman affecting all of humankind, men and women both (2004, p. 233).

Claire Colebrook in 'Woolf and "theory"' (2012) further explains that 'becoming-woman' "is the key to all becomings precisely because man has been a definitive figure in the concept of the subject: man is that being who must present, know and master a world that is always given to him as so much objective reality" (p. 75). In the same way, Julia is a woman, representing a minority and becoming-woman because the men, as demonstrated in the characters of Mackenzie, Griffiths, and James, largely already represent being that is defined by and confined to patriarchal

and capitalist terms, whereas in Julia we see a desire to struggle and get away from it.

However, the youthful poems Mackenzie wrote, Julia's uncle's second impulsive marriage, and James's love for his collection of paintings all indicate a possibility of becoming-woman in them. For example, Mr Mackenzie, whom we already know represents the organised society,

> had discovered that people who allow themselves to be blown about by the winds of emotion and impulse are always unhappy people, and in self-defence he had adopted a certain mental attitude, a certain code or morals and manners, from which he seldom departed (Rhys, 1997, p. 24).

Yet, we learn that he does depart from these morals when he is sure no one finds out; his behaviour is still haunted by the side of him that made him write "youthful poems" (Rhys, 1997, p. 24). In the same way, Julia's uncle's one instinctive decision was marrying his second wife, and it was a decision he never regretted (Rhys, 1997, p. 81), and Mr James's usual confidence is shaken in the presence of the artwork he has collected (Rhys, 1997, pp. 111-115). Within these moments, the otherwise majoritarian characters start to question the legitimacy of their own power and influence – they seem to move away from their identity as the already defined figure of 'man' toward a becoming-woman. In other words, there are traces of becoming-woman present also in male characters, and it seems that encountering Julia triggers this becoming, even if only shortly. When Julia is in a car, going to her mother's funeral, her uncle thinks "how he disliked that woman and her expression, and her eyes, which said: 'Oh, for God's sake, leave me alone. I'm not troubling you; you've no right to trouble me. I've as much right as you to live, haven't I?'" (Rhys, 1997, p. 129). It is important that the narrative voice designates the thought that Julia has a right to live to Uncle Griffiths, not to Julia, although Uncle Griffiths thinks Julia is the one thinking so. In other words, Julia does make Uncle Griffiths question whether his way of living is the only right way of living. What is at stake in becoming-woman is a creation of selves and subjects who are not defined in Oedipal terms, and what is at stake in Julia's struggle to sustain her right to live is affirming her, a woman's, a minoritarian figure's desire. Colebrook (2012) writes that

> becoming-woman allows moving beyond heteronormative subjectivity […] the becoming of becoming-woman is a non-subjective, aesthetic, and sexual mode of becoming: non-subjective, because there is not a self who becomes

> so much as a movement from which self-hood emerges as relatively stable, but always in relation to what is perceived (aesthetic) and to which one is drawn (sexual) (pp. 74-76).

Julia is the embodiment of becoming-woman as her self is not a self that is fixed in a certain Oedipal category but a self that is in constant relation to the non-human environment she inhabits and people she encounters, as I will demonstrate shortly in the next section. She is constantly desiring things and life outside Oedipal relations, and she also triggers that desire in other characters.

More-Than-Human Selves

Colebrook (2012) says of Woolf that "at the most general level, Woolf's writing described the ways in which selves […] are nothing more than the sounds, surfaces, lights, and bodies they perceive" (p. 73). The same can be said of Rhys. To understand that, focusing on how Rhys describes the non-human environment in her fiction is crucial. Recent criticism on Rhys looks at the non-human world and the importance of affects and emotions and explores how this invites a new understanding about how Rhys's characters' selves are formed in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*.[87] The most relevant of these for my work is a Deleuzian reading by Erica L. Johnson (2015). Johnson succinctly points out the shortcomings of criticism that try to understand human relations in terms of sex, money, and power in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*. Johnson (2015) writes that

> [a]ttempts to sort these relations into the narratives of will and agency that rely on the notion that individuals either do or do not possess such properties, stop short of understanding Rhys's larger portrait of how such affective attachments build upon and produce a model of subjectivity in which her heroines are enmeshed within the world in which they dwell, and amongst the subjects and objects alike of which that world is made (p. 214).

[87] Such criticism includes a monograph, *Jean Rhys: Twenty-First-Century Approaches* (2015) edited by Erica L. Johnson and Patricia Moran, and various articles such as Aberheen Hai's '"There is always the other side, always": Black Servants' Laughter, Knowledge, and Power in Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea' (2015), Rebecca Colesworthy's 'Jean Rhys and the Fiction of Failed Reciprocity' (2014), Erica L. Johnson's 'Haunted: Affective Memory in Jean Rhys's Good Morning, Midnight' (2014), Octavio R. Gonzales 'The Narrative Mood of Jean Rhys's Quartet' (2014?), Delia Caprasso Konzett's 'White Mythologies: Jean Rhys's Aesthetics of Posthumanism' (2002), Betsy Berry's 'Between Dog and Wolf: Jean Rhys's Version of Naturalism in "After Leaving Mr Mackenzie"' (1995), and Panayiota Chrysochou's 'In-Between States: Twilight Horror in Jean Rhys's After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie and Djuna Barnes' Nightwood' (2011).

Although Colebrook refers to selves as combinations of non-human perceptions, Johnson also indicates that subjectivity too is influenced by this contact and becoming with the non-human. I agree with Johnson that to understand Rhys's sense of self, and subjectivity, we need to examine how her characters are constantly made and remade by the non-human world they inhabit.

If the self is not merely made up by interaction with the mother and other family members, it is made up of thousands of other points of (intimate) contact with the world at various points in time. In fact, Rhys seems to associate, like Deleuze and Guattari, the power to affect and be affected with something other than human. The chapters in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, including 'Norah', 'Uncle Griffiths', 'Mr James', 'Acton', and 'Notting Hill', are not merely about Norah, Uncle Griffiths, or Mr James, or those parts of London. Instead, they are as much about Julia as they are about other characters or places. Julia's self is laid out between them and made and remade in the encounters with the people she meets, places she visits and environment she encounters. Naming chapters after places, people, and sometimes abstract concepts is possibly a technique to demonstrate that human selves and subjectivities are formed in relation to places, and in encounters with the world of non-human and the environment in as much as subjectivities are formed in relation to other humans, particularly one's family members.

Rhys's references to physical places and animals in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* give us the idea that desire, especially desire in women, is something varied, affirmative, and world-making, and that it is the repression of this desire that undermines Rhys's protagonists', including Julia's, attachment to life and love for life. Colebrook (2012) writes that, "desire is not some human set of embodied interests that must be repressed or articulated through language; desire is the multiplicity of forces of life as such, which is diminished and impoverished when represented as human" (p. 67). As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, other characters perceive Julia's life as not worth living because they are unable to imagine that there is more than one way of being happy, or finding joy in life. Julia, however, has her own way of wanting to live. Her attachment to life becomes clear in the way Julia feels about places, streets, rivers, and the atmosphere these non-human elements create.

Already at the beginning of *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, Julia muses that "it was always places that she thought of, not people" (Rhys, 1997, p. 10). For instance, Julia loves the Seine at night; she

> looked out of the window at the bookstalls on the quay. And beyond the bookstalls was the Seine, brown-green and sullen. When a river-boat passed, it would foam and churn up for a while. Then, almost at once, it was again calm and sluggish (Rhys, 1997, p. 15).

She thinks, lying in bed,

> of the dark shadows of houses in a street white with sunshine; or of trees with slender black branches and young green leaves, like the trees of a London square in spring; or of a dark-purple sea, the sea of a chromo or of some tropical country that she had never seen (Rhys, 1997, p. 12).

And she walks the quiet streets of the city "feeling serene and peaceful. Her limbs moved smoothly; the damp, soft air was pleasant against her face. She felt complete in herself, detached, independent of the rest of humanity" (Rhys, 1997, p. 17). Much later in the novel, already in London, on the way to her mother's funeral, Julia thinks, "it was a mild day. The sky was the rare, hazy, and tender blue of the London sky in spring. There was such sweetness in the air that it benumbed you" (Rhys, 1997, p. 130). After her mother's funeral, we get the description of "[t]he French window into the little garden was open. The room was full of sunlight subdued to a grey glare and then suddenly of shadows. 'Life is sweet and truly a pleasant thing.'" (Rhys, 1997, p. 132). The tone in these passages is very different from the tone the narrator has when describing most of the human encounters in the novel; here we see detailed attention to colours, the quality of air, and the movement of the protagonist's body that seems to blend into the environment. There is no anxiety in these passages as there often is when Julia encounters humans. In other words, the human world in general diminishes and represses Julia's desire to live, which is not a set of embodied interests but rather, as Colebrook (2012) writes, "the multiplicity of forces of life as such" (p. 67).

Within the moments when Julia is absorbed by her external environment, she seems to be content and to be detached from humanity also in a sense that she does not have to worry about her particular individual life and the things she should be and do as a woman. To put it differently, at her moments of ease, Julia can be seen as what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as 'haecceity'. Or, Julia *is* the moments she feels

the air, and experiences sensations and impressions from the external world as when she walks down the quay and lies thinking of shadows of houses and the way lights falls on trees. Deleuze and Guattari write that

> there is a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance. We reserve the name haecceity for it. A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date have a perfect individuality lacking nothing, even though this individuality is different from that of a thing or a subject […] you will yield nothing to haecceities unless you realize that *that is what you are, and that you are nothing but that* […] You are longitude and latitude, a set of speeds and slownesses between unformed particles, a set of nonsubjectified affects. You have the individuality of a day, a season, a year, a life (regardless of its duration)—a climate, a wind, a fog, a swarm, a pack (regardless of its regularity). Or at least you can have it, you can reach it. *It should not be thought that a haecceity consists simply of a decor or backdrop that situates subjects*, or of appendages that hold things and people to the ground. It is the 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 (2004, pp. 261-262; emphasis mine).

Julia, feeling the soft air against her face, seeing the sky of London, and imagining the shadows of houses also seems *to be* those sights, impressions, sensations, and thoughts. Julia too is in an assemblage with her non-human environment, which is not simply a backdrop to her as a self. She, as a self, is formed by the impressions and sensation the world of the non-human offers her, hence the chapters that are titled by places and people's names are also what Julia is.

Julia is also described as lacking any definite ways of identification: "Her career of ups and downs had rubbed most of the hall-marks off her, so that it was not easy to guess at her age, her nationality, or the social background to which she properly belonged" (Rhys, 1997, p. 14). Instead, it seems that she has been shaped and is shaped constantly by different places she inhabits, people she interacts with, clothes she wears, and impressions she receives from the external world, as demonstrated. There is a general vagueness about her life history if we wanted to try to understand it in conventional terms, beginning with where she grew up, when and whom she married, and what happened to her marriage. First, when Julia wants to tell about her life – her marriage and journey to continental Europe, and the death of her baby – to the painter Ruth, the latter does not believe her (Rhys, 1997, p. 54). Then, when retelling the story to Horsfield, the latter also thinks the story is vague and that talking about her life, Julia, should know that "your life is your life, and you

must be pretty definite about it" (Rhys, 1997, p. 50). The unreality of Julia's life is expressed also on her behalf when she thinks,

> I wanted to say to Ruth: 'Yes, of course you're right. I never did all that. But who am I then? Will you tell me that? Who am I, and how did I get here?'[…] When I got home I pulled out all the photographs I had, and letters and things. And my marriage-book and my passport […] But it had all gone, as if it had never been" (Rhys, 1997, p. 54).

After her attempts to recover her past and her self through narrating her story, Julia then decides to go back to England, to her family, to find some sort of affirmative identity there, without success. Rhys seems to suggest with this that selves do not depend on past memories as much as they do on the present moment which they inhabit and share with others in time and space.

Julia's life, in other words, cannot so much be understood as the life of an individual but rather as 'a life'. Like Woolf's writing in *Between the Acts* and in *To the Lighthouse*, Rhys's fiction somewhat predicts Deleuze's writing in 'Immanence: A Life' (1995/2002). To emphasise again a quotation that has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis, Deleuze writes,

> A life is everywhere […]: an immanent life carrying with it the events and singularities that are merely actualized in subjects and objects […] Between [a person's] life and his death, there is a moment that is only that of a life playing with death. The life of the individual gives way to an impersonal and yet singular life … The life of such individuality fades away in favor of the singular life immanent to a man who no longer has a name, though he can be mistaken for no other […] (1995, pp. 27-29).

Julia's feeling of unreality about her individual past supports the idea that I emphasise throughout this thesis – it is not small individual lives of men and women Woolf and Rhys engage with primarily, but a common life – a life lived in relation to and with the world of the non-human. Julia's life should not be measured as a life of an individual, but as 'a life' in Deleuzian terms – not a subjective life but a singular life lived in relation to things, places, animals, seasons, weather, and anything a self encounters. When Julia is drunk and out with Mr Horsfield, she tells him that, "I hate people. I'm afraid of people. I never used to be like this [...]" (Rhys, 1997, p. 42). Rhys suggests that it is not life as such that Julia struggles with, but a life of an individual, expected to be lived according to patriarchal and capitalist assumptions about happiness in relation to other individuals. The fact that Julia says that she

"never used to be like this" (Rhys, 1997, p. 42), indicates that there has been a time when Julia did love life in a Deleuzian sense.

One time when Julia was happy, as it turns out, was when she was a child. Chapter Twelve at the end of the second part of the novel is interestingly titled Childhood, beginning with sentences, "Every day is a new day. Every day you are a new person" (Rhys, 1997, p. 157). In this chapter, although it is only six pages long, Rhys spends three of these pages describing an intense happiness of Julia's childhood: "You ran as if you were flying, without feeling your feet. And all the time you ran, you were thinking with a tight feeling in your throat: 'I'm happy – happy – happy […]'" (Rhys, 1997, p. 159). It is worth noting that Julia refers to her child self as 'you', indicating that her adult self is indeed a new person who has lost the happiness of childhood. Like Woolf in *To the Lighthouse*, wherein Mrs Ramsay is poignantly aware that when Cam and James grow up, they will lose the happiness of their childhood, Rhys indicates that there is something particular in the way children experience life and happiness. In these three pages in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, life is described as a life lived in relation to everything. The only time Julia claims she felt like herself is in her childhood, when she was free, and felt intimate with the environment around her:

> When you were a child, you put your hand on the trunk of a tree and you were comforted, because you knew that the tree was alive – you felt its life when you touched it – and you knew that it was friendly to you, or, at least, not hostile. But of people you were always a little afraid […] When you are a child you are yourself and you know things prophetically. And then suddenly something happens and you stop being yourself; you become what others force you to be. You lose your wisdom and your soul (Rhys, 1997, p. 158).

The conflict between who Julia would like to be and who society wants her to be is clear here – in childhood, Julia was who she herself thought she was; in adulthood, she has to be what society expects her to be. To put it differently, in childhood, she had the freedom to experience life as a relation between the human and non-human; in adulthood, she has to be confined to living her life as an individual, with expectations society has about individual lives. I will come back to childhood in the next chapter on *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which is the only novel in Rhys's oeuvre, and the only novel examined in this thesis, that has a section which depicts the protagonists' life in childhood. Like in this very short section about childhood in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, Rhys's final novel also indicates that childhood is a

'place' where the attachment to non-human life is easier and more natural to develop. To put it differently, Rhys seems to suggest, like Deleuze and Guattari, that children are more open to experiencing life as a life, and seeing themselves as part of and made by the non-human world they inhabit (2004, p 256).[88] What is particularly important to emphasise in terms of *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* is the fact that Julia's childhood happiness has nothing to do with her mother, and everything to do with the world of non-human, and her being able to experience a life as desiring, and her self as part of it.

The Importance of Animal Imagery

In *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, references to childhood are interesting to consider alongside the references to animal imagery. Thus far I have pointed out the relevance of becoming-woman in understanding some of the issues around women, femininity, and desire in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*. I now want to examine Deleuze and Guattari's 'becoming-animal', as the animal references are central in Rhys's novel. Betsy Berry (1995) writes that "Mackenzie contains at least fifty references to creatures and beasts, thirty of them specific to individual species and five of them to the insect and reptilian world" (p. 545). For example, Julia's last name is Martin, referring to a small, blue-black-white coloured bird. Julia and other characters often refer to themselves and others as animals. For instance, Julia has "a dog's chance against Mackenzie and his lawyer"; she is "kind of a worm" in comparison to Mr James; she feels stimulated and cheered by a wallpaper with "half-bird, half-lizard" creatures; her mother is like a "dying animal, howling like a dog"; and her sister is compared to a cart-horse Dobbin (Rhys, 1997, p. 22, p. 12, p. 10, p. 33, p. 100). Also, Mr Griffiths' voice, when pronouncing '"a lady?" […] sounded alarmed and annoyed, as he might have said: 'A zebra? A giraffe?'" (Rhys, 1997, p. 79).[89] Rhys finishes the novel with the ambivalent thought that "the street was cool and full of grey shadows. Lights were beginning to come out in the cafes. It was the hour

[88] I will engage Deleuze and Guattari's writings on childhood directly in the next chapter.

[89] These are just a few examples of the many, varied references to the animal and insect worlds in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*. See Betsy Berry's article 'Between Dog and Wolf: Jean Rhys's Version of Naturalism in "After Leaving Mr Mackenzie" (1995) for a more thorough overview of animal and insect references and also Panayiota Chrysochou's *In-Between States: Twilight Horror in Jean Rhys's After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* and Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* (2011).

between dog and wolf, as they say" (Rhys, 1997, p. 191). This passage (if Woolf had read Rhys, of which there is no record) might have easily influenced Woolf's ending of *Between the Acts* (1941), which also depicts a twilight hour when "the dog fox fights with the vixen" (Woolf, 2000, p. 129).

What is at stake with these animal references is a potential for change of the twilight moment described in the end of both *Between the Acts* and *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari write that becoming-animal has nothing to do with becoming 'real' animals. Rather, there is a potential for change, for being in the world otherwise in what animals represent (2004, p. 262).[90] Coming back to childhood and children, Deleuze and Guattari write that it was largely Freud's misinterpretation of what the wolf or horse stood for in the stories of Little Hans. Deleuze and Guattari say that the horse stands for nothing but a horse and the potential it represents:

> again, we turn to children. Note how they talk about animals, and Little Hans's horse is not representative but affective. It is not a member of a species but an element or individual in a machinic assemblage: draft horse-omnibus-street. It is defined by a list of active and passive affects in the context of the individuated assemblage it is part of […] These affects circulate and are transformed within the assemblage: what a horse 'can do' (2004, p. 255).

Claire Colebrook further explains the role of desire in 'becoming-animal', and what 'becoming-animal' means, in *Gilles Deleuze* (2002):

> The child's fascination for the wolf is not for what the wolf represents but for the wolf's entirely different mode of becoming: wolves travel in packs, at night, wandering. There is a desire here that is directed to a multiplicity of affects (all that the wolf does and can do and that is not attached to any single wolf character so much as a collection or 'swarm'). *This is a desire, not for what the wolf is or symbolises, but for potential actions* (p. 134; emphasis mine).

Important from these explanations about animal imagery in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* is precisely the idea that animals are not referred to because Julia, or other characters, desire to literally become animal. Rather, Julia's last name as

[90] I am not trying to present the argument that Deleuze and Guattari's work does not engage with real animals. Donna Haraway, for example, has criticised their work in terms of not engaging with real animals. See Derek Ryan and Mark West's edited issue of *Modernist Ethics and Posthumanism* (2015) for a response to that criticism. My aim here is simply to engage with the part of becoming-animal that does not necessarily refer to 'real' animals but to what becoming-animal means. I do so because it resonates with what Rhys might be aiming to do with her text.

Martin might refer to her desire to live a life like a bird. I explained above why Julia is not well understood via identity categories such as a wife, a mother, or a child – because she is a becoming, and what matters, like in the case of Little Hans's horse, is what a human or an animal can do, not what he or she is by filiation. What also matters is the particular human or animal's relation to the environment she or he inhabits. In other words, the animal references in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* can also be seen as indicators to see humans, particularly women, not in narrow ways such as a wife, a child, a mother, but as what these specific women could actually do.

Interestingly, many of the references in Rhys's novel are to domesticated animals or dying animals: her mother is like a dog who is no longer healthy and her sister is like a cart-horse. Both are animals who have been domesticated – a cart-horse is a domesticated version of a wild horse, and the dog a domesticated version of the wolf. These references give us the idea that Julia's desire is a desire also for the potential actions that these animals allow her to imagine, but are cut off from; like Julia's own desire to get away, the horse and the dog, once wild and free, are now limited to certain domestic roles. In Part II, chapter 5, Julia meets her mother in London, after having spent many years somewhere in continental Europe, and shares a moment of intimacy with her. In this moment, Julia and her dying mother make eye contact; this moment is very ambivalent – Julia thinks her mother recognises her, and the reader may believe she does:

> Her mother's eyes opened suddenly and stared upwards. Julia put her face closer and said in a frightened, hopeful voice: 'I'm Julia, do you know? It's Julia.' The sick woman looked steadily at her daughter. Then it was like seeing a spark go out and the eyes were again bloodshot, animal eyes. Nothing was there (Rhys, 1997, p. 98).

We do not know exactly what happens during this gaze. But there is a glance and a connection is made. It is an encounter, and whichever the outcome is, the intimacy is held for a brief moment, at least on Julia's part. Simpson (2005) interprets a passage where Julia and Norah look at their mother and think of her as "a beautiful dying animal" (Rhys, 1997, p. 98) as well as the above passage as a representation of their infantile desire to become one with the good part of the mother. Simpson (2005) argues that for the sisters, the mother is what a mother is for an infant according to Freudian psychoanalysis – either a good or a bad object, but never good and bad combined in the same object (p. 49).

Rather than being good or bad, at that point, her mother is just "dead weight", as Julia "hauled at the inert mass", or simply an animal, "like a dog howling" (Rhys, p. 99, p 99, p. 100). Julia's clear memory of loving her mother, and then coming to dislike the same person, and then seeking self-assurance from the same person, while seeing her as merely an animal-like mass of flesh, demonstrates the ongoing complex relationship between the mother and daughter. Looking at desire in becoming-animal, we get an understanding why the mother might be compared to a dog, and it is not because she is a good or a bad object:

> the wolf does not stand in for that original scene of trauma where the child loses his mother to his father. The desire directed to the wolf is not one of possessing or regaining some object towards which desire is directed; it is a desire to expand or become-other through what is more than oneself. The wolf is not a signifier of some human quality or figure; it is another mode of perception or becoming. In perceiving the wolf we perceive differently, no longer separated from the world in the human point of view (Colebrook, 2002, p. 135).

Perhaps we can also understand Julia's likening of her mother to a dying dog as her desire to see her mother as something other than a mother. She might want to see her as a woman who, instead of symbolising conventional narratives of intimacies and what a woman might become, symbolises, like a wild dog howling, a desire to "become-other through what is more than oneself" (Colebrook, 2002, p. 135). Perhaps if we stop seeing the loss of Julia's mother as necessarily negative and traumatising and somehow also responsible for Julia's unhappiness, then we can begin to see that Julia could establish her self through other images than that of her mother as a human mother and woman. Perhaps seeing her mother as a dog howling is an indication that Julia also identifies herself with something other than human.

Although the references to the animal world are rather hopeless (old cart-horse, dog's chance against powerful people, worm compared to others, dying dog), they allow seeing the hierarchies and inequalities in the human world with fresh eyes. Berry (1995) writes that at the end of the novel,

> insect imagery, still a lower order, replaces animal references. Julia sees herself and others in her Paris hotel after going back from a failed trip to England as 'mites in a cheese' and is assaulted by the smell of sulphur when a room nearby is disinfected for lice (p. 558).

The insects here are not necessarily symbols for something, but they are here to trigger a certain perception in the human reader. To emphasise the restrictive

conventions of human society that reproduce the same system that suppresses desire, Rhys refers to animals to open up new ways of seeing the world in her reader. The animal references in the novel also do not necessarily indicate that the characters are like animals, but that there is a potential in humans to form communities other than those organised by the family and the State. Deleuze and Guattari write,

> The Universe does not function by filiation. All we are saying is that animals are packs, and that packs form, develop, and are transformed by contagion […] But we should not confuse these dark assemblages, which stir what is deepest within us, with organisations such as the institution of the family and the State apparatus […] There is an entire politics of becoming-animal, as well as a politics of sorcery, which is elaborated in assemblages that are neither those of the family nor of religion nor of the state. Instead, they express minoritarian groups, or groups that are oppressed, prohibited, in revolt […] (2004, p. 267, pp. 272-3).

Perhaps we can also see the envy between Julia and other women, and the envy mixed with strange intimacy in Julia and her sister, and their relation to their dying, animal-like mother as a sort of unrealised female pack that could have a potential to undermine the patriarchal, capitalist system.

Colebrook (2002) writes that "the fascination for the animal is a fascination for the world seen, not from an already organised position of opinion, but seen anew" (p. 138). The animal references in Rhys, despite being gloomy, thus signal to a hope towards life becoming something different from what it is. Colebrook suggests, referring specifically to the potential of becoming-animal in literature, "[b]ecoming-animal is the power of literature to present precepts and affects freed from their moorings in the drama of human interests" (p. 137). This is also what Rhys is trying to convey: her references to animals are not there to show that people are necessarily similar to animals, but to initiate a fresh view on human relations. The detailed attention to the world of the non-human that creates moments when Julia is content, and the animal imagery functions as an indicator of a desire to be in the world otherwise; that there are ways of being that do not confine to the rules and laws of the 'organised' patriarchal and capitalist society.

Art as a Space for Non-Human Impressions and Affects

In the introduction I explained how Cixous's work is relevant for affect studies and new materialisms because she talks about the importance of materiality and 'imund'

beings in writing. In *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* (1993), in 'The School of Roots', Cixous talks about a ladder of writing that descends to Earth. Rhys seems to be on a similar journey in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* – her references to animals and insects indicate a desire for knowledge that does not transcend the Earth but descends into it. Rhys's writing in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* predicts a Cixousian approach to writing that takes place on the ground, going deeper into the Earth instead of aiming for transcendental, immaterial heights. It is that kind of affective writing *per se*, a writing rooted in the ground that takes emotions, feelings (Julia's instinctive decisions to go to London, her crying hysterically at the funeral) and the world of the non-human into account, which embodies a potential for change. This is the kind of writing that lets the other, be it human or non-human, speak in the text; this writing embodies a potential to see the world in a different light.[91] Rhys's writing itself, her decision to tell the story of Julia, offers a space that criticises the organised society and the way it represses desire, especially in women, and how these repressions result in the lack of female intimacy. It is a kind of writing that depicts life as a general life lived by humans in relation to the world of the non-human, where humans are 'made' by the non-human impressions, affects, and sensations they experience.

Berry argues that both language and human touch fail in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, and suggests that art, however, may lead the reader out of this miscommunication. Berry (1995) examines the series of paintings which "can be narrowed to Modigliani's "Reclining Nude" series, where bodies are depicted as hanging earthward" (p. 547). Indeed, Julia looks at one of those paintings where the woman painted is like an animal, and Julia thinks that the woman says to her: "I am more real than you. But at the same time I am you. I am all that matters of you" (Rhys, 1997, p. 53). By looking at the painting, Julia realises how society sees all women as the same, as sexual objects, and depicts them as the same and ultimately makes them think that they all desire the same thing. Looking at the women in the painting makes Julia feel like "all [her] life and all [herself] were floating away from [her] like smoke" (Rhys, 1997, p. 53). Here too, she realises that women's different desires are suppressed in a society that considers all women to be the same in relation to one another and different from men, when in reality, the differences are

[91] See the introduction for a lengthier discussion on affective writing.

much more multiple between individuals rather than between sexes. In short, the painting triggers a realisation in Julia that her desire has no place in the society she lives in. Paintings have a similar effect on Mr James. When Julia and Mr James "looked at the pictures [Mr James] became a different man. Because he loved them he became in their presence modest, hesitating, unsure of his own opinion" (Rhys, 1997, p. 115). The paintings in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* function as having an effect on people's views of the world and on themselves – Julia realises her own trapped situation and Mr James becomes humble, unsure of his ways. Again, although no change happens in the story, these moments in the presence of artwork interrupt the plot and make the reader pause and rethink the story Rhys is telling.

Art having an effect on people's views of themselves and the world predicts the idea that art can take people out of their isolated subjective experience. Simon O'Sullivan (2001), also following Deleuze and Guattari, and also thinking along the same lines as Cixous in her writing school, proposes that "art's function [is] to switch our intensive register, to reconnect us with the world. Art opens us up to the non-human universe that we are part of" (p. 128). O'Sullivan sees art as the dwelling place of affect, which, ultimately, is able to take people out of their own subjectivities. He writes, "this world of affects, this universe of forces, is our own world seen without the spectacles of subjectivity" (O'Sullivan, 2001, p. 128). O'Sullivan is possibly trying to convey a similar idea to that of Rhys: art, because it triggers affects (rather than emotions) that are impersonal, allows us to see the world not from our own, egoistic viewpoint, but to see a world from some distance, being able to question its rules and laws.

Although art has the potential to take one out of one's subjectivity in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, it still points to a 'you' – for example, to Julia or to Mr James – because they are the ones who are supposed to give up their subjectivity. Occasionally, Rhys's text has the same effect as it also points to a 'you'. Simpson (2005) distinguishes between the male and female use of 'you' in Rhys. In the novel, male characters use 'you' to eschew their responsibility, but female characters use 'you', because they are unable to make sense of their own feelings, but also, and more importantly, to create intimacy between the text and the reader (pp. 41-64). Here, I am interested in the female use of 'you' that aims to establish intimacy between the reader and the text. As Simpson (2005) notes, the reader can join Rhys

in creating the meaning (pp. 41-64). Rhys's modernist, readerly texts are the opposite of what Rosi Braidotti identifies as texts that create masculine subjectivities. Braidotti (1993) argues that the narrativity of the Oedipal structure "organizes the meaning of a text as a process of identification of the practitioner – whether male or female – with the achievement of a subjectivity that, qua active and empowered, is defined as masculine" (p. 2). A readerly modernist text, like that of *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, on the contrary, constantly questions its own meaning and truthfulness, and is therefore better understood as Cixousian affective writing which lets the other speak in the text, whether this other is a non-human other, or an other with a different viewpoint.

Letting the other speak in the text, and letting the text speak to the reader, is one of the main components of affective art: it opens the world of new possibilities and other viewpoints. Critics who read Rhys through psychoanalytical frames note the same potential: Simpson (2005) and Sylvie Maurel (1998) acknowledge that although *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* is deeply suggestive of isolation and alienation, the narrative strategy leaves open a possible connection between the I and non-I. Rhys's novel can thus indeed be seen as an example of what Cixous considers to be affective writing. Cixousian affective writing is much like Deleuzian becoming-animal or becoming-woman as it breaks out of psychoanalytical circles and fixed identities. Rhys's writing does that too; the moments of strange intimacy are moments of potential becoming something else. Although there is no visible becoming something else in the plot, and the Rhysian protagonist wanders on in modern metropolises from men to men and street to street, from hotel room to hotel room, we can nevertheless begin to map an alternative route for female desire when we look at moments of strange intimacy between female characters, references to the non-human world, and the effect artwork has on people. Taking these moments into account, Julia's wandering itself is already an embracing of a different desire to become something other than what a woman was allowed to become in early-twentieth-century Paris and London. The Rhysian text itself is the potential for change rather than any specific event or character in the plot.

This brings us back to Deleuze and Guattari's arguments about the non-human, anti-Oedipal desire and becomings. Colebrook (2002) writes that

> A radical politics, for Deleuze and Guattari, will begin from a desire that is not the desire of man, and will not assume the closed human body as a basic political unit. Rather, through art and literature we can look at all those investments and images that have produced 'man' as the transcendent body and value that organises the political. Thinking a desire beyond the prohibition of woman, thinking a desire that traverses the human body, means thinking of the becoming of woman, not as a sex but as the opening to 'a thousand tiny sexes'. Becoming-woman is therefore the opening of a desire that is pre-personal, anti-oedipal and directly revolutionary. It is not a desire explained from within the story of man or human history. It is a desire radically other than man and his negation of life […] For this reason Deleuze and Guattari also tie becoming-woman to the impulse of literature (p. 143).

Art at the story level in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, and Rhys's writing as such, give Rhys's characters and her readers the chance to reflect why society, life, and humans are organised in a certain way that sees the white European male as a figure of authority. Art in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, and Rhys's writing, then, opens up the possibility to see the world with different eyes; by telling the story of Julia in the specific way Rhys does, she challenges what she refers to as the organised society.

If we read *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* as an example of Cixousian affective writing that echoes Deleuzian ideas about anti-Oedipal desire, we see the role of the mother, female desire, and female intimacy as well as subjectivity and selfhood in a new, more positive light in Rhys's texts. In such a reading, the mother no longer represents an infantile desire to find the lost, primary good object that in fact can never be found again, so the wandering woman is unfulfilled and wanders on in modern metropolises, searching for substitutes in lovers. If we instead take into account the moments of strange intimacy between female characters, the moments when art takes characters out of their own subjective experience, and pay attention to the references of the non-human, then we get a series of moments that disrupt the plot that otherwise seems to be a failed desire to settle to Oedipal relations. We should see *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* as an example of literature that

> is productive, not representative. Literature has the power to mobilise desire, to create new pre-personal investments, and enables thought and affects that extend beyond the human […] Becoming-woman, or the destruction of oedipal man, through literature is the very opening of the political and the future. Literature transforms the political space from a relation 'among men' to the production of inhuman affects and intensities […] Literature is, therefore, not a vehicle for veiling and representing unconscious and timeless dramas. Literature produces new dramas and intensities. Literature is not

> reducible to the story and explanation of man; it always possesses the power to move beyond man: becoming-woman (Colebrook, 2002, p. 145).

After Leaving Mr Mackenzie too becomes an example of that kind of literature when we pay attention to moments of strange intimacy between female characters, references to the world of non-human, and to art's potential for change. *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* is a text in which characters cannot be understood in Oedipal terms. Rather, it is a text that opens up new possibilities of seeing life as desiring, and portrays it as such in the strange, brief moments of intimacy. It is a text that, as I proposed in the introduction, displays "a different mode of modernism – one focused less on the limits of language [than] on broadening perception" (Colebrook, 2012, p. 66). It is a text that writes, no matter how slightly and strangely, a protagonist who, even if she is not in love with her individual life, is attached to a life as such.

Chapter Four

The Embodied Aesthetics of Place in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Then I turned round and saw the sky. It was red and all my life was in it. I saw the grandfather clock and Aunt Cora's patchwork, all colours, I saw the orchids and the stephanotis and the jasmine and the tree of life in flames. I saw the chandelier and the red carpet downstairs and the bamboos and the tree ferns, the gold ferns and the silver, and the soft green velvet of moss on the garden wall. I saw my doll's house and the books and the picture of the Miller's Daughter.
Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Wide Sargasso Sea (1966) is the only novel by Jean Rhys which is predominantly set in the West Indies, particularly in Jamaica and Dominica.[92] In this novel, Rhys depicts a love story between Antoinette and the West Indies, not between Antoinette and her unnamed husband, as popular media has depicted it in the film adaptations of 1993 and 2006. In other words, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, intimacy emerges most often and most radically between Antoinette and the West Indies, not between Antoinette and her husband. In her final novel, Rhys explicitly expresses the importance and love for place that she already examined in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*. In a letter to Francis Wyndham on 14 September 1959, Rhys wrote that "when I say I write for love I mean that there are two places for me. Paris (or what it is to me) and Dominica […] both these places or the thought of them make me want to write" (1985, p. 171). While for Rhys it is places that make her want to *write*, I suggest that for Antoinette, places, or what they are for her, make her want to *live*. More precisely, the non-human world of the West Indies creates intimacy between Antoinette and "her place" (Rhys, 2001, p. 53). Because Antoinette sees her life in the sky as something that includes "the orchids and the stephanotis and the jasmine and the tree of life" (Rhys, 2001, p. 123), we can consider selfhood and life in a Deleuzian sense – Antoinette, like Julia in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, can be seen as an haecceity and her life as

[92] I am not only referring to Jamaica here because it is likely that Rhys makes references to both Dominica and Jamaica in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Elaine Savory writes in *Cambridge Introduction to Jean Rhys* that "*Jane Eyre's* plot references are set in Jamaica, so Rhys also sets the beginning of the story there but describes Coulibri as if it were her maternal family's estate of Geneva in Dominica. Jamaica is a thousand miles or so from Dominica (and the fictional Granbois) and 'Rochester' speaks of the "interminable journey from Jamaica" (2009, p. 82).

a life.[93] Antoinette *is* herself in relation to the places she inhabits, things she encounters, and impressions she has. She is not, like Julia is not, in love with her individual life but with a life that includes the human and non-human worlds. Her vision that "everything was alive, not only the river or the rain, but chairs, looking-glasses, cups, saucers, everything" (Rhys, 2001, p. 18) encourages us to read the novel with new materialist and affect theories that allow us to notice the embodied connection to and love for the non-human world of the West Indies.

In what follows, I begin by exploring how Antoinette's lonely childhood paves the way to her intimate relationship with the West Indies, how this intimacy is well understood with Deleuzian new materialist approaches to the non-human, and how this approach is connected to childlike perspective both in Rhys and Deleuze. I then suggest that Antoinette's intimate engagement with her surroundings allows her to rethink the relation to land in a way that is critical of colonialism, imperialism, and patriarchy. Without undermining the important and insightful work done on race and ethnicity studies, I want to shift focus on identity formation in relation to land and the non-human. Such a reading offers an understanding of place in Rhys's final novel, as with *Between the Acts*, that is not dependent on nationalistic ideas about the concepts of place and country. Accordingly, I propose that *Wide Sargasso Sea* offers a ground for bridging the gap between new materialist and postcolonial and/or Indigenous studies. Finally, I explore those intimacies that are normally not allowed to have a plot to demonstrate that these intimacies are precisely that which attaches the characters to life and enhances their love for life. I put forward the idea that from Rhys's oeuvre, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is the most explicitly concerned with that which is lost or forgotten – a prevailing love for life, a desire for, and a possibility of, happiness. I argue that paying attention to those intimacies and to the world of the non-human allows us to notice the love for life that is always present in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

The Embodied Sense of Belonging to the Non-Human World

Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips point out in *intimacies* (2008) that in psychoanalysis, all love is seen as self-love (p. 10). Indeed, if we follow psychoanalytic theories, we

[93] See Chapter Three for a lengthier discussion of 'a life' and 'haecceity' in Rhys's oeuvre.

may conclude that Rhys's characters fail in life in a conventional sense because they lack self-respect and self-love, and are therefore unable to love anyone else, or life.[94] Rhys's interwar fiction predominantly deals with loss (of language, of the mother, of the homeland, of economic and sexual power) and the atmosphere in the novels is indeed often, as many critics point out, that of indifference and numbness.[95] Accordingly, no attention has been paid to that which paves the way to these losses and gloomy atmospheres – the underlying love for life.[96] In *Wide Sargasso Sea* the love for life that is lost in Rhys's other novels is always present. *Wide Sargasso Sea* seriously undermines Erica L Johnson's (2015) claim that Rhys's characters "eschew or fundamentally alter such mystifying concepts as hope, happiness, or social mobility for the more realistic possibilities of temporary escape, numbness, and indifference" (p. 213). Of all Rhys's novels, here we see the love for and attachment to life before it is weakened or overshadowed by imperial and patriarchal conventions.

Jane Bennett (2001) writes that "if popular psychological wisdom has it that you have to love yourself before you can love another, my story suggests that you have to love life before you can care about anything" (p. 4). In the same sense, *Wide Sargasso Sea* demonstrates Antoinette's love for life in Jamaica and Dominica, which is a prerequisite for caring about anything or anyone else. As elsewhere in this

[94] See previous chapter for a discussion about Freudian psychoanalysis and anti-Oedipal readings of Rhys's fiction.

[95] See for example Erica L. Johnson's "'Upholstered Ghosts': Jean Rhys's Posthuman Imaginary" in *Jean Rhys: Twenty-First-Century Approaches* (2015) and John J. Su's "The Empire of Affect: Reading Rhys after Postcolonial Theory" in *Jean Rhys: Twenty-First-Century Approaches* (2015).

[96] Many critics read Rhys's novels, including *Wide Sargasso Sea*, as examples of disorientation and/or dislocation. John S. Ju '"Once I Would Have Gone Back … But Not Any Longer": Nostalgia and Narrative Ethics in *Wide Sargasso Sea'* (2010) examines the sense of feeling out of place and out of one's body in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. According to Ju, disorientation is a major factor influencing and defining the 'fate' of Rhys's characters, including Antoinette and her husband in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Delia Caparaso Konzett in *Ethnic Modernisms*, and particularly in a chapter 'White Mythologies: Jean Rhys's Aesthetic of Posthumanism' (2002) similarly suggests that "[the] sense of homelessness and dislocation, so pervasive in Rhys's works, challenges not only colonial models of master nations and narrations, with their unquestioned ontologies of belonging but, more importantly, a concomitant mythology of the white race" (p. 128). Elaine Savoury too (2015), focusing on post-colonial aspects of Rhys's fiction, notes that "one vital aspect of post-colonial ecology is to reimagine the displacement between people and place through poetics" (p. 87), suggesting that Rhys's fiction expresses this "pained connection often as displacement, between people and place with her characteristic originality and awareness" (p. 87). I agree that in most of Rhys's interwar novels dislocation is indeed a prominent affect. However, as I will demonstrate, Antoinette knows exactly where she belongs. Therefore, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the shifting narrative voice and complex collision of different worldviews functions, rather, as disorientation for the reader, as Su has pointed out.

thesis, when I refer to an attachment to life, I refer to 'a life' in a Deleuzian sense. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, it is not Antoinette's individual life in particular that she is attached to, but life as a common life lived in relation to other, particularly non-human, beings and things.[97] Rhys's final novel is not only a prequel to *Jane Eyre* (1847), but in a way also a prequel to all other Rhys's novels – it demonstrates the love for life before it was debilitated by the many troubles her heroines suffer in her earlier fiction: for example, in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*. This love for life that is always present in Rhys's fiction, no matter how unconventionally and implicitly, is explicit and alive in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, at least until her husband names Antoinette 'Bertha' and takes her away from the West Indies. When Antoinette thinks that "there are more ways than one of being happy" (Rhys, 2001, p. 17), she indicates that she never had the chance to be happy in the West Indies, *with* the West Indies, as she would have liked to be happy. Instead, she had to submit to patriarchal and imperial conventions.

Despite that submission, the novel is full of the memory of love and happiness place triggered in Antoinette. The novel begins with a section that is narrated by Antoinette's child-self's perspective. The first section of the novel paints the overall tone of the story where the non-human dominates the narrative. We get descriptions of places with loving, careful detail. For example,

> our garden was large and beautiful as that garden in the Bible – the tree of life grew there. But it had gone wild. The paths were overgrown and a smell of dead flowers mixed with the fresh living smell. Underneath the tree ferns, tall as forest tree ferns, the light was green, orchids flourished out of reach or for some reason not to be touched. One was snaky looking, another like an octopus with long thin brown tentacles bare of leaves hanging from a twisted root (Rhys, 2001, p. 4).

The garden here is not described as something made by the Lord *for* the humans he had also created, but as something that is powerful in its own right as it has *gone*

[97] Once this attachment to place is wounded, Antoinette presumably follows the fate of *Jane Eyre's* (1847) Bertha, i.e. she takes on the story that is attached to the name 'Bertha'. It is worth pointing out that the unnamed husband is often called Rochester because *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a prequel to *Jane Eyre*. I will not call him Rochester because the link to *Jane Eyre* is not that relevant in my reading. I want to focus on what *Wide Sargasso Sea* does as a novel in its own right, whether or not *Jane Eyre* exists. Therefore, I will refer to him here as 'her husband' or 'a husband' because, in a way, not naming him can emphasise the fact that there were probably more than one Bertha-like cases happening in that time. Elaine Savory (2009) also points out that "in *Wide Sargasso Sea* the husband is not named, an effective retort by Rhys to the renaming or erasure of names performed by colonialists and planters" (p. 35). In a sense then, not naming the husband takes power from him, and naming Antoinette gives her power.

wild not been *made* wild. The way Rhys describes the garden is full of detailed attention to the variety of plants that grow there. This attention encourages the reader to see the garden as lively and independent. The description of smell and sight makes the garden almost a sensual experience also for the reader. This passage is the first detailed description that offers us a setting of the novel and the atmosphere it creates. Although Antoinette's mother, Christophine, and Baptiste are mentioned before the garden, Rhys does not offer any detailed information about them. She does so, however, when it comes to the non-human.

The non-human and Antoinette's detailed attention to it dominate the novel from this point. Her friendship with Tia, as well as the end of that friendship, is remembered and narrated as embedded in their environment:

> Soon Tia was my friend and I met her nearly every morning at the turn of the road to the river […]. [at the bathing pool] Tia would light a fire […] We boiled green bananas in an old iron pot and ate them with our fingers of a calabash and after we had eaten she slept at once. I could not sleep, but I wasn't quite awake as I lay in the shade looking at the pool – deep and dark green under the trees, brown-green if it had rained, but a bright sparkling green in the sun. The water was so clear that you could see the pebbles at the bottom of the shallow part. Blue and white and striped red. Very pretty. (Rhys, 2001, p. 8).

Nowhere is Tia described with such detailed attention and care as are trees, bananas, water, and pebbles. Besides being a sign of love for Antoinette's surroundings, this passage also indicates that their friendship is not just something that exists between the two of them, but is like a wire: like intimacy in *Between the Acts*, or brief intimacies between Norah and Julia in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*. Antoinette is not just happy because she is friends with Tia but because she is friends with her in a specific place that she appreciates and finds joy in.

After her and Tia have a fight, it is also nature that Antoinette finds solace in, not other humans:

> I took another road, past the old sugar works and the water wheel that had not turned for years. I went to parts of Coulibri that I had not seen, where there was no road, no path, no track. And if the razor grass cut my legs and arms I would think 'It's better than people.' Black ants or red ones, tall nests swarming with white ants, rain that soaked me to the skin – once I saw a snake. All better than people. Better. Better, better than people. Watching the red and yellow flowers in the sun thinking of nothing, it was as if a door

> opened and I was somewhere else, something else. Not myself any longer. (Rhys, 2001, p. 11).

Since childhood, Antoinette has trusted nature more than people – even if the razor grass cuts her legs and rain soaks her to the bones, it cannot hurt her as much as people could. Or, if it does hurt her, she finds this suffering pleasurable as she comes into intimate contact with the non-human world. I have explained in the previous chapters how art functions as a site that takes people out of their subjectivity, here we can see how the non-human takes the child Antoinette out of her own subjectivity and absorbs herself in the environment "as if a door opened and [she] was somewhere else, something else" (Rhys, 2001, p. 11). Although the friendship was no longer a source of happiness, the non-human environment remains, and allows Antoinette to imagine herself beyond human relations.

The happiness she experiences again in the convent with the nuns and girls is also always related to the non-human environment. We get the impression of her happiness by the sensual, atmospheric descriptions of life in the convent. For example, Antoinette describes her friendship with Louise:

> Louise and I walked along a paved path to the classroom. There was grass on each side of the path and trees and shadows of trees and sometimes a bright bush of flowers. She was very pretty and when she smiled at me I could scarcely believe I had ever been miserable (Rhys, 2001, p. 29).

Although it is Louise's smile that seemingly makes Antoinette happy, she does not simply remember this smile, but the grass on the sides of the path, the shadows of the trees, and flower-bushes. Similarly, when describing the life in the convent, she remembers the smell of soap, the taste of hot coffee and buns, and how Sister Marie Augustine sat "serene and neat, bolt upright in a wooden chair [and how] the long brown room was full of gold sunlight and shadows of trees moving quietly" (Rhys, 2001, p. 31). In these passages, she seems to remember the non-human environment and atmosphere and her being embodied in it rather than the doctrines of Catholicism.

Antoinette notices the prevalence of the non-human world around her precisely because she is aware of being embodied in this world. An oft-cited example of such an awareness is the following:

> Quickly, while I can, I must remember the hot classroom. The hot classroom, the pitch pine desks, the heat of the bench striking up though my body, along

> my arms and hands [...] My needle is sticky, and creaks as it goes in and out of the canvas. 'My needle is swearing,' I whisper to Louise, who sits next to me. We are cross-stitching silk roses on a pale background. We can colour the roses as we choose and mine are green, blue, and purple. Underneath, I will write my name in fire red, Antoinette Mason, nee Cosway, Mount Calvary Convent, Spanish Town, Jamaica, 1839 (Rhys, 2001, p. 29).

Through remembering the embodied, lived experience, the narrative re-enacts and reactivates the sensory experience of the past moment.[98] She does not remember, or feel that she has to remember, the saints, prayers, or sins that were introduced to her in the convent.[99] Instead, she chooses to remember (or is made to remember, because of being embodied in the surroundings) the hot classroom, the desks that were made of pine, and how she sat on the bench, feeling the heat of the wood of which the bench is made, in her body. She remembers the feeling of her needle, the noise it makes, and how it is in touch with her and the canvas on which she is stitching silk roses. She also remembers the freedom to colour the roses as she likes. Many critics have examined this quotation for various reasons, and this passage remains striking precisely because it holds so much of the general atmosphere of the novel: detailed attention to the non-human world and a sensory, tactile perception of it in humans. This quotation is the only time when Antoinette claims her identity in the novel. This moment is pressed on the readers' mind in fire red, locating Antoinette with her real name in Jamaica, West Indies – a place which, as Antoinette claims, is where she belongs and wishes to stay (Rhys, 2001, p. 67).

All the above examples are parts of Antoinette's intimate relationship to her surroundings – to trees, grass, ants, waterfalls, her garden; this relation is an example of her strange intimacy with her environment because she is aware of being embodied in a world of animate and inanimate, human and non-human things. Within these moments, Rhys seems to slow the narrative pace down by drawing attention to silence and heat. This aesthetic is Rhys's method for enhancing the sense of being present in the moment, and focusing on the importance of the non-human – both are means by which to create an affective atmosphere of strange intimacy. It is

[98] Critics such as John J. Su (2015), Patricia Moran (2007), and Elaine Savoury (2009), to name a few, have examined the urgency of remembering expressed in this passage. We cannot be sure where she writes this, and why she has to hurry, but we can imagine that she is, for example, trapped in England.

[99] For a discussion of religion in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, see for example Michael Rasbury's 'Protestantism in the Obeah and Rastafarian Doctrines: Afro-Caribbean Religion in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Brother Man*' (1994), as well as Savoury's (2009) companion to Jean Rhys.

interesting here to think of how in the interwar novels, Rhys emphasises her heroines' being cold in England. It seems that Rhys, like Woolf, associates the experience of embodied, pleasant affect with warmth rather than cold. As in Woolf's moments in the boat in *To the Lighthouse*, and the audience drawn together in the summer heat in *Between the Acts*, heat and silence function as a precondition of feeling bodily presence and connection to one's surroundings, even if these moments are not always pleasant. In these moments, the reader is encouraged to be with the text, dwell on the moment, and read slowly. This technique seems to help to create an intimate atmosphere, to pull the reader into the text, and to then feel perhaps what the characters might have felt, sensed, and seen.

While the above examples involved Antoinette and her being embodied in her surroundings, besides Antoinette, even the husband who wants to suppress his liking of the West Indies notices the overwhelming presence of the place. He thinks, "The silence was disturbing, absolute. I would have welcomed the sound of a dog barking, a man sawing wood. Nothing. Silence. Heat. It was five minutes to three" (Rhys, 2001, p. 63). Shortly after thinking this, he takes a walk and is touched by the beauty of his surroundings (Rhys, 2011, pp. 63-64). He is absorbed in the place and the reader gets that impression because silence and heat slow down the narrative and dwell on the atmosphere and depict the character's absorption in the atmosphere. Even the husband who fails to feel at home in the Caribbean has moments when he enjoys the place and feels absorbed in it. He thinks that the Caribbean is "a beautiful place – wild, untouched, above all untouched with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness" (Rhys, 2001, p. 52). In fact, he seems to grow very familiar with his surroundings:

> I sat on the veranda with my back to the sea and it was as if I had done it all my life. I could not imagine different weather or a different sky. I knew the shape of the mountains as well as I knew the shape of the two brown jugs filled with white sweet-scented flowers on the wooden table (Rhys, 2001, p. 75).

However, his colonial background makes him want to control and own the place. Su (2015) points out that the husband's obsession with the "secret" (Rhys, 2001, p. 52) of the place is his unwillingness to accept a different kind of epistemology, one that is based on embodied relations to a place. Because he has doubts about who

Antoinette is, he perceives the place and his surroundings as a nightmare, and towards the end of the novel, he

> hated the mountains and the hills, the rivers and the rain […] hated the sunsets of whatever colour, […] hated its beauty and its magic and the secret [he] would never know. [He] hated its indifference and the cruelty which was part of its loveliness (Rhys, 2001, p. 112).

Unlike Antoinette, her husband is unable to avow that the non-human world exists independently of his will and control, remaining tangled in the colonial Western knowledge system.

The narrative techniques that slow time down, and 'pull' the characters as well as the reader into the environment and text, have ethical and political implications. First, because the strange intimacy between Antoinette and the West Indies indicates how the human mind perceiving the non-human world as a radical other that can be treated with respect and care offers an alternative to the patriarchal, imperial attitudes that subjugate everything non-human to human control, as I explained in the previous chapters and introduction with references to Levinas.[100] Antoinette's awareness of her dependency on her surroundings encourages her to pay more attention to the world around her. Here, I would like to read Antoinette's relationship to her surroundings with Bennett's (2001) concept of the ethics of enchanted materialism, which proposes that "its appreciation of non-human, as well as human, sites of vitality – of what might be called its hyperecological sense of interdependence – proceeds from and toward the principle of treading lightly on the earth" (pp. 156-158). Bennett (2001) suggests that a life with enchanted moments requires seeing non-human nature not as "inert matter", but something that is a crucial part of calling "attention to magical sites already" present in the world (pp. 7-8). In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, more than in any other of the three novels explored in this thesis, the non-human, especially nature, functions as the marvellous that "erupt[s] amid the everyday" (Bennett, 2001, p. 8). Bennett (2001) explains the proceeding from enchantment to ethics:

> Just how does an enchanted sensibility make it more likely that ethical principles will be enacted as ethical practices? Any response to this question must be somewhat experimental. The one that I am playing out is basically this: Enchantment is a feeling of being connected in an affirmative way to

[100] See the introduction for Levinasian ethics of radical alterity in relation to keeping the distinction between human and non-human.

> existence; it is to be under the momentary impression that the natural and cultural worlds offer gifts and, in so doing, remind us that it is good to be alive (p. 156).

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, it is the natural world in particular that offers 'gifts', the most prominent of which is the enhancing of the attachment to life. The brief friendship with Tia, Antoinette's time in the convent, her intimacy with Jamaica, as well as her husband's sense of becoming embodied in Jamaica all demonstrate how enchanting the material, embodied experience of the West Indies is. Regarding Antoinette, her relationship to the West Indies is ethical because, unlike her husband, she treats her environment with attention and care. Unlike him, she treads lightly in her environment; she does not step, like her husband, on frangipani the first day he arrives in the honeymoon house, disrespecting his surroundings (Rhys, 2001, p. 42).

Second, the focus on embodiment, and a worldview that encourages first-hand, embodied knowledge of and relation to place, complicates the postcolonial assumption that voice is the essential indicator of subjectivity and is therefore ethical. [101] Carine Mardorossian (1999) suggests that Rhys's use of silence in particular "deconstructs the opposition between silence and voice and, in so doing, questions the Western assumption that the speaker is always the one in power'" (p. 178). Rhys locates subjectivity not merely in language and writing, but in embodiment and perhaps what might be called silent resistance to colonialism and imperialism. Antoinette's story and her non-verbal act of setting the house on fire at the end of the novel is *per se* an example of silent resistance. Su (2015) writes that in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, "exploitation is experienced as an affective phenomenon: felt but unexpressed, referenced but not articulated" (p. 176). In fact, although *Wide Sargasso Sea* is considered to be giving voice to Bertha, the madwoman in the attic in *Jane Eyre*, Antoinette does not have a first-person voice throughout the majority of *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

What Rhys's novel does, however, is to demonstrate that subjectivity is not dependent on the speaker's position only, but it is rather our custom to associate power, authority, and knowledge with the ability to speak. Importantly, the fact that the husband chooses to narrate the specific sentences by Antoinette that emphasise

[101] A similar claim is made by John J. Su (2015) and Molly Hite (1989). See their articles for longer discussions on the role of voice in subjectivity in post-colonial scholarship. I will also turn to the rethinking of post-colonial scholarship in the light of affect theories at the end of this chapter.

her sense of belonging to the West Indies and her embodied relation to it, is a confirmation that these sayings have a power over him. We learn that Antoinette belongs to the West Indies through the husband's narration (Rhys, 2001, p. 53). This might indicate that the husband struggles to forget and suppress the epistemology that takes embodied, lived experience seriously. In other words, she demonstrates that there is always more than one side to a story, and the story Rhys gives us is not a tale told merely from a position of power, but a tale that has many sides, views, and feelings.[102] Most importantly, the end of the novel is again narrated from Antoinette's perspective. At the end of the novel, Antoinette describes:

> Then I turned round and saw the sky. It was red and all my life was in it. I saw the grandfather clock and Aunt Cora's patchwork, all colours, I saw the orchids and the stephanotis and the jasmine and the tree of life in flames. I saw the chandelier and the red carpet downstairs and the bamboos and the tree ferns, the gold ferns and the silver, and the soft green velvet of moss on the garden wall. I saw my doll's house and the books and the picture of the Miller's Daughter (Rhys, 2001, p. 123).

Antoinette's life is not her marriage or a grand linear narrative of her personal growth; it is a collage of non-human as well as human encounters she has experienced in her life. It is, in short, a life in Deleuzian sense, lived in relation to other beings and non-human forces. Because Rhys shifts the narrative voice back to Antoinette at the end of the novel, she establishes Antoinette and her embodied relation to the West Indies as the last thing in the reader's memory.

Place Without Imperial and Nationalistic Sentiments

The above examples demonstrate how in *Wide Sargasso Sea* Rhys constructs her characters', particularly Antoinette's, sense of self, mainly in relation to place, and to

[102] In a letter to Diana Athill, written in 1966, Rhys writes the much-quoted line that emphasises the need to acknowledge the existence of various lives, ways of being, and knowledge systems. She writes, "I came to England between sixteen and seventeen, a very impressionable age and Jane Eyre was one of the books I read then. Of course Charlotte Bronte makes her own world, of course she convinces you […] I remember being quite shocked, and when I re-read it rather annoyed. 'That's only one side – the English side' sort of thing" (1972, pp. 296-7). In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, many sides of a story are remembered, acknowledged, and told. First Antoinette until p. 36 Part II, then her husband has the majority of narrative, then at page 66 back to Antoinette for a brief while, when their marriage is falling apart; in this part, Antoinette herself confirms again, looking at the dark blue sky and dark green mango trees that "'This is my place and this is where I belong and this is where I wish to stay'" (2001, p. 67). Then it switches back to the husband on p. 74. Until the final Part III where we get a brief kind of objective description from an outsider, and then have Antoinette's narrative until the end, which is brief, not even 10 pages. But the briefness confirms the point of the novel: voice, and the length of the words said does not necessarily give power.

the non-human world inhabiting that place.[103] Antoinette, like Julia, *is* the impressions of the non-human world of the West Indies she perceives. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, and as Erica L. Johnson (2015) has pointed out with the reference to the Deleuzian 'minoritarian' identity, Rhys's characters in her interwar novels identify with, for instance, animals, streets, and machines (2015, pp. 211-212). By doing that, Rhys shifts the focus from what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari refer to as 'majoritarian' identities to 'minoritarian' identities – identity based on one's relation to their surroundings and others instead of one's age, sex, skin colour, and social background.[104] In *Wide Sargasso Sea* Antoinette's relation to the West Indies is an explicit example of the Deleuzian sense of self. Antoinette's final statement that her life, which is made of "orchids and the stephanotis and the jasmine and the tree of life" (Rhys, 2001, p. 123) as well as her doll's house, books, and various other objects, is visible to her in the sky, indicates that she, and her life, *is* all these non-human things. In the end, it is not her class, race, or gender that Antoinette remembers, but all the non-human things and the people she formed odd intimacies with in the West Indies: for example, Tia. Johnson (2015) and Delia Caparoso Konzett (2002) have argued that Rhys's characters undermine rational Western subjectivity by focusing on the non-human.[105] When Johnson and Konzett focus on the harshness Rhys's protagonists face in her interwar novels because they cannot conform to those Western ideas of agency and subjectivity, I see Antoinette's identification with the non-human precisely as a site for enchantment and happiness. Through Antoinette's relation to the place, the novel questions, like theories of new materialism and affect, the anthropocentric ideas that position humans (most often the white human adult male) as higher than other life forms, and instead looks at life

[103] The importance of place in identity-construction in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is also examined by Delia Caparoso Konzett in *Anzia Yezierska, Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Rhys, and the Aesthetics of Dislocation* (2002). See the chapter on Jean Rhys.
[104] For a more detailed discussion about Deleuzian concepts such as 'haecceity', 'becoming', and 'minoritarian' identity, see *A Thousand Plateaus*, or the introduction to this thesis.
[105] Many critics including Elaine Savoury (2009, 2015), Wilson Harris (2003), Mary Lou Emery (2015), and Molly Hite (1989) have examined gardens, outdoor spaces, and flora and fauna in Rhys's fiction. Savoury discusses Antoinette's love for and association of happiness with Dominican flora (hibiscus, orchids, jasmine, ferns): "In some important ways, flowers and trees destabilise conventional agency in the service of an alternative possibility" (2015, pp. 95-96). Su also suggests that ,"It is good to remember Molly Hite's judgement (The Other Side, 1989) that Rhys's achievement involved her placement of 'marginal characters at the centre of her fiction which Hite argues destabilises the novel's traditional privileging of agency" (p. 96). However, only recently have people begun to systematically examine the dismantling of Western Enlightenment subjectivity in Rhys as related to her privileging of the non-human world. For this reason, new materialist criticism is insightful for reading Rhys.

as an assemblage of various human and non-human, animate and inanimate factors.[106]

It is important to pause here for a moment on the criticism of new materialist and affect theories that are often influenced by Deleuze and Guattari. Although I do not agree that new materialism ignores issues related to class, race, and gender, and ignores the work done in the field of Indigenous studies, I do take seriously the idea that there is too little dialogue between new materialisms and the earlier theories that have addressed the issues new materialism engages with. Criticism from Peta Hinton, Tara Mhrabi, and Josef Barla (2014), Nicki Sullivan (2012), Juanita Sundberg (2014), and Alison Ravenscroft (2018) opens up a similar dialogue between post-colonialism and post-humanism, or new materialism and post-colonialism, as Sara Ahmed opened up between feminism and new materialism.[107] What these criticisms take issue with is not *what* new materialists do but *how* they do it – mostly white scholars focusing on Western, often Eurocentric thought.[108]

Yet, thinking of Jane Bennett's work, which is central to this thesis, her engagement with white Western philosophers such as Kant, Paracelsus, Lucretius, Foucault, and Deleuze demonstrates that the Western thought itself is not that different from, say, Australian Indigenous thought. She dismantles the Western subjectivities from within it, focusing on the tradition that has seemingly built those subjectivities. *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a particularly interesting novel to read bearing these debates in mind, as Rhys's Antoinette too dismantles the Western subjectivity from within that tradition. The latter novel, and Rhys as a writer, as John J. Su (2015), and Konzett (2002), for instance, have argued, dismantles the white mythologies from within, as Rhys, like most new materialist critics, belongs to and comes from the tradition of whiteness. She does so by maintaining the attention to race, ethnicity, class, sex, and gender, but in a way that undermines the legitimacy of

[106] It is also relevant to emphasise here, as many critics such as Spivak (1985) and Savoury (2009) have pointed out, that one of the main achievements of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is to criticise the feminism of *Jane Eyre* that celebrates the Enlightenment ideas of individual growth and freedom that are in fact also the fulcrum of oppression for women and anyone who is other to white middle-class men. See Elaine Savoury's *Introduction to Jean Rhys (2009)*, Gaytari Spivak's 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1985) and Carl Plaza's *Jean Rhys, Wide Sargasso Sea: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (2001), Chapter 2.

[107] See the introduction and Chapter One for the discussion about femininity and materiality in feminist and new materialist theories.

[108] See the introduction for a longer discussion of the critical debates around new materialism, post-colonialism, and Indigenous studies.

any of these categories in identity-formation. Here it is also important to emphasise again that in my reading of Rhys, these 'majoritarian' categories of identity do not offer an explanation for what Rhys is doing with subjectivities throughout her oeuvre. Rhys's engagement with the non-human dismantles coherent Western subjectivities from within the Western tradition, especially by making Antoinette not cohere to any of the identity categories that she should fit in, but making her, a white coloniser's daughter, both belong and not belong to that tradition.

As demonstrated in the previous section, the Western subjectivity in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is mostly undermined by focusing on how selves are 'created' by being embodied in the non-human material environment. When we extend the centrality of embodiment and materiality to the concept of national identity more generally, then we can also see this identity as located not so much in myths of imperialism but rather in the material, non-human aspects of the place in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In this sense, Rhys engages with similar problems that Woolf tries to dissect in *Between the Acts*. Both writers are interested in writing and remembering history, constructing ethnic and national identities, and understanding people's sense of belonging to a place and time they inhabit with fellow beings from a view that undermines imperial attitudes. Antoinette's character in particular demonstrates that there is nothing inherent about being white and English, or black and Caribbean, but that subjectivities and identities are formed in relation to one's environment and others. Antoinette knows where she belongs not because of the people and their external, majoritarian identities, but because she identifies with the non-human – a sense that is constantly undermined by imperial discourses.

Antoinette has been lonely since childhood: her father died, her mother was more concerned with Antoinette's handicapped brother, and Antoinette never felt at home with either the white English colonisers or the black slaves/servants. Instead, she found comfort in her surroundings – in non-human animate and inanimate life. Antoinette's relation to place, therefore, also requires some consideration of the meaning behind the word 'country', as it might tell us something of what Antoinette means when she refers to the West Indies as "her place" (Rhys, 2001, p. 53). Ravenscroft (2018) writes about the word 'country', and its meanings in various Indigenous Australian languages:

> Country cannot be confused with the connotations of that word in English: this is not merely land or ground or nature if by these things we mean something inanimate. To the extent it can be translated, it seems to be something like a living and life-giving nexus of energy-matter in which entities, including Ancestors, emerge; it is a sensate intelligence; it includes what in English might be thought of as geological and life forms, except that rock and mountain ranges are among the living. In includes 'human' and 'animal', but these now would be approached as consubstantiating (p. 361).[109]

Thinking of Antoinette's relationship with the West Indies, her relation to the countries of Jamaica and Dominica, and the lands of those countries, it is more similar to the Indigenous Australian understandings explained in the above quotation than to any 'country' in the Western sense of the word. To put it differently, country (when she thinks and speaks of the West Indies) for Antoinette is not a word for a political entity governing a specific piece of land that is inhabited by people with passports issued by this same country, but something that has an intelligence and independence of its own.

In a way, Antoinette's love for and engagement with the Caribbean should not be strange because, conventionally, one is supposed to love one's birthplace – a notion that was especially true at the height of British imperialism. Yet this relationship is complicated precisely because of colonial regimes, as Antoinette is expected, when marrying an Englishman, to consider England her home, not Jamaica or Dominica. I take seriously Carmen Wicramagamage's (2000) idea that "Antoinette is not a woman who is troubled by a lack of cultural identity; she is a woman who perceives herself troubled by others on account of her cultural identity" (pp. 30-31). In "The Day they Burned the Books" (1972), Rhys gives an account of English children who have never been to England and yet talk of England with love and admiration, perceiving England as their 'true' home. Like the narrator of "The Day" – a young girl – Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea* does not consider England her home. On the contrary, Antoinette considers the Caribbean "'[her] place', stating that this is where she belongs and where she wishes to stay" (Rhys, 2001, p. 67) because she "love[s] it more than anywhere in the world. As it if were a person. More than a person" (Rhys, 2001, p. 53). It is clear, then, that Antoinette is not

[109] Ravenscroft's essay explores Australian Indigenous materialism's challenge to the concept of human in the Western tradition. She does so by examining the novels by Waanyi writer, critic, and activist Alexis Wright. Although *Wide Sargasso Sea* is not an Indigenous Australian text, there are striking similarities between how Rhys and Wright depict the non-human in their novels.

disoriented, as the female protagonists of Rhys's interwar novels tend to be.[110] Quite the opposite, there is an intimate connection between Antoinette and the West Indies. Antoinette notices the liveliness and independence of the place as "everything was alive" for her (Rhys, 2001, p. 18) – she is, and has been for a long time, aware of the fact that she is not just existing among dead nature and objects, but is in a mutual ongoing encounter with her surroundings. Because of this embodied, ongoing attachment to the Caribbean, Antoinette, like the narrator in 'The Day', resists the imperial project of raising white colonisers' children in the spirit of considering the heart of Empire, that is, England, their home. Antoinette is unsure of her identity in relation to people – who she is between her husband and Amelie; who she is between white English colonisers and black servants, both of whom consider her or parts of her as alien and other (Rhys, 2001, p. 63). Instead of identifying with people, Antoinette forms a strong sense of belonging in relation to the world of the non-human.

Because Antoinette's relationship to land formed in childhood, because the 'protagonist' of the short story discussed above is a young girl, and because I already explored the references to Julia's childhood in the previous chapter, I now want to turn to the concept of children and childhood both in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and in Deleuze and Guattari's writings. I already drew attention to childhood in the previous chapter, and most of the above examples in the first section of this chapter, are from Antoinette's childhood. Similarly, in the short story, 'The Day', the characters are children, and in another short story about the vividness and liveliness of the West Indies, 'Mixing Cocktails', the narrator is a small girl. Rhys also examines a child-like mind-set in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. For instance, Antoinette's husband refers to her as "not a stupid child but an obstinate one" (Rhys, 2001, p. 56), whom he likes to make feel safe. Interestingly, also the passage that speaks most to new materialist criticism, is narrated thinking back to Antoinette's childhood, when she believed in her 'stick', or rather amulet of a sort:

> It was not a stick, but a long narrow piece of wood, with two nails sticking out at the end, a shingle, perhaps […] I believed that no one could harm me when it was near me […] *I was still babyish* and sure that everything was

[110] See John J. Su's article 'Empire of Affect: Reading Rhys After Postcolonial Studies' (2015), Delia Konzett's *Anzia Yezierska, Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Rhys, and the Aesthetics of Dislocation* (2002).

> alive, not only the river or the rain, but chairs, looking-glasses, cups, saucers, everything (Rhys, 2001, p. 18; emphasis mine).

Like in *Between the Acts*, things, such as a narrow piece of wood in this case, are more than just what they would be by categorisation – they become something else by their ability to affect. I have discussed the ability to affect and be affected as the main indicator what a person or a thing is in a Deleuzian sense. Deleuze and Guattari speak about 'becoming-child' in *A Thousand Plateaus*, which they associate with the ability to affect and be affected with. Firstly, they see children as more easily assessing bodies in terms of what they can do, i.e. how they can affect and be affected, not in terms of to which species certain bodies belong (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 257). Second, they stress the importance of an indefinite article in children's language: "Children's questions are poorly understood if they are not seen as question-machines; that is why indefinite articles play so important a role in these questions *(a* belly, a child, a horse, a chair, "how is *a* person made?")" (2004, p. 256).[111] Antoinette never refers to her stick as the stick, but always as a stick. What can a stick do? She thought it could bring her luck and protect her. In other words, children possess a certain ability to see the non-human not as an already-defined inert matter to be used for specific functions like chairs and bellies are, but non-human as sites that affect and can be affected in various ways. Accordingly, they are also more able to ethically engage with, and identify themselves with, the world of the non-human, as Antoinette does.

What is important from this childlike perspective in terms of identifying with land is the ability to see country not as an abstract political entity, but a very material network of human and non-human life, as Ravenscroft explains it. There is a clear association of happiness, which depends on seeing the world of the non-human as lively as related to the childlike perspective in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Rhys's unfinished autobiography *Smile Please* (1979) relies on childhood memories too; indeed, it

[111] Timothy Morton in *Ecology without Nature* (2007) makes a similar point about children, referring to Shelley "who wrote in his essay 'On Life' that children 'less habitually distinguished all that we saw and felt, from ourselves.' Some adults who find themselves still capable of accessing this state called reverie feel as if their nature were dissolved into the surrounding universe, or as if the surrounding universe were absorbed into their being" (p. 122). However, because, in my reading and understanding, Rhys keeps the distinction between human and non-human intact, I do not want to bring in a thread of thought that emphasises the dissolution of these boundaries in children's thinking. What is important from both these references to children is their ability to see the non-human not as inert and something already defined.

posits these memories as sites upon which all else is built upon, and to which Rhys returns to, very explicitly, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.[112] Rhys's first memories are naturally that of colours, of nature, of warmth. In her fiction, we can also trace that it is often warmth that makes the world come more alive, friendly, and full of feeling. This juxtaposition too is rooted in her childhood in the West Indies. She writes in *Smile Please*,

> [Morgan's Rest] was hot, only about four hundred feet above sea level. Not a beautiful place, just a pretty place. It was shut in behind two low hills which sloped down to the sea. It was there, not in wild beautiful Bona Vista, that I began to feel I loved the land and to know that I would never forget it. There I would go for long walks alone. It's strange growing up in a very beautiful place and seeing that it is beautiful. *It was alive, I was sure of it*. Behind the bright colours the softness, the hills like clouds and the clouds like fantastic hills. There was something austere, sad, lost, all these things. *I wanted to identify myself with it, to lose myself in it. (But it turned its head away, indifferent, and that broke my heart*). The earth was like a magnet which pulled me and sometimes I came near it, this identification or annihilation that I longed for. Once, regardless of the ants, I lay down and kissed the earth and thought, 'Mine, mine'. I wanted to defend it from strangers. Why was I sure that in the end they would be defeated? They can't cut down the silent mountains or scoop up the eternal sea but they can do a lot. The trees and flowers they destroy will grow again and they will be forgotten (1990, pp. 66-67; emphasis mine).

Rhys's own memories of her childhood setting in the West Indies reflect her writing in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Antoinette's relation to the land. First, we can see from this quotation that it is the natural environment of Dominica that Rhys loves, and the land itself that she sees valuable and wants to protect from strangers. We also see how she positions land as indifferent and as stronger than human activity as she believes that in the end, it will not be defeated.

Second, Rhys depicts land as independent and alive, free of human-imposed concepts. Although she calls the land "mine, mine", she also acknowledges that it "turns its head away, indifferent" (Rhys, 2016, pp. 66-67). Towards the end of the novel, Antoinette and her husband have an argument because the latter perceives the place as "something unknown and hostile" (Rhys, 2001, p. 82), something that is on

[112] Interestingly, although their childhoods were spent in very different countries, looking at Woolf's first memories of St Ives in summertime reveals similarities to Rhys's childhood environment in Dominica. Woolf describes a highly sensual memory of walking down to the beach from Talland House, her memory of "stopping and looking at the garden" with ripe, red and gold apples, bees humming, and pink flowers blossoming (1972, p. 78).

Antoinette's side, which makes him feel "very much a stranger" (Rhys, 2001, p. 82). In response, Antoinette, echoing Rhys's writing in the above passage, states that

> You are quite mistaken […] It is not for you and not for me. It has nothing to do with either of us. That is why you are afraid of it, because it is something else. I found that out long ago when I was a child. I loved it because I had nothing else to love, but it was indifferent as this God you call on so often (Rhys, 2001, p. 82).

By saying "it is not for you and not for me" (Rhys, 2001, p. 82), Antoinette indicates that the non-human world is alive and powerful, but it is also indifferent. This, she states, is something that she found out as a child. Regarding Rhys's writings in *Smile Please*, we also know that she is describing her childhood memories about land being indifferent to humans and powerful regardless of what humans to do it. Carine M. Mardorossian (2015) takes an interesting approach to the non-human/human divide and questions the blurred boundaries between human and non-human, arguing instead that these two categories should be kept intact, and there is nothing necessarily ethical about this dissolution of boundaries. I have argued throughout the thesis, following Levinas, that it is precisely the radical other and its otherness and acknowledging that which is ethical, not accommodating the other. In a sense, then, it seems that in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, particularly, and in Rhys's writings more generally, the ethical engagement with the other, especially the non-human other, and acknowledging this other in its radical alterity, is associated with children who are free of patriarchal and imperial doctrines.

The ability to see the non-human world as lively, particularly by children, is also supported by the fact that while at first Antoinette's perception of the Caribbean is lively and colourful, her attitude alters after her marriage – when she loses her childlike perspective, her relation to her surroundings becomes also slightly altered. At the turning point in the novel, when Antoinette has a short final voice while she is still in the Caribbean and seeks help from Christophine, asking the latter to make her a love potion for her husband, Antoinette describes the morning when Christophine gave her the drink as follows:

> I can remember every second of that morning, if I shut my eyes I can see the deep blue colour of the sky and the mango leaves, the pink and red hibiscus, the yellow handkerchief [Christophine] wore round her head […], but now I see everything still, fixed for ever like the colours in a stained-glass window (Rhys, 2001, p. 74).

The West Indies, although still beautiful, have become for Antoinette a fixed image, like a stained-glass window – life has gone from it, because her ill-fated marriage to her husband has altered the way she perceives her surroundings and her role in it. Similarly, her husband remembers that, even as a boy, he was taught not to feel:

> How old was I when I learned to hide what I felt? A very small boy. Six, five, even earlier. It was necessary, I was told, and that view I have always accepted. If these mountains challenge me, or Baptiste's face, or Antoinette's eyes, they are mistaken, melodramatic (Rhys, 2001, p. 63).

Like Mr McKenzie in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, and various male characters in Woolf's writing, including Bart and Giles in *Between the Acts* and Mr Ramsay and Charles Tansley in *To the Lighthouse*, Antoinette's husband too is taught from early childhood to feel nothing. Rhys highlights that men are not naturally inclined to be resilient to feelings but that social expectations force and encourage them to become so. He too lost his childlike relation to land. It is this childlike perspective then that allows Rhys's characters to form selves and see others not in terms of majoritarian identity categories but in specific human and non-human relations.

Somewhat problematically, it is also Christophine that is associated with what could be termed as a childlike perspective that allows Antoinette, or indeed encourages her, to develop a sense of identity in relation to place. While this might seem like Christophine's racial otherness to the white norm here is associated with a childish mind-set, the child-like perspective in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is not something less intelligent than the adult perspective. Quite the opposite, it is in children that Rhys seems to see an opportunity for living freely. We can see how Christophine undermines Western philosophy when we look at how she confronts Antoinette's over romanticised, dreamlike image of England. Christophine questions that image: "'I don't say I don't *believe*, I say I don't *know*, I know what I see with my eyes and I never see [England]'" (Rhys, 2001, p. 69). For Spivak, Christophine's line "read and write I don't know, other things I know" (Rhys, 2001, p. 105) "stages what she sees as the most significant strength of Rhys's novel: its refusal to contain Christophine within its own narrative framework, thereby allowing her to mark the limits of the novel's discourse" (Spivak, qtd. in Su,2015, p. 175). Christophine's walking away from her conversation with Antoinette's husband is an example of her refusal to submit to the Western epistemologies. Many critics including Ambreen Hai (2015), Delia Caparoso Konzett (2002), and Mary Loy Emery (2015) examine

Christophine's importance in the novel. Important for me is Konzett's (2002) point in relation to nationality and belonging that Christophine represents:

> Christophine's doubt about the existence of England should not be read as a representative statement of the provincial and ignorant native. Instead, it points, in a manner reminiscent especially of Hurston and Faulkner's regional and folkloric characters with their vernacular grasp of epistemological uncertainty, to the entire phantom existence of nationality […] The unreality of Eliot's London is extended in Rhys's novel to the entire nation of Britain and reflects the empire's claim to a natural territory merely to be the product of a cultural imaginary, a "dream." Unlike Eliot, Rhys challenges not merely a modern lifestyle (mass culture) as devoid of substance but questions the entire myth of national culture and belonging from within which Eliot still attempted to salvage a tradition (pp. 139- 140).

I agree with Konzett that in Rhys's work, existence of any kind of nationality or straightforward ethnic origin, and through that ethnic or national belonging, is portrayed as a dream, a phantom existence, or an illusion growing from imperial discourses and values. I would also like to take this further by saying that the belonging Rhys portrays is located in place, but in place as non-human or free (as much as it could it be) of imperial ideals. In other words, Rhys represents land and its 'use' for people, nations, and countries as something very different from traditional ideas of nationalism. Land in Rhys's writings is not a site to be occupied, controlled and used for human profit and benefit, but something that should be seen as lively and independent, something that can provide a site for living for humans. Precisely because it provides a place for living for humans, it should be treated with respect and care.

Although Rhys questions the modern myths of national belonging, she seems to support a sense of belonging that is rooted in the environment of the place that one feels intimate with. Antoinette is rooted in a material place, not to abstract ideas about where people belong because of their passports or ethnic origin, but because of lived, embodied experience of place. Hélène Cixous's (1993) writing about the word 'root' is insightful here. She writes: "the word racine (root) has taken on a somewhat vulgar tint nowadays, rubbed in ideologies that have racist connotations. We must reduce it to ashes and wait for its rebirth" (p. 145). Cixous indicates that we are afraid of speaking of roots because we think of nationalism in fascist forms, but Rhys is on a different journey in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Cixous writes that our roots take us to the matter, which

> is not abstract but intelligent, alive, and powerful. One has to follow a path to arrive at matter […] we began as matter before moving away from whence we came. The journey is spiritual because it is not enough to put one's foot on the ground to come back to earth. It is an extremely difficult spiritual exercise, reintegrating the earthly, the earth, and the earth's composition in one's body, imagination, thought (Cixous, 1993, p. 150).

I quoted this passage also in the introduction, to suggest that all the novels explored here are on this spiritual journey towards matter, towards the earth. Rhys in *Wide Sargasso Sea* arrives closest to the matter via Antoinette. Although Antoinette is not able to put her feet on the ground at the end of the novel, in her act of resistance, in remembering her life in the sky and all the objects, she nevertheless (re)roots herself to the West Indies. This rooting allows Rhys to notice, remember, and tell stories that offer alternative plots of nationalism and belonging to imperialism and patriarchy, at least in the imagination.

Intimate Stories

Wide Sargasso Sea addresses the complex ethical issues around noticing, remembering, and telling histories and stories in general not just through Antoinette's relation to place. Throughout the novel the reader gets glimpses of a past that has been erased, whether by nature (as in overgrown roads) or by people (refusing to tell certain stories). When Antoinette and her husband head to their honeymoon house, the husband asks about the name of the place: "'Massacre.' 'And who was massacred here? Slaves?' 'Oh no.' She sounded shocked. 'Not slaves. Something must have happened a long time ago. Nobody remembers now.'" (Rhys, 2001, p. 36). In a similar manner, memory is erased when the husband asks Baptiste about the road that was once in the forest: "'There was a road here once, where did it lead to?' 'No road,' he said. 'But I saw it….' 'No road'" (Rhys, 2001, p. 65). Baptiste denies there ever being a road. The past is perhaps denied because it refers back to times of slavery and French colonisation, because indeed it seems to be the husband who always tries to evoke the past and enquire about it, whether his questions are concerned with the road or with Antoinette's origins. His need to know the past can be interpreted as his desire to have the former slaves confirm to him that colonialism was a very material presence on the island. Through that, the husband perhaps wants to legitimise his own being on the island.

Yet, when it might seem that it is the husband, representing the colonisers and imperial system who insists on remembering, then it is also Antoinette declaring that, "I am not a forgetting person" (Rhys, 2001, p. 85). We see Antoinette trying to gain historical knowledge already in her childhood, asking her mother about Christophine's past, to which her mother responds:

> She was your father's wedding present to me […] I don't know how old she is now. Does it matter? Why do you pester and bother me about all these things that happened long ago? Christophine stayed with me because she wanted to stay (Rhys, 2001, p. 6).

Antoinette is denied the truth that she would like to know in order to gain a certain historical knowledge about the past. Antoinette's mother, Anette, denies, or perhaps does not know herself, the story about colonialism, slavery, and the Emancipation Act – all which are the reasons Christophine was 'given' to her in the first place. Anette's denial of the racist past and her affirmation that Christophine stayed because she wanted to renders invisible the context of slavery and servitude that are the real reasons Christophine was with her in the first place. Because Antoinette does not know this past, she also cannot change her future. In the second dream, Antoinette yields to knowing that "this must happen" (Rhys, 2001, p. 34) – there is nothing to rewrite, because the history has happened already. Konzett (2015) suggests that "unlike a developmental novel or a novel of manners [like Jane Eyre], Rhys's text does not advance a progressive or emancipatory model of growth but instead foregrounds a history condemned to repeat itself" (Rhys, 2001, p. 138). In a way, history repeats itself precisely because historical facts are distorted, deleted, and denied to generations who would like to learn about them. In other words, if Antoinette and her husband knew exactly what colonial violence had been carried out in the West Indies, then perhaps their understanding of the present and their futures would be different. As Su (2010) proposes, "the evocation of the past recalls and makes present memories that colonial narratives have chosen to forget" (p. 168). It is also exactly what Rhys is doing by telling the story of Bertha Mason before she became Bertha Mason; a story about Antoinette and her love for her life in the Caribbean.

Not knowing allows imagining history as it never happened. In a sense, then, this denial of past colonial regimes is related to imaging a past that never were – that is, a past where neither racial prejudices nor gender prejudices exist. It is imagining

not the familiar, the possible, but the unfamiliar, the impossible, that yet somehow also *is* possible. Su (2010)argues that *Wide Sargasso Sea* prioritises "worlds that never were" (p. 159) and that it is the past not the future that *Wide Sargasso Sea* looks into. Su (2010) gives an example of Antoinette's final dream when she is reunited with Tia – a unification that was impossible in real life because of the racial and class prejudices – "a regret for intimacy felt too late" (p. 161). Indeed, most of the intimacy in Rhys's oeuvre is strange in a way that it is felt at the wrong time. In the same way, Sandi and Antoinette's relationship, with them being from different racial backgrounds, was something unthinkable at the time when the novel is set, and as Elaine Savoury (2009) points out, even still difficult to speak about at the time when *Wide Sargasso Sea* was written (p. 88). The novel encourages the reader to imagine a past that never was, a past where the road never existed, and a past where Tia and Antoinette were friends, and Antoinette and Sandi lovers. It is a past where intimate stories that otherwise have no life are given an implicit chance to live in people's imagination.[113]

In other words, even though Rhys demonstrates that the unwillingness to narrate history with all its racist and sexist content is damaging in a way that encourages the future generation to live those discriminations, she also says that within this history are present already moments of intimacy that deny these discriminations. Race too is depicted as something intimate, something that Antoinette does not experience or understand through major examples of violence and discrimination, but something that is intimately entangled in her life. Maroula Jouannou (2015) argues that the materiality and physicality of racism becomes apparent when Antoinette "is forced to live the materiality of race subordination and to experience through her senses (in the touch of the borrowed clothing on her skin) the shock of physical intimacy and proximity to the racial 'Other'" (p. 132). Jouannou refers to the incident when Antoinette is forced to wear Tia's dress when the latter took Antoinette's, and how this is example of the lived experience of race and racism. Noticing stories like this, however, also demonstrates not only the existence of racism but inter-racial intimacies. Hai (2015) proposes that we should

[113] This imagination can also be seen as positive struggle to overcome what critics, for example, Su (2015) refer to as Antoinette's internalised racism.

shift the focus to personal relationships and intimacies, to understand servitude better, without presupposing that we already know what it means. She argues that

> rather than presupposing servitude to be an already understood, easily dismissed, simple condition, I read it as complex and expansive, as inclusive of affective interpersonal relations, paradoxical intimacies, and dependencies, as deeply fraught by intersecting axes of power, embedded in multiple hierarchies, and as therefore demanding of historically attentive, nuanced reading (Hai, 2015, p. 494).

She is particularly interested in the relationship between female servants and the children they raise: for example, in the relationship between Christophine and Antoinette. Hai argues that instead of thinking of their relationship as inevitable and forced because of Christophine's servitude, she encourages us to see the real bond and true intimacy between these female characters from different racial and social backgrounds. Indeed, Christophine is the mother-figure for Antoinette, and their attachment seems to be genuine, as Christophine is protective of Antoinette and Antoinette remembers Christophine's songs, meals, voice, and the colours of her handkerchief even in England. With Sandi, Antoinette has learned one of the pleasures of her life: pebble throwing (Rhys, 2001, p. 52), and with Sandi, Antoinette also has "the life and death kiss" (Rhys, 2001, p. 120) – a kiss that seems to embody their intimacy that could have never had a real life, to use Berlant's term. It is precisely these affective moments – the sights, sounds, touches, and smell of the Caribbean – that 'roots' Antoinette there, and creates intimacy between her and various characters who she, as a white plantation owner's daughter, was not supposed to be intimate with.

In this sense, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a story of a series of intimacies that have no life but provide a ground for exploring within an affective turn in postcolonial studies. Phanuel Antwi, Sarah Brophy, Helene Strauss and Y-Dang Troeung (2013) suggest that postcolonial studies need to turn attention to tracing and taking seriously affects and intimacies (p. 2). These authors follow affect theorists such as Ann Cvetkovich and Kathleen Stewart and they shift the focus from what John Ashcroft (2012) calls Grand Theory to lived experiences of race, colonialism, and oppression. The authors of the edited collection quote Stewart's *Ordinary Affects* (2007) to say that postcolonial texts "'pulse' with what Stewart terms 'rogue intensities' – with 'everything left unframed' by the dominant 'stories of what makes a life'" (qtd. in

Antwi et al., 2013, p. 7). In *Wide Sargasso Sea,* as in the other novels examined in this thesis, "everything left unframed" by what both Stewart and Lauren Berlant call 'a life' and conventional intimacies framing that life, is given a story. For example, Berlant (1998) writes that "intimacy builds worlds; it creates spaces and usurps places meant for other kinds of relations" (p. 282). These intimate stories include Antoinette's relation to the non-human world of the West Indies, and importantly also her intimacies with black characters in the novel that build an imaginative yet powerful world and depict a place historically associated with colonial violence as a place that also resonates with inter-racial intimacies. *Wide Sargasso Sea* pays attention to intimacies that, despite the imperial, racist and sexist attitudes, attach Christophine and Antoinette, and Antoinette and her husband, and most importantly, Antoinette and the West Indies, together.

By narrating those intimacies, *Wide Sargasso Sea* then gives us reasons to believe that imagining a past that never was, or was but is suppressed under imperial discourses, has ethical potential. Su (2010) refers to Paul Ricœur's work on narrative ethics, arguing that "his notion of 'telling otherwise' can be read to suggest the ethical aspect of narrative resides not in the events it described but in the implication that any event can be narrated again and therefore described otherwise" (p. 165). Su (2010), unlike Susan Stewart and Renato Rosaldo, for example, sees nostalgia as having ethical potential (p. 166). Su (2010) suggests that history in *Wide Sargasso Sea* "is defined by images of communities never formed, empathy never felt, suffering never shared – in other words, history is defined by what never occurred" (p. 166). Indeed, Antoinette's dreams are premonitions, indicating that history cannot be changed. The only way to change things is then in imagination, in narrative. Su (2010) highlights that

> the key distinction between Rhys's use of nostalgia and more familiar forms of it, such as those employed by Nazism and numerous nationalist and fundamentalist movements in the past 150 years: the nostalgic fantasies Antoinette creates are never depicted as historical realities (p. 166).

I agree with Su that Rhys locates intimacy in possibilities, not necessarily in realities. This is why storytelling is important as such – what kind of stories do we (choose to) notice, pass forward, and write down? Rhys, especially in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, writes down intimacies that otherwise go unnoticed in patriarchal, imperial, and even postcolonial narratives.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, these minor intimacies often refer to that which never really happened or will happen, but that have potential to create spaces where being otherwise can be imagined. Storytelling itself, like nostalgia, has an ethical potential because it can create the worlds that never were. Ravenscroft (2018) argues that "poetics means the practice that, after [Roland] Barthes, can be thought of as producing effects most powerfully not through the possible, the familiar – the already known, the already believed – but through the improbable or impossible" (p. 355). Ravenscroft puts forward the idea that we enter and read the text as strangers (2018, p. 366). She is interested in the possibilities such an approach holds for dismantling the Western colonial subject who enters an Indigenous text as a stranger (Ravenscroft, 2018, p. 359), suggesting that these texts have a power to challenge Western subjectivity. She writes,

> It may be that for the non-indigenous reader to attempt to take up the position of a stranger before Indigenous textuality is such a precarious, decentred, and destabilised position that the Western sovereign subject might fall into doubt and uncertainty – exactly what new materialism has aimed at, suggesting the significance of literary practices for understanding the possibilities of changing western ideas about human, inhuman, life and nonlife, energy and matter (Ravenscroft, 2018, p. 359).

Although *Wide Sargasso Sea* is not an Indigenous text, it clearly poses the same challenge for the reader – how to orient within the shifting narrative voice and the various worldviews it presents.

Wide Sargasso Sea demonstrates the complex and intimate co-existence of various different lives from different backgrounds in relation to specific places and the non-human world. By giving the reader Antoinette's, Rochester's, and Christophine's (although the latter is never through first-person narration) views, the novel does not present a binary image of the West Indies and England where the former represents exotic, less intelligent ways of being in the world. In a letter to Diana Athill, written in 1966, Rhys writes the much-quoted line that emphasises the need to acknowledge the existence of various lives, ways of being, and knowledge systems. She writes,

> I came to England between sixteen and seventeen, a very impressionable age and Jane Eyre was one of the books I read then. Of course Charlotte Bronte makes her own world, of course she convinces you […] I remember being quite shocked, and when I re-read it rather annoyed. 'That's only one side – the English side' sort of thing (1985, pp. 296-297).

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, many sides of a story are remembered, acknowledged, and told.

The attention of various intimate stories and the decision to narrate them from the Western perspective itself makes *Wide Sargasso Sea* a novel that undermines the Western tradition from within. It does not look at major identity pointers such as race and class to draw on characters' otherness, but positions every other, including the non-human other, as something infinitely other and strange that the self tries to understand by forming intimacies with it. Rhys shifts the focus to Antoinette's, and to a lesser extent to her husband's and Christophine's lived experience and through that offers an alternative to a panoramic, detached, omniscient view of the place, as Rhys gives the reader a close-up, a strangely intimate, embodied experience of the place. Such embodied aesthetics of place can be seen as part of Rhys's feminist ethics and anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist critique that treat the non-human world – the radical other – with care. The intimate and careful focus on the non-human allows us to see Antoinette's sense of identity and belonging as not dependent on indicators such as race, class, or sex, but on her relation to land and non-human life on that land. Although the encounter between a character of a specific sex, class, race, and ethnicity and the non-human world of animate and inanimate things is always influenced by the former's human attributes, the material world nevertheless functions as a potential point of common discourse between the different characters. And even if the characters in the novel cannot find a way toward a peaceful coexistence, *Wide Sargasso Sea* nevertheless encourages us, the readers, to look for a common discourse with those who are different from us. It encourages us not to ask what is different or what is the same about Antoinette, her husband, and Christophine. Rather, it tells us to ask what is common that they share at their present moment and location.

Conclusion

In the course of this thesis, I have explored Virginia Woolf's novels *To the Lighthouse* and *Between the Acts*, and Jean Rhys's novels *After Leaving Mr*

Mackenzie and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, to think about intimacies, desires, affects, embodiment, materiality, and the non-human. I have read these novels in the light of contemporary theories of affect and new materialism, which, as I have suggested, have some roots in (feminist) post-structuralist theories. I have read Woolf's and Rhys's novels with a specific focus on works by Hélène Cixous, Jane Bennett, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to develop a theory of modernism that is anti-Oedipal, affective, and life-affirming. I have explored how Cixous' *écriture féminine* is not simply an aesthetic mode built on biological essentialism but a way of writing that pays a specific attention to glances, gestures, and moments that otherwise go unnoticed in the patriarchal grand narratives of heteronormative love plots, patriotism, and ideas about what a good life should look like. I have looked at various strange moments and atmospheres of intimacy in Woolf's and Rhys's writings – moments and atmospheres which can be seen as examples of affective, anti-Oedipal *écriture féminine*. These strange intimacies are, as Lily thinks in *To the Lighthouse*, "unclassified affections of which there are so many" (Woolf, 2016, p. 115). Noticing these intimacies and affections is dependent on embracing and acknowledging that which Western cultures and societies tend to consider as feminine – embodiment, materiality, affect, and the radical other, which is often the non-human. I have argued that noticing these intimacies is important precisely because it allows us to look at modernism as enchanted and life-affirming, and to understand life as a whole, including all the ordinary and daily sites, moments, forces, sounds, things, and impressions. It is not just a life of an individual, or a life concerned with individuals who are defined in Oedipal, majoritarian categories of sex, class, and race, all which go hand in hand with patriarchy, but a common life lived in relation to other human and non-human beings, all of which contribute to a characters' sense of self.

Taking into account Cixous's *écriture féminine*, her writings from the 1990s, and her more recent novels, I have argued that her oeuvre demonstrates an engagement with bodies, materiality, and the non-human, which allows us to see the continuity between post-structuralism and affect, new materialist, and post-humanist theories. Her writing is not only a link between feminist theories and new materialist and affect studies but also a link between post-structuralism and material turns more generally. It is important to see that link because theories are not a series of breaks

from one another but an intellectual dialogue and continuity, and I believe that it is important to appreciate and acknowledge the work that has been done by earlier thinkers. Reading Cixous with Jane Bennett, Deleuze and Guattari, in particular has not only given us the opportunity to focus on affects, bodies, materiality, and the non-human, but to consider how these features create a sense of the common life to which Woolf's and Rhys's characters are attached. In other words, putting these thinkers into dialogue with one another allows us to see a theory about modernism, whether post-structural or materialist-oriented, as anti-Oedipal and life-affirming, focusing on intimate, positively affective atmospheres and moments. I have developed this view on modernism and theory precisely because, although the modernist period witnessed traumatic events and changes, which are depicted in various modernist writings, there are still moments and atmospheres of strange intimacy present in the midst of this chaos. This view does not aim to undermine or challenge the readings that examine negative affects such as alienation, shame, and disorientation. Rather, my aim is to create a fuller picture of modernism by focusing on that which is life-affirming. Such readings are not limited to the modernism of Woolf and Rhys, but can be extended to modernism more broadly.

In this thesis, I have explored how the novels of Woolf and Rhys, despite being set in times of war and social change that influence personal lives, maintain this attachment to and love for life. They show us how in life, like in writing, a certain order nevertheless emerges and remains in the seeming chaos and discontinuity. I have argued that Woolf and Rhys 'locate' this attachment to life precisely in the moments similar to Mrs Manresa's coffee-sipping from the beginning of this thesis – in sensual, affective, and oddly intimate moments where characters realise their bodily connection to the world of others, things, and places. I opened this thesis with a question from *Between the Acts*: 'Why waste sensation?' A possible answer is the following one: sensation breeds affective atmospheres and moments of strange intimacy. The intimate moments and atmospheres that I have explored have all been dependent on characters' senses of being embodied in the material world which they share with other human and non-human bodies that feel and sense, and have the power to be affected and affect. Accordingly, these moments and atmospheres allow the characters to form opinions, connections, thoughts, and feelings that function as halts in what Woolf calls their daily non-being. It is

sensation that creates moments of being; sensation absorbs our attention, it directs it to places already in this world, in our everyday, that we might otherwise pass by. It creates strange intimacies and directs our attention to these moments: for example, between Julia and her sister, between Antoinette and Christophine, between Mrs Ramsay and Lily, and many other pairs or groups examined in this thesis. I have tried to demonstrate that Woolf and Rhys are experts at creating scenes through words that 'vibrate' with various intimacies that the characters sense. To do that, they sometimes use silence, and increase heat in their texts. By doing so, they slow the narrative pace down to a point that both the characters and the readers are absorbed in the atmosphere and text; the characters experience (sometimes unwillingly) strange intimacy, and the reader too comes closer to the text.

I have shown how an important factor in strange intimacy, or any kind of intimacy, is desire. In the fictions of Woolf and Rhys, desire is, like in the works of Cixous and Deleuze and Guattari, and many other critics mentioned in this thesis, life-affirming and anti-Oedipal. Cixous writes that "life is to desire the other" (2008, p. 34). I have demonstrated that life as such also becomes the other that is desired in Woolf and Rhys. For instance, when Antoinette thinks of her life in the red sky and all the objects in it, she desires her life and to be one with it. Above all, when the figure of Mrs McNab dusts and dances and the narrative voice circling around her asks questions about what will remain, we are presented with the idea that life, despite Mrs McNab's weariness, remains, and she is joyful because of this. Life here, is 'a life' in the Deleuzian sense – not an individual, personal life lived by a person who can be defined by or confined into majoritarian categories of sex, gender, class, and race, but 'a life' that is lived in relation to other human and non-human beings and influenced by forces, sights, and impressions, which make up the 'self' who experiences life as such. Such an understanding of life and selfhood is visible precisely in moments of strange intimacy.

These moments of strange intimacy draw attention to the spaces already available that enchant and induce wonder in the modern world, which, as Jane Bennett (2001) points out, is often seen as disenchanted, rational, and void of meaning. To summarise this point, I would like to return to one of the texts that has 'haunted' this thesis. In *The Hundreds* (2019), Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart,

writing in the tradition of affect theories, speculate on the shortcomings of social constructivist and humanist critiques, and the things these critiques miss:

> all the extensions of ways of being touched, what it feels like to be carried along by something on the move, the widespread joking, the voicing, the dark wakefulness, the sonorousness, how managing a life vies with an unwitting ungluing, how things get started, how people try to bring things to an end, like the day, through things that slam or slide down their throats, why thought might become an add-on or take the form of a speed list, or why it matters that attention sometimes slows to a halt waiting for something to take shape (p. 42).

I too have tried to capture in this thesis how Woolf and Rhys pay attention to certain moments when their characters are, in the course of their daily, ordinary lives, brought to a halt. I have tried to explore how in these moments the characters experience intimacy because in these moments, they realise the strength of their own desire, whether it is for a human other, for an idea, or for a life. In these moments, characters feel enchanted, wonder-struck, and attached to a material world which they inhabit with beings human and non-human, animate and inanimate, precisely because they find certain meanings in a life that otherwise seems chaotic and disenchanted.

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