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"WITHIN THE COMPASS OF A SINGLE DROP": AN ANALYSIS OF WATER IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *THE VOYAGE OUT*, *TO THE LIGHTHOUSE*, AND *THE WAVES*

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Johannesburg, 2020

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

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Justine Boake

16 March 2020

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INTRODUCTION

The literature of Virginia Woolf is drenched in water. From her fictional work to her collections of essays to her biographical pieces, the aqueous element streams into all her writing in the form of oceans, rivers, thunderstorms, and more. In her own life, Woolf had a complete fascination with water and it seems to have encapsulated her entire existence — some of her earliest memories that she documents in *A Sketch of the Past* take place in Talland House, her childhood home by the seaside, and her death came as a result of drowning by walking into a river, her pockets weighed down with rocks. Across her work, Woolf let her own life "enter and shape her novels (and her essays) often" and her fixation with water is one of the most conspicuous examples of this (Lee 541-2).

The presence of water recurs throughout all of Woolf's work, though it is arguably found most explicitly in her novels; *The Voyage Out* begins with a journey across the sea to the fictional Santa Marina, a land saturated with water, whilst *To the Lighthouse* is set at the seaside with the last part of the novel primarily taking place on the ocean's surface. *The Years* contains not only several instances of detailed descriptions of rainfall as well as references to a voyage across the ocean undertaken by a principal character, but there are also several instances where characters are completely transfixed by sites of water — Eleanor at a fountain, Rose at a stream, and Kitty at a river. *Jacob's Room* opens with a scene at the beach that is based on Woolf's own experience at St. Ives, and much of Orlando's early life orientates around the River Thames (*Orlando*). *The Waves* is Woolf's most overtly watery novel, both in its fluid structure and its inclusion of several beachside interludes that not only punctuate the characters' soliloquies but provide metaphoric comparisons between water and the novel's characters.

Water is also found in some of Woolf's shorter fiction, with stories such as "Sympathy", "In the Orchard", "String Quartets", "Solid Objects", "Monday or Tuesday", "The Watering Place", and "The Fascination of the Pool" all mentioning various images of water. These range from brief references to lakes, rivers, and fountains, to lengthy sections of text focusing specifically on fish and their movements in water. Many of these stories (and her novelistic works too) also include settings that are reminiscent of the beachfronts Woolf spent her childhood visiting. The word water is itself found in the title of Woolf's only written play, *Freshwater*, and the element is not limited to her fictional writing as it flows into both her biographical work, including *A Sketch of the Past*, her personal letters and diaries, and finally into her essays — particularly her celebrated lectures turned essay, *A Room of One's Own*.

Despite the pervading presence of water, and Woolf's unwavering obsession with it, the representation of water in her work has only been partially examined before and often appears in literary studies as a tangential thought rather than a thoroughly explored topic in itself. Therefore, my thesis will uniquely focus entirely on Woolf's portrayal of water. In addition to taking the previously tangential thoughts regarding water into consideration, I will apply many ideas that emerged from the ecocritical studies done around Woolf's portrayal of nature to the specific element of water as it appears in *The Voyage Out*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Waves*. Traditionally, ecological explorations into Woolf's writing have focused on the broader notion of nature, with very few studies being explicitly concerned with water. The few studies that do engage with water primarily focus on it being a recurrent aesthetic that is both symbolic of Woolf's writing style and use of language and a faint hint towards her personal fixation with the element. In this thesis, I will closely consider the ecocritical scholarship that exists around Woolf's literary archive as I explore how Woolf attempts to transcend the traditional division between the human and the nonhuman through her representation of water as being intimately connected to her characters.

While there are clear moments within the chosen novels where Woolf does succeed in integrating the traditionally separated binary, and she does express her clear awareness of the artificiality of the division, I will argue that she circles nature back to the characters in her texts and subsequently reestablishes human-centrality. Her attempts at integrating the nonhuman and human ultimately allow for her characters to navigate water as both an extension, and reflection, of their own identity. The characters also use water as a metaphoric basis of description for both themselves and those around them, and they utilise it as a conceptual framework through which they operate their understandings of the world around them and grapple with notions of identity and selfhood. Further, I will closely analyse the acclaimed moments of "disanthropy" in both *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* and explore how Woolf's ultimate anthropomorphisation of the nonhuman world in the instances that it is described apart from human observation and presence ultimately circles the nonhuman back to the human once more (Garrard 41).

Furthermore, I will use the geological era of the Anthropocene as the conceptual framework through which to navigate my critical reading of water as it appears in Woolf's writing. We are living in a time where the detrimental, and vastly devastating, effects of human-centrality are evident on a global scale. Therefore, navigating an exploration into Woolf's novels during such an epoch will allow me to examine the limitations of her ecological imagination in a much more radical manner that has not been done in previous ecocritical studies. In considering Woolf's work so many years after her publication of it, and in a period of immense global and geological change,

I am able to offer the suggestion that despite her concerted efforts to present a less human-centric world through her constant incorporation of water, Woolf's representation of water throughout the chosen texts of *The Voyage Out*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Waves* is ultimately anthropocentric.

Where Woolf has previously been lauded as an extensively ecologically conscious author — she is dubbed by Bonnie Kime Scott (2016) as a "proto-ecocritic" for her presentation of the natural world and her attempts to deconstruct the division between the human and the nonhuman (320) — I will instead show how she ultimately reestablishes human centrality throughout her writing, despite her concerted efforts to equate, and integrate, the human and the nonhuman. Here, specific attention will be drawn to several of the novels' primary, and particularly watery, characters and their ultimately anthropocentric approach to water; Rachel Vinrace in *The Voyage Out*, Mrs Ramsay, her daughters, and Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse*, and Bernard and Rhoda in *The Waves*.

In addition to exploring the characters' anthropocentric manipulation of water, I will also explore how Woolf allows for each of her novels to include a clear fictional duplication of herself. By incorporating herself into her literature in the form of both her characters and her overarching fixation with water, Woolf's anthropocentric manoeuvring of water can be understood as not ending on the pages of her novel, but rather filtering into her own life. The deconstruction of the boundary between Woolf's fiction and reality will be explored with close consideration to the importance that Talland House held in her consciousness and the crucial role that the *Titanic* played in her personal understanding, and later representation, of water and her fixation with drowning. Furthermore, I will explore how this deconstruction allows for Woolf to use her texts as a meditative space upon which she utilises water to consider notions of her own tumultuous past and grapple with her own conceptualisations of identity, existence, and death. In doing this, Woolf not only consistently loops water back to the characters of the novels, but she ultimately, and inwardly, circles water back to herself as her appropriation of water is not only anthropocentric, but almost solipsistic.

This thesis contains three chapters, with one dedicated to each of the chosen novels. Due to the recursive nature of water within Woolf's writing, each chapter will navigate an exploration into water in a similar manner. In the chapter dedicated to *The Voyage Out*, I will begin my exploration into how Woolf ultimately loops the nonhuman back to the human through her constant metaphoric application of natural imagery to the human presences within the text. This clear indication of Woolf's ultimately anthropocentric manipulation of the nonhuman world to explore her human characters will begin each of the chapters that follow.

Succeeding this, each chapter will draw particular focus to the element of water and how it is manoeuvred by the characters. In *The Voyage Out*, I will explore how it is often used metaphorically by the characters as they describe themselves, their personal experiences, and all those they encounter with watery imagery. In my chapters dedicated to *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, water will once again be examined as being a metaphoric basis for the characters. I will also explore how water structures the various conceptualisations that the characters — particularly Mrs Ramsay and Bernard — develop about their own identity.

Finally, each chapter will draw close attention to the characters that are most associated with water and the characters who operate as fictional echoes of Woolf herself in the texts. In *The Voyage Out*, I will argue that Rachel Vinrace is a reflection of a young Virginia Woolf and, in *To the Lighthouse,* Lily Briscoe and Cam will be examined as replications of Woolf herself. In *To the Lighthouse* I will also consider the ways in which Mrs Ramsay is a patent recreation of Julia Stephens, and explore the Ramsay's home as being a clear fictional reflection of Talland House. In *The Waves*, I will carefully explore how Woolf fragments herself into the characters Rhoda and Bernard. Finally, each chapter will end with a consideration of how Woolf allows her own voice to filter into her text. With reference to her constant inclusion of water in her writing, her continuous references to the notion of sunken ships and drowning, and her constant construction of characters in her own image, I will conclude that Woolf circles the nonhuman world back to the human presences within her novels, but also continually loops it back to herself in a manner that is ultimately anthropocentric.

The image of water in literature has been examined through a historical perspective for years, with analyses tending to orientate around the importance of water throughout history, and very particularly the importance of water in British history. Much of the establishment of Britain as a global power took place over the hydrographic sphere — oceanic conquests, the defeat of the Spanish Armada, and colonisation across continents all saw to the rise of the British Empire (O'Hara 1108-11;1125;1128; Smith 483-7). Whilst this expansion across the oceans saw to Britain becoming a political stronghold, it also led to numerous developments in the social and cultural spheres. The development of new forms of communication and new conceptualisations of time and space (O'Hara 1109;1114-6). Given the impact that the ocean had on the alteration of life, and the influence that water had on Woolf's work, there is immense value in the application of a historical approach when exploring Woolf's fixation with water. However, despite Woolf's historic interest in the ocean, and her repetitive use of water as indicative of time, previous studies have primarily explored Woolf's representation of water symbolically and metaphorically.

In the vast archive of literary studies that exists on Woolf, water specifically has been only very briefly critiqued by most scholars. In addressing the symbol that lends its name to the novel's title, for example, Jack F. Stewart (1972) hints at a potential reading of water in *The Waves* but limits its significance to his analysis of the waves themselves being indications of rhythm and writing style (Stewart 435-6;444-5). He suggests that the waves are a symbol of the rhythmic motions of life and existence — as described by Woolf as the "ebb and flow of the tide of life" (*A Writer's Diary* 15). Existence is illustrated as being dynamic, with Woolf using the waves to elucidate the "rhythmic succession of voices" that constitutes the characters' lives, as well as the novel as a whole (Stewart 436). Additionally, Stewart notes that the image of the waves may be indicative of Woolf's new novelistic form and her revolt against the idea of a rigidly structured novel that was common prior to, and at the time of, her writing (Stewart 436-7). In concluding, he argues that the waves represent "the rhythmic rise and fall of phrasing" and become the "symbolic essence of the book" (Stewart 436;447).

The subtly recurring image of water in *Mrs Dalloway* has also been explored at both a symbolic and a semiotic level in previous literature (Garvey 60-65;74). Marine terminology is found throughout the text with the cityscape of London being compared to the drowned city of Atlantis and the novel's principal characters being compared to thalassic imagery — Clarissa is likened to both a mermaid and a diver, Peter to a buccaneer and a fish, and Septimus, who finds

water a place to meditate on death, to a drowned sailor (Garvey 65-7;71-73). Garvey (1991) focuses her exploration into water as being directly associated with language and she states that in the novel water is used to create an amalgamation of the voices and conversations in the text — including those labelled by Ann Banfield as "unspeakable sentences"[1] (59-60).

Water is not only connected to language in general, but it has been considered to be particularly associated with the language of time, death, and gender when explored in Woolf's writing (Garvey 67;71). This is seen through the way Woolf has been thought to follow the tradition of marking water as distinctly feminine — water is noted to favour the female over the male in *To the Lighthouse* where Mr Ramsay appears to be an enemy of the ocean whilst Mrs Ramsay "lives towards the sea" (Hartman 22; Philips 420). Additionally, Garvey (1991) furthers an idea that was touched on in Stewart's work, which noted that Woolf uses water imagery in her text to undermine and rebel against the existing "expected, patriarchal" notions of form, rigidity, and continuity — an expectation of the "powerful and unscrupulous tyrant" of novelistic conventions that Woolf was faced with (*Modern Fiction* 149; Garvey 60; 64; Philips 420).

Additionally, the influence that other texts had on Woolf's writing has been a common point of interest for some scholars exploring Woolf's presentation of water in her work. In exploring Woolf's method of textual transitions — "how the novelist goes from one thing to another" — Geoffrey Hartman (1961) examines how Woolf appeared to be continuously drawn to texts that deal with the aesthetics of water (20). He mentions that she was particularly inspired by *The Tempest* (Hartman 27). Elizabeth McArthur (2004) adds to this list of potential influences by noting that Woolf read Marcel Proust's *À la Recherché de Temps Perdu* whilst she was writing *To the Lighthouse* (331-2). Furthermore, Jean Johannessen Smoot (1968) briefly explores the presence of watery imagery in *To the Lighthouse* by drawing a comparison between Woolf's writing to the work of Jacques Bénigne Bossuet and James Joyce (252-255).

In Bossuet's own work, he understands water as being a reflection of the presence and power of God and that water is a force to be feared unless it is controlled by God (Smoot 252-4). This notion of water is echoed in the work of Joyce whose character, Stephen, fears water as he sees it as "chaotic, formless, engulfing" potentially because of his atheistic inclinations and his lack of faith in God (Smoot 254-5). Smoot also draws a direct comparison between the two famous modernist writers by noting that Joyce's portrayals of water are akin to Woolf's presentation of water, specifically in *To the Lighthouse*. She ends her examination of the influences on Woolf's

[1] Ann Banfield (as cited in Garvey, 1991) uses this term to describe voices that belong to no one or anyone in the text.

descriptions of water by mentioning how her portrayal of water may have been directly influenced by, and been a direct reflection of, her pervasive personal feelings towards the element and suggests that her work reverberates the personal obsession with water that she had throughout her life (Smoot 255).

In her book dedicated to the life of Virginia Woolf, Ira Nadel (2016) explicitly states that Woolf was completely fascinated with water. Water is noted to have appeared throughout her personal life "to such a degree that she could not separate one from another" and that it seems only natural that water would become a primary concern of hers (Nadel n.p). Woolf's life seemingly begins with water, with her earliest memories being sketched at her childhood home of Talland House, and her life as an author seems to start with the same engulfment in water. One of the first known examples of her writing is "A Terrible Tragedy in a Duckpond", a mock newspaper article that documents the voyage across a pond of water and the subsequent drowning of the vessel's occupants. The notion of drowning would haunt Woolf throughout her life, appearing in her fictional work as well as in her biographical writings where it is often captured as thoughts in her personal diaries and brief mentions in her letters (Spalding 71).

In examining all the literature on Woolf that focuses on water in her texts, it cannot be ignored that a sizeable portion of this body of work is located in informal studies and discussions. Potentially marking the presence of water in Woolf's writing as an emerging point of interest, and one that has not yet been fully formalised in academic scholarship, it is important to consider these bodies of work. Short blog posts and casual conversational pages emphasise Woolf's continued fascination with water and highlight it as being of clear significance to her work, though they do not explore water in any great depths. In a blog post, Ricky Sharma suggests that whilst the image of water in Woolf's work holds various meanings, it may be most specifically representative of her famed writing technique — the stream of consciousness — and her desire to show the inner thoughts and feelings of all her characters.

Anna Dowling, on her own blog, agrees with Sharma as she mentions that there may be multiple meanings attached to water but suggests that the long-term relationship that Woolf had with water may be most representative of the modernist movement in which Woolf was writing. This may be found most plainly in the fluid nature of the stream of consciousness technique that was popular across modernist authors, and is particularly prominent across Woolf's archive. In very briefly considering modernistic techniques, this thesis will take into consideration Marianne DeKoven's (1991) suggestion that "antimodernists find solipsism, excessive subjectivity, and artistic ego-mania in a wide range of modernist forms" (9). While DeKoven indicates that it is a

key critique of anti-modernists, I will examine how a consideration of the notion of solipsism reveals the limitations of Woolf's ecological consciousness as she continually incorporates her own voice into her writing and circles her work back to herself. Furthermore, on her website dedicated to Virginia Woolf, Rebecca Beatrice Brooks not only addresses the importance of water for Woolf — quoting a piece by Ira Wood which states "[Woolf] was obsessed with water and writes about it continuously" — but she goes on to address a particular event in history that would pique the interest of Woolf greatly. This event was the sinking of the *Titanic*.

In May 1912, Virginia and Leonard Woolf attended the British Board of Trade's inquisition into the *Titanic* only a few weeks after the vessel sank (Brooks; Lee 284; Nadel n.p; Wilson 287). Before attending the inquest, Woolf had developed a keen interest in the ship's sinking, but after sitting through the first day of witness testimony, her "imagination had fastened on the wreck" even more (Lee 284). She later wrote to Katherine (KA) Cox:

> What I should really like to do now, but must refrain, is a full account of the wreck of the *Titanic*. Do you know it's a fact that ships don't sink at that depth, but remain poised half way down and become perfectly flat.
>
> (Brooks n.p)

Woolf followed the press and statements released about the *Titanic* with close interest as "the catastrophe captivated the young Virginia Woolf" (Nadel n.p). Whilst she never went on to write the "full account of the wreck" that she wanted to, Woolf did go on to publish *The Voyage Out* and her first novel is filled with subtle references to the historic sinking, with the most obvious being that "the heroine embarks on a journey out, and does not return" (Wilson 287).

In what has been called the "most famous maritime disaster of the century, if not of all time", the *Titanic* embarked on its maiden voyage from Southampton on April 10th 1912. Intended for New York, the ship never reached its destination as it collided with an iceberg at sea and, by the morning of April 15th 1912, it had sunk to the bottom of the ocean (Burleigh 75;78; Frey et al. 209; Sanchez 40). Considered to be one of the greatest oceanic tragedies in history, with a majority of those onboard losing their lives at sea, the *Titanic* had a profound impact across the globe and especially on the age of modernity — being described as a "mighty blow to the self-confidence of the age" (McCaughan 21). This newly exposed vulnerability of the age is noted by Woolf who, in brief moments in *To the Lighthouse*, looks beyond the egocentric and offers a glimpse at this dark side of modernity. This includes the moment when Mr Ramsay considers the way "the little island

seemed pathetically small, half swallowed up in the sea" and the human-dominated land is no longer invincible against the force of nature (*To the Lighthouse* 77). Though the tragedy is often amplified by the fact that the ship was labelled as "unsinkable", it must be noted that the *Titanic* was only given this name after it had met its demise in the icy waters (Gregson 271; Sanchez 40). The ship's sinking did go against all expectations though, with the captain of the *Titanic* — Captain Edward Smith — writing in 1906:

> I cannot imagine any condition which would cause a ship to founder. I cannot conceive of any vital disaster happening to this vessel. Modern shipbuilding has gone beyond that.
>
> (Lord 55)

The oceanic wreck had a major impact on media and literature. David Burleigh (2000) labels the sinking as "an event of major literary consequence" with the disaster leading to a wave of inspiration across the fields of literature, painting, poetry, music, and more (Burleigh 75; McCaughan 21). Thomas Hardy, shortly after the disaster, immortalised the ship in his work The Convergence of the Twain and George Orwell noted that he felt "more deeply moved by the sinking than by the full carnage of the First World War" (Gregson 268). The sinking is cited as being "the dominant symbol of disaster in our collective imagination" and it is a symbol that Woolf returns to across her writing in the form of patent allusions to the *Titanic* as well as subtle mentions of sunken ships (McCaughan 21). In considering Woolf's fascination with the *Titanic*, it is clear she possessed a keen historic and material interest in water despite a majority of previous scholarship examining the element in an aesthetic and symbolic manner.

It is in *The Voyage Out* — Woolf's first novel — that she subtly alludes to the historic tragedy of the "most famous ship in history" that happened only a year before her novel was published (*The Voyage Out;* McCaughan 21). Whilst onboard the *Euphrosyne*, Richard Dalloway worries there may be icebergs in the water that could pose a threat to the safety of those onboard the cargo ship. This concern not only elucidates Woolf's fixation with the wreck, but it also reveals how the maritime tragedy slips into her writing. Though never mentioned so explicitly again, the *Titanic* continued to profoundly influence Woolf's understanding of water, and particularly water as being linked to the notion of death and drowning.

In looking at a natural element such as water in Woolf's work, it is vital to consider how nature has been portrayed and understood more generally across Woolf's archive. This has previously been done through the application of ideas stemming from ecology — particularly

including the sub-fields of ecocriticism and ecofeminism — to both Woolf's biographical and fictional work. Bonnie Kime Scott (2016) writes that whilst she primarily operated as a modernist writer, Woolf can be understood as being "a proto-ecocritic" and that her work may be of great interest to those intrigued by the ecological field (320). Whilst Woolf arguably did not write with the specific intention of being an ecocritic — or an ecofeminist as she is labelled by some scholars — her focus on the relationship between the human and nonhuman is often considered to be indicative of an ecological consciousness (Kostkowska 5, Scott 2016:330; Swanson 24;26-9). Furthermore, in following Buell's conceptualisation of ecology, Kostkowska (2013) explores how Woolf does not limit her understanding of the nonhuman to nature, but rather she uses the term to encompass all elements of the nonhuman world — "the living and the nonliving, the animate and the inanimate" (Buell 137; Kostkowska 2;23).

The term 'ecology' was coined in 1866 by the German biologist Ernst Haeckel and is defined as the science interested in the relationship that exists between organisms, and between organisms and their environment (Love 65; Scott 2016:320). It was only over a century later, in the 1990s, that the term ecocriticism — the idea of using ecology as a lens through which to read literary works to explore "the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty and Fromm xviii) — was established (Scott 2016:320). Two principal ideas that have emerged from ecocriticism over the years are those originally found in, and later adapted from, the work of Val Plumwood (Scott 2011: 4; Swanson 24-5;32). They suggest that the author should seek to explore a communal, rather than divisive, space between the human and nonhuman within their work and that the author should move beyond the use of an anthropocentric (and more specifically, androcentric) narrative by instead utilising "multicentric pluralism" (Kostkowska 1;54; Swanson 24).

Kostkowska notes that there are two novels in which Woolf specifically explores this notion of "multicentric pluralism". The first is *Jacob's Room*, where she forgoes the androcentric narrative form in favour of utilising multiple female voices to construct both the portrait of Jacob Flanders and the novel itself (Kostkowska 25-7). The second is *The Waves*, which is constructed from the multiple soliloquies that are sequentially delivered by the novel's main characters — here, no voice has particular authority over another (Kostkowska 47). Kostkowska (2013) further suggests that Woolf's use of such a technique in her modern experimental fiction foregrounds her as an author who can be valuably read through an ecocritical lens (28).

Instead of writing primarily of the urban space, which MacPhail (2013) indicates was the usual spatial concern of modernist authors, Woolf immerses herself in the natural world by both

describing it, and engaging with it, across her writing (1-2). Woolf allows nature to slip into all her work, even the pieces that are primarily orientated around the cityscape as she attempts to dismiss the traditional division thought to exist between the human and the nonhuman. She often does this by ascribing the metropolis natural descriptions and ensuring that she includes moments that focus on elements of the natural world that are always operating below the constructed space such as water in the pipes, puddles of water in the streets, and flowers in restaurant vases (*The Voyage Out; The Waves*). Through her continual focus on elements of the natural world, MacPhail notes that Woolf ensures "nature remains indelible in even the most urbane creative minds of the modernist period" (1). Woolf's choice to continually include nature in her work indicates the personal interest that she had with the natural world and this fascination can be traced back to her very first moments of consciousness. In her autobiographical work, *A Sketch of the Past*, Woolf recalls her earliest memories taking place in St. Ives and fills them with descriptions of the wind, the sea, and numerous floral images (Bartkevicius 41; Scott 2016:323).

Throughout her childhood, Woolf immersed herself in the natural world. She spent large amounts of time in the garden, often at the behest of her father who encouraged her to pursue both natural history and botanical studies (Scott 2011:1). Her brother, Thoby Stephan, collected and observed birds, and her family, who were constantly surrounded by numerous sorts of pets, all adopted animal-inspired nicknames (Scott 2011:1; Scott 2016:327). As a young girl, Woolf was fondly known as "goat" (Scott 2016:327). The interest that Woolf had in nature quickly extended into her literary studies as she became an avid reader of nature writers and took a particular interest in the work of Darwin (Scott 2011:2; 7). Furthermore, she would continuously return to the space of Talland House as the beachside home is the setting for both the opening chapter of *Jacob's Room* and the entirety of *To the Lighthouse* (Bartkevicius 41; Scott 2016:323). It would also be alluded to in the early childhood moments of *The Waves* and act as a clear influence behind the creation of the Ambroses' Santa Marina villa in *The Voyage Out*.

Furthermore, Woolf's interest in nature is found through her constant desire to integrate the natural world with that of the human. Her diaries capture the image of a woman who continued to find tremendous joy in the natural world, and it was after her first breakdown that she was encouraged to take up gardening as a form of therapy (Scott 2016:324; Westling 858). This newly extended time in the natural world lead to Woolf not only experiencing a surge of creativity that resulted in some of her more experimental novels, including *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, but it also grew Woolf's desire to depict the wholeness of the world (Lostoski 55; Ryan 2011:205-6; Ryan 2013: 4;19; Scott 2016:324; Westling 861;869).

Woolf's keen interest in nature, and her desire to present nature in accordance of her understanding of its integration with humankind, is found across her entire archive. Her work overflows with detailed descriptions of the natural world — from landscapes and seascapes, to specifically detailed accounts of flowers, leaves, oak trees, and animals (Kostkowska 18; Scott 2011:8; Sparks 42). It is, therefore, unsurprising that a large portion of the literary analysis dedicated to the work of Woolf seeks to explore not only the presence of nature in her texts, but also the connection she attempts to portray between the human and nonhuman (Scott 2011:8).

In her writing, Woolf seeks to erase the boundaries that exist between humans, and between humans and the nonhuman worlds they inhabit (Kostkowska 17-8;22). She also seeks to transcend the division between the narrator and the reader as she presents worlds in her writing that are filled with connections and attachments that only the reader is privy to knowing (Kostkowska 30-32). Through her literature, Woolf "challenge[s] the assumption that human life occurs apart from the natural world" and instead aims to illustrate a world that is completely integrated (Bartkevicius 41).

Furthermore, scholars suggest that Woolf's attempt to integrate the human and nonhuman is found through her depiction of the equality between the human and the nonhuman (Kostkowska 17; Swanson 30). In drawing focus to "Kew Gardens", both Kostkowska (2013) and Swanson (2010) explore how Woolf presents a new perspective of the world as she not only forces the reader to engage with the story from the level of the flowerbed, but she rather presents the snail as having a role of as much importance as the human presences have within the story (Kostkowska 17; Swanson 30). Additionally, Scott (2011) notes Woolf's choice of language allows for an integration rather than a separation of the two spaces (5). She explores how Woolf often uses natural metaphors to describe humans and cultural metaphors to describe nonhuman elements, providing the specific example of the moment when the characters onboard the *Euphrosyne* are compared to insects by those who view them from the land (Scott 2016:325). This particular use of language has been previously understood by other scholars as being indicative of Woolf's ecological consciousness. However, I will consciously depart from this understanding as my thesis will explore how Woolf's utilisation of natural metaphors to describe the human presences within her writing ultimately centralises the human and thus reveals her anthropocentric utilisation of nature, particularly water, in *The Voyage Out*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Waves*.

Whilst Woolf attempts to shift the conventional relationship between the human and nonhuman in her work, she does not ignore the dominance that mankind has traditionally had over nature. She explores this dominance in two short stories — "The Shooting Party" and "Lappin and Lapinova". It is particularly apparent in the latter story as Rosalind, who pretends to be a rabbit,

feels she is in danger around her husband's family, whom she envisions to be human hunters (Scott 2016:323; Simpson 151-2). However, rather than focusing on this relationship of inequality, Woolf instead seeks to illustrate an integrated, and equal, space between the human and nonhuman within her writing. In her own work, Lostoski (2016) explores Woolf's rejection of such a tradition by addressing how the second part of *To the Lighthouse* documents nature taking over the Ramsey's seaside home in a manner that is aligned with the notion of vital materialism, "the theory that consider[s] the role and the agency of nonhuman as well as the human in shaping the world" (Lostoski 54).

Furthermore, Bartkevicius (1999) explores how Woolf deconstructs the boundary between the human and nonhuman in her fictional writing and in her collections of essays as well (42-44). In focusing on "The Sun and the Fish", Bartkevicius explores Woolf's presentation of the agency of the nonhuman space as she examines the essay that presents the natural world (captured during an eclipse) in motion whilst all the humans that populate the work stand still (43). Bartkevicius suggests that by presenting the scene in such a way, Woolf reverses the expectation that the nonhuman should have no agency. Instead, she brings the nonhuman to the forefront whilst simultaneously pushing the humans into the background and out of focus in a manner that suggests both binaries are of equal potential to be focused on as the primary source of action in her writing (Bartkevicius 42-44).

Further studies that explore Woolf's integration of the human and nonhuman space include Kostkowska's writings. She explores how Woolf's choice to have her characters in *The Waves* speak aloud, rather than simply use the stream of consciousness technique to slip into their minds and reveal their thoughts to only the reader, sees to the projection of the human voice into the nonhuman space in a manner that crumbles the division that once existed between the two (50). Additionally, she explores the complex web of relations that exists between the human and nonhuman as she draws particular attention to *Mrs Dalloway* (37-39). Kostkowska also suggestions that within the novel, Woolf creates a society that is akin to that of an ecosystem and that it is only through the nonhuman world that the principal characters are linked together as rather than sharing direct contact, Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith are connected only through the observation of the same passing car (34).

Lostoski (2016) further explores how the integration between the human and nonhuman takes place through Woolf's amalgamation of sounds, particularly those evident in *Mrs Dalloway*. A child crying, a bird singing, and a car honking are all described in immediate succession to illustrate how the human and nonhuman sounds — both that of animate and inanimate sources —

equally contribute to the formation of the whole noise of the cityscape (62). This amalgamation of the previously separated constructions is found through Woolf intricate interweaving of her characters with each other and the world around them. The characters of Orlando, Septimus, and Louis all hold a deep connection to the trees in their respective texts whilst all the characters of *The Waves* take comfort in understanding themselves as being "part of a much larger rhythm" rather than existing independently (Scott 2011: 7; Sparks 51; Swinford 197-8; Zlatkin 88).

Despite the copious amount of literature that exists around Woolf's portrayal of nature, the specific element of water has received minimal attention in ecocritical studies. In her work, Sriratana (2011) uses water — particularly referencing the rainstorm that Kitty Malone is caught in during *The Years* — to explore how an integration between the human and nonhuman can result in a new worldly perspective whilst another article describes water as being a cleansing space in stark contrast to the increasingly urban world (Lowe 114; Sriratana 193). Muscoguiri (2011) dedicates an article to exploring the role of the ocean in Woolf's work, but she explores the thalassic imagery as being an indication of Woolf's writing technique as she draws attention to Woolf's use of particularly poetic language (101-103;105). Furthermore, it is in her own work that Scott (2011) directly mentions the element of water when she notes "Cam shares the aqueous imagery of Rachel in *The Voyage Out* and Rhoda in *The Waves*" (8). However, like the aforementioned studies above, she does not explore water in any further depth than this.

Throughout the scholarship that exists around Woolf's writing, there has been a limited exploration into the recurrence of water in her texts. In this thesis, I will not only seek to explore water in a more thorough manner than has previously been done, but I will use theoretical concepts stemming from the Anthropocene to complicate the existing ecocritical perspectives on Woolf's depiction of nature. Instead, I will suggest that despite her concerted efforts to integrate the human and nonhuman division, Woolf's representation, and utilisation, of water throughout my chosen selection of novels is ultimately anthropocentric.

There has long been a keen interest in environmental literary studies, and as explorations into the thalassic sphere have increased, so has the interest and potential for new oceanic frameworks to emerge that can be used to study literature (Hankins 69). Numerous cultural and postcolonial studies have fed into the production of environment-based literature and have increased the general interest in work orientated around elements of the environment (Chakrabarty 1). One new path of study that is vital to consider when exploring water in literature, is that of the emerging field of the Anthropocene.

First coined by Eugene F. Stoermer in the late 20th century, and popularised by Paul J. Crutzen in the early 21st century, the Anthropocene is the geological epoch defined by humanity's dominant influence over Earth and how mankind's impact on the planet is akin to that of a serious geological force (Chakrabarty 2;9-10;15; Savi 945;956; Thornber 989). Although there has been a significant amount of debate as to when the Anthropocene can be cited as officially beginning — a majority of scholars agree on the period of the Industrial Revolution, specifically noting the invention of the steam engine by James Watts in 1784, whilst others believe it could have been as early as the Columbian Exchange in 1610 — it is clear that Woolf would not have been writing with any explicit awareness of the Anthropocene (Braddock & Ater 4; Chaplin 511;516; Deane-Drummond 56; Irvine 155; Taylor 225-6; Wodskou 25).

Still an emerging field of interest, much of the research that has been conducted into the Anthropocene concludes with the call for a trans-disciplinary approach to the epoch (Swanson, Bubandt & Tsing 151;162; Trischler 6). Swanson et al. (2015) and Trischler (2013) acknowledge the importance of literature in exploring, understanding, and potentially changing geological phenomena because literature is, as described by Ursuka K. Le Guin, a "medicine bundle" that offers a potential approach to grappling with, and pondering, particular topics in the world today (Le Guin as cited in Savi 953; Gills). This notion of the importance of literature in considering global epochs is further seen in Haraway's (2016) work where she uses a literary example — the question posed in Woolf's *Three Guineas* — to understand the question of how humanities can help improve the current environmental situation:

> In this context of thinking the implications of the Anthropocene, Haraway (2016) invites us to think this moment when humans become ethically responsible for so many other species and bodies and things, and she invokes Virginia Woolf's injunction in *Three Guineas* (first published in 1938), where the latter replies to a fictitious letter from a member of the government. In the letter, the politician asks Woolf how women can aid in the prevention of war. For our current moment, the question can be translated into "how can we improve this situation we have put ourselves in, where climate change threatens to end with innumerous lives on Earth, including our own?"
>
> (Haraway as cited in Savi 948)

Furthermore, Braddock and Ater (2014) note there is no need for literature to be overtly 'green' in order for it to be analysed from an ecological, or Anthropocentric, perspective as a majority of

literature will, even if unintentionally, include environmental implications of some sort (4). Therefore, even though Woolf did not write with the explicit purpose of making her works overtly dedicated to the subject of the environment, there is tremendous potential in using the Anthropocene as the theoretical framework through which to consider her inclusion of nature across her archive.

Scholars of environmental humanities who have begun analysing literature from the perspective of the Anthropocene have found that the epoch is an "innovative and broadly conceptualised framework to rethink the relation between nature and culture, environment and society" (Trischler 6). Weik von Mossner (2016) suggests that the Anthropocene allows for a potential evolution of the storytelling process by causing a growth of the imagination — both in the writing and the reading of literature (83-5;88). As an example of the useful application of the Anthropocene as a theoretical framework for literary studies, Taylor's (2016) work on Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, a piece that she calls "*the* poem of the Anthropocene", distinctly stands out (Taylor 230).

In her presentation of a new understanding of the poem, Taylor explores Tennyson's work by applying common ideas stemming from the Anthropocene to the text itself. The clearest example of this is her application of the notion of "speaking for another" whereby mankind is clearly speaking for all other life on the planet when it comes to their actions being that which determine the fate of the world all living specifies inhabit (Taylor 228). While this notion has been applied to the exploration of how humans speak for animals, this thesis will consider how Woolf incorporates the idea of characters speaking for each other in her writing. The most evident example of this is in *The Waves* where the character of Percival exists only within the spoken soliloquies of the other characters. It is also found, though, in *The Voyage Out* where Rachel's voice is often overshadowed by the voices of Willoughby Vinrace, Helen Ambrose, and Terence Hewet. Furthermore, I will expand upon this idea in my thesis as I use it to explore how various characters across the novels serve as fragmented representations of Woolf herself and often speak for Woolf as they share her comprehensions around identity and existence, and her anthropocentric manipulation of water.

A further example of Taylor's application of the Anthropocene to literature to consider is in her exploration of memorialisation — a concept that gains prominence in the Anthropocene as it is an epoch resting on the verge of humanity's potential extinction. She uses the concept to specifically explore how "meaning is not entirely dependent on the original form, but is, to some degree, mobile" (Taylor 228). This idea of changeability existing in meaning is found across Woolf's work, with a clear example being her dynamic conceptualisation of gender in *Orlando*.

This is further found in her representation of water as it is not assigned one particular meaning in Woolf's life, or by her characters in her novels. Rather, water is used as a channel through which the characters explore numerous notions pertaining to their identity and understandings of time and mortality.

In exploring water as a potential representative of death, the Anthropocene is of clear importance. In referring to the period as one of "marine transgression" (490), Meeder and Parkinson (2018) reaffirm the notion that the Anthropocene is an epoch clearly marked by the threat of rising sea levels (Chaplin 512; Squire 211; Thornber 991; Wodskou 24). This association of water and death is explored further by Wheeler (2013) who uses the Anthropocene to navigate a reading of Maggie Gee's *The Flood*, a novel which recites the biblical flood found in the *Book of Genesis* (58-60). This connotation of water as an engulfment and representative of death is one that gains prominence in the Anthropocene, but can be found throughout Woolf's work as across her personal writings and fiction she often indicates that water is a platform upon which to contemplate the very notion of death.

Many studies highlight how the Anthropocene is not only a period of dramatic human influence on the planet, but is a period marked by transformative technological development (Irvine 158). Whilst the term was not yet coined, and Woolf was not writing with direct reference to the Anthropocene, there can be little doubt that such a global period of industrialisation influenced her work. Overt mentions of the mechanical nature of London in her *London Essays*, subtle mentions of the sinking of the *Titanic* — the ship that was a clear marker of the failure of modern industrialisation — in both her personal letters and *The Voyage Out*, and her hinting at the technological advancement of World War II in her short story "The Searchlight" all indicate the clear influence that the modern epoch had on her work. While Woolf herself may not have been fully aware of the extent of modernity's destructiveness — particularly in the same way scholars operating at the time of the Anthropocene are — this new epoch is immensely valuable to consider when exploring water as it offers a unique approach to her writing that illustrates the limitations of her ecological imagination in a way that earlier ecocritical studies may not have.

Another common idea found in the literature that exists around the Anthropocene is that of the ecologically bound desire to collapse the "human and non-human boundaries" (Chaplin 510-3; 515-8;520-3;528; Irvine 155-7;160; Moore 1-2; Thornber 990-3; Swanson et al. 158). This restructuring of boundaries, which echoes ideas presented in the ecocritical work done around Woolf, intends to create a fluid relationship between the traditional binaries. Across her work, Woolf attempts to transcend this boundary between the human and nonhuman. Previous ecological

scholarship has argued that this is particularly found in *To the Lighthouse* when she writes of the Ramsay's seaside holiday home being overtaken by the natural world. However, I would suggest that Woolf's attempt to transcend the division between the human and nonhuman ultimately results in her circling the natural imagery back to the human characters in her text as she allows them to continuously use the nonhuman space to explore notions of their own identity. Further, when she does present the natural world in moments apart from the humans, she personifies it to such an extent that she ultimately humanises the space and reestablishes human centrality.

Finally, Woolf deconstructs the regular depiction of time in her writing in a manner that almost precedes the Anthropocene's reconfiguration of the understanding of time. With the emergence of the Anthropocene, there has been a call for the reconsideration of the temporal scale of the geological phenomenon as well as a reconsideration of what is understood by the very idea of time. The Anthropocene challenges the familiar understanding of time and space by replacing the idea of the natural world being infinite against the mortality and inconstancy of humanity with one that sees to a world potentially coming to an end (Colebrook 133-4; Irvine 159). It also challenges the traditional understanding of the past, present, and future as being three distinct periods by blending the three together with the explanation that the past, present, and future all influence each other so drastically that they cannot be explored as separate notions (Irvine 155-6;167; Trexler 295).

I will utilise this latter reconceptualisation to explore time in Woolf's novels. In the same way that the Anthropocene understands the past as constantly seeping into the present and impacting the future, my thesis will consider how Woolf's past continually filters into the fictional work that she produced throughout her lifetime. Furthermore, Irvine (2017) notes that water is a symbol of a world lost to the technological advancement of today, and is "consigned to the past" (158). I will explore how Woolf frames her own understanding of water in a similar way. Not only does she continually link water to memories as she allows it to frame her characters' recollections of the past, but she also uses water to constantly refer to her own past writing. Further, Woolf presents water as the main channel through which she enters her writing and explores moments of her youth — particularly her childhood space of Talland House — and identity as she manipulates water in an ultimately anthropocentric manner.

THE VOYAGE OUT: WOOLF'S ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND EARLY SKETCHES OF BEING

In her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, Woolf immediately establishes water as being a crucial conceptual, literal, and metaphoric concern in her writing. The novel begins with Helen Ambrose crying beside the River Thames as a "fine rain" continues overhead, and it concludes with an intense thunderstorm that quickly follows Rachel Vinrace's death (*The Voyage Out* 5;347). By utilising ecological criticism as the theoretical framework to structure this chapter, I will thoroughly explore how *The Voyage Out* reveals Woolf's awareness of the artificiality of the division between the human and nonhuman. Further, I will examine her conscientious efforts to thoroughly integrate the traditionally separated binary, and her ultimate circulation of the nonhuman world back to the human.

While Woolf's literature has been read through an ecocritical lens for decades, *The Voyage Out* is visibly absent from a majority of the studies. This chapter seeks to remedy this as it bases much of the investigation into Woolf's representation of nature, and particularly water, on the primary ecological concern of reintegrating the human and the nonhuman. Across ecological theory, acute attention has repeatedly been drawn to the need to "redefine the human subject… in relation to the nonhuman world" and to explore the artificiality of the boundary that has often separated humans from nature (Heize 507; Opperman 166). This concern is one that has remained central to various ecological literary discourses, reappearing most recently in the studies surrounding the Anthropocene where scholars of the epoch have noted the incredible need to "knit back together the human and the natural worlds" (Olson and Messier 41).

I would like to note here that when exploring the division between humans and nature, all three chapters will use the terms human and nonhuman. The natural world will be encompassed into the latter term so to allow for the inclusion of the artificial cityscape of London and the constructed, fictional location of Santa Marina. While this term has been used in various ecological theory before, I will specifically use it in this thesis because Woolf expresses a clear awareness of the connection between the artificial and the natural. This is found when she writes about water flowing through the cityscape in *The Voyage Out*, ultimately presenting the constructed world and nature as being intermeshed (*The Voyage Out* 194).

Despite the constant call to reassess this division between the human and nonhuman, the duality has proven to be "surprisingly eternal in our discourse" (Cohen 1092). In *The Voyage Out*, Woolf attempts to dismiss the notion of there being a disconnection between man and nature as she

instead explores the innate bond that humans have with the natural world (Heize 503-4). In her salient work focused on applying ecological theory to Woolf's writing, Scott (2011) notes that Woolf was acutely aware of "the construction of the self, as inflected by gender, merged with or distinct from others, non-human others, and the environment" and that it was an "abiding concern" for her (3). Furthermore, in following the feminine literary convention of focusing on "communal engagements with a natural world conceived as always interwoven with human existence", Woolf attempts to portray the artificiality of the division between man and nature through an assortment of characters (Heize 508).

Throughout *The Voyage Out* "natural images rarely stand alone" and instead merge together with the "human beings who perceive them" (Scott 2011:8). This chapter will address the moments where Woolf does amalgamate the human with the nonhuman, particularly through her constant metaphoric application of the natural world to the human entities in her text, and vice versa. However, where her concerted efforts to merge the human with the nonhuman have continually been foregrounded in ecocritical studies as evidence of her ecological consciousness, I will depart from this traditional reading and complicate the understanding of Woolf's constant application of natural metaphors to the human presences within her novel. Though she does attempt to equate, and merge, the historically divided binary throughout her writing, Woolf ultimately fails to move beyond a human-centric perspective. Throughout *The Voyage Out*, nature ultimately operates as a basis upon which almost all of her characters build conceptualisations of their own identity, and comprehend those they encounter. Further, her repeated utilisation of natural metaphors to describe and explore her characters ultimately shows how she operates nature — particularly water — anthropocentrically as a vehicle for self-discovery and self-analysis.

Furthermore, this chapter will also carefully consider how Woolf's anthropocentric use of water does not end with her literary creations, but rather how it becomes the primary point through which she slips her own voice into her text. Here, just as DeKoven (1991) suggests that women's writing is often fragmented and multiple in nature, I will explore how Woolf uses water to circle her writing back to herself in numerous ways (6;8). This includes creating, and exploring, Rachel as a fictional echo of herself and attributing aspects of herself, and interests of her own, to a multitude of characters in *The Voyage Out*. Moreover, in considering Murphy's (1999) suggestion that writing should be "understood in relation to the rest of the world", this chapter will closely examine the novel in the context of Woolf's own life (1099).

Throughout her literary archive, it is clear that Woolf's writing was heavily influenced, and even dominated, by her own experiences (Lee 120;144;160;398; Wheare 25). Whilst all of her

writing contains threads of her own life — most often in the form of her characters taking shape after her sister, Vanessa Bell, or her parents Sir Leslie Stephen and Julia Stephen — it is *The Voyage Out* that is most orientated around Woolf herself. In this chapter, I will draw particular focus to the way in which the primary character is moulded directly around Woolf and the very plot of the novel is based on her own travels with her siblings in 1905. I will further examine her fascination with the sinking of the *Titanic*, an event that continually permeates an assortment of her novels and is explicitly referenced within the pages of *The Voyage Out* (Lee 283).

Woolf was explicitly aware of the reflection that occurred between herself and her writing, and she openly encouraged an exploration into water as the basis for this slippage between her life and her fictional work. This is found in the opening pages of *The Voyage Out* where she writes "it is always worthwhile to look down and see what is happening" in the waters, and to consider what "great white monsters of the lower waters" may lie beneath (*The Voyage Out* 4;17). Therefore, in concluding the chapter, specific attention will be drawn to Woolf's anthropocentric manoeuvring of water and how the novel operates as a conceptual grounding for her own reconciliation with her tempestuous adolescence, her early struggles with her mental health, and her constant fixation with the notion of death and drowning.

1.1.

The primary way in which Woolf attempts to merge the human and nonhuman, and ultimately reveals her anthropocentric manipulation of the natural world, is through her metaphoric application of nature to the human presences within the novel. Throughout the novel, almost every character that appears in *The Voyage Out* is ascribed a natural description and uses nature as a basis for their own metaphoric comparisons for both themselves and those around them. William Pepper is immediately described as being "a little man who was bent as some trees are by a gale on one side of them" and is later recounted by Ridley Ambrose to be "a vivacious and malicious old ape" (*The Voyage Out* 8;10). Additionally, when perceived by those still on land whilst he is onboard the *Euphrosyne*, Pepper is "mistaken for a cormorant, and then, as unjustly, transformed into a cow" because of the distance that lies between the land and the ship (*The Voyage Out* 78). The others onboard the cargo ship are given similar descriptions, being described first as "swarming about like aimless ants" when the ship sails away from England, and then later as "insect-like figures" (*The Voyage Out* 24;78).

Natural images are continually ascribed to groups of characters throughout *The Voyage Out*. When everyone from the hotel, along with Helen and Rachel, gather for the picnic that Terence Hewet organises, Terence describes the coming together of the characters as being as though everyone were cows "drawn together in a field; ships in a calm" (*The Voyage Out* 116). Later, when the gathered group embarks on their journey into the jungle to find a spot to picnic, their procession is likened to an insect with the line: "the cavalcade wound on like a jointed caterpillar" (*The Voyage Out* 117). Worth noting here is that during this same gathering, St. John Hirst is noted to act "the part of a hoarse energetic sheep-dog" (*The Voyage Out* 117).

During the dance that is arranged at the hotel, the arrival of the guests is described as being "like rats who followed the piper, heads instantly appeared in the doorway" (*The Voyage Out* 138). Furthermore, when letters arrive from England, Hirst describes the excited hotel occupants as being like animals who had just been fed. He likens some to hippopotamuses, some to canary birds and swines, and others to parrots and reptiles (*The Voyage Out* 162). In addition to the characters being described by others with natural imagery, they often ascribe such descriptions to themselves. In moments during a storm whilst out at sea, Rachel has "just enough consciousness to suppose herself a donkey on the summit of a moor in a hail-storm, with its coat blown into furrows; then she became a wizened tree, perpetually driven back by the salt Atlantic gale" (*The Voyage Out* 62). Further, Terence tells Hirst that he is "not a hen in a circle" but rather "a dove on a tree-top" when he describes himself as standing apart from the crowd rather than conforming to it (*The Voyage Out* 97).

I would like to draw attention here to how, throughout her writing, Woolf does not abide by the traditional depiction of nature as she uses the natural world to explore the men that populate her texts just as much as she uses it to examine the women. In doing so, she breaks away from the traditional notion that the natural world is a primarily feminine space (Kostkowska 27; Lowe 109; Muscoguiri 106; Scott 2011:1; Sedon 163). This alteration to the traditional idea is further seen in moments onboard the *Euphrosyne* when Richard Dalloway notes that he finds "nature very stimulating" and that "[his] best ideas have come to [him] out of doors" (*The Voyage Out* 55). While this line reveals how Woolf presents the natural world as being as inclusive of men as it is women, it further indicates her anthropocentric presentation of nature as it ultimately serves the purpose of being beneficial for humankind — in this case, being a source of inspiration for Richard.

In addition to the application of natural imagery by, and to, the characters in the novel, nature is also used as a scaffolding for human conceptualisations. This is found in the very brief mention made by Helen when, in a moment discussing religion, she notes that her children "think of

God as a kind of walrus" (*The Voyage Out* 19). God, who is commonly imagined to be a humanoid figure — with Biblical texts all agreeing that he created man in his own image — is likened instead to an aquatic mammal. While this replacement of the image of a man with a walrus shows Woolf's attempts to dismiss the ecological notion of "human sovereignty" — suggesting that the image of a man and the image of an animal can be easily interchanged — it ultimately shows how Woolf re-centralises the human (Irvine 160; Kelly 810). Here, the natural world is shown to operate as a grounding for the characters' conceptualisations about the world around them as they use the image of a walrus to grapple with the concept of religion and the very notion of God.

Despite Woolf's concerted attempts to integrate the human and the nonhuman, she manoeuvres water in an ultimately anthropocentric manner as it continually returns back to the human and is repeatedly used as a framework to structure thoughts and emotions, and scaffold understandings of experiences. Examples of this are found throughout *The Voyage Out*, including the moment when the characters onboard the *Euphrosyne* describe the effects of the storm, noting that the choppy waters left them feeling as though "their sensations were the sensations of potatoes in a sack on a galloping horse" (*The Voyage Out* 61). Additionally, Mrs. Flushing is later described as being "like a wounded animal" when she expresses her grief over Rachel's passing (*The Voyage Out* 338).

In addition to nature being a constant metaphoric basis, and conceptual framework, for the characters, I would like to draw attention to how nature — when described without human presence — is often ascribed a particularly "anthropomorphic characterisation" (Garrard 43). Woolf further reveals her ultimately anthropocentric manipulation of the natural world as she ascribes such humanlike descriptions to nature that even the scenes without the presence of human characters remain human-centric. This can be see through the description of water "hissing" and "chuckling", and later when the animals in the Santa Marina jungle are humanised with the line "a bird gave a wild laugh, a monkey chuckled a malicious question" (*The Voyage Out* 9;253). Furthermore, this humanisation of the nonhuman spaces extends beyond just the natural world as it affects several artificial phenomena too.

Towards the very beginning of the novel, the *Euphrosyne* is described as giving "a loud melancholy moan" (*The Voyage Out* 9). This melancholy cry ascribed to the ship is echoed later when the vessel arrives in Santa Marina and is described as "bellow[ing] thrice like a cow separated from its calf" (*The Voyage Out* 78). While the latter line does not distinctly humanise the ship the way the former does, it does lend itself to being explored metaphorically. The mourning ship, compared to a cow separated from its calf, reflects the separation that occurs between Willoughby

Vinrace and Rachel. Here, the melancholy mood caused by the separation between parent and child may also foreshadow Rachel's death and the notion that the father and daughter will never reunite again. This notion of nonhuman elements — and particularly the *Euphrosyne* — becoming a reflection, and extension, of the humans in the text is one that recurs throughout the novel and will be explored more closely later in this thesis.

In addition to the *Euphrosyne* being distinctly anthropomorphised, the artificially constructed space of London faces the same treatment as it is humanised in Woolf's descriptions. The first description of the cityscape notes that "from the deck of the ship the great city appeared a crouched and cowardly figure, a sedentary miser" (*The Voyage Out* 11). While this description may be another moment in which Woolf attempts to present the actual interconnectedness between the human and nonhuman — her belief that "all things, human and nonhuman were connected" (Ryan in Lostoski 55) — it ultimately reveals her anthropocentric manoeuvring of the nonhuman. Not only does she constantly use nature as a channel through which to describe and explore her characters but she also continually describes the natural and artificial world with distinctly humanistic images that ultimately circle the spaces back to the human. Furthermore, while nature quite generally is utilised by Woolf in an anthropocentric manner, the phenomenon that is most focused upon to explore the characters and structure their understandings of self is that of the constantly recurring element of water.

1.2.

Throughout *The Voyage Out*, Woolf draws explicit attention to water. This is done in two distinct ways, the first being the metaphoric language that both the novel's narrator and characters continually utilised. In the same way that Woolf presents nature anthropocentrically within the novel, she uses water to both establish and explore her characters, and to aid in their development of understandings regarding notions of their identity. She often does this metaphorically, ascribing watery language to her characters who use it to describe either those that they encounter or to explore their own emotions and experiences.

The second way in which Woolf draws close focus to water in the novel is through the constant recurrence of literal bodies of water. On numerous occasions, Woolf draws blatant attention to the element, including the moment where she draws focus to the River Thames and suggests that significant consideration should be given to what water may represent beyond just being literally present on the page (*The Voyage Out* 4). She further does this when the *Euphrosyne*

first arrives in Santa Marina and, upon initially exploring the land, the characters note how the town's "men seemed to be beating brass and crying 'water'" (*The Voyage Out* 81). Furthermore, these literal bodies of water often become points upon which characters reflect on various notions of their own identity and are able to conceptualise grander notions of existence and death. In considering Maurice Merleau-Ponty's idea of "bodily experience" — a notion which suggests that there is a close physical interrelatedness between the human body and the habitat in which it exists — I would suggest that Woolf often operates these literal bodies of water as clear extensions of her characters (Heise 511 and Kostkowska 3-4).

The physical connection that exists between the characters and water is found throughout the novel where storms echo the characters' situations and emotional states. Wheare (1991) draws specific attention to how storms often mirror the characters, noting particularly the storm that occurs whilst the characters are still onboard Willoughby's cargo ship (30). She suggests that this storm directly reflects the emotional distress that Rachel undergoes in the moments after she is kissed by Richard (Wheare 30). She further provides the example of the novel's ending where she notes the storm that occurs shortly after Rachel's death is a mirror of the emotional anguish that the characters experience at Rachel's passing (Wheare 30).

In continuing this idea of the storms mirroring the characters, I would suggest that a further example can be found at the very beginning of the novel where the rain in London directly echoes Helen. Although she is already noted to be upset, as she and Ridley prepare to board the *Euphrosyne*, it is only when she grows more tearful that the weather too grows more dreary. This is noted in the line: "a fine rain [that] now made her still more dismal" (*The Voyage Out* 5). Also important to consider is the short moment that succeeds this one where Helen is first described in the novel as crying beside the River Thames and specific attention is drawn to "the tremulous medium of a great welling tear" that falls into the river (*The Voyage Out* 4).

Not only does this line draw attention to water and immediately establish it as having "great" importance throughout the novel, but it also subtly implies that the river is a comforting space to Helen. Helen openly cries in the rivers' presence while she feels she must hide her face from London and those moving through the city. This immediately bonds her to the literal body of water around her as the mixing of her tears with the river water creates a physical connection between the two. This connection between the characters of her novel and water is one that is crucial to consider as it reveals Woolf's anthropocentric manipulation of the literal presence of the element. Here, water operates as both a reflection of her characters — allowing their experiences and emotions to be explored more thoroughly through the watery presence in the novel — and a

constant provision of service to the characters as it becomes a source of inspiration for Richard, and a place of comfort for Helen.

In addition to the literal importance of water in the text, attention must be drawn to the metaphoric significance that it also holds. In his work, David Bradshaw notes the incredible importance of considering the "metaphoric treatment" of the element in Woolf's writing (Muscoguiri 101). Woolf metaphorically uses the element to ascribe watery descriptions and motifs to almost every character in *The Voyage Out*. One of the most direct examples of a watery expression framing the characters' experiences is the dance held at the hotel where the movement of the dancers makes it appear "as though the room were instantly flooded with water" and it is noted that "the rhythmic swish of the dancers sounded like a swirling pool" (*The Voyage Out* 139; 144). Other examples include music being compared to the swelling and crashing of waves and the bells, that chime during the litany that takes place at the hotel, being compared to water as "the sound spread[s] through the chapel as the rings of water spread from a fallen stone" (*The Voyage Out* 139;214).

Throughout *The Voyage Out*, the characters not only use water as a structuring framework to describe the sensations and experiences around them, but they also use water to understand various notions about their own existence. This is shown when water is used to understand conceptualisations that are so grand in scale that they may be difficult to grapple with without the grounding framework of a natural comparison. In the same way that Helen notes her children understand God as being like a walrus, Mr Bax explores the significance of human life and action through the element of water. During the litany, he delivers a sermon that consists entirely of an extended metaphor whereby he aims to explain the importance of each individual, and the impact of their actions, through the image of a drop of water falling into the ocean's waters:

> "As a drop of water, detached, alone, separate from others, falling from the cloud and entering the great ocean, alters, so scientists tell us, not only the immediate spot in the ocean where it falls, but all the myriad drops which together compose the great universe of waters, and by this means alters the configuration of the globe and the lives of millions of sea creatures, and finally the lives of the men and women who seek their living upon the shores — as all this is within the compass of a single drop of water, such as any rain shower sends in millions to lose themselves in the earth, to lose themselves we say, but we know very well that the fruits of the earth could not flourish without them — so is a marvel comparable to this within the reach of each one of us, who dropping a little word or a little

> deed into the great universe alters it; yea, it is a solemn thought, alters it, for good or for evil, not for one instant, or in one vicinity, but throughout the entire race, and for all eternity."
>
> (*The Voyage Out* 219)

Through this utilisation of water to structure thoughts and scaffold grand notions in a way that makes them easier to comprehend and grapple with, Mr Bax's speech also reveals Woolf's anthropocentric use of water. Here, water is explicitly shown to be a tool used by the characters, and by extension Woolf, to aid in human understanding. "Within the compass of a single drop", the characters are able to comprehend their own existence and the world around them as they use water as a literal and metaphoric basis upon which they grow and reveal their understandings of their own sense of self and develop conceptualisations about their own identity and their very existence within the world they inhabit.

Furthermore, water is also used by the characters to explore and understand their emotional states. This is found when Helen understands her varying emotions as being akin to water, noting that "all these moods ran themselves into one general effect, which Helen compared to the sliding of a river, quick, quicker, quicker still, as it races to a waterfall" (*The Voyage Out* 210). An additional example is Terence's repeated use of the image of mist to explore, and understand, his own emotional state, particularly as it pertains to his relationship with Rachel. This image is first found when he and Rachel begin their relationship and slowly begin to know each other. Terence describes the newfound closeness with Rachel as being as though "with every word the mist which had enveloped them… melted a little further (*The Voyage Out* 266). He later returns to this image at the novel's conclusion when the mists once more become representative of uncertainty as they cloud his days spent during Rachel's declining health. As Rachel grows more ill, Terence is described as going through the days "through a mist" (*The Voyage Out* 317).

In addition to the above, there are numerous moments throughout the novel where water is anthropocentrically utilised as a metaphoric base as characters are sketched by others through watery images. Examples of this permeate the entire text, and include Ridley Ambrose who is immediately likened to a pirate when the young children passing him in the London streets call him "Bluebeard" (*The Voyage Out* 4). Pepper is not only ascribed numerous natural metaphors throughout his appearance in *The Voyage Out*, but is also described by Rachel as being a "fossilised fish" (*The Voyage Out* 12). A few moments later, Richard describes both himself and Rachel as

being “solitary icebergs” (*The Voyage Out* 66). Moreover, Terence interestingly likens himself to the boat used to take the gathered characters up the river, noting that:

> In some strange way the boat became identified with himself, and just as it would have been useless for him to get up and steer the boat, so was it useless for him to struggle any longer with the irresistible force of his own feelings. He was drawn on and on away from all he knew, slipping over barriers and past landmarks into unknown waters as the boat glided over the smooth surface of the river.
>
> (*The Voyage Out* 252)

In the paragraph above, Terence uses the image of the boat to understand his current emotional state as he concludes that it would be futile to try and change “the irresistible force of his own feelings” that he has developed for Rachel. He further uses water to explore how unfamiliar these emotions are to him as when he accepts these feelings, he notes that he feels as though he is slipping “into unknown waters”. Finally, the comparison drawn between Terence and the boat echoes the comparison drawn between the *Euphrosyne* and the Vinraces shortly after their arrival in Santa Marina. This direct reflection that occurs between the nonhuman elements of the novel and the human characters further cements the notion that Woolf’s utilisation of watery imagery is ultimately anthropocentric as water, and images associated with water, provide the characters with a comparative base to explore, and define, aspects of their own being.

Additional examples of the application of watery metaphors to the characters in *The Voyage Out* include both Mrs Thornbury, who is described by Terence as being “rather like a large old tree, murmuring in the moonlight, or a river going on and on and on”, and Clarissa Dalloway who, caught in a particularly bad gust of wind, is described as “looking uncommonly like a sea-gull” (*The Voyage Out* 278;45). While this comparison holds value because of the particular comparison to a watery bird, it is also interesting to consider the more general image of a bird being attached to Clarissa. In the same way birds are unbound to one particular setting — capable of flight across spaces — so is Clarissa not bound to *The Voyage Out*. Rather, she becomes a character who recurs throughout Woolf’s fictional writing, appearing in an assortment of short stories and becoming the focus in an eponymous novel.

Though associated with nature more generally, Clarissa is also shown to be particularly intrigued by the ocean, as is evident when she expresses interest in viewing the oceanic specimen that Mr Grice has collected. Mr Grice describes this collection as being “the treasures which the

great ocean had bestowed upon him — pale fish in greenish liquids, blobs of jelly with streaming tresses, fish with lights in their heads, they lived so deep" (*The Voyage Out* 45). Here, the description of the sea bestowing a gift upon Mr Grice must be considered as it subtly personifies the oceanic space. The ocean is distinctly humanised as it gifts Mr Grice with treasures he keeps in the same way humans share gifts with each other. While this humanisation of the watery space is found very briefly in *The Voyage Out*, it must be closely noted as it not only indicates Woolf's ultimately anthropocentric manipulation of water, but it subtly foreshadows Woolf's later humanisation of the natural world — and particularly the waterscapes within it — in *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*.

Throughout the novel, water is presented in a distinctly anthropocentric manner. It is utilised by the characters as a metaphoric basis for exploring notions of themselves and those around them, and it operates as an extension of their own being as it often reflects their emotional states and experiences. Furthermore, in the same way nature is anthropocentrically navigated by the narrator of the novel, and the characters, so is water continually circled back to the human presences in the novel as it is used as a descriptive base for the people that populate the text, and as a conceptual framework to explore understandings of identity and grapple with conceptualisations of existence. While this utilisation is found across an assortment of characters, it is most evidently found in the character of Rachel who, throughout her appearance in the text, is absolutely engulfed by water.

1.3.

In following the same exploration pattern into the other characters of the novel, Rachel is not only heavily associated with nature quite generally but she is rather particularly connected to the element of water. She makes her very first appearance in *The Voyage Out* onboard her father's cargo ship and is instantly linked to water through both her physical proximity to the ocean and the watery metaphors that are immediately ascribed to her (*The Voyage Out* 7). Examples of such attributions include Helen, who only moments after first meeting Rachel describes talking to her as being like "when you said something to her it would make no more lasting impression than the stroke of a stick upon water" (*The Voyage Out* 13).

Water is further used to describe Rachel a short while later when it is noted that "her eyes were unreflecting as water, her fingers still toying with fossilised fish, her mind absent" (*The Voyage Out* 14). Additionally, Evelyn Murgatroyd notes that Rachel not only looks as though she had "lived all [her] life in a garden" but specifically compares her to a river when she recounts that

"Rachel seemed to see and hear a little of everything, much as a river feels the twigs that fall into it and sees the sky above, but her eyes were too vague for Evelyn's liking" (*The Voyage Out* 235;247). Furthermore, metaphoric comparisons to water are not only made by those around Rachel, but they are rather used by Rachel herself when she explores notions pertaining to herself. She describes her personality as being "unmergeable, like the sea" and later she feels as though "she was a limpet, with the sensitive side of her stuck to a rock, for ever dead to the rush of fresh and beautiful things past her" (*The Voyage Out* 75;216). She further describes herself as "feel[ing] like a fish at the bottom of the sea" in the hours that follow the dance held at the hotel and understands her own mind to be "very much in the condition of the racing water to which Helen compared it" (*The Voyage Out* 155;210).

Throughout the novel, water is utilised by the characters as a tool to understand and describe the sensations of their minds and to develop notions regarding their own being. While Rachel continually uses water metaphorically to explore her own identity, she also acknowledges how water operates as an extension of herself. In a brief moment of ecstatic joy, Rachel declares to Terence: "I'm a mermaid! I can swim!" (*The Voyage Out* 282). This line indicates the ultimately anthropocentric manoeuvring of water as the element is looped back to the human through the image of a mermaid — a being whose body begins with the torso of a human and extends into the tail of a fish. Therefore, water is not only intimately connected to Rachel through her linguistic utilisation of watery images, but is closely bonded to her through its operation as both an extension, and reflection, of her own being.

Throughout her appearance in the novel, Rachel is not only metaphorically bound to water, but she is also constantly connected to the literal bodies of water that populate the text. She is drawn to them in fascination, noting at one point that she found the idea of being "flung into the sea, to be washed hither and thither, and driven about the roots of the world" to be "incoherently delightful" (*The Voyage Out* 281). Rachel is also absolutely enthralled by the idea of travelling up the river and it captures her attention from the very first moment Helen mentions it as she continues to press for the journey every opportunity she gets (*The Voyage Out* 77). Further, her fascination with the element is found in a later moment when she is completely "absorbed by the water and the exquisitely pleasant sensations which a little depth of the sea washing over rocks suggests" (*The Voyage Out* 195).

Rachel also appears to find a sense of comfort in the watery bodies she encounters, including the oceanic water she travels to reach Santa Marina. Described in the moments after Richard kisses her, Rachel is noted to have "leant upon the rail and looked over the troubled grey

waters, where the sunlight was fitfully scattered upon the crests of the waves, until she was cold and absolutely calm again" (*The Voyage Out* 67). Here, water becomes a soothing space — akin to what the River Thames was for Helen in the earlier chapters — where she is able to leave her worries at its surface and become "absolutely calm again".

Rachel is constantly drawn to, soothed by, and utterly fascinated with water. It completely encompasses her being as all the most important moments of her life that take place during the course of the novel occur on, or near, bodies of water. Her voyage to Santa Marina — a trip that will forever alter her life and essentially lead to her death — occurs across the ocean, and she first meets the man who becomes her fiancé whilst "kneeling by the stream lapping water out of her palms" (*The Voyage Out* 116). Her engagement to Terence happens during the long-awaited journey up the river, and her final moments are completely engulfed by the sound of the waves crashing outside the hotel and the watery hallucinations that haunt her until the hour of her death (*The Voyage Out* 273;327-8).

Woolf carefully aligns the physical bodies of water that permeate the text with Rachel as she allows them to often act as reflections of Rachel's experiences. In the same way Wheare (1991) noted the importance of the storms when exploring the novel's characters, Woolf allows the literal presence of water in the form of the ocean to become an extension of Rachel as she presents it in such a way that it becomes a constant source of reflection for Rachel and her internal workings (30). Examples of this include the seemingly concurrent empowerment of Rachel and the ocean that occurs when the *Euphrosyne* first leaves the docks of London:

> She was more lonely than the caravan crossing the desert; she was infinitely more mysterious, moving by her own power and sustained by her own resources. The sea might give her death or some unexampled joy, and none would know of it. She was a bride going forth to her husband, a virgin unknown of men; in her vigor and purity she might be likened to all beautiful things, for as a ship she had a life of her own.
>
> (*The Voyage Out* 25)

In the same moment that Rachel is granted the ability to move by her "own power", "sustained by her own resources" for the first time in her life, so is the ocean capable of providing her with "death" and "some unexampled joy". Here, the sea directly mirrors Rachel as it is granted the same sense agency and authority that she is. This repetition ultimately further emphasises the newness and importance of Rachel's newfound freedom as it stands in stark contrast to the constrictive past

that she lived with her aunts back in England. Further, the ocean acts as a clear mirror to Rachel reveals Woolf's ultimately anthropocentric manipulation of the element. Even in a moment where water is granted a deep sense of power over the human, it is ultimately backgrounded to the human presence in the passage as it distinctly operates as a reflection of Rachel and her own experience.

Also worth noting is that the above paragraph includes a subtle foreshadowing of Rachel's untimely death at the novel's conclusion when it is specifically noted that the journey across the waters to Santa Marina "might give her death". Furthermore, I would like to draw attention to the comparison that is drawn between Rachel and the *Euphrosyne* with the line: "for as a ship she had a life of her own". While this comparison mirrors the earlier discussed association that occurs between the cargo ship and the Vinraces, it also precedes the numerous instances where Rachel metaphorically bonds herself to the image of a ship. This distinct utilisation of the marine vessel to explore notions of Rachel's own being, will be discussed shortly.

The mirroring of bodies of water to Rachel is further found in the way water's literal appearance changes as the novel draws to a close. While the bodies of water are constant presences in *The Voyage Out*, filtering throughout the entirety of the novel, it is only once Rachel's health begins to deteriorate that acute attention is drawn to them seemingly apart from human observation. Woolf attempts to draw focus to water by making it literally louder than Rachel, whose presence in the text becomes quieter as she is confined to her deathbed. This is shown when it is noted that "in the intervals when no one spoke, they heard far off the low murmur of the sea, as the waves quietly broke and spread the beach with a film of water, and withdrew to break again" (*The Voyage Out* 304). However, despite Woolf's attempt to transcend the human-centric presentation of nature, she ultimately presents water anthropocentrically. In these moments, water does not exist beyond the human as it operates as an extension, and direct reflection, of Rachel.

This reflection between water and Rachel is particularly found in the closing chapters of the novel. Here, attention is drawn to how "the waves on the shore sounded like the repeated sigh of some exhausted creature" (*The Voyage Out* 308). The description of an "exhausted creature" that is attributed to the waves allow for them to directly reflect Rachel who herself becomes physically exhausted as she succumbs to her illness. This mirroring occurs once more shortly after Rachel passes away and "the waves, too, lay flat, and yet rigid" echo Rachel's own rigidity in death (*The Voyage Out* 347).

In addition to water operating as a direct reflection of Rachel, the element is also intrinsically bonded to her. This connection is immediately presented at the beginning of the novel, where it reads:

> Inextricably mixed in dreamy confusion, [Rachel's] mind seemed to enter into communion, to be delightfully expanded and combined with the spirit of the whitish boards on deck, with the spirit of the sea, with the spirit of Beethoven O, even with the spirit of poor William Cowper there at Olney.
>
> (*The Voyage Out* 29)

Within this passage, Rachel's mind seamlessly becomes bonded to the waters upon which the *Euphrosyne* travels, as well as the ship itself. The notion of the human mind entering into a "communion" with both the ocean and the marine vessel suggests a deep connection is formed between the three phenomena. Here, water and the *Euphrosyne* can be understood as operating as extensions of Rachel's own being as they become cites of clear anthropocentric manipulation where Woolf not only links the triad together, but she constantly loops the nonhuman elements of water and ships back to Rachel to explore her character further.

In considering the anthropocentric connection that exists between Rachel and nature, it is important to examine the role she is ascribed within the natural world. Throughout the ecocritical literature that exists around Woolf's writing, scholars have drawn attention to how Woolf simultaneously deconstructs traditional notions surrounding the division between humans and nature whilst continuing to incorporate a traditionally feminine perspective of nature. Scott (2011) suggests that evidence of Woolf's use of the feminine depiction of nature is found in her inclusion of figures such as Mother Nature, Gaia, and Persephone (6). Whilst I have noted earlier that Woolf does not depict nature as being only inclusive of women in the text — rather she allows nature to become a metaphoric basis for all the characters — she does allude to this conventional presentation through Rachel who can be likened to these figures. This connection is found in the comfort that she takes in the watery bodies around her as well as the brief moment where the natural world appears to mould itself for her viewing when it is noted that "upon that occasion at the hotel when she had sat in the window, the world once more arranged itself beneath her gaze very vividly and in its true proportions" (*The Voyage Out* 266).

By representing Rachel as a Mother Nature figure, the above line further indicates how Woolf utilises the natural world as a source of human exploration. She anthropocentrically manoeuvres nature — having it arrange itself for Rachel's viewing — to aid in understanding and exploring her characters. In considering how Scott (2011) considers mythological figures in Woolf's work, I would also like to draw attention to an additional female figure who stems from a

nature-rich, mythological basis — Aphrodite (6). Though the mention is very brief, Woolf specifically calls attention to Hirst reading Sappho's *Ode to Aphrodite* during the litany (*The Voyage Out* 217). A figure soaked in watery imagery, Aphrodite's very conception comes from the ocean's waters and thus she is a suitable mythological female figure to compare to the character of Rachel.

Rachel can be understood as mirroring Aphrodite's birth as she too is born from the waters and the persistent obsession that Woolf had with the element. She becomes the primary vehicle through which Woolf explores water most explicitly within the novel and reveals her constant circulation of natural elements back to notions of human existence and identity. This is shown through Rachel's constant attraction to the various literal bodies of water that permeate the text as well as the continued ascription of water-based metaphors to her identity and internal workings — both by those around her and Rachel herself. She is so inextricably bonded to water that the element cannot be considered apart from her. Instead, it operates as a conceptual metaphor for Rachel as she turns to the literal bodies to consider her emotions and repeatedly utilises watery images to understand her own being. Here, Rachel becomes the principal point where Woolf's own voice enters into the novel and the main locus upon which Woolf grounds much of her own anthropocentric utilisation of water.

1.4.

In considering how Rachel is the primary site upon which Woolf allows her own voice to filter into *The Voyage Out*, I would like to begin with the conversation Rachel has with Richard towards the beginning of the novel. During this talk, Rachel speaks of being aware of something existing below the city of London:

> Under the streets, in the sewers, in the wires, in the telephones, there is something alive; is that what you mean? In things like dust-carts, and men mending roads? You feel that all the time when you walk about London, and when you turn on a tap and the water comes?
>
> (*The Voyage Out* 58)

This paragraph reveals Woolf's conscientious efforts to merge the human and nonhuman spaces as it specifically draws attention to something "alive" under the streets and Rachel's specific awareness of the water in the taps. It also reveals Woolf's attempt to combine the natural world with the artificially constructed one, and, through her additional incorporation of the human presence in the nonhuman space, her desire to show the world as being a space of perfect

amalgamation. However, this paragraph also reveals how this attempted integration of the human and nonhuman is backgrounded to Woolf's ultimately anthropocentric presentation of water. It explores Rachel's intense bond with water almost immediately in the novel as, despite the noise and constant movement of the city of London, Rachel is critically aware of the presence of water in the pipes. Furthermore, the very idea of something more existing below a constructed space serves as a basis for a metaphoric comparison to understand how Woolf's own voice exists within, and operates under, her fictional writing.

Woolf's own voice echoes throughout *The Voyage Out*, and is principally found in her novel's heroine. Rachel is the primary channel through which Woolf conducts her own exploration into water and reveals her anthropocentric utilisation of the element as she is distinctly constructed from Woolf's own likeness. Throughout the novel there are numerous instances where a clear mirroring occurs between Woolf and Rachel and Rachel is ultimately cemented as being a fictional echo of her author. Examples of this reflection existing between the two include one of the moments in which Terence and Rachel find themselves alone and Terence notes that Rachel looks out at the ocean waters with "childlike intentness" (*The Voyage Out* 210).

The particular use of "childlike" here may be a direct reference to Woolf herself as her own lifelong fascination with water began in her childhood. This is something that has been thoroughly documented in her own biographical writing where she recalls some of her first moments of consciousness as being marked by "the waves breaking, one, two, one, two, and sending a splash of water over the beach" (*A Sketch of the Past* 64). Furthermore, this reflection between the Woolf and Rachel is explicitly evident through a comparison of their respective mother's deaths and funerals. Rachel provides a brief recollection of her mother's funeral where she draws specific attention to the flowers that were brought to the house:

> … she had thereupon seen the little hall at Richmond laden with flowers on the day of her mother's funeral, smelling so strong that now any flower-scent brought back the sickly horrible sensation; and so from one scene she passed, half-hearing, half-seeing, to another. She saw her Aunt Lucy arranging flowers in the drawing-room.
>
> (*The Voyage Out* 27-8)

This description directly parallels Woolf's own documentation of her mother's passing, which she recalls in *A Sketch of the Past*:

> We were all sitting in the drawing room round father's chair sobbing. The hall reeked of flowers. They were piled on the hall table. The scent still brings back those days of astonishing intensity.
>
> (*A Sketch of the Past* 92)

The near identical nature of the passages above reveals how Woolf subtly slips her own life, and her own voice, into *The Voyage Out*. Here, Rachel's recollection of her mother's death is marked by the flowers present at the time of her mother's funeral. This recollection directly mirrors Woolf's own memory of her mother's death where she distinctly recalls how "the hall reeked of flowers". Furthermore, in drawing such a close comparison between herself and her novel's primary character, Woolf allows Rachel to operate as her fictional duplicate within the novel.

In returning to the exploration into how water and ships operate as extensive representatives of Rachel within the text, it is importance to consider how Rachel is the main channel through which Woolf navigates her own personal, and anthropocentric, exploration into water. While the *Euphrosyne* is the watery vessel that Rachel is most explicitly explored through, she is also linked to the specific image of a ghost ship. This connection is shown when Rachel's attention is captured by "a steamer anchored in the bay, looking very ghostly in the mist" (*The Voyage Out* 154). This ghostly steamer is immediately bonded to Rachel through the inclusion of the watery form of mist in its description as mist is continually associated with Rachel throughout the novel, particularly by Terence when he uses the image to describe his growing relationship with Rachel.

Furthermore, the triadic connection between Rachel, water, and ships — and the way the latter two images circle back to Rachel continuously — is first found in the novel's opening pages. Still onboard the *Euphrosyne*, Rachel is described leaning over the ship's railing and observing the waters below:

> Down she looked into the depth of the sea. While it was slightly disturbed on the surface by the passage of the *Euphrosyne*, beneath it was green and dim, and it grew dimmer and dimmer until the sand at the bottom was only a pale blur. One could scarcely see the black ribs of wrecked ships…
>
> (*The Voyage Out* 20)

While Rachel observes the literal wrecks of ships that lie on the bottom of the ocean floor, this line also doubles as a powerful allusion to the sinking of the *Titanic*, an incident that completely captured the mind of Woolf and is known to have had an overt influence on *The Voyage Out* (Lee

283). By morphing her obsession with the *Titanic* into Rachel, Woolf cements her as the primary point of entry for her own voice in *The Voyage Out* and she continually uses her to explore water anthropocentrically, not only within the pages of her novel, but in the context of her own life too. Also worth noting here is that the fiction used to describe the ships — particularly the description of "black ribs" — indicates how Woolf conscientiously attempts to erase the boundary between the human and nonhuman through her use of metaphors that transcend the traditional division. However, it further reveals how she is ultimately unable to move away from the centralisation of the human as she describes the nonhuman elements in humanistic images. Additionally, the wrecked remains of ships described above become further reflections of Rachel as they provide a foreshadowing of her death and align her with the *Titanic* as both meet their untimely demise on their maiden voyage (Brooks; Nadel n.p).

As the first of her novels, *The Voyage Out* is the work that provides the conceptual groundwork for exploring how Woolf utilises water anthropocentrically throughout her fictional writing to grapple with notions of her own identity. While there are numerous inclusions of details about her personal life across all of her literature, *The Voyage Out* is the work that is most blatantly based on Woolf herself. Rather than fragmenting pieces of her own being into an assortment of characters, like she does in later works, Woolf reconstructs herself quite completely in the image of Rachel. Further, she orientates the novel almost entirely around Rachel — and thus herself. Woolf uses the novel as a textual space upon which she meditates on her life, drawing particular attention to her tempestuous childhood, her own recurring bouts of mental illness that marked a majority of her writing, and her suicidal tendencies which are intrinsically tied to her constant fascination with, and life-long pull towards, water (Wheare 16).

In pursing an exploration into Woolf's own voice in her writing, I would like to draw attention to the fact that Woolf was highly aware of the presence of an author's voice within their respective writing, and she was particularly conscious of the inclusion of her own voice in her work. This is shown through a brief mention that occurs in *The Voyage Out* where the narrator notes that "all you read a novel for is to see what sort of person the writer is" (*The Voyage Out* 204). This awareness not only suggests that Woolf was acutely conscious of how *The Voyage Out* operates as a direct reflection of her own being, but rather that the anthropocentric utilisation of water that Woolf presents through her characters — across her literature — ultimately loops back to Woolf herself.

In her introduction to the novel, Wheare (1991) addresses the idea that Woolf was "essentially an autobiographical writer" and that *The Voyage Out* in particular is simply a "fictional

version of Woolf's own life"[2] (13-4). This is shown through the very plot of the novel which is inspired by Woolf's own travels — particularly her trip across Europe in 1905 that she took with her siblings (Lee 206). There are two subtle references made to this particular trip made throughout the novel. The first is when the *Euphrosyne* is noted to stop momentarily in Portugal for Willoughby to conduct some business (and to allow the Dalloways to join the passengers onboard the ship) as Portugal was one of the places Woolf and her siblings visited during their vacation (*The Voyage Out* 30).

The second reference occurs at the end of the novel, where inspiration from Woolf's own trip is found in the circumstances of Rachel's death and the moments leading up to her passing. Woolf echoes the way Vanessa fell ill during the trip in Rachel and she captures her own feelings about the event through the other characters — particularly Terence — who sit around at the villa and hotel, anxiously waiting for updates on Rachel's condition. Lee describes this mirroring when she writes:

> Their hotel became a sick-room; Virginia sat reading and making notes on Mérimée's Lettres à une inconnue while Thoby and Adrian quarrelled downstairs about whether the Portsmouth to Hindhead road was macadamised. (The boredom, the nervous strain, the irritability and anxieties of waiting by a sick-bed in a foreign country are brilliantly caught in the last pages of *The Voyage Out*.)
>
> (Lee 211)

Additionally, it must be noted that Woolf's voice slips into *The Voyage Out* in the same way that it does in almost all her subsequent novels — through her constant reference to Talland House. Although more faintly referenced in this novel compared to her later texts, Talland House acts as a clear basis for the holiday home that the Ambroses rent from Helen's brother. This is evident in the very description of the villa, particularly when it is noted to "look straight across the shoulder of a slope, ribbed with olive trees, to the sea" (*The Voyage Out* 82). The particular drawing of attention to the house being near the oceanside reveals how the villa echoes the beachside holiday home that Woolf frequented throughout her childhood visits to St. Ives. Furthermore, the Santa Marina villa becomes even more reflective of Talland House through Ridley and Helen's faint resemblance to the original occupants of Talland House — Woolf's own parents (Wheare 13).

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[2] This introduction appears in the annotated Penguin Books edition (1992).

Although Talland House, and Sir Leslie and Julia's influence on Woolf's characters, will be thoroughly explored in my chapter dedicated to *To the Lighthouse*, it is important to momentarily consider it in this chapter. In a study conducted by Tunstall and Penning-Rowsell (1998), it was found that the beach is a prime space of importance in the wider English consciousness and that the sandy spaces often come to represent "personal experiences in childhood" (319). They further note that beaches are locations that come to have "life-long echoes" for those who visit them, and this certainly holds true for Woolf. She continually uses beaches as a crucial and often primary, setting for several of her novels, beginning with *The Voyage Out*.

While Woolf's voice subtly slips into *The Voyage Out* through her faint allusion to Talland House, it primarily enters the novel through Rachel and the way water and ships operate as extensions of her being — particularly the image of the *Titanic*. As previously explored in the introduction, Woolf, and her husband Leonard, attended the British Board of Trade's inquisition into the sinking of the *Titanic* in May 1912 (Brooks, Lee 284, Nadel n.p; Wilson 287). In the days that followed her attendance, Woolf became completely fixated with the wreck, with Lee (1996) noting that "her imagination had fastened on the wreck… the underwater image stayed with her" (284). Furthermore, following her attendance Woolf wrote to Katherine Cox to express her absolute fascination with the sinking and convey her desire to one day write "a full account of the wreck of the *Titanic*" (Brooks).

Woolf never wrote such an account of the infamous sinking, but she did allow the event to heavily influence *The Voyage Out* which she was editing at the time of her attendance at the inquisition. The image of the *Titanic* undoubtedly echoes throughout the novel, and becomes an explicit point through which Woolf's voice becomes evident in her text. It is found through the subtle references of ghost ships and sunken ships that haunt the novel's pages, and through the thinly veiled references to the dangers of icebergs in the water. The most noticeable instance where this occurs is onboard the *Euphrosyne* when Richard recalls talking of the dangerous perils that lie within the ocean:

> I remember crossing in the Mauretania once, and saying to the Captain — Richards — did you know him?— 'Now tell me what perils you really dread most for your ship, Captain Richards?' expecting him to say icebergs, or derelicts, or fog, or something of that sort. Not a bit of it. I've always remembered his answer. 'Sedgius aquatici,' he said, which I take to be a kind of duck-weed.
>
> (*The Voyage Out* 34)

Woolf most prominently presents her own persona in her text through her allowance of her own fascination with the wreck to slip into her writing and her linking of the *Titanic* to Rachel. Here, her ultimately anthropocentric manipulation of water starts to move beyond the pages of her novel as she utilises the element to navigate an exploration into her own experiences and notions of identity. In doing this, *The Voyage Out* becomes her work that is the least experimental of her archive, but one of her most personal. This clear personalisation is shown throughout the novel and is particularly evident in the way Woolf mirrors the loss of her own mother — and the descriptions of her funeral — in the character of Rachel. Furthermore, this is found through the way she operates Rachel as a vehicle through which to explore her own fascination with water, particularly as it pertains to notions of death and drowning — two ideas that completely encapsulate Woolf's life.

Woolf explores the topic of death across the majority of her work, and *The Voyage Out* is no exception as death "dominates the novel as it did her personal life" (Wheare 14). It is a topic consistently mentioned by the characters of the text, beginning in the opening chapter where Rachel and Helen note the danger of falling down the stairs head-first and dying (*The Voyage Out* 7). Shortly after this, Pepper abruptly mentions to Ridley that a mutual acquaintance of theirs has passed away (*The Voyage Out* 9). While still on the *Euphrosyne*, death is mentioned twice more when Helen describes a sleeping Rachel as looking like "a victim dropped from the claws of a bird of prey" and when the passengers onboard the cargo ship talk of "valour and death" after watching the Mediterranean Fleet pass them by (*The Voyage Out* 29;60).

References to death continue to persist once the characters arrive in Santa Marina. Examples include a conversation between Evelyn and Terence where the topic is arbitrarily brought up and Terence notes that he does not "think [death] would be awful" (*The Voyage Out* 133). Later, after attending the litany given by Mr. Bax, Miss Allan notes that "going to church aboard always made her feel as if she had been to a sailor's funeral" (*The Voyage Out* 226). In addition to these mentions, the topic of death is particularly linked to Rachel throughout the novel, especially after she disembarks in Santa Marina. This connection is found both subtly and explicitly within the text. An example of a more subtle moment where the notion of death circles back to Rachel includes the moment when she finds out that the very spot where she and Helen stood the night they peered into the hotel window is the same place the kitchen staff slaughter hens for cooking (*The Voyage Out* 238).

The more explicit way in which Rachel is tied to death is through her constant association with the notion of drowning. Similar to the broader notion of death, specific mentions of drowning

recur throughout the novel, and across all of Woolf's writing. The topic initially makes its appearance in one of Woolf's very first pieces of writing titled "A Terrible Tragedy in a Duckpond". This mock newspaper article shares the story of a vessel capsizing whilst journeying across a duckpond and three individuals drown. The most salient aspect of this story is that the imagined drowning victims are Adrian Stephen, Emma St John Vaughan (the Stephens' cousin), and Woolf herself ("A Terrible Tragedy in a Duckpond*"* 178).

In writing of her own imagined drowning, Woolf reveals the personal fascination she had with the notion that would extend throughout her life and ultimately became the cause of her own death. Furthermore, this personal fixation slips into her writing and becomes a recurrent theme throughout her novels. In *The Voyage Out*, it is found in the brief mentions made by secondary characters such as Mrs Paley who recalls "her brother, who had been drowned before her eyes" (*The Voyage Out* 166). It also appears explicitly through the inclusion of allusions to the *Titanic* and through the character of Rachel, whose nightmares and hallucinations are absolutely encased in water. Here, these moments not only indicate the presence of Woolf's voice in her writing, but they reveal her ultimately anthropocentric utilisation of water as she uses its presence in her novel to grapple with her own understanding of the notion of death.

Arguably, the principal manner in which Woolf explores death through water is through the vivid descriptions of Rachel's hallucinations. The hallucinatory experiences become worse the closer they occur to Rachel's death, and they also become progressively soaked in watery imagery. The first hallucination that Rachel experiences shortly after falling ill is a vision of an indistinguishable female figure sitting below a river:

> She shut her eyes. When she opened them again several more hours had passed, but the night still lasted interminably. The woman was still playing cards, only she sat now in a tunnel under a river, and the light stood in a little archway in the wall above her.
>
> (*The Voyage Out* 313)

This particular vision is repeated, and further explored, in Rachel's second hallucination. Quickly following the first one, this second hallucination sees to Rachel now imagining herself in the tunnel with the woman:

> Rachel again shut her eyes, and found herself walking through a tunnel under the Thames, where there were little deformed women sitting in archways playing cards, while the bricks

> of which the wall was made oozed with damp, which collected into drops and slid down the wall.
>
> (*The Voyage Out* 313)

In both hallucinations, Rachel notes the image of water in them but she does not consider herself to be completely engulfed yet. Rather, she finds herself in a tunnel below — and only slightly separated from — the waters. This quickly changes with each new hallucination she experiences, and this slow growth to a complete encompassment in water is already evident in the subtle differences that exist between the first and second paragraphs provided above. In her first hallucination, Rachel's vision is of someone other than herself sitting in the tunnel playing cards. In her second hallucination, Rachel imagines herself in the tunnel with the woman. Furthermore, particular attention is drawn to the walls of the tunnel in the second hallucination where they are ascribed a watery description which notes that they "oozed with damp, which collected into drops and slid down the wall".

Rachel's later hallucinations continue to become more and more riddled with the presence of water. In constructing Rachel's hallucinations in such a way, Woolf intrinsically bonds the notions of death and water together and essentially explores her own fascination with the concept of drowning through Rachel's delirious fantasies. This is most evident in one of Rachel's later hallucinations that see to her imagining herself to be completely engulfed by water in a manner that reflects Woolf's description of herself in "A Terrible Tragedy in a Duckpond":

> At last the faces went further away; she fell into a deep pool of sticky water, which eventually closed over her head. She saw nothing and heard nothing but a faint booming sound, which was the sound of the sea rolling over her head. While all her tormentors thought that she was dead, she was not dead, but curled up at the bottom of the sea. There she lay, sometimes seeing darkness, sometimes light, while every now and then some one turned her over at the bottom of the sea.
>
> (*The Voyage Out* 322)

In this paragraph, Rachel conceptualises her slippage into unconsciousness as falling "into a deep pool of sticky water, which eventually closed over her head". Further, this hallucination highlights how water is understood as being an intermediary space in the novel. While Rachel imagines herself to be at the bottom of the ocean, the "sea rolling over her head", she is simultaneously aware of the reality in which she exists where someone turns her over in her bed. This understanding of

water further supports the idea of water being a point of slippage within the novel. It becomes the primary point through which Woolf moves between fiction and reality as she utilises water to explore Rachel in her moments of death, and simultaneously attempts to conceptualise the notion of death for herself.

Similar to the previous two aforementioned hallucinations, this latter example is also echoed in the delirious vision that follows immediately after. In this sixth hallucination, Rachel imagines that:

> She had come to the surface of the dark, sticky pool, and a wave seemed to bear her up and down with it; she had ceased to have any will of her own; she lay on the top of the wave conscious of some pain, but chiefly of weakness. The wave was replaced by the side of a mountain. Her body became a drift of melting snow, above which her knees rose in huge peaked mountains of bare bone.
>
> (*The Voyage Out* 327)

Once more, water becomes an intermediary space when Rachel rises "to the surface of the dark, sticky pool". Here, she straddles the line between the vivid hallucinations that are slowly consuming her, and drawing her closer to death, and the reality of her situation where she is aware of "some pain" and "weakness". In ascending to the surface of the pool of water, Rachel momentarily becomes lucid enough to have a final, short conversation with Helen and Terence before she passes away. This ascription of such water-based hallucinations to Rachel reveals how Woolf ultimately explores her own understanding of death to be a complete detachment from the solidity of reality and a drifting away to the bottom of a "deep pool of sticky water" (*The Voyage Out* 322). Here, Woolf uses water to understand that which is too grand to comprehend without a metaphoric or conceptual grounding in the tangible world around her as she anthropocentrically utilises water to frame her own understanding of death.

In addition to anthropocentrically utilising water to explore her conceptualisation of death, Woolf further uses it to explore notions of her own identity and grapple with moments of her tempestuous childhood. Described as a novel being full of "Virginia's painful adolescence", *The Voyage Out* includes a very brief, but very vivid, reflection of the sexual assault Woolf experienced as a child (Lee 398). In her biographical exploration into Woolf, Lee (1996) draws close attention to how Woolf's "recreations of the imaginative world of childhood" include "a moment of fear or

shame or panic, and the image of a safe private world being invaded often with the strong sense of sexual threat" (120).

In *The Voyage Out*, this moment is found when Rachel is suddenly kissed by Richard while the two are onboard the *Euphrosyne*. Here, the "safe private world" that is invaded is the deck of the ship which only moments before Rachel felt bonded to, and which gave her the promise of a newfound freedom, and life, away from the sheltered upbringing she had in London. Furthermore, the "strong sense of sexual threat" that Rachel experiences when Richard kisses her leads to her suffering from a graphic nightmare shortly after the interaction. This nightmare foreshadows the hallucinations that plague Rachel in the moments before her death:

> She dreamt that she was walking down a long tunnel, which grew so narrow by degrees that she could touch the damp bricks on either side. At length the tunnel opened and became a vault; she found herself trapped in it, bricks meeting her wherever she turned, alone with a little deformed man who squatted on the floor gibbering, with long nails. His face was pitted and like the face of an animal. The wall behind him oozed with damp, which collected into drops and slid down.
>
> (*The Voyage Out* 68)

Although no explanation is given for this dream, the original copy of the text did apparently include an additional line whereby Rachel briefly attempts to make sense of what she dreams of. Wheare (1991) documents this in her introduction to the novel, sharing that the explanation was found in a portion of dialogue where Rachel notes that her fear from the experience stemmed from the fact that: "I felt he could do what he chose to me" (30). In considering this, I would suggest that the fear Rachel has for Richard in this moment directly mirrors the fear that Woolf developed for Gerald Duckworth after he assaulted her. Here, Rachel is not only cemented as being a clear reflection of Woolf herself, but she also becomes the primary channel through which Woolf allows her voice to slip into her writing and anthropocentrically manipulate the element of water to explore her own experiences, and grapple with particularly difficult moments of her own childhood.

While Woolf enters her text, and explores notions of her own identity, primarily through Rachel, I would like to note that she does create many of the characters as fictional replications of her own family members. Lee (1996) describes Helen as being both modelled after Woolf's sister, Vanessa, and being blurred with "versions of Julia and with self-portraits" (110). Miss Allan is thought, by scholars, to be a copy of Janet Case or Violet Dickinson whilst the relationship between

Clive Bell and Woolf is thought to be found either in the relationship that blossoms between Rachel and Terence, or in the moments that Rachel and Richard share (Lee 228; Wheare 26). Further, Ridley is noted to be a shadow of Leslie, with the dynamic between him and Helen being representative of Woolf's own parents (Brooks and Wheare 13-4).

Although *The Voyage Out* does include the same traces of Woolf's family as her other novels come to have, Woolf's first novel particularly centres around her own being. Not only does she create the novel's heroine as a direct reflection of herself, but she fragments aspects of her own being into numerous characters that populate the text. Lee (1996) and Wheare (1991) suggest that Woolf distinctly assigns parts of herself to almost all the characters she creates, with specific attention being drawn to Miss Allan who possesses Woolf's "intellectual seriousness" and Evelyn who receives Woolf's flirtatiousness (Lee 160; Wheare 13-4). Furthermore, I would like to suggest that Susan Warrington subtly mirrors Woolf too. She finds herself unmarried at the age of thirty, as Woolf was, and she is also noted to write in her diaries "daily year after year" which directly echoes Woolf's own habit (*The Voyage Out* 94).

Moreover, Woolf filters her own experiences in Terence. The connection between the two is shown during the hours of Rachel's death where Woolf's own experience of sitting at Vanessa's bedside is used as a blatant basis for the days Terence spends around Rachel's passing (Lee 211). Additionally, she allows her own interest in the art of the novel to slip into Terence (Lee 160). Terence becomes Woolf's first artistic duplicate in her literature, and, though the resemblance between the two is quite faint, their bond is echoed throughout Woolf's writing. Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* and Bernard in *The Waves* both come to reflect Terence closely as they both possess a similar artistic connection to Woolf in their respective works.

In particularly focusing on Terence, it is clear to see that he shares the same hopes as Woolf when it comes to the topic of writing. Terence constantly expresses his desire to write a novel about "Silence" — "the things people don't say" — as he strives to produce a novel that explores the typically domestic, feminine spaces that he notes are sorely absent from existing literature (*The Voyage Out* 240). This mirrors Woolf who, along with her modernist contemporaries, aimed to move away from the "self-important and high seriousness of their Victorian ancestors" (Wheare 10). Instead, throughout her literary works, Woolf constantly draws close focus to the women that populate her writing and she continually incorporates the natural world, particularly water, into her archive as she attempts to thoroughly integrate the traditionally divided human and nonhuman through her efforts to equate the previously backgrounded nonhuman to the human. However, despite *The Voyage Out*'s ostensible concern with nature, and her concerted efforts to merge the

historically separated binary, Woolf is unable to surpass the traditional human-centralism of the division. Instead, her attempt to transcend the division ultimately circles the natural world back to both the human presences within the text and loops her presented anthropocentric manipulation of water back onto herself.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the chapter above, I have explored how water is used in an ultimately anthropocentric manner. Through an application of notions stemming from ecological criticism, an investigation into Woolf's awareness of the actual artificiality of the division between the human and nonhuman was performed. This investigation became the grounding for my suggestion that despite Woolf's concerted efforts to transcend the anthropocentrism of the traditional boundary, she ultimately, and continually, circles water back to the human presences of her text. Throughout the novel, the characters — and particularly Rachel — conceptually, metaphorically, and literally manipulate nature, and specifically water, to explore notions of their own being and grapple with the world in which they exist. Furthermore, this chapter began my critical analysis into how Woolf's anthropocentric manipulation of water does not end in the pages of her fictional writing. Rather, I explored how such a manoeuvring of water becomes the primary point through which Woolf slips her own voice into her text. Here, I focused on Rachel and how water and ships — particularly allusions to the *Titanic* — operate as both extensions and reflections of Rachel's own being. Furthermore, close attention was drawn to how Rachel operates as a fictional duplication of Woolf herself in the novel.

Woolf's anthropocentric manipulation of water is shown through her construction of Rachel's character in her own image and how Rachel's subsequent use of water to framework her own comprehension of her identity and reality directly mirrors Woolf's. Woolf utilises water as a tool to reconcile herself with incidents that transpired in her tumultuous childhood and to grapple with her own unwavering fixation with the notion of death, and drowning. While I have argued that *The Voyage Out* is one of Woolf's most personal novels, as it focused the most on her as an individual, her ultimate anthropocentric utilisation of water is not unique to her first novel. Rather, it becomes a staple across her subsequent works and is a central concern in the novels that will be focused on in the chapters that follow. In continuing this exploration into the anthropocentric manipulation of water, I will begin with the novel that continues Woolf's exploration into, and

ultimate reconciliation with, her childhood and the figures most prominent within it — *To the Lighthouse*.

WATER AS A CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR IN *TO THE LIGHTHOUSE*

In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf continues to utilise water as means of exploring human identity and understanding cardinal notions of the self. She navigates water in an ultimately anthropocentric manner as she presents the element as both a metaphoric basis for her characters to comprehend those around them and a structuring framework through which characters conceptualise notions of their own being. Furthermore, Woolf continues to anthropocentrically manipulate water herself as she continues to incorporate her own life into her writing. In this chapter, I will draw particular attention to her parents, Sir Leslie and Julia Stephens, her childhood and the time she spent in St. Ives, and her comprehension of her own being — particularly her creative process as an author.

This chapter will continue to use ecological criticism as the theoretical framework in which to navigate the investigation into Woolf's portrayal of water as a conceptual metaphor, for both her characters and for herself. Following the previous chapter, much of the exploration will be grounded in Woolf's efforts to transcend the division traditionally perceived to separate the human from the nonhuman (Arnold 1090; Cohen 1092; Heise 503-4; Oppermann 166). Woolf's awareness of how humans are actually "grounded in intimate interdependence with the nonhuman living world" will be considered when exploring how Woolf ultimately, and continually, circles the nonhuman — and particularly water — back to the characters in her novel (Naess in Buell 89-90; Heise 506-7; Kelly 810). I will draw particular focus to the continuous metaphoric application of water, as the characters use water as a descriptive basis to frame their own understandings of their identity, grapple with their emotions, and comprehend those they encounter.

Furthermore, close attention will be drawn to the literal importance of water in the novel as Woolf presents her characters as being constantly aware of how they use the bodies of water to frame their narratives of existence, aid in their construction of identity, and structure their own conceptualisations of death. The exploration into the characters', and ultimately Woolf's, numerous projections onto water will be aided by James Lovelock's *Gaia Hypothesis*. Through his conceptualisation of the *Gaia Theory*, Lovelock (1974) presents the understanding of the world as being that which is a single, living, harmonious, entity and rejects the notion of there being a division between the organic and inorganic, the human and nonhuman. He uses the mythical figure of Gaia as a foundation for the theory as she is simultaneously representative of life, death, and rebirth (Lovelock in Scott 2011:5).

While Woolf makes a concerted effort to present the world in a manner that reflects this theory, she is ultimately unable to move beyond the anthropocentrism of the division. In presenting

the spaces as connected, Woolf ultimately circles the nonhuman back to the human as she allows her characters to reduce nature to a metaphoric basis upon which they can construct their understandings of their existence. Further, when Woolf does attempt to foreground the natural world in *To the Lighthouse*, she ultimately personifies it to such an extent that it operates in the novel as a human-like entity. While I will primarily depart from Lovelock's ideas, I will closely consider the multiplicity that is suggested to exist in the single figure of Gaia and use it to explore Woolf's portrayal of water in the novel. She continually presents water as simultaneously being a literal presence in the novel whose tangibility elicits numerous emotions in the characters, a symbolic space whereby notions of life, death, and existence are grappled with, and a conceptual metaphor where water becomes the basis upon which characters build understandings of their own identity.

Finally, in understanding Woolf's idea that "nothing was simply one thing", this chapter will conclude with a thorough examination into how *To the Lighthouse* principally operates as an exploration into Woolf's family and childhood. In continuing the approach taken in the previous chapter, I will explore the biological basis of the novel by considering the notion that there are "interconnections between textual practises and the larger physical world" (Lehtimaki 120). Where specific attention was drawn to Woolf herself in *The Voyage Out*, this chapter will draw explicit attention to Woolf's presentation of the Ramsay family as being fictitious recreations of her own family and how the Ramsay's holiday home is essentially a reconstruction of Talland House (Rigby in Oppermann 154-55). Furthermore, the character of Lily Briscoe will be considered through the way in which she operates, similarly to Rachel Vinrace in *The Voyage Out*, as Woolf's own fictional replication in the novel and becomes a primary locus through which Woolf's own voice heavily enters into her novel. In concluding, I will explore how water is carefully orchestrated by Woolf as a conceptual metaphor for both the characters of *To the Lighthouse* and herself as she once again manoeuvres water in a manner that is ultimately anthropocentric.

2.1.

Throughout *To the Lighthouse*, the nonhuman world is regularly used as a scaffolding for the characters in the novel as they describe themselves, and each other, with natural imagery. They also use this metaphoric application of nature to understand numerous aspects of themselves and conceptualise their experience of emotions and processes of cognition. This is found throughout the novel, including when Lily understands the rushing process of her thoughts as being as though they

"dance up and down, like a company of gnats, each separate but all marvellously controlled in an invisible elastic net" (*To the Lighthouse* 28). Additionally, Mr Ramsay understands the natural world as paving human thought when he observes the red geraniums in this garden and notes that they "often decorated processes of thought, and bore, written up among their leaves, as if they were scraps of paper on which one scribbles notes in the rush of reading" (*To the Lighthouse* 48).

The natural world operates as the characters' primary frame of reference, with it often being utilised by the characters metaphorically to describe aspects of themselves and those that they come into contact with (Lehtimaki 120). Examples of this include Mr Ramsay being described as being "lean like a knife" by James after he makes stabbing remarks about the family's inability to travel to the lighthouse in *The Window* portion of the novel (*To the Lighthouse* 6). Shortly after this moment, Augustus Carmichael is described as having eyes like a cat when he sits in the Ramsay garden, closely observing those moving around him (*To the Lighthouse* 11). Furthermore, when Mr Bankes takes a moment to look at Lily's painting, Lily winces "like a dog" out of fear that Mr Bankes will provide her with the same harsh criticism of her artwork, and her life as a female painter, that Charles Tansley did (*To the Lighthouse* 58).

Cam Ramsay is heavily associated with the natural world throughout her appearance in the novel. While I will be drawing particular attention to her utilisation of water later in this chapter, I would like to first draw attention to the moment of her introduction in the novel which reads:

> … Cam, the little girl, Ramsay's youngest daughter. She was picking Sweet Alice on the bank. She was wild and fierce. She would not "give a flower to the gentleman" as the nursemaid told her. No! no! no! she would not! She clenched her fist. She stamped. And Mr Bankes felt aged and saddened and somehow put into the wrong by her about his friendship. He must have dried and shrunk.
>
> (*To the Lighthouse* 25)

Cam's introduction immediately links her to the natural world through her direct engagement with it as the passage distinctly describes her "picking Sweet Alice". This introduction also reveals her sense of belonging in the natural world and may be an example of Woolf's attempt to integrate the human and nonhuman. However, Woolf ultimately reestablishes the notion of human-centrality in this passage as Cam is immediately granted an authority within nature as she "clenches her fists" and "stamps" her feet as she adamantly refuses to give Mr Bankes a flower. In addition to reinstating the anthropocentrism of the traditional division, Woolf also utilises nature as an

extension of the human as she uses it to further explore aspects of her characters. Here, she uses the natural world as a means to demonstrate the "fierceness" and "wildness" of Cam's personality. This utilisation of nature to explore Cam is found throughout the novel, and she is further associated with nature later on when Mrs Ramsay describes her as moving about "like a bird, bullet, or arrow" (*To the Lighthouse* 61).

While Cam is explicitly linked to nature throughout her appearance in the text — and later to water in *The Lighthouse* portion of the novel — she is not the only Ramsay woman to be continually explored through nature. Mrs Ramsay continually uses nature to describe those around her, and is embossed with natural metaphors herself. When talking of Minta Doyle, she recalls the nicknames that she has for Minta's parents which include "The Owl" for Minta's mother (*To the Lighthouse* 64). Later, she describes her youngest children, who are sent to bed while the rest of the house's occupants go down to dinner, as being "in their cots like birds among cherries" (*To the Lighthouse* 66).

In addition to ascribing natural imagery to others, Mrs Ramsay herself is often ascribed natural imagery by those around her. She also continually utilises nature metaphorically and conceptually to comprehend her identity, and quite consciously uses the natural world to explore her understanding of her own existence. This is found in the moment when she expresses an acute awareness of the innate inclination she possesses to turn to nature to provide her with comfort:

> It was odd, she thought, how if one was alone, one leant to 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. There rose, and she looked and looked with her needles suspended, there curled up off the floor of the mind, rose from the lake of one's being, a mist, a bride to meet her lover.
>
> (*To the Lighthouse* 71)

There are numerous points within this paragraph that I would like to draw close attention to. First, it reveals how Woolf is not only aware of the previously constructed dichotomy of the human and nonhuman, but it captures her attempt to transcend this division. This is shown through Mrs Ramsay initially considering it "odd" to find comfort in the natural elements around her which suggests that she may have assumed a traditionally constructed distance to exist between humans and nature instead. However, despite her clear effort to bridge this separation by presenting the human turning towards nature, Woolf ultimately reveals her anthropocentric manipulation of the

natural world. In understanding that she and nature are "in a sense…one", and that the natural world "expresses" her own being, Mrs Ramsay displays her clear awareness of how nature operates as both an extension, and reflection, of her own being.

Woolf's ultimately anthropocentric manipulation of nature is further shown through the way Mrs Ramsay not only understands nature as being something with which she can interact (as she lists several elements of the natural world which exist very tangibly for her) but also as a phenomenon that is capable of comforting, and soothing, her. Furthermore, this paragraph provides one of the novel's earliest indications of nature working as a conceptual framework for the characters. Here, Mrs Ramsay uses nature to scaffold her understanding of her own feelings as the tenderness she possesses for the natural world works as a basis for understanding the tenderness one might feel "for oneself."

Additionally, Mrs Ramsay uses nature, and particularly water, to frame her conception of self as she likens her existence, and "being", to that of a lake. In attempting to understand her own process of thought, she utilises the image of mist rising off a watery surface to explore "what brought her to say that". Therefore, Mrs Ramsay not only understands water as operating as an extension of herself but she also provides one of the first explicit indications of how water in particular is used metaphorically and conceptually by the characters throughout the novel to grapple with notions of her own mind and existence.

In further exploring the innate connection that Mrs Ramsay has with the natural world, and how nature ultimately circles back to her character, it is important to examine all the moments when she attributes natural descriptions to herself. These include her noting that "her singleness of mind made her drop plumb like a stone, alight exact as a bird" and later when she is described as having "seemed to fold herself together, one petal closed in another" (*To the Lighthouse* 33;44). In comparing herself to a flower closing in on itself, Mrs Ramsay understands the physical exhaustion that she feels after having provided reassurance to Mr Ramsay and after mediating the tension between her husband and son all day. This conceptualisation of emotions through natural imagery indicates how nature is used as a metaphoric, and conceptual, basis for the characters to grapple with notions of their own being.

In addition to utilising nature throughout the novel, Mrs Ramsay is also associated with the natural space through the numerous nature-based descriptions that she is ascribed by those around her. This is shown most prominently when Mr Tansley observes her for a moment and notes:

> — she was the most beautiful person he had ever seen. With stars in her eyes and veils in her hair, with cyclamen and wild violets — what nonsense was he thinking? She was fifty at least; she had eight children. Stepping through fields of flowers and taking to her breast buds that had broken and lambs that had fallen; with the stars in her eyes and the wind in her hair — He had hold of her bag.
>
> (*To the Lighthouse* 16)

Mrs Ramsay is further integrated into the natural world as Mr Tansley links her appearance to nature-based imagery, noting particularly that she has "stars in her eyes" and "wind in her hair". Furthermore, this passage includes a subtle reference to the incredible importance that Mrs Ramsay holds as a figure in the novel. The idea of there being "stars in her eyes" may suggest an ethereality to her beauty as she is compared to that which is beyond the earthly world. This is furthered when Mr Tansley describes her as being "the most beautiful person he had ever seen". Additionally, she is specifically described as "stepping through fields of flowers". This is important to consider as the specific indication of the plurality of the fields suggests that she has walked through numerous fields, potentially for an extended period of time, and thus possesses an extensive connection to the natural world.

Furthermore, the very notion of Mrs Ramsay "taking to her breast buds that had broken and lambs that had fallen" is important to consider as it ascribes a deeply nurturing image to Mrs Ramsay. Throughout the novel, she is presented as being a particularly caring and maternal figure as she often acts as a soothing force to the tension around her. Not only does she constantly try to engage with all those staying in her house, in a bid to ensure they feel welcome and at home, but she becomes a source of constant reassurance to both her husband and her children — particularly James. This is shown in the moments where James is made upset by his father, and Mr Ramsay's determination not to visit the lighthouse the following day, and later too when James is afraid to fall asleep because he fears the old pig's skull that hangs in the children's room (*To the Lighthouse* 34;127-8). The cultivation of such a nurturing image, particularly one so connected to the natural world, aligns Mrs Ramsay with the mythical figure of Mother Nature.

In the same way I argued that Rachel in *The Voyage Out* may be understood as being an Aphrodite-figure and might be likened to Mother Nature, Mrs Ramsay can be explored as operating as a thinly veiled allusion to the figure of Mother Nature herself. Throughout her appearance in the novel, Woolf draws explicit attention to the incredible importance that Mrs Ramsay holds within the world she is constructed in. This is particularly shown through the way she is repeatedly referred to

as being queen-like. Examples of this include the moment when the regality of her presence, and "her strange severity, her extreme courtesy" cause her children to refer to her as a "Queen" and a later scene when she is described descending down the stairs to dinner "like a queen" (*To the Lighthouse* 9;93).

Furthermore, at the dinner Mrs Ramsay is shown to be markedly aware that "nothing seemed to have merged. They all sat separate. And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her" (*To the Lighthouse* 95). The awareness Mrs Ramsay possesses for the need to merge serves as an example to show how she operates as Woolf's vehicle in the novel to reveal her desire to merge together the traditionally separated spaces of the human and nonhuman. However, in revealing her desire to "merge" everything together, Woolf ultimately reestablishes human-centrality and human sovereignty over the natural world. Not only does Mrs Ramsay feel the need to merge the separated elements together, but she also possesses the authority (akin to that of Mother Nature) to do so as she notes that the "creation" of this sense of unification "rests on her". Moreover, this moment of explicit awareness becomes a prime point through which Woolf's own voice can be heard in her novel. While Mrs Ramsay principally operates as a clear reflection of Woolf's own mother in the novel, she also represents a part of Woolf through their shared need to merge.

Mrs Ramsay's desire to bring separated parts together presents Woolf's attempt to illustrate the actual fluidity of the division between the human and nonhuman. However, in allowing her own concern to filter so heavily into her character, Woolf reveals the way in which her own voice is echoed in Mrs Ramsay and thus Mrs Ramsay's anthropocentric manipulation of the natural world can be understood as being a direct reflection of Woolf's own approach to nature. When considering this mirroring between the novel — both in the form of the world that is constructed in the text's pages and the characters themselves — and Woolf, it is vital to consider what is arguably the most crucial location in Woolf's life — Talland House — and its prominent inclusion in *To the Lighthouse*.

2.2.

Throughout the course of *To the Lighthouse*, there is a constant circling back to the individual as the nonhuman elements within the novel constantly provide a foundation for the characters' understanding of themselves and those around them. Here, instead of equating and merging the spaces of the human and nonhuman, Woolf ultimately explores the natural world as being a

metaphoric and conceptual basis for the characters to grapple with their own identity. Further, in the moments when she does attempt to explore the natural world without the presence of humans, Woolf attributes nature human qualities in a manner that reestablishes the human-centrality of the traditional division. This construction of the natural world as a seemingly human presence in the novel is shown most prominently in her depiction of the lighthouse and her creation of the Ramsay's beachside home (Lostoski 66-71). The house becomes a point through which Woolf allows her own voice to enter into her text, as it calls back to her own childhood home of Talland House. It also becomes an evident example of Woolf's essential personification of the nonhuman realm.

Across the scholarship that exists around the topic of nature in Woolf's writing, the Ramsay's holiday home is consistently found at the centre of ecological concern (Garrard 41-2; Lostoski 66-71; McNeer 95; Ryan 205; Westling 860-2). Through her depiction of the Ramsay's home, and particularly the illustration of the home as presented in the *Time Passes* section of the novel, Woolf offers what Garrard (2012) describes as being the "merest glimpse of the world without us" (Garrard 40-1). He further notes that "in the early 20th century, though, for the first time writers began to imagine a world completely and finally without people (40).

Garrard (2012) describes Woolf's depiction of the Ramsay's home as being completely unprecedented as she displays, what he terms, "disanthropy" through her capturing of the "passing years through the inhabited house" (41). Additional scholarship writes that "In *To the Lighthouse* Woolf focuses full attention upon the energies of earth's life without human beings" as she draws attention to the "organic life that has moved into the Ramsay house and the inorganic objects that were left behind" (Westling 860 and Lostoski 70). While I agree that Woolf's approach to the second portion of her novel is certainly unique and shows evidence of her attempts to construct a space that is primarily without human existence and focused principally on the nonhuman, I would argue that while Woolf does present the house as being almost completely free from literal human presence in *Time Passes*, she personifies the natural presences in such a manner that they themselves become humanistic in existence.

Through her clear anthropomorphism of the natural space, Woolf continually ascribes humanising qualities to the nonhuman world. Before considering the exact ways in which she does this within her portrayal of the Ramsay's home, I would first like to consider how she humanises the literal lighthouse of the novel. The lighthouse exists as both a physical construct within the novel that Mr Ramsay, James, and Cam travel to at the end of the novel, as well as a symbolic entity that represents Woolf's attempt to coalesce the human and nonhuman and her ultimate

anthropocentric manipulation of the nonhuman world. While the lighthouse is an inanimate, manmade construction, and may be initially aligned more with the nonhuman space than the human, it is operated by men. Further, the very reason for its establishment is the waters that are part of the natural world, but also the need for a guiding light for human travellers moving across the ocean's surface.

Despite the way the lighthouse might be understood as being a point of attempted amalgamation, it becomes one of the most prominent examples of how the nonhuman world is not only constantly circled back to the human, but is also defined through humanising qualities. The first example of the lighthouse being distinctly humanised is when Mrs Ramsay notes that "(she woke in the night and saw [the lighthouse's light] bent across their bed, stroking the floor), but for all that she thought, watching it with fascination, hypnotised, as if it were stroking with its silver fingers…" (*To the Lighthouse* 73). Here, the light coming from the lighthouse is described by Mrs Ramsay as being "fingers" stroking at the floor in a manner that a human would.

Furthermore, this humanisation of the lighthouse extends to all elements that pertain to it as the boat that the Ramsays use to sail to the lighthouse is distinctly humanised too. In a blatant personification of the marine vessel, the boat is compared to a woman arousing from her slumber when it reads: "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" (*To the Lighthouse* 211). In returning to the lighthouse in particular, I would like to draw further attention to how the recurring nonhuman element is not only ascribed clearly humanising metaphoric descriptions, but is also granted a presence in the novel that is akin to the humans in the text. This is shown in the passage that reads:

> When darkness fell, the stroke of the Lighthouse, which had laid itself with such authority upon the carpet in the darkness, tracing its pattern, came now in the softer light of spring mixed with moonlight gliding gently as if it laid its caress and lingered steathily and looked and came lovingly again. But in the very lull of this loving caress, as the long stroke leant upon the bed, the rock was rent asunder; another fold of the shawl loosened; there it hung, and swayed.
>
> (*To the Lighthouse* 149)

In laying its light upon the floor "with such authority", the lighthouse becomes a clear indication of Woolf's reestablishment of the centrality of the human within the natural space. This is shown

through the way in which the lighthouse — and its clear association with the human through the description of the light appearing like "fingers" — possesses a clear authority within the nonhuman construction of the Ramsay home (*To the Lighthouse* 73). Furthermore, the presentation of the lighthouse's authority may be understood as being a subtle echo of the character of Cam who, in the limited descriptions that exist of her character, is instantly described as possessing an authority within the nonhuman space she inhabits (as has been explored in her refusal to give Mr Bankes a flower in the garden). By aligning the lighthouse to Cam, Woolf potentially presents the lighthouse as a mirrored image of Cam as the lighthouse's own authority further emphasises the authority, and freedom, that Cam herself possesses. Here, Woolf not only ascribes a humanistic appearance to the lighthouse, but she manipulates it into becoming a reflection of one of the novel's primary characters in a manner that is ultimately anthropocentric.

This anthropocentric presentation of the lighthouse is further found through Woolf's particular choice to capitalise the word. She does this throughout *To the Lighthouse*, but she noticeably does not capitalise the word "lighthouse" in any of her other literary works (*Orlando; The Waves*). While this may be a simple emphasis of the importance that the lighthouse possesses within the novel — it is the central focus of both the novel's plot and several of its characters — it may also be understood as being a subtle suggestion of the essential humanisation of lighthouse. Here, it acts as a name that would be given to a human entity rather than an inanimate, nonhuman element. Finally, the humanisation of the lighthouse is further found through the description of it leaning against a bed in a way that mirrors human action, and the later description of it caressing, lingering, and possessing a "loving" quality (*To the Lighthouse* 149).

While found throughout her depiction of the lighthouse, Woolf's ultimate anthropomorphisation of the nonhuman world is prominently found in her depiction of the Ramsay's beachside house. Evidence of her anthropocentric manipulation of the house is found in one the descriptions given to the house in *Time Passes* which reads:

> … the profusion of darkness which, creeping in at keyholes and crevices, stole round window blinds, came into bedrooms, swallowed up here a jug and basin, there a bowl of red and yellow dahlias, there the sharp edges and firm bulk of a chest of drawers. Not only was furniture confounded; there was scarcely anything left of body or mind by which one could say, "This is he" or "This is she." Sometimes a hand was raised as if to clutch something or

> ward off something, or somebody groaned, or somebody laughed aloud as if sharing a joke with nothingness.
>
> (*To the Lighthouse* 140)

In the paragraph above, the nonhuman elements are immediately humanised as they enter into the Ramsay home. The darkness is compared to an intruder in the night, creeping into the house and steeling behind window blinds. Also, in the same way a criminal might break into a house at night and steal possessions, the darkness, upon entering the home, "swallows up" a jug, a basin, a bowl of dahlias, and a chest of drawers. Furthermore, it is important to note that this particular passage occurs towards the beginning of the second portion of the novel where it is hinted that there are still occupants within the house — in parenthesis, Mr Carmichael is noted to finish reading Virgil, and then blow out his candles — as the human guests appear to be aware of a tangibility of the darkness. Someone raises a hand as if to grab at it, or "ward it off", whilst another laughs aloud "as if sharing a joke with nothingness" suggesting the nonhuman element exists as something akin to human entity, and may react or respond to the humans within the house.

The humanisation of the nonhuman elements within the Ramsay home is further found in several instances. This includes the moment when it is noted that "the little airs mounted the staircase and nosed round bedroom doors" (*To the Lighthouse* 141). The airs that move through the house are further focused on when they are compared to soldiers in the line: "those stray airs, advance guards of great armies, blustered in, brushed bare boards, nibbled and fanned" (*To the Lighthouse* 144). The distinct humanisation of the nonhuman elements within the house is also found when the clothing articles that are left behind by the characters are described as remaining shaped to the humans who once wore them as "what people had shed and left — a pair of shoes, a shooting cap, some faded skirts and coats in the wardrobes — those alone kept the human shape and in the emptiness indicated how once they were filled and animated" (*To the Lighthouse* 144). This line further indicates how the nonhuman world is moulded, manipulated, and ultimately defined by the humans, even in moments of their clear absence within the space.

While the general nonhuman elements in the house are important to consider when exploring Woolf's anthropomorphisation of the home, it is absolutely vital to draw attention to the specific watery presence that surrounds, and exists within, the Ramsays' home. Within her own study, Westling (1999) draws particular attention to the sea air that moves through the house, describing it as being one of Woolf's most obvious "anthropomorphic projections" (862). While the work above explores examples of the humanisation of the element of air quite generally, attention

must be given to Woolf's continual emphasis of the particular sea air that enters and moves through the home. The first instance of this is:

> … 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… Almost one might imagine them, as they entered the drawing-room questioning and wondering, toying with the flap of hanging wall-paper, asking, would it hang much longer, when would it fall?
>
> (*To the Lighthouse* 140)

Here, the "certain airs" that move into the house can be inferred as being sea airs because of the way they move through hinges that have rusted and the "swollen sea-moistened woodwork". These sea airs are attributed human qualities as they enter into the house and ponder its condition, just as human guests might. This clear humanisation continues further on when "the soft nose of the clammy sea airs" is described as "rubbing, snuffling, iterating and reiterating their questions — 'Will you fade? Will you perish?'" (*To the Lighthouse* 145). Once more, the airs are depicted as being human entities that are capable of thought and question. A further point to note here is how the questions that these airs ask precede the recitation of "we perished, each alone" that Mr Ramsay does on the boat going out to the lighthouse towards the end of the novel (*To the Lighthouse* 186; *A Writers Diary* 75). Here, Woolf once again reasserts her anthropocentric manipulation of nature, and water, as she presents the sea airs as being an anthropomorphised element within the novel and a mirror to Mr Ramsay's character.

The personification of the clammy sea air continues into later moments of the novel where it is noted that "the clammy breaths, fumbling, seemed to have triumphed" (*To the Lighthouse* 156). Here, the sea air, described as "clammy breaths", is likened to the breath of a human entity. Furthermore, the very idea of it triumphing suggests that it completely takes over the Ramsay home, conquering the inorganic objects that populate the space and occupying the house in a manner that reflects typical human sovereignty over the natural world. Throughout *Time Passes*, nature (and particularly water) occupies the principal roles in the house that would typically be ascribed to the human characters. In addition to the anthropocentric presentation of the elements, this ascription of human roles is also shown through Woolf's presentation of water as capable of changing and manipulating nonhuman elements in the same way humans did when they moulded their clothes to their shape. This is found explicitly when it is noted that "the books and things were mouldy" and

"the saucepan had rusted and the mat decayed. Toads had nosed their way in" all because "the rain-pipe had blocked over the study window and let the water in" (*To the Lighthouse* 153;156). By presenting the watery presence of the house in such a manner, Woolf personifies the elements of the natural world to such an extent that they operate more like human agents in her text than anything else.

Water is fundamental to exploring the anthropomorphisation of the Ramsay's home, with Mrs Ramsay noting towards the beginning of the novel that, in the months when the house is left unoccupied, it "positively dripped with wet" (*To the Lighthouse* 31). While the humanisation of the watery elements, and literal bodies of water, happens most clearly in conjunction with its presence in the Ramsay home, it must be noted that this humanisation of the element is not bound to the second section of the novel and is rather found throughout *To the Lighthouse*. The ocean that surrounds the Ramsay's home is described as "chuckling" on multiple occasions, and is later recounted to emit a "hissing sound" as its waves slap "the rocks as if they were wild creatures who were perfectly free" (*To the Lighthouse* 323).

In addition to her clear humanisation of water, and her continual reference to it in human terms in moments when it exists free of human contact and observation, Woolf also presents water as being ultimately anthropocentric in purpose. As a literal presence in the novel, water becomes inextricably bonded to numerous characters in the novel, and its tangibility produces numerous emotions in those who encounter it. Water also exists as both an extension, and reflection, of the humans within the novel. This is subtly shown in the quote above where the specific mention of the "wild" creatures aligns the ocean to Cam who herself is notably described as being "wild and free" (*To the Lighthouse* 25). Furthermore, water specifically operates as a clear conceptual metaphor for the characters within the novel (and by extension, Woolf herself) as they base almost all their understandings of their own identity and notions of selfhood on watery images.

2.3.

Throughout the novel, water is used both metaphorically by the characters to describe themselves and each other, and conceptually to discern their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. The metaphoric application of water is found in Mr Ramsay who is attributed two distinct watery comparisons. He is described as having "reminded his wife of the great sea lion at the Zoo tumbling backwards after swallowing his fish and walloping off" when he insists on reiterating to his son that the family will not be traveling to the lighthouse, and ultimately causes more tension

between him and James (*To the Lighthouse* 37). Shortly after this, Mr Ramsay describes himself as being "like a desolate sea-bird" when he wallows in a moment of self-doubt and self-pity (*To the Lighthouse* 49).

The attribution of watery metaphors is further found with Mr Carmichael, who is described as being both like a "sea monster", and Poseidon when Lily notes that he reminds her of an "old Pagan god" because he is "shaggy, with weeds in his hair and the trident (it was only a French novel) in his hand" (*To the Lighthouse* 49;234). Additionally, Mrs Ramsay describes Bankes as being "a sailor not without weariness" who she notes "sees the wind fill his sail and yet hardly wants to be off again and thinks how, had the ship sunk, he would have whirled round and round and found rest on the floor of the sea" (*To the Lighthouse* 95).

Water is used to describe Mr Tansley's grandfather when his grandson recalls that he was once a fisherman, and the story that Mrs Ramsay reads to James sporadically throughout the novel is particularly watery as it centres around a fisherman and his wife (*To the Lighthouse* 62;103). Cam, feeling herself to be "sad and sulky" describes her emotional state as being "overcast", whilst James, at the close of the novel, is noted to be "like a born sailor" when he steers the boat through a patch of water where it is revealed that ships had sunk before (*To the Lighthouse* 189;231). Furthermore, Mrs McNab is said to have "rolled like a ship at sea" when she works her way through the derelict Ramsay home in *Time Passes*, and is later compared to a "tropical fish oaring its way through sun-laced waters" (*To the Lighthouse* 146;149).

Throughout the novel, watery imagery surrounds the characters and while this often occurs through the metaphoric application of water, it does also occur through the characters grounding of many of their conceptual understandings of identity, and existence, in the element. Here, I would like to first consider the ocean as it is not only the literal body of water that is permanently present within the text, but it is the body that is most often utilised by the characters. In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf depicts her own awareness of her ultimately anthropocentric utilisation of water and explicitly illustrates her characters as being conscious of their own use of water. This is shown through the way the characters, who turn to the element, are often aware of how the ocean becomes a basis upon which they structure their thoughts and feelings, and grapple with various notions pertaining to their identity and their existence.

When considering the characters who utilise water the most, it must be noted here that in *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf rejects the traditional androcentric narrative in favour of presenting a multi-voiced and female-centric narrative (Kostkowska 1;54; Swanson 24). She constructs the novel primarily around the voices, and the thoughts, of the women that exist within her text — Mrs

Ramsay leads the course of the first part, Mrs McNab the second, and Lily and Cam share the final section. These women's streams of consciousness are interrupted only by the natural world, and most specifically and recurrently, elements pertaining to water. This is found particularly in *Time Passes* where Mrs McNab is the primary human presence within the second section of the novel, but she shares the role of central perpetrator of activity with the humanlike-watery presences that occupy the house during this time. In sharing this role, Mrs McNab and water are closely bonded together and the anthropomorphic representation of the natural world in this scene becomes more evident as it directly mirrors Mrs McNab's impact on the home. Furthermore, Lily's voice breaks through between the oceanic passages of the final chapter. In alternating between the female presence and water, Woolf binds the two intimately together and allows water to operate as both an extension, and reflection, of the women in her text.

Throughout the novel, the characters are constantly aware of water's existence within their world. This literal presence of water is found in both the direct mentions of, and subsequent engagements with, the ocean, as well as in the moments that do not necessarily draw obvious attention to water, but rather include only subtle hints of its consistent presence. Whilst writing the novel, Woolf documented in her diary that "the sea is to be heard all through" *To the Lighthouse*, and she achieves this particularly when the characters of Mrs Ramsay and Lily both take moments to describe their awareness of the sound of water (*A Writer's Diary* 78; Muscoguiri 102-4). During a moment of solitude, Mrs Ramsay notes that all was "very still… there was only the sound of the sea" (*To the Lighthouse* 72). Later, after returning to the Ramsay's holiday home after the years surrounding the war, Lily notes that "through the open window the voice of the beauty of the world came murmuring… gently the waves would break (Lily heard them in her sleep)" (*To the Lighthouse* 161).

In addition to Mrs Ramsay and Lily being distinctly aware of the literal presence of water, the bodies of water found in the text ultimately loop back to the human as they become mirrors of the characters within the novel. This mirroring is shown when Lily notes her own state of mind to be like that of water with the line: "her mind [was] still rising and falling with the sea" (*To the Lighthouse* 169). It is also found during the hours that surround Mrs Ramsay's passing as the night is described as being "full of wind and destruction", with leaves from trees flying "helter skelter until the lawn is plastered with them and they lie packed in gutters and choke rain pipes and scatter damp paths" (*To the Lighthouse* 143).

During this same night, the sea "tosses itself and breaks itself" in a way that makes the world appear as though it "reflect[s] the compass of the soul" (*To the Lighthouse* 143). While

water, and particularly storms, were explored as being mirrors of characters' emotional states in the previous chapter focused on *The Voyage Out*, it is clear that, in *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf continues this idea and further expands upon it. Here, Woolf not only incorporates it in her writing again, but she expresses her clear awareness of her manipulation of water into becoming a reflection of her characters when she notes that the waves reflect "the soul". She later reiterates this awareness when she writes that "the minds of men" are often mirrored in "pools of uneasy water" (*To the Lighthouse* 148).

In considering the particularly acute awareness that Mrs Ramsay has for the watery spaces around her, the close bond she has to the element that often reflects her own emotional state, and how Woolf reincorporates ideas from her previous novels into her later works, I would suggest that Mrs Ramsay can be understood as operating as an echo of Rachel Vinrace. The connection between two of Woolf's primary novelistic characters is found both through their complete fascination with the element, and the bond they share with water throughout their appearance in their respective texts. In the same way that Rachel is absolutely transfixed by the literal bodies of water around her — and is particularly enthralled by the idea of journeying up the river in Santa Marina — Mrs Ramsay grows completely elated at the thought of going to the beach (*The Voyage Out* 77;195). In the passage below, water evokes such an intense emotional response in Mrs Ramsay that she both cries and laughs, and sprints down the staircase very "quickly" to bid farewell to those who do go down to the ocean:

> Instantly, for no reason at all, Mrs Ramsay became like a girl of twenty, full of gaiety. A mood of revelry suddenly took possession of her. Of course they must go; of course they must go, she cried, laughing; and running down the last three or four steps quickly, she began turning from one to the other and laughing and drawing Minta's wrap round her and saying she only wished she could come too, and would they be very late, and had any of them got a watch? … "How I wish I could come with you!" she cried.
>
> (*To the Lighthouse* 128-9)

In further exploring the connection between Mrs Ramsay and Rachel, Mrs Ramsay is also completely engulfed by watery imagery. Across numerous literary studies conducted into her character, scholars primarily settle on the idea that she is a character who "lives towards the sea" and is not only aware of its presence within *To the Lighthouse*, but is repeatedly engulfed by the

element (Hartman 22; Philips 420; Muscoguiri 102). This engulfment is found very clearly during a brief exchange that happens between Mrs Ramsay and Mr Tansley:

> … he could not help laughing herself sometimes. She said, the other day, something about "waves mountains high." Yes, said Charles Tansley, it was a little rough. "Aren't you drenched to the skin?" she had said. "Damp, not wet through," said Mr Tansley, pinching his sleeve, feeling his socks.
>
> (*To the Lighthouse* 9)

Mrs Ramsay is absolutely "drenched to the skin" with water through her constant awareness of the literal element and the metaphoric application of the aqueous entity to various aspects of her persona — something that is done both by Mrs Ramsay herself as well as numerous other characters in the novel. Furthermore, she is also drenched through her constant utilisation of water as a conceptual metaphor and her manipulation of the element to better understand and explore notions of her life, her identity, her existence, and particularly her emotions. An example that presents how water not only elicits emotions within Mrs Ramsay but is also used by her to conceptualise her own life and identity is found when she spends time outdoors in the garden towards the very beginning of the novel:

> …so that the monotonous fall of the waves on the beach, which for the most part beat a measured and soothing tattoo to her thoughts and seemed consolingly 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 in 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… One moment more, with her head raised, she listened, as if she waited for some habitual sound, some regular mechanical sound; and then, hearing something rhythmical, half said, half chanted, beginning in the garden, as her husband beat up and down the

terrace, something between a croak and a song, she was soothed once more, assured again that all was well…

(*To the Lighthouse* 19-20)

In the passage quoted above, the "monotonous fall of the waves" indicates the consistent repetitiveness of water and its absolute permanence within the constructed space of the novel. This consistency is further emphasised multiple times in this passage, the first being through Mrs Ramsay's awareness of how the sound of waves is always present, though it may simply be "obscured and concealed under other sounds" at times. The second is the indication that the waves are described as being a "ghostly roll of drums" that "beat the measure of life". Here, the continuous motion of the waves exists throughout Mrs Ramsay's life — continuing until her final moments whilst also existing in her earliest ones as they murmur an "old cradle song". In addition, the very notion of the waves being an "old cradle song" is a subtle allusion to Woolf's own recollection of her past as one of her earliest memories is of her "lying half asleep, half awake, in bed in the nursery at St. Ives" where she specifically describes "hearing the waves breaking, one, two, one, two, and sending a splash of water over the beach" (*A Sketch of the Past* 64). Woolf's inclusion of an echo of her own life in her novel reveals how water is not only a point of slippage where Woolf's own voice enters into her text, but also a clear point of anthropocentrism as water continually loops back to the characters as well as Woolf herself.

Furthermore, this passage indicates how Woolf illustrates her characters as being acutely aware of their anthropocentric manipulation of the element, with water becoming a clear conceptual framework for their identity and existence. Here, Mrs Ramsay feels as though, in soothing her, water murmurs: "I am your support". This explicitly reveals how water operates as a metaphoric scaffold for the way the characters interpret the world around them and as a structural framework, and a conceptual metaphor, that allows the characters to consciously comprehend notions of their own being.

In concluding my close reading of this passage, I would like to draw attention to how Mrs Ramsay is initially comforted by the ocean, finding the waves to be "consoling" and a "soothing tattoo to her thoughts" but is almost immediately made fearful of the sea only a moment later as the noise "made one think of the destruction of the island and its engulfment in the sea". Here, the very presence of water serves as a reminder of her own mortality which invokes a deep sense "terror" within her. The particular idea that Mrs Ramsay becomes fearful of the possibility of the sea "engulfing" the whole island is one of the rare moments where Woolf achieves her equalisation of

the traditional binary of the human and nonhuman. She presents water as having an authority that is exists beyond the human and is capable of causing the destruction of mankind, and precedes one of the primary concerns of the Anthropocene — rising sea levels (Chaplin 512; Meeder and Parkinson 490-1;495; Squire 211; Thornier 99; Wodskou 24). In considering Woolf's seeming preemption of one of the primary, global concerns of today, precisely because I am exploring her work from the time of the Anthropocene, I am able to suggest that her portrayal of water within her writing reveals the actual limitations of her ecological imagination. Despite her conscious efforts to ascribe an agency to the natural world, she ultimately circles it back to being anthropocentric in nature as it is used by Mrs Ramsay to explore the notion of fear and spark a consideration into the topic of death.

However, in the same way she is quickly made fearful of the water after initially being calmed by it, Mrs Ramsay instantly finds comfort once more in water and is "assured again that all was well". The multitude of feelings that the ocean generates within Mrs Ramsay indicates how water is used to scaffold numerous thoughts and conceptualisations for the characters. While water provides Mrs Ramsay with comfort, and allows her to understand notions of her own being, it also operates as both a grounding for the conceptualisation of mortality and death, and a basis for the comprehension of an assortment of experiences and emotions.

Throughout the course of *To the Lighthouse*, water is linked to emotions by numerous characters as they use the element to metaphorically structure their understanding of, and exploration into, the personal emotions they experience. Immediately presented as being a particularly empathetic woman — captured in the opening pages of the novel knitting socks and gathering together odd items to send along to the lighthouse keeper and his son — Mrs Ramsay compares herself to a sponge soaked with water because of her highly emotional inclination, noting that "she often felt she was nothing but a sponge sopped full of human emotions" (*To the Lighthouse* 6-7;37). Worth noting here is that the notion of a soaked sponge being representative of emotions is one that is hinted at within *To the Lighthouse* and later thoroughly expanded upon by Woolf in her subsequent novel, *The Waves*.

Further examples of water being used to explore emotions include how water, and various images pertaining to it, elicits emotions in those who observe it. This not only includes the previously mentioned moment where Mrs Ramsay grows ecstatic at the thought of visiting the beach with several other dinner party guests, but also includes the moment when she notes that "the waves beat inspires in merry boat-loads a feeling of gratitude" (*To the Lighthouse* 50). Additionally, she understands her own emotions as being like water. This is shown after her observation of the lighthouse's light that moves through her bedroom where Mrs Ramsay

understands her emotions as flooding through her as though "some sealed vessel in her brain whose bursting would flood her with delight" (*To the Lighthouse* 73).

Mrs Ramsay also manoeuvres water anthropocentrically when she uses the aqueous space to explore the feelings of exhaustion that she experiences after interacting with her husband. This is found in the following passage which reads:

> [Mrs Ramsay] seemed to raise herself with an effort, and at once to pour erect into the air a rain of energy, a column of spray, looking at the same time animated and alive as if all her energies were being fused into force, burning and illuminating (quietly though she sat, taking up her stocking again), and into this delicious fecundity, this fountain and spray of life, the fatal sterility of the male plunged itself, like a beak of brass, barren and bare… James felt all her strength flaring up to be drunk and quenched by the beak of brass, the arid scimitar of the male…
>
> (*To the Lighthouse* 42-3)

Here, Mrs Ramsay understands her provision of sympathy to her husband, who so greedily demands it, as being an expulsion of energy, a "spray of life". The extremeness of this moment — and the impact it has on Mrs Ramsay — is shown through the very distinct contrast that is created between the couple where Mrs Ramsay, and her provision of sympathy, is heavily associated with watery imagery whilst Mr Ramsay is described as being "arid", "barren and bare". Furthermore, Mrs Ramsay returns to watery images to describe her moments of exhaustion when, during the dinner party, she implores Lily to help her entertain the guests with a look that says:

> "I am drowning, my dear, in seas of fire. Unless you apply some balm to the anguish of this hour and say something nice to that young man there, life will run upon the rocks — indeed I hear the grating and the growling at this minute. My nerves are taut as fiddle strings. Another touch and they will snap"
>
> (*To the Lighthouse* 103)

In addition to Mrs Ramsay, Lily also continually understands her emotions through a framework of water. This is found when she is described as having "floated off instantly upon some wave of sympathetic expansion" and then suffering from an "enormous flood of grief" when she engages with Mr Ramsay, who seeks to find the same reassurance in Lily that he once sought in his own wife (*To the Lighthouse* 171-2). Lily also further describes this encounter with Mr Ramsay in more

water imagery when she notes that "his demand for sympathy poured and spread itself in pools at her feet" (*To the Lighthouse* 173).

Water is anthropocentrically utilised not only to understand human emotions, but also to comprehend the passage of life for the characters as they grapple with notions about their existence through watery conceptualisations. Mrs Ramsay understands her existence as being an amalgamation of all the moments of her life when she considers "how life, from being made up of little separate incidents which one lived one by one, became curled and whole like a wave which bore one up and threw one down with it, there, with a dash on the beach" (*To the Lighthouse* 53). Furthermore, she directly compares her own mind to water. Not only does Mrs Ramsay feel as though the experience of emotions is like the bursting of a vessel in her mind, but she also conceptualises the process of retrieving memories as being as though she were "fishing them up out of her mind" (*To the Lighthouse* 64;73). This conceptualisation of the mind as being a pool of water is further explored when Lily notes that "the whole world seemed to have dissolved in this early morning hour into a pool of thought, a deep basin of reality, and one could almost fancy that had Mr. Carmichael spoken, for instance, a little tear would have rent the surface pool" (*To the Lighthouse* 200).

The distinct understanding of human thought, and human subconsciousness, as being aqueous is further illustrated when Mrs Ramsay notes that "the things you know us by, are simply childish. Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep; but now and again we rise to the surface and that is what you see us by" (*To the Lighthouse* 70). Lily once more extends this idea towards the end of the novel when, "against her will she had come to the surface, and found herself half out of the picture, looking, little dazedly, as if at unreal things, at Mr Carmichael" (*To the Lighthouse* 199). The notion of water being used to scaffold the very understanding of human unconsciousness is one that is directly echoed from *The Voyage Out*. There, Rachel's moments of unconsciousness are explored through a series of hallucinations which involve a slow encapsulation in water. Further, when she is momentarily conscious, she is described as having "come to the surface of the dark, sticky pool" (*The Voyage Out* 327). In *To the Lighthouse*, the characters continue this conceptualisation of human consciousness, and subconsciousness, through the image of water and once again, the element is constantly looped back to being of purpose to the human as it becomes a conceptual, and metaphoric, foundation for the characters' grapplings with notions of existence.

The idea of the human mind being conceptualised through the application of watery images continues when Mrs Ramsay describes her recollection of the day's events. She explores her

thoughts as having washed "from side to side of her mind, and as they washed, words, like little shaded lights, one red, one blue, one yellow, lit up in the dark of her mind" (*To the Lighthouse* 131). In addition to using water as conceptual foundation for her own mind, Mrs Ramsay also uses it to understand Cam's. In noting that "the words seemed to be dropped into a well, where, if the waters were clear, they were also so extraordinarily distorting that, even as they descended, one saw them twisting about to make Heaven knows what pattern on the floor of the child's mind", Mrs Ramsay indicates her uncertainty about Cam's mind and her thoughts through the application of a watery metaphor (*To the Lighthouse* 64).

In addition to water acting as the structural framework of the characters' minds, it is also used anthropocentrically when it becomes the scaffold upon which they understand the events they experience. When Lily considers the characters of Mr Ramsay and Mr Bankes, it is noted that "impressions poured in upon her" (*To the Lighthouse* 28). Later Mrs Ramsay describes bending "her head as if to left the pelt of jagged hail, the drench of dirty water, bespatter her unrebuked" during a momentary spat with Mr Ramsay regarding the journey to the lighthouse and his adamant refusal to see the trip through. In the same way Lily understands herself as being a vessel of water with impressions pouring into her like water would pour into a vase, Mrs Ramsay compares the harshness of Mr Ramsay's words to being struck by "jagged hail".

Furthermore, Mrs Ramsay frames the experience of catching multiple fragments of conversation during the dinner party with water. This moment reads:

> …like a light stealing under water so that its ripples and the reeds in it and the minnows balancing themselves, and the sudden silent trout are all lit up hanging, trembling. So she saw them; she heard them; but whatever they said had also this quality, as if what they said was like the movement of a trout when, at the same time, one can see the ripple and the gravel, something to the right, something to the left; and the whole is held together
>
> (*To the Lighthouse* 118)

In the same way it might be difficult to spot a fish moving through a body of water because of the quickness of its actions and the iridescence caused by light reflecting off the water's surface, the moments of conversation that pass across the dinner table are fragmented and difficult to grasp onto completely. Instead, Mrs Ramsay is only able to catch small portions of the multiple dialogues that take place. She later reiterates this inability to focus in on the multiple strands of conversation by recounting that "the words (she was looking at the window) sounded as if they were floating like

flowers on water out there, cut off from them all, as if no one had said them, but they had come into existence of themselves" (*To the Lighthouse* 122).

Throughout *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs Ramsay and Lily continually utilise water anthropocentrically as they reduce the element to being a conceptual basis upon which they structure their thoughts and experiences, and grapple with their understandings of their respective internal processes. Furthermore, their manipulation of the element is often presented as being a markedly conscious decision as they are continuously aware of their intrinsic bond to water. This conscious manipulation of water is not only found in Mrs Ramsay and Lily, but is rather evident in Nancy too. Described as seeing "the whole world spread out beneath her", Nancy's first substantial appearance in the novel immediately presents her as being a sovereign of the natural world:

> Nancy, reluctantly, saw the whole world spread out beneath her, as if it were Constantinople seen through a mist, and then, however heavy-eyed one might be, one must needs ask, "Is that Santa Sofia?" "Is that the Golden Horn?" So Nancy asked, when Minta took her hand. "What is it that she wants? Is it that?" And what was that? Here and there emerged from the mist (as Nancy looked down upon life spread beneath her) a pinnacle, a dome; prominent things, without names. But when Minta dropped her hand, as she did when they ran down the hillside, all that, the dome, the pinnacle, whatever it was that had protruded through the mist, sank down into it and disappeared.
>
> (*To the Lighthouse* 83)

In the same way Mrs Ramsay turns to watery imagery to ground her explorations into her emotions, her engagements with the world around her, and her very understanding of the notion of life and death, so does Nancy manipulate the natural world to her liking. Peering at the natural landscape around her, Nancy allows nature to ground her imagination as she envisions "a pinnacle, a dome" emerging from the land. In addition to manoeuvring the natural world to her liking, Nancy very particularly anthropocentrically manipulates water too. Described in scholarship as being a "gazer into the depths of the sea", Nancy draws from the water any image she wishes (Royer 182; Scott 2011:9). This is found when she observes a tidal pool on the beach:

> Nancy waded out to her own rocks and searched her own pools and let that couple look after themselves. She crouched low down and touched the smooth rubber-like sea anemones, who were stuck like lumps of jelly to the side of the rock. Brooding, she changed the pool into the sea, and made the minnows into sharks and whales, and cast vast

> clouds over this tiny world by holding her hand against the sun, and so brought darkness and desolation, like God himself, to millions of ignorant and innocent creatures, and then took her hand away suddenly and let the sun stream down.
>
> (*To the Lighthouse* 85)

This specific description of Nancy seeking out the pools of water that may be "her own" implies a distinct sense of belonging in the natural world, and one that echoes both her mother's, and her sister's, connections with nature. Further, it indicates her authority within the space as she manipulates the waters before her, turning the pool into the sea, and the minnows into sharks and whales. This passage also reveals how Nancy is not only capable of manipulating the natural world to suit her imagination, but rather how she is aware of her anthropocentric navigation of the natural space as she describes her own actions as making her "like God himself". Furthermore, attention is drawn to Nancy's "broodiness" as she crouches over the watery pool. Here, just like Rachel in *The Voyage Out* and Mrs Ramsay, Nancy allows a literal body of water to become a space where she can both reveal her feelings, and grapple with them, as well as seek comfort. In the same way Rachel is calmed by the waters she engages with in her novel, so is Nancy calmed by the tidal pool she engages with as she appears before it broody, covering the waters to make the pool "dark" and "desolate" but then pulls "her hand away suddenly" and lets "the sun stream down".

This anthropocentric manipulation of water that sees to the characters peering into water, and pulling from the depths whatever one desires, is further found in Cam towards the end of the novel when it is noted that:

> [Cam's] hand cut a trail in the sea, as her mind made the green swirls and streaks into patterns and, numbed and shrouded, wandered in imagination in that underworld of waters where the pearls stuck in clusters to white sprays, where in the green light a change came over one's entire mind and one's body shone half transparent enveloped in a green cloak.
>
> (*To the Lighthouse* 206)

Here, just like her sister before her, Cam is shown to manipulate the ocean to her own pleasure as she allows her hands to carve patterns of "green swirls and streaks" into the water's surface. Furthermore, her imagination projects visions into the depth of the ocean as she wonders what lies beyond the surface and what an engulfment of her own being in such water would do — wondering if "one's body shone half transparent enveloped in a green cloak" — in a bid to keep herself entertained during the boat ride she takes with her father and brother to the lighthouse.

Throughout the novel, the characters not only anthropocentrically manipulate water to explore notions of their own being, but they are often presented as possessing a clear awareness of how they operate water to their benefit and frequently use it as a conceptual foundation for their ideas around life and existence. In using water in such an anthropocentric manner, the characters are able to grapple with ideas that they might be otherwise unable to fully conceptualise. This is explicitly suggested in the novel when it is noted that the water "set sailing thoughts which had grown stagnant on dry land, and gave to their bodies even some sort of physical relief" (*To the Lighthouse* 23). Cam reiterates this idea later on when she notes that when on water, "one could let what one thought expand here" as thoughts are capable of expanding "like a leaf on water" (*To the Lighthouse* 214). Here, it is clear that the characters possess an awareness of their anthropocentric utilisation of water as they understand the element as operating as an extension of themselves, and a foundation upon which to develop conceptualisations of their own being.

While Woolf attempts to decentre human centrality through her presentation of water within her writing, she ultimately loops it back to the human. The literal bodies of water become spaces upon which the characters consider their emotions, and the image of water becomes a basis for their metaphoric and conceptual grapplings with their own identity and existence — something the characters of *To the Lighthouse* are aware of. This awareness of the very notion of anthropocentrism, and the constant circling back to the human and notions of the self, is shown when it is noted: "what they complained of about Charles Tansley was that until he had turned the whole thing round and made it somehow reflect himself and disparage them — he was not satisfied" (*To the Lighthouse* 10).

In possessing an explicit awareness of their ultimately anthropocentric navigation of the nonhuman around them, and how they twist the spaces to constantly reflect back on their own notions of self, the characters of *To the Lighthouse* echo Woolf's own conscious, anthropocentric manipulation of water. Throughout the course of her writing, Woolf becomes more acutely aware of her own manipulation of water as it becomes a literal and metaphoric grounding not only for her fictional creations, but for herself as she uses water to grapple with notions of her own identity and her work as an author, and to reconcile with her own childhood and the image of her parents.

2.4.

As she did in *The Voyage Out*, Woolf clearly "incorporates her own life" into *To the Lighthouse* (McCracken 59). While the inclusion of her own childhood in her first novel was primarily done in

a more subtle manner, she explicitly illustrates her own background in *To the Lighthouse* as she thoroughly recreates the space of Talland House, and includes in the house distinct recreations of both her parents. Additionally, she operates a clear investigation into her own identity with the novel particularly focusing on her continued fascination with the notion of death and drowning, and her role as an author in what she described in her personal diaries as being her most "sentimental novel" (*A Writer's Diary* 79).

In establishing a world in the pages of *To the Lighthouse* that is an almost exact replication of the space of her own personal childhood, Woolf also creates characters who find their origins either in members of her family or in aspects of Woolf herself. In the very opening pages of the novel, Woolf writes that "in earliest childhood any turn in the wheel of sensation has the power to crystallise and transfix the moment upon which its gloom or radiance rests" (*To the Lighthouse* 5). The line directly alludes to how she constructs the novel as being a recollection of moments of her own childhood — all of which are intrinsically bonded to the space of St. Ives — that she remains completely "transfixed" by her entire life. While traces of her childhood appear across an assortment of her work, they are found most prominently in *To the Lighthouse* where the Ramsay's beachside house becomes a clear fictional replication of the Stephen's holiday home, and the house's occupants are essential reconstructions of Woolf's own family.

Throughout the course of *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf seamlessly incorporates biographical echoes from her own life into her text. The most prominent echo is found in her presentation of Mr and Mrs Ramsay as they operate as recreations of her own parents, Sir Leslie Stephen and Julia Stephen. Both Mr and Mrs Ramsay are characterised in Woolf's parents' likeness, and they are noted to have eight sons and daughters — the same number of children that Woolf's own parents had (*To the Lighthouse* 10). Furthermore, Mrs Ramsay is surrounded by language in the novel that Woolf associates with her own mother in her biographical writing. This is found in a moment towards the end of the novel where Lily notes that "it was strange how clearly she saw [Mrs Ramsay], stepping with her usual quickness across fields among those folds, purplish and soft, among whose flowers, hyacinth or lilies, she vanished" when she tries to recall Mrs Ramsay to complete her painting (*To the Lighthouse* 203-4).

This incredibly detailed flowery association not only once more bonds Mrs Ramsay further to the image of Mother Nature, but it also intrinsically cements her as being a reflection of Julia. This scene is both an echo of Rachel's own recollection of the pungent flowers that were present during her own mother's funeral — a recollection that directly mirrored Woolf's own memories of Julia's funeral — as well as a clear reflection of Woolf's own recollection of her mother. In

documenting her first moments of consciousness, Woolf draws close attention to her mother and her floral dress:

> I begin: the first memory. This was of red and purple flowers on a black ground — my mother's dress; and she was sitting either in a train or in an omnibus, and I was on her lap. I therefore saw the flowers she was wearing very close; and can still see purple and red and blue, I think, against the black; they must have been anemones, I suppose. Perhaps we were going to St Ives; more probably, for from the light it must have been evening, we were coming back to London.
>
> (*A Sketch of the Past* 64)

In addition to the recreation of her parents in the form of Mr and Mrs Ramsay, it must be noted that Woolf also reconstructs many of her siblings in her portrayal of the Ramsay children. James is considered to be a replication of Adrian Stephen because of his "closeness to his mother and his gloomy adolescence" whilst Prue, "a silent, beautiful, obedient ghost" is a reflection of Woolf's half-sister, Stella Duckworth (Lee 107;114). Furthermore, the fragmentation of the family bond that the Ramsay children experience after the death of their mother — and their resistance against their father — mirrors the deconstruction of the family space that the Stephen children experienced after Julia passed away and their own rebellion against their father Leslie (Lee 31;441).

While Woolf creates Mrs Ramsay as a final tribute to her mother, she explores Mr Ramsay as a "satiric portrait of [her] own father" (Westling 860). The inclusion of her father's character was of prime concern for Woolf who wrote in her diaries that she intended for *To the Lighthouse* to "have father's character done completely in it; and mothers; and St. Ives; and childhood; and all the usual things I try to put in — life, death, etc. But the centre is father's character sitting in a boat, reciting We perished, each alone, while he crushes a mackerel" (*A Writer's Diary* 75). Her intention for his inclusion is ultimately realised as the ending portion of the novel includes a scene that is an almost exact replication of this sketch she provided in her diary as it reads: "the breeze bred in Mr Ramsay too the same excitement, and, as old Macalister turned to fling his line overboard, he cried out aloud, 'We perished,' and then again, 'each alone'" (*To the Lighthouse* 186).

Woolf further alludes to her parents through her inclusion of the notion of death within the novel, and particularly death that is associated with their fictional duplications. In mirroring Julia, Mrs Ramsay passes away while her children are still young and leaves them having to provide the emotional support and reassurance to Mr Ramsay that she once did (*To the Lighthouse* 143).

Woolf's portrayal of Mrs Ramsay, and the incredible importance that she held as the mother figure in the novel, echoes Woolf's own recollection of her mother and the importance that both she, and her death, had in Woolf's life. Furthermore, while Mr Ramsay never passes away in the novel himself, Woolf alludes to the passing of paternal figure when Mrs Ramsay notes that the Swedish girl Marie's "father was dying" (*To the Lighthouse* 32). In writing Mr and Mrs Ramsay as tributes to her parents, Woolf heavily integrates her own life into her fiction work, essentially operating *To the Lighthouse* as both a therapeutic space upon which she reflects on her childhood spent at Talland House and considers the influence her parents — and their death — had on her life as she finally lays them to rest. She noted years after completing the novel that she "used to think of [father] and mother daily; but writing the *Lighthouse* laid them in [her] mind" (*A Writer's Diary* 135).

Furthermore, Woolf uses the novel as a conceptual grounding to grapple with several notions pertaining to her own identity as she utilises water in the same anthropocentric manner as her characters. In the same way her characters understand nature to be an extension of their own being, and as conceptual basis to structure their own understandings of life and existence, Woolf allows the text to operate as an extension of her own being. She incorporates her own life into *To the Lighthouse* through the inclusion of figures from her own life, the attribution of fragments of her own identity to her characters, and her inclusion of her own fascination with the idea of life and death. This fascination is manifested within her characters, and while water is constantly circled back to the characters within the novel as they use it anthropocentrically to explore their own understandings about the notion of mortality and death, water ultimately loops back to Woolf herself as she uses its presence in her writing to explore her own, continuous fixation with the notion of drowning.

While the notion of death is tied most explicitly to Mrs Ramsay throughout the novel, it does filter throughout the text in various other ways as Woolf grapples with the conceptualisation of death throughout *To the Lighthouse*, and continues to use water as a means of understanding it. She does this both through her characters and their attempts to comprehend the notion of death through watery metaphors, and through her own constant return to it in her conscious decision to have it become a recurring element within her novels. In *To the Lighthouse*, death is mentioned almost immediately, and very abruptly, when James is momentarily overwhelmed with a desire to "gash a hole in his father's breast and kill him" (*To the Lighthouse* 7). These muted homicidal feelings that James experiences around his father in moments of rage are ones that he harbours throughout his appearance the novel.

Other examples of the recurring mention of death include various moments surrounding Mr Ramsay. After wallowing in a moment of self-pity, he explores what he understands by the idea of death and later, shortly before beginning the voyage to the lighthouse, he feels as if "he would have flung himself tragically backwards into the bitter waters" if he knew his children did not want to make the journey with him (*To the Lighthouse* 40;168). Death is also alluded to when Mrs McNab describes the old man working in the Ramsay's garden, drawing particular attention to how "some said he was dead, some said she was" (*To the Lighthouse* 158). In a moment immediately following this, Mrs Bast's son, George, is noted to be "scything the grass" (*To the Lighthouse* 159). The particular choice of a scythe as his garden tool is interesting as it is an instrument often associated with the portrayal of death, and particularly its personification through the figure of the Grim Reaper (*To the Lighthouse* 159).

Furthermore, death is heavily explored in association with water. This is found in the focus that is drawn to the image of a dead fish in the final section of *To the Lighthouse*. Shortly after boarding the vessel bound for the lighthouse, it is noted that "Macalister's boy had caught a mackerel; and it lay kicking on the floor, with blood on its gills" (*To the Lighthouse* 190). This gruesome description of the fish is repeated again when "the mutilated body (it was still alive) was thrown back into the sea" whilst other "fish were dead in the bottom of the boat" (*To the Lighthouse* 202;229). In exploring death so vividly through the image of the fish, Woolf once more presents water as being a point in her writing where her own voice enters into her novel. Here, she anthropocentrically navigates the element to explore her own comprehension of death and her constant association of the phenomenon with water.

In considering how Lee (1999) describes *To the Lighthouse* as being "a kind of ghost story, a story of a haunted house", it is important to explore the subtle allusion to death that recurs throughout the novel in the form of ghost imagery (444). The natural elements that inhabit the Ramsay house during the second portion of the novel are attributed ghostly descriptions, with their movement through the house being described as "wearily, ghostily, as if they had feather-light fingers" (*To the Lighthouse* 141). Also, Mrs Ramsay is often particularly associated with such imagery, including the moment when she recalls "gliding like a ghost among the chairs and tables of that drawing-room on the banks of the River Thames where she had been so very, very cold twenty years ago; but now she went among them like a ghost" (*To the Lighthouse* 98-9). The particular mention of the River Thames further associates this image with the notion of death as it calls back to *The Voyage Out*. As explored in the previous chapter, the River Thames became a

persistent presence in the hallucinations Rachel experienced towards the end of the novel (*The Voyage Out* 313-20).

Mrs Ramsay is also ascribed ghostly imagery by Lily. This is found when Lily is attempting to remember Mrs Ramsay's image years after her passing and she describes her recollection of the family matriarch as being like a "ghost, air, nothingness" (*To the Lighthouse* 200). Furthermore, a ghostly image is attached to the town near the Ramsay's beachside home. Due to the distance between the two, from the Ramsay's house "the lights of the town and of the harbour and of the boats seemed like a phantom net floating there to mark something that had sunk" (*To the Lighthouse* 76). In this mention, the ghostly imagery of the novel becomes specifically tied to both the notion of drowning, and Woolf's own fascination with the *Titanic* which very faintly slips into her work for a second time in *To the Lighthouse*.

While the *Titanic* is not as patently referenced in *To the Lighthouse* as it was in *The Voyage Out*, the notion of sunken ships is referenced several times in the final portion of the novel. This includes the moment when Cam "tell[s] herself a story of adventure about escaping from a sinking ship", and a later moment when Macalister recalls that "three men were drowned" in the same waters that the Ramsay family crosses to get to the lighthouse (*To the Lighthouse* 215;231). By particularly including the notion of sunken ships, Woolf allows her own fascination with the *Titanic* — and thus her own voice — to filter into her writing, and indicates her own anthropocentric utilisation of water to grapple with her obsession with the notion of death, and particularly death by drowning, within her fictional literature.

In addition to the mentions of sunken ships, there are several very specific moments where Woolf explores death through the engulfment of water. The first instance is in the novel's opening pages where Mrs Ramsay talks of the lighthouse keeper and wonders if he might be fearful of his job because he must "not be able to put [his] nose out of doors for fear of being swept into the sea" (*To the Lighthouse* 7). Drowning is also referenced very clearly when Mr Ramsay explores the idea of the island, upon which the Ramsay's home exists, being threatened by the oceans around it when he describes it as being "land which the sea is slowly eating away" at and later, "pathetically small, half swallowed up in the sea" (*To the Lighthouse* 49;77). Once again, the very notion of water being a threat due to its ability to completely engulf the land, and all those residing upon it, aligns Woolf's understanding of water with the Anthropocene (Chakrabarty 12; Chaplin 512; Meeder and Parkinson 490-1;495; Squire 211; Thornier 991; Wodskou 24).

Although Woolf was not writing with an awareness of the current geological epoch, and the contemporary fear of rising sea levels, she does indicate a subtle awareness of the threat that water

may pose. Her portrayal of water in the aforementioned lines reveals her understanding of water possessing an authority, and autonomy, that makes it capable of destroying humankind. However, despite her attempt to show the agency of water, Woolf ultimately loops her portrayal of water back to herself as the inclusion of death by watery encapsulation is a direct mirror of her fascination with drowning which permeated her entire life and literary archive. By considering the Anthropocene here, the limitations of Woolf's ecological imagination become clear as despite her efforts to move beyond the idea of human-centrality, she ultimately reestablishes the anthropocentrism of the traditional binary division of the human and nonhuman. Furthermore, this inclusion of such a depiction of water reveals how water becomes the primary channel through which she incorporates her own voice into her novel as despite this momentary glimpse of transcendence beyond the human-centralism of the traditional division, Woolf ultimately, and continually, uses water to explore her own fascination with death, as well as various notions pertaining to her own being.

Finally, in concluding how Woolf incorporates her own voice into *To the Lighthouse*, and ultimately operates water anthropocentrically to explore notions of her own life and identity, it is vital to consider how Lily acts as Woolf's own fictional duplication. Upon initial glance Lily may seem to be more indicative of Woolf's own sister, Vanessa Bell, through their mutual occupation as an artist. However, Lily operates as an essential echo of Woolf herself through both her character and artistic role she plays within the novel. Lily's existence as a reflection of Woolf is shown through how Woolf draws numerous parallels between herself and Lily, particularly the dualism between their respective artistic endeavours to recreate the space of Talland House/Ramsay Home before the death of Julia/Mrs Ramsay (*To the Lighthouse* 193). In the same way Lily "dipped into the blue paint, she dipped too into the past" to paint an image of the house during the time Mrs Ramsay stayed in it, Woolf dips into her own past as she constructs a near-perfect recreation of her own childhood home and her mother particularly through a "blue" element — water.

Additionally, on multiple occasions Lily expresses her fondness for those who stay at the Ramsay's home, noting that "she was in love with them all, in love with this world" (*To the Lighthouse* 26). Her particular fondness for the space, and the people who exist within it, reveals her role as a direct reflection of Woolf who herself continued to return to these moments of childhood throughout her life. Woolf's own fondness for Talland House and the occupants within it is evidently found in her desire to have *To the Lighthouse* operate as more of an elegy, dedicated to her "powerful, loved, dead parents" than as a novel (Lee 442). Furthermore, where Terence Hewet began the role of a literary, artistic representative in *The Voyage Out* — becoming a character through whom Woolf began her exploration into the process of writing — Lily occupies the same

role and becomes a clear artistic representative of Woolf in *To the Lighthouse*. Evidence of this inherited role is further shown through both Lily and Woolf's mutual muses — Mrs Ramsay/Julia and the Ramsay's Home/Talland House — and the struggles they both face in creating their respective works.

Lee (1999) addresses the dualism that exists between Lily and Woolf when she writes "painting overlaps with remembering in *To the Lighthouse*, and Virginia Woolf — like Lily Briscoe redoing her painting of the Ramsay's house and garden — spent a lifetime making and remaking her own 'views' of St. Ives" (31). In the same way Lily "had never finished her picture" by the time she returned to the Ramsay's house years after her first visit to the beachside house, so does Woolf subtly allude to her childhood (particularly her parents and Talland House) across numerous works but does not complete a full portrait of her childhood space until she finishes *To the Lighthouse* (*To the Lighthouse* 167). It is only in the completion of this novel "at age forty-four, the same age Lily is when she finally completes her painting" that Woolf finally reconciles with her childhood and all the crucial aspects pertaining to it (Lee 77).

While Woolf creates Lily in her image primarily through their respective roles as artists, they are further intricately bonded through their mutual interest in drowning. Lily's fascination with the subject is shown when, momentarily overwhelmed, she expresses "her headlong desire to throw herself off the cliff and be drowned looking for a pearl brooch on the beach" (*To the Lighthouse* 197). In ascribing her own interests to Lily, and particularly her fascination with water, Woolf establishes Lily as a recreation of her own. Although she is her more prominent duplicate, I would suggest that Lily is not the sole replication of Woolf within the novel. Instead, Mrs Ramsay subtly echoes Woolf's own conscious manipulation of water and, by considering the Ramsay family as a reconstruction of the Stephen family, I would suggest that Cam operates in the novel as a further literary representative of Woolf. This mirroring is found through Cam's role as daughter to Mr and Mrs Ramsay — who represent Woolf's own parents — and through her continuous engagement with nature and her particular bond to the element of water which closely aligns her to Woolf's previous fictional echo — Rachel.

Therefore, through her reconstruction of her childhood home and her continuous inclusion of her own voice within the novel, Woolf manoeuvres water in an ultimately anthropocentric manner in *To the Lighthouse*. Here, water constantly circles back to the characters of the novel as it operates as being an extension of their identity and a conceptual, and metaphoric, scaffold upon which they grapple with notions pertaining to their own selfhood and those around them. In mirroring characters off her own being, Woolf allows water to constantly loop back to her own

existence as the characters' anthropocentric manipulations of water to exploration into their own identity reflects her own understanding of the element.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this chapter, attention has been drawn to how the characters of *To the Lighthouse* anthropocentrically utilise water to explore their own identity, grapple with their understandings of emotions, and comprehend notions about their own being. Here, close attention was drawn to Mrs Ramsay, Lily, Cam, and Nancy. In exploring their characters, I considered how they not only consistently utilise water conceptually, and metaphorically, but they are often presented as being particularly conscious of their blatant manipulation of the element and how they use water to frame their narratives of existence, structure their notions of identity, aid in grappling with their emotions, and explore conceptualisations about the topic of death.

Within the novel, Woolf presents water as being "unfathomably deep", where into it "had spilled so many lives. The Ramsays'; the children's; and all sorts of waifs and strays of things besides" (*To the Lighthouse* 22). Water operates in the novel as an extension, and reflection, of the characters but also of Woolf herself. In following *The Voyage Out*, the anthropocentric navigation of water extends beyond the pages of the novel and once more is found in Woolf's own manipulation of water. Through her creation of the novel as a clear reflection of her own childhood — and populating the text with characters who are fictional replications of her parents and herself — Woolf operates the novel as being a therapeutic space upon which she can meditate on her memories of childhood, pay tribute to her parents, and explore comprehensions of her own identity.

While she finally puts to rest the image of her parents, and she presents Talland House in its most perfect form in *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf continues to utilise water anthropocentrically within her writing to further explore her role as an author, and her recurring fixation with the notion of death (particularly as it relates to drowning). These two central concerns have been addressed before in both this chapter and the previous one, but they are further expanded upon, and more thoroughly explored, within *The Waves*. There, Woolf fragments her primary preoccupations into two characters who inherit the roles of fictional echoes from Rachel and Terence in *The Voyage Out*, and Lily and Cam in *To the Lighthouse* — Bernard and Rhoda.

THE CIRCULATION BACK TO WOOLF'S OWN BEING IN *THE WAVES*

While Woolf's anthropocentric manoeuvring of water is found throughout her writing, it is in *The Waves* that her blatant, and conscious, utilisation of the element to explore human identity and ground conceptualisations of the self, is found most unequivocally. In this chapter, I will explore how the characters within the novel metaphorically and conceptually use water, and particularly the image of the wave. Here, attention will be drawn to how water operates as a foundation for their constructions of identity, their internal processes of thought and recollection, and their comprehension of the very notions of life and death. It will further consider the literal presence of water within the novel, focusing specifically on the novel's oceanic interludes and how water is anthropocentrically utilised as being an extension, and reflection, of the novel's characters. In exploring this, close attention will be drawn to the structural fluidity of the novel, as Woolf consciously constructed the novel as a "play-poem", a work that is "prose yet poetry, a novel and a play" (*A Writer's Diary* 107; Kostkowska 42-3; Muscoguiri 102).

This chapter will once again ground much of the exploration into the ultimately anthropocentric portrayal of water in ecological criticism. I will consider how Woolf did possess an awareness of the actual fluidity that exists between the human and nonhuman and how, despite her attempts to foreground the nonhuman, she ultimately reestablishes the binary's anthropocentrism. Here, attention will be drawn to her continued utilisation of nature, and particularly water, as the predominant frame of reference for both her characters, and herself (Kostkowska 43-7; Lehtimaki 120).

Furthermore, I will consider an idea suggested by both Bevis (1956) and Scott (2011) which emphasises the importance of the birds within the novel's natural interludes. Both scholars suggest that the birds are indications of the novel's main characters, with Scott (2011) in particular noting that Woolf was "keenly aware of the characteristic motions of birds, noting in them behaviours that could serve human representation" (Bevis 15; Scott 2011:1). By considering this idea, my chapter will advance the notion that Woolf uses nature metaphorically and conceptually to explore her characters within the sequential soliloquies that they deliver. Additionally, it will explore how she operates the natural interludes — and particularly the watery elements pertaining to it — as being both extensions, and reflections, of her characters.

Additional ecological notions that will be used in this chapter include the idea stemming from Kostkowska's (2014) pioneering work that she terms the "ecopoetics" of *The Waves* (41-55). In her work, Kostkowka also explores how Woolf possesses an acute ecological desire to present

the world as "one thing" in her writing and how she attempts to portray the "central ecofeminist tenant of all entities being interconnected while persevering their differences and diversity" (42). While there are moments within *The Waves* where Woolf conscientiously attempts to transcend the human-centrality of the traditional division between the human and the nonhuman, she ultimately presents the natural world as constantly circling back to the human. Not only does she use general elements of nature to explore her characters, but Woolf specifically utilises water anthropocentrically as water operates as both an extension, and reflection, of her characters as well as a metaphoric basis, and conceptual foundation, upon which they navigate their understandings of the world they engage with and their explorations into notions of their own identity and selfhood.

In addition to returning to ecological criticism as the chapter's primary theoretical framework, several notions pertaining to literary studies conducted into the Anthropocene will be considered. The notion of "speaking for another" has been used in literary studies before when considering how humankind speaks for other life forms on the planet, but little consideration has been given to how mankind might speak for each other too (Taylor 228). I will use this idea to explore the character of Percival and his enigmatic presence in the novel. Moreover, this chapter will use the reconceptualisation of time that is prominent in the Anthropocene to further explore the argument that Woolf uses water in an ultimately anthropocentric manner.

Studies pertaining to the Anthropocene have emphasised the need to reconsider the traditional understanding of time as three distinct segments, and rather understand the past, the present, and the future as being so influential on each other that they cannot be considered apart (Irvine 155-6; Trexler 295). In her own ecological exploration into Woolf's writing, Mattison (2011) indicates that this idea is not unique to the Anthropocene and is rather one that is considered in the work of Henri Bergson as she notes the "past and present, as Bergson argues and Woolf's fiction affirms, are not so easily separated" (Mattison 72). This fluid integration of the previous divisions will ground the exploration into Louis, who consistently uses not only natural metaphors, but particularly watery descriptions of time, to grapple with his understanding of his own identity and belonging.

Finally, this chapter will conclude with an investigation into how, once again, Woolf allows her own voice to freely flow into *The Waves*. Specific attention will be drawn here to the characters of Rhoda and Bernard — who like Rachel Vinrace and Cam Ramsay, and Terence Hewet and Lily Briscoe before them — operate as fictional replications of Woolf herself. Rhoda, and her immensely aqueous presence, will be explored as being a channel through which Woolf grapples with the deterioration of her mental health and her growing fixation with the notion of drowning.

Bernard, and his constant metaphoric and conceptual utilisation of water will be examined as being a direct echo of Woolf's own anthropocentric manipulation of the element, particularly as it pertains to her work as a writer.

I will finally draw attention to how much of Bernard's life is based off Woolf's own life, as she explores fictional versions of her memories in *The Waves* that she would later recount as personal recollections of her own childhood in her biographical writing. In consolidating Bernard as her fictional representative, I will conclude my argument that her novelistic characters' conscious anthropocentric utilisation of water is a direct reflection of Woolf's own manoeuvring of the element. This will be shown through a particular consideration of how, throughout her life and literary archive, Woolf continuously manipulates water in an almost solipsistic manner. Water constantly reflects back not only on her novelistic characters, but on Woolf herself as she uses water to navigate recollections, and reconciliations, of her past, conceptualise her understanding of the very idea of life and death, and comprehend cardinal notions of her own identity.

3.1.

Throughout *The Waves*, natural imagery is often ascribed to, and used by, the characters. Louis likens Rhoda to a butterfly, while Rhoda herself describes her dress as being "veined" like a seashell (*The Waves* 22;34). Bernard gives his school headmaster the nickname of "Old Crane", whilst Louis describes his group of friends as being like sheep, "trooping" after Percival (*The Waves* 32;37). Towards the end of the novel, Bernard notes that everyone "compared Percival to a lily" when he was alive, and that he, and his friends, live and age just like animals do (*The Waves* 245;265).

Furthermore, Susan is constantly bound to natural imagery throughout her appearance in the novel. She describes herself as feeling "planted like a tree", and as though she were "the seasons… the mud, the mist, the dawn" (*The Waves* 98;190). Louis describes Susan as being "a creature dazed by the light of lamp" and compares her to a "wild beast" and her eyes are described as being both "grass-green", and like those of a cat's (*The Waves* 14;41;119). Additionally, she is often presented as feeling most content within the natural world as she is blatantly uncomfortable within the cityscape of London because she feels as though she is "the field… the barn… the tree" that stands in opposition to the artificial elements that she hates — "the smell of carpets and furniture", "the smell of pine and linoleum", and "the sanitary tiles" (*The Waves* 33-4;97;131).

In complete contrast to Susan, Jinny is presented as being somewhat fearful of the natural world, noting in moments of her first soliloquy that "the leaves went on moving. [She] was frightened… [She] cried as [she] ran, faster and faster. What moved the leaves? What moves [her] heart, [her] legs?" (*The Waves* 13). Where Susan finds comfort in the natural world, Jinny finds her comfort in the nonhuman space where she "tread[s] naturally on thick carpets", and believes that she is "a native of this world" of London (*The Waves* 102;104). In addition to seeking comfort in the artificial, Jinny is also acutely aware of nonliving constructions. This is shown in the very opening pages of the novel where, captured in a moment describing the world around them, Rhoda draws attention to birds chirping and Susan specifically notes "the leaves gathered round the window" while Jinny describes seeing "a crimson tassel… twisted with gold threads" (*The Waves* 9).

However, despite being presented as being fearful of the natural world, and possessing a preference for the nonliving, Jinny is the character who most frequently utilises nature to metaphorically construct herself. She describes her hands as being like "snake's skin", her knees like "pink floating islands", and her dress "billowing round [her] like a flower" (*The Waves* 23-4). She later compares herself to both a stalk and a leaf, and notes that her friend's faces "leap like butterflies" when she moves quickly past them (*The Waves* 42;46;55). Jinny directly compares herself to both a monkey and a goat — the latter description being particularly interesting as it offers a faint allusion to Woolf's own childhood nickname of "goat" (*The Waves* 174-6; Scott 2016:327). Here, despite her hesitancy towards the natural world, Jinny continually utilises nature-bound imagery to both describe elements of herself, and those around her. Furthermore, this clear anthropocentric navigation of the nonhuman world sees to nature repeatedly being reduced to a metaphoric basis upon which the characters scaffold their descriptions of themselves, and others, and framework their explorations into their own identity.

In addition to utilising the natural world as a metaphoric basis for the characters to build their descriptions of both themselves, and those around them, Woolf also ensures that nature regularly circles back to the human through her repeated presentation of "nature as 'human'" (Kostkowska 52). This distinct anthropomorphisation of nonhuman elements is a continuation of Woolf's approach to nature in *To the Lighthouse*, and is found throughout *The Waves*. Examples include the very opening pages of the novel where Susan describes the leaves in the garden, that the characters play in as children, as being like "pointed ears" (*The Waves* 9). Only a few moments later, Bernard notes that the tree under which Susan sits has roots that spread out like "a skeleton on the ground" (*The Waves* 14). Though not a natural element, the artificial space

of London itself is also often described as being more like a person than a constructed city. Louis notes in one instance that "London heaves and surges", whilst Bernard personifies the cityscape by referring to it as "she" (*The Waves* 31;111). Furthermore, Bernard describes London as being like a "sleeping woman" when he observes the city from a train ride (*The Waves* 111).

The humanisation of the nonhuman is further found in the literal presence of water in London. Not only is water found in the forms of rainwater puddles that populate the city streets, or as water "[running] down the gutters" and "from the scullery tap", but it is ascribed a human liveliness when Neville notes hearing "the chuckle of water in some irrelevant drainpipe" (*The Waves* 10;167;199). Through the attribution of such descriptions to both the city of London, and the watery spaces that exist within it, the characters infuse a distinct humanness into the city space. This distinct personification of the nonhuman world reveals Woolf's anthropocentric manipulation of nature as she is unable to tranced the traditional human-centralism of the division. Instead, she presents the natural world as being both metaphorically manipulated by the characters in the novel who use natural imagery to describe themselves, and those around them, and existing as an extension, and reflection, of the characters.

The attribution of human qualities, and the essential personification of the nonhuman world, continues into the natural interludes of the novel. In exploring these interludes, I would like to begin with their structural significance within the novel. Writing in her diary shortly after the completion of the novel, Woolf notes that "*The Waves* is my first work in my own style", and that it essentially comprises of "a series of dramatic soliloquies" that run "in the rhythm of the waves" (*A Writer's Dairy* 156;172). Not only does her stylistic manipulation of the novel emphasise the absolute importance that water, and particularly the image of the wave, has in her literary work, but it also reveals how water operates as a structural foundation for the characters of the novel.

The sequential soliloquies appear like the rising and crashing of waves, momentarily individual but ultimately, and essentially, bound together in one "'oceanic feeling' of oneness" in the same way that the characters are bound together (*Stewart* 437). These sequential soliloquies are interrupted only by the natural interludes that operate stylistically as momentary divisions for the different periods of the characters' lives. These soliloquies also exist as clear examples of anthropocentric manipulation as the natural elements they capture become either extensions, and reflections, of the characters themselves or are framed by Woolf with human description and characteristics that result in the nonhuman elements operating as humanistic entities themselves.

Throughout *The Waves*, Woolf constructs many of the natural interludes as being distinctly humanlike in description as she essentially creates a "mystical figure of a sun-woman" within these

intermissions (*Kostkowska* 51). This female figure is slowly elaborated on with each new interlude, and is first found in the very opening interlude with the description:

> The sun had not yet risen. The sea was indistinguishable from the sky, except that the sea was slightly creased as if a cloth had wrinkles in it… The wave paused, and then drew out again, sighing like a sleeper whose breath comes and goes unconsciously… Behind it, too, the sky cleared as if the white sediment there had sunk, or as if the arm of a woman couched beneath the horizon had raised a lamp and flat bars of white, green and yellow spread across the sky like the blades of a fan. Then she raised her lamp higher and the air seemed to become fibrous and to tear away from the green surface flickering and flaming in red and yellow fibres like the smoky fire that roars from a bonfire.
>
> (*The Waves* 7)

Here, the break of day is described as being the waking up of some powerful female figure. The ocean is immediately described as being like a cloth, with the comparison of the water to material implying that the ocean waters are the woman's clothing. This idea is furthered when the waves are presented as moving like "a sleeper whose breath comes and goes unconsciously". Additionally, Woolf closely aligns the break of day and the woman's arousal from slumber. Here, this female figure may be Woolf's own construction of Mother Nature herself as she possesses some sort of power within the natural space which is emphasised when the rising of the sun is described as being the result of her raising her arm, lifting "*her* lamp higher".

This distinct construction of a female figure within the natural world — and thus, Woolf's ultimate personification of the natural world — is found again in the novel's second interlude:

> The girl who had shaken her head and made all the jewels, the topaz, the aquamarine, the water-coloured jewels with sparks of fire in them, dance, now bared her brows and with wide-opened eyes drove a straight pathway over the waves massed themselves; their green hollows deepened and darkened and might be traversed by shoals of wandering fish. As they splashed and drew back they left a black rim of twigs and cork on the shore and straws and sticks of wood, as if some light shallop had foundered and burst its sides and the sailor had swum to land and bounded up the cliff and left his frail cargo to be washed ashore.
>
> (*The Waves* 73)

Similar to the previous interlude, the female figure is not only deeply ingrained in the natural world, but she is specifically presented as being part of the ocean. She is also presented as possessing a power over nature again as she is responsible, in this interlude, for the waves crashing on the shore and the oceanic waste scattering across the sand. Woolf's construction of such a figure within the natural interludes reveals her ultimate reestablishment of the notion of human-centrality. Even in the portions of her novel that are comprised almost entirely of nature, free from human interaction and observation, Woolf depicts nature as being essentially humanistic itself as she personifies the natural element and ultimately constructs the image of a woman from the natural world.

Furthermore, I would like to draw attention here to how Woolf draws a clear comparison between the mythical female figure and a male sailor in this interlude. The inclusion of the human figure of a sailor further indicates how these natural interludes do not operate independently from the characters as they ultimately circle back to the image of the human and human presence. Additionally, by comparing the female figure's pushing of oceanic remnants onto the beach to the way a sailor's cargo might wash up on shores, Woolf destabilises the traditional depiction of the natural world as being a particularly feminine space. This is something that she begins in *The Voyage Out* when she presents the natural world as operating as a literal and metaphoric space that serves to benefit both the men that populate that novel as well as the women and it is something that she continues to expand upon in *The Waves*. Here, the anthropocentric utilisation of nature, and the particular manipulation of water, as a metaphoric and conceptual basis upon which to develop understandings pertaining to the self, is found most prominently in Bernard and Louis. Where Bernard continuously utilises water to grapple with conceptualisations of aspects of his identity and existence, Louis constantly grounds his struggles with, and later understanding of, his own identity in natural imagery.

3.2.

Throughout his appearance in the novel, Louis is presented as finding a comfort in, and an understanding of, his identity in his close bond with the natural world. Not only does he "delight in the snails; delight in the leaf" but he is also described as always hearing "the sullen thud of the waves" (*The Waves* 57;96). This constant awareness of the watery element closely aligns him with the characters of Mrs Ramsay and Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* who were also always aware of the sound of the ocean around them and who, like Louis, constructed conceptualisations of their own being through their anthropocentric manipulation of the natural world around them (*To the*

Lighthouse 72;161). Furthermore, he is presented as being absolutely intermeshed with nature both through his engagement with the physical world and his constant utilisation of natural imagery to grapple with his insecurities regarding his nationality. The first example of Louis' anthropocentric utilisation of the natural world is the moment that occurs towards the very beginning of the novel, when he is still a child in the garden, which reads:

> I am left standing by the wall among the flowers… I hold a stalk in my hand. I am the stalk. My roots go down to the depths of the world, through earth dry with brick, and damp earth, through veins of lead and silver. I am all fibre. All tremors shake me, and the weight of the earth is pressed to my ribs. Up here my eyes are green leaves, unseeing. I am a boy in grey flannels with a belt fastened by a brass snake up here. Down there my eyes are the lidless eyes of a stone figure in a desert by the Nile. I see women passing with red pitchers to the river; I see camels swaying and men in turbans… I am on the other side of the hedge. There are only little eye-holes among the leaves. Oh Lord, let them pass. Lord, let them lay their butterflies on a pocket-handkerchief on the gravel. Let them count out their tortoise-shells, their red admirals and cabbage whites. But let me be unseen. I am green as a yew tree in the shade of the hedge. My hair is made of leaves. I am rooted to the middle of the earth. My body is a stalk. I press the stalk. A drop oozes from the hole at the mouth and slowly, thickly, grows larger and larger. Now something pink passes the eyehole. Now an eye-beam is slid through the chink. Its beam strikes me. I am a boy in a grey flannel suit. She has found me. I am struck on the nape of the neck. She has kissed me. All is shattered.
>
> (*The Waves* 11-2)

From the very moment of his introduction in *The Waves*, Louis is absolutely integrated with the natural world. Standing "among the flowers", he describes himself as being as "green as a yew tree" and draws particular attention to how his eyes are like "green leaves" and his hair is "made of leaves". While Louis' application of natural imagery to describe his own appearance shows his absolute integration with the natural world, it also acts as an immediate indication of his struggles with his identity. Here, the particular emphasis on the colour green may be a subtle reference to the notion of being green with envy which is shown through the way in which Louis is continually presented in the novel as being incredibly insecure about the fact that he is the only Australian in his group of English friends.

Louis continues to use natural imagery to explore the acute insecurity he possesses regarding his identity. This is shown when, in the passage above, he notes that he both "hold[s] a stalk in [his] hand" and that he "is the stalk". This dual comparison emphasises how he is structurally bound to the other characters in the novel both through the sequential, flowing streams of consciousness and through the metaphoric understanding of the group of characters being like waves moving together in the ocean. It also reveals the internal isolation that Louis experiences as despite his literal integration with the others in the novel, he continuously feels as though he is an outsider. By noting that he is both the stalk and is holding the stalk, Louis expresses his desire to belong to some grander whole, and to unobtrusively blend into the garden space his friends occupy, and belong within their community. Here, Louis anthropocentrically utilises natural imagery to particularly explore his feelings of disconnection and alienation.

Throughout the novel, Louis' conceptualisation of self orientates principally around the fact that he is not English. He notes that he desires "above all things to be taken to the arms with love" because he feels that he is "alien, external" (*The Waves* 94). He also continually draws attention to his Australian accent, and speaks of his father back home in Australia who he repeatedly notes "is a banker in Brisbane and speaks with an Australian accent" (*The Waves* 19;31). In grappling with his identity, and his need to establish a sense of belonging, Louis repeatedly utilises the image of tree roots to understand his foreign origins. This is shown in the paragraph above when he describes feeling as though his roots go "down to the depths of the world, through earth dry with brick, and damp earth, through veins of lead and silver". Louis returns to this exact image of roots a short while later when he notes that his "roots go down through veins of lead and silver, through damp, marshy places that exhale odours, to a knot made of oak roots bound together at the centre" *(The Waves* 95).

The particular description of Louis' roots moving through "veins of lead and silver" circles back to a previous moment that Woolf presented in *The Voyage Out* where Rachel expressed an acute awareness of the lead pipes, filled with water, that lie under the city of London. Not only does this reference show how Louis attempts to ground his sense of self in imagery stemming from the nonhuman world, but he particularly turns to the natural world to structure his deep desire to belong. In utilising the image of roots moving both through, and beyond, the constructed space of London, Louis finds a sense of belonging as he likens his own identity to the tree roots that move beyond the immediate, limited locus of England.

In addition to utilising the image of roots to ground his understanding of his identity existing beyond England, Louis uses the natural element to explore how his notion of self is intricately

connected to notions of time. The first indication of this occurs in the aforementioned paragraph, where he notes: "down there my eyes are the lidless eyes of a stone figure in a desert by the Nile. I see women passing with red pitchers to the river; I see camels swaying and men in turbans… I am on the other side of the hedge". In likening himself to a statue in Egypt, Louis once more uses the nonhuman to express his feelings of isolation and alienation. Here, he understands his existence as being like a stone figure that stands apart from the motion and movement of human life that operates around him. Furthermore, with his particular inclusion of the image of the Nile River, Louis associates water with both the concept of time and the notion of fluidity, particularly the "fluidity of identity" (Hinnov 215).

Through his utilisation of both nature, and the distinct allusion to water, Louis frames his understanding of his identity as being that which is fluid in existence. In the same way water exists beyond human comprehension — existing both before Louis, and geologically apart from him in the space of Ancient Egypt — so does Louis' own comprehension of his identity exist beyond the present and the immediate locus in which he is bound. Rather, he finds comfort in understanding his identity as being that which is part of a legacy, and a lineage of people who existed both before, and apart, from him when he notes that his "roots are threaded, like fibres in a flower-pot, round and round about this world" (*The Waves* 20). Furthermore, his continued use of the image of roots growing beneath the Earth's surface is shown when he returns to the space of Ancient Egypt only a few moments later:

> I force myself to state, if only in one line of unwritten poetry, this moment; to mark this inch in the long, long history that began in Egypt, in the time of the Pharaohs, when women carried red pitchers to the Nile. I seem already to have lived many thousand years. But if I now shut my eyes, if I fail to realise the meeting-place of past and present, that I sit in a third-class railway carriage full of boys going home for the holidays, human history is defrauded of a moment's vision.
>
> (*The Waves* 66)

Louis finds solace in understanding his identity as being that which is fluid in nature, as he notes that he seemed "already to have lived many thousand years" and that he is "not a single and passing being" but one that goes "beneath the ground torturously" (*The Waves* 202). He furthers this understanding when he notes that there is "a vast inheritance of experience packed in [him]" and

that he finds fragments of his own being in a history of mankind that has existed in times that have past (*The Waves* 167). This is further shown when he exclaims:

> I find relics of myself in the sand that women made thousands of years ago, when I heard songs by the Nile and the chained beast stamping. What you see beside you, this man, this Louis, is only the cinders and refuse of something once splendid. I was an Arab prince; behold my free gestures. I was a great poet in the time of Elizabeth. I was a Duke at the court of Louis the Fourteenth.
>
> (*The Waves* 127)

In addition to his anthropocentric manipulation of the natural element of roots to explore both his ancestral lineage and his identity as bound to another continent, Louis also utilises the element of water to grapple with the fluidity of his identity when he notes that "we have laced the world together with our ships" (*The Waves* 200). In using both the image of tree roots and a marine vessel to remedy his need to belong, Louis finds a connection to a wider populate of people, outside his immediate surroundings, in his understanding of legacy. Further, this understanding of his belonging to a legacy becomes the very point upon which his entire identity hinges as he comprehends himself as being an accumulation of numerous lives already lived, and a locus through which the continents are joined and in the same way that a ship is capable of voyage between two spaces, so is Louis' identity bound to more than one space, and further, more than one era.

3.3.

Throughout the novel, the characters not only utilise the nonhuman as a structural framework for their constructions of notions pertaining to their own identity, but they rather specifically manoeuvre the element of water in an ultimately anthropocentric manner. This is shown through the watery metaphoric comparisons that the characters in the novel often ascribe to both themselves, and those around them. Jinny frequently describes herself as "rippling like water", and is compared, by Rhoda, to a gull on a wave (*The Waves* 12-3;42;102;106). Bernard is described by Neville as being just "like seaweed hung outside the window, damp now, now dry" and compares himself in a later moment to a toad (*The Waves* 19;77). He also likens his school teacher, Dr. Crane, to a "drunken sailor" and later describes Neville as a "fish in mid-stream" (*The Waves* 37;77). Rhoda describes herself as being a "half-eaten boat" whilst Bernard further describes himself as

"gap[ping] like a codfish" when he is caught in a moment of monotonous conversation and, right at the novel's conclusion, labels himself a "solitary sea-bird" (*The Waves* 130;185;295).

Furthermore, the characters often understand both their own experiences, and the existence of those around them, through watery metaphors. Rhoda describes Percival as being "like a stone fallen into a pool round which minnows swarm. Like minnows, we who had been shooting this way, that way, all shot round him when he came" (*The Waves* 136). In comparing herself, and her friends, to minnows, Rhoda uses water metaphorically to understand the effect that Percival had on the group. In the same way the fish immediately swarm around a fallen stone, the primary characters of the novel all find themselves inextricably drawn to Percival, who remains at the centre of their consciousness even years after his death. Moreover, her particular understanding of Percival as being like a stone while she, and the other five characters, are fish may indicate how Percival is lifeless compared to the others. While Bernard, Jinny, Louis, Neville, Rhoda, and Susan all have voices of their own in the novel, and document their lives from childhood into late adulthood through their own soliloquies, Percival remains an enigmatic presence as he exists only in the soliloquies of others rather than possessing any monologue of his own.

Throughout the novel, water is continually circled back to notions of anthropocentrism through the characters' utilisation of the element as a metaphoric basis for their descriptions of themselves, and those around them, as well as their constant conceptual application of water. Water repeatedly operates as a structural framework for the characters' conceptualisations of both their own identity, and the phenomena that they interact with in the world around them. Examples of this include Jinny describing music, and dancing, in watery terms when she notes: "we yield to this slow flood. We go in and out of this hesitating music. Rocks break the current of the dance" (*The Waves* 103). This description of music directly echoes back to the presentation of it in *The Voyage Out*, where music, and the act of dancing, is compared to the movement of water (*The Voyage Out* 139;144).

The characters' anthropocentric, and conceptual, manipulation of water is further found when Bernard notes the people who make good first impressions are those who are able to "keep their equilibrium in mid-stream" (*The Waves* 77). In addition to being used to describe the actions of those around them, the characters utilise water as a scaffold to conceptualise the notions of dreaming and unconsciousness in the same way that characters of *The Voyage Out* and *To the Lighthouse* did. Rhoda describes her experience of dreaming, and being drawn into unconsciousness, at the end of her first soliloquy when she notes:

> Oh, to awake from dreaming! Look, there is the chest of drawers. Let me pull myself out of these waters. But they heap themselves on me; they sweep me between their great shoulders; I am turned; I am tumbled; I am stretched, among these long lights, these long waves, these endless paths, with people pursing, pursing.
>
> (*The Waves* 28)

Like Rachel before her, Rhoda conceptualises the process of being unconscious as being an engulfment in water. This is shown when she describes the process of waking up as being a need to "pull [herself] out of these waters" that "sweep [her] beneath their great shoulders". Bernard also describes his process of dreaming of being like an encapsulation in water when he notes that he wishes "to go under; to visit the profound depths" of the dreamscape where he can "exercise my prerogative not always to act, but to explore" (*The Waves* 114).

In addition to water being utilised to conceptualise the notion of unconsciousness, it is also used by Neville to describe the experience of being inspired. Here, he uses the particularly watery image of waves to understand a moment of inspiration as he notes "now begins to rise in [him] the familiar rhythm; words that have lain dormant now lift, now toss their crests, and fall and rise, fall and rise again" (*The Waves* 82). Bernard also envisions imagination in a similar manner as he describes his own moment of inspiration as being like when "pictures rise — summer afternoons, boats, old ladies holding their skirts up, one urn in winter, some daffodils in March — these all float to the top of the waters that now lie deep on every scene" (*The Waves* 210).

Through their utilisation of water, the characters continually circle water back to notions pertaining to their own identity. Metaphorically, they navigate the element as being a comparative basis upon which they construct descriptions of both themselves and those around them. Conceptually, they manipulate the element into operating as a clear framework for their investigation into notions relating to human experiences and particularly experiences that they may be unable to fully comprehend without a scaffold. This is shown above through Bernard and Rhoda's application of water to their ideas of dreaming, and Bernard and Neville's utilisation of the element to explore their understandings of the process of being inspired. Additionally, it is found when Rhoda uses the aqueous imagery to describe her projection of images onto her basin of water as she notes that "out of [her] now [her] mind can pour" (*The Waves* 27).

Furthermore, similar to how water is anthropocentrically utilised in *To the Lighthouse*, water is used by the characters to understand, and grapple with, their emotions in *The Waves*. In considering how "the waves in the mind is a metaphor for unconscious elements rising to the

surface and for undifferentiated sensation building into form", it is clear that the characters ground their experience of emotions not only in natural imagery, but specifically watery comparisons (Stewart 436). At the very beginning of the novel, Susan notes that she "will take [her] anguish and lay it upon the roots under the beech tree. [She] will examine it and take it between [her] fingers" (*The Waves* 13-4). Here, she figuratively grounds her emotions in the natural world to "examine" them. The way in which Susan turns to the natural world to grapple with her emotions, and finds a sense of comfort in nature, directly mirrors Rachel in *The Voyage Out*, and Mrs Ramsay and Nancy in *To the Lighthouse* who all turn to water to conceptualise their own experiences of emotions.

Jinny also turns to nature to describe her own emotions when she states that "now the tide sinks. Now the trees come to earth; the brisk waves that slap my ribs rock more gently, and my heart rides at anchor, like a sailing-boat whose sails slide slowly down to the white deck. The game is over. We must go to tea now" (*The Waves* 46). She vividly describes the sensation of getting lost in a moment of fantasy as being an engulfment in water, and the return back to reality as being the retreating of fantastical waters. She uses watery imagery to particularly describe how her heart pounded during her moment of fantasy — the pumping of the organ being likened to waves slapping against some solid item — and then calmed down slowly, like an anchor falling into the ocean or a sailboat's sails slowly being brought down. This utilisation of water to describe the emotions that are elicited in the characters is further found when Rhoda uses water to understand the effect that music has on her, noting "the sweetness of this content overflowing runs down the walls of [her] mind, and liberates understanding" (*The Waves* 163).

In further considering how water is anthropocentrically manipulated by the characters throughout the novel, I would like to draw close attention to how water is often used to conceptualise the very notion of time. Water first becomes indicative of time right at the start of the novel when the dew that appears as "beads of water" and "drops of white light" on a spider's web in the childhood garden marks the early hours of the morning (*The Waves* 9). Additionally, Susan often uses water as an indication of the passing of time, including the moment when she notes: "whether it is summer, whether it is winter, I no longer know by the moor grass, and the heath flower; only by the steam on the window-pane, or the frost on the window-pane" (*The Waves* 172). She further utilises water to conceptualise her own experience of ageing when she notes that "when the light from a passing car dazzles the windows and [she felt] the waves of [her] life tossed, broken, round [her] who is rooted" (*The Waves* 192). Moreover, she further understands time

through the element of water when she notes that "[her] children will carry [her] on… like the waves of the sea under [her]. No day will be without its movement" (*The Waves* 132).

In addition to Susan, Bernard also uses watery imagery to conceptualise his own understanding of the passing of time. This is shown when he notes: "how fast the stream flows from January to December" and how all the characters' lives seem to "stream away" (*The Waves* 227;257). When describing the inevitably of being caught in the rush of the passing time and the continuous movement of life, Bernard states that he, and the other characters, have to "leap like fish, high in the air, in order to catch the train from Waterloo. And however high [they] leap [they] fall back again into the stream" (*The Waves* 216). He further understands the very process of living, and the notion of a lifetime, as being watery when he describes life as being an "imbuing [of himself] entirely in one fluid" (*The Waves* 116).

Furthermore, Bernard's understanding of time as framed by watery imagery is vividly shown at the conclusion of the novel when, during his final summing up of his, and his friend's, lives, Bernard asks: "Should this be the end of the story? a kind of sigh? a last ripple of the water?" (*The Waves* 267). In considering Bernard's final questions, and the way Neville himself describes his own existence as being watery when he notes "the ripple of my life was unavailing", it is clear that water exists within the novel to support the characters as it becomes the primary, structuring framework through which the characters grapple with both their various human experiences, and emotions, and attempt to comprehend the very notion of life itself (*The Waves* 24). Furthermore, this anthropocentric utilisation of water is a markedly conscious one within *The Waves*. While implicitly suggested throughout the novel, Neville states his explicit awareness of his own manipulation of water into being a metaphoric basis, and conceptual grounding, for himself with the lines:

> 'Yet these roaring waters,' said Neville, 'upon which we build our crazy platforms are more stable than the wild, the weak and inconsequent cries that we utter when, trying to speak, we rise; when we reason and jerk out these false sayings, "I am this; I am that!" Speech is false.
>
> (*The Waves* 138)

Moreover, throughout his appearance in the novel, Bernard is presented as being the character who continually, and often consciously, circles water back to himself as he anthropocentrically manipulates water into becoming both a metaphoric basis, and a conceptual framework through

which he can explore notions pertaining to his identity and his existence. This is shown through Bernard's repeated utilisation of water to conceptualise his understandings of his internal processes. He refers to his thoughts as being like water, noting that "the surface of [his] mind slips along like a pale-grey stream reflecting what passes", and later refers to "the lake of [his] mind, unbroken by oars, heaves placidly and soon sinks into an oily somnolence" (*The Waves* 37;113). Bernard additionally attributes watery imagery to his mind when he describes mists that "curl off the roof of [his] being", an image that is once again an echo of one presented in *To the Lighthouse* when Mrs Ramsay uses aqueous comparisons to comprehend her own mind (*To the Lighthouse* 71; *The Waves* 89).

Furthermore, Bernard constantly utilises the image of a drop when he attempts to understand the process of the development of his thoughts and realisations. He also uses it to frame his understanding of the construction of memories, and the subsequent return to them, as he additionally uses the drop to understand the very notion of time, and life, passing by. One of the first instances of this occurs when Bernard describes the development of a memory being "the drop that forms on the roof of the soul in the evening [that] is round, many coloured" (*The Waves* 80). Here, not only does Bernard comprehend his mind as being watery in existence but he conceptualises the accumulations of the day's memories through a comparison to the accumulation of a drop of water.

Bernard further uses the image of a drop of water to understand both the processes of realisation and the concept of time — particularly time as linked to his identity — when he speaks of a moment shaving which reads:

> The drop that has formed on the roof of the soul falls. On the roof of my mind time, forming, lets fall its drop. Last week, as I stood shaving, the drop fell. I, standing with my razor in my hand, became suddenly aware of the merely habitual nature of my action (this is the drop forming) and congratulated my hands, ironically, for keeping at it. Shave, shave, shave, I said. Go on shaving. The drop fell. All through the day's work, at intervals, my mind went to an empty place, saying, "What is lost? What is over?" And "Over and done with," I muttered, "over and done with," solacing myself with words.
>
> (*The Waves* 184-5)

Here, Bernard characterises the experience of having a realisation through the metaphoric comparison to a drop forming over time, and then falling. He further understands the process of

time as being like the accumulation of a drop of water such as when he considers the processing of ageing and notes: "I formed; a drop fell; I fell — that is, from some completed experiences I had emerged" and when he describes the next chapter in his life as being like "the new drop" (*The Wave* 185;189-90;253). Through his utilisation of the watery image to ground his understanding of both the experience of thought and realisation, and to comprehend the passing of time, Bernard manoeuvres water in an anthropocentric manner as it becomes a basis for his various conceptualisations.

Furthermore, Bernard ascribes a watery image to his mind when he describes his own experiences of recollecting memories as being a process of lifting them from a body of water. Like Mrs Ramsay before him, Bernard utilises water to conceptualise the process of recollection when he states: "I have to recall things gone far, gone deep, sunk into this life" (*To the Lighthouse*; *The Waves* 27;289). Additionally, towards the end of the novel he is the only character to provide a soliloquy in the final portion of the text, and in doing so he takes a moment to recall the lives of all his friends. He describes the process as being a dipping into a pool that has amassed his, and his friends', lifetimes of experience, noting that he will "dip again and bring up [his] spoon another of these minute objects which we call optimistically, 'characters of our friends'" (*The Waves* 243). Here, Bernard understands the process of recollection as being a dipping into, what Louis terms, the "bright waters of childhood" as he ultimately utilises water anthropocentrically to conceptualise almost all the processes of his existence (*The Waves* 67).

Throughout the examples explored above, I believe it is clear that the primary characters of the novel all utilise water anthropocentrically as water becomes a constant metaphoric and conceptual grounding for them to engage with the world around them and grapple with understandings of their own being and identity. This blatant looping of water back to the human is found not only in the characters' soliloquies and their own, primarily conscious manipulation, of the element, but is also found in the natural interludes that permeate the novel. While the interludes have previously been explored as being distinctly human-like in existence, they are also metaphorically, and conceptually, bound to the characters as the "natural imagery rarely stands alone" and instead "fuse[s] with the identity of animals or human beings" and becomes both an extension, and reflection, of the characters themselves (Scott 2011:8).

Throughout the text, the characters deliver soliloquies that are "punctuated with nine interludes that are purely descriptive passages rendering the seaside scene (Kostkowska 51). While numerous editions of the novel use these passages as distinct points of separation for the continuous monologues, it must be noted that when writing the novel, Woolf herself intended for it to flow as

one, uninterrupted whole[3]. The interludes not only result in the completely fluid construction of the novel, but they have as much metaphoric value as they do structural. Structurally, the novel is composed of the "collective unconscious of six characters" punctuated by interluding natural scenes that result in a "wavelike oscillation" and an "oceanic feeling of oneness" (Kostkowska 42; Stewart 437). Metaphorically, they operate anthropocentrically as reflections of the characters with the descriptions of the waves directly mirroring the experiences of the characters. The natural interludes flow as seamlessly into the characters' streams of consciousness as the characters' consciousnesses flow into each other. The sea, and particularly the waves, becomes indistinguishable from the characters as the oceanic scene presented in the interlude both echoes the characters' lives and foreshadows the events that they come to experience.

The first example of how the natural interludes exist as reflections of the characters is found in the subtle difference in the description of the sea that occurs between the first and second interlude. In the opening interlude, the novel begins with the lines: "the sun had not yet risen. The sea was indistinguishable from the sky" (*The Waves* 3). The notion that the sky and the sea are merged together so indeterminably mirrors how the characters are so interwoven in each other's soliloquies, and thus lives, that they cannot be understood as existing apart. They all occupy the same literal space of the garden, and they all describe each other in as much detail as they describe themselves. Further, in preceding the way Percival exists only in his friend's spoken words, so do the characters in the first section exist as much in each other's soliloquies as they do in their own. Here, the way in which the characters blur together in their presented soliloquies is shown through a projection of their lives onto the "image of the sea and sky" and this indistinguishable fusion that occurs between the sea and sky mirrors the "'oceanic feeling' of oneness" that is reflected in the characters' sequential, and continually flowing, soliloquies (*Stewart* 436-7).

This image of the sea and sky is later altered in the second interlude where, not only are the sea and sky now clearly discernible from each other, but the waves themselves are distinguishable as "blue waves, green waves swept a quick fan over the beach" (*The Waves* 29). This separation of the waves, and particularly the separation into two distinct colours, foreshadows the separation of the characters that occurs when they attend different schools. No longer all inextricably involved in each other's lives; Bernard, Louis, and Neville are separated from Jinny, Rhoda, and Susan, and their identities momentarily cease to blur together as they once did.

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[3] This is noted in the introduction to *The Waves* that appears in Delphi Classic's kindle publication *Complete Works of Virginia Woolf* (26944).

Hinnov (2010) suggests that the "undulation between the self and the greater whole" is shown throughout the characters' soliloquies in *The Waves* (215). In considering this, I would suggest that the oceanic scene presented in the natural intermissions ultimately operates as an extension, and reflection, of the characters themselves. Throughout the novel, the characters oscillate between being distinct waves, moving apart and independently from each other, and being pulled back together again as one oceanic whole. A later interlude captures the reflection of the characters' oscillation within the description of both birds, and the literal body of water in the scene, when it reads:

> "Now and again their songs ran together in swift scales like the interlacing of a mountain stream whose waters, meeting, form and then mix, and hasten quicker and quicker down the same channel, brushing the same broad leaves. But there is a rock; they sever."
>
> (*The Waves* 109)

Once again, this interlude presents a preceding reflection of the characters through the natural, and particularly watery, elements within it. Like the mountain stream, the characters all "meet, form, and then mix" when they all reunite for a dinner after spending several years apart. This reunion is brief, however, as Bernard abruptly announces his engagement and Susan immediately states that "a circle has been cast on the waters; a chain is imposed. We shall never flow freely again" (*The Waves* 142). However, like a stream of water, the characters can never be truly "severed" from each other, and almost immediately after Susan's brief soliloquy, Louis notes that "the circle breaks. Now the current flows. Now we rush faster than before" (*The Waves* 142).

Water is used anthropocentrically to frame the characters' understandings of the relation that they have with each other, and the impact that this bond has on their own identities as Susan is seemingly just as impacted by Bernard's engagement as Bernard is. While water in general is used to scaffold the characters' comprehensions of their own being, it is the image of the wave that is particularly used as it becomes symbolic of the "chaotic unity" and "fluidity of identity" that echoes throughout the novel (Hinnov 215). The characters understand themselves as being like waves in the ocean, moving differently and independently at given moments, but always moving in some sort of "chaotic unity" and constant flux together.

This fluidity, and interdependent element, of identity is particularly shown in *The Waves* through the character of Percival. Throughout his brief appearance in the novel, Percival is often associated with the natural world. Louis recalls Percival as "flowering with green leaves" and notes

that he was "laid in the earth with all his branches still sighing in the summer wind" (*The Waves* 203). Additionally, shortly after meeting Percival for the first time, Neville notes that "not a thread, not a sheet of paper lies between [Percival] and the sun, between [Percival] and the rain" (*The Waves* 48). These descriptions reveal the innate connection that Percival has with the natural world — one that almost mirrors the bond that Louis shares with nature. They also reveal how Percival is often constructed, and remembered, through natural — particularly watery — imagery and often exists through the characters' association of his being with water.

The association between Percival and water is further found in the interlude that succeeds the death of Percival. Here, attention is drawn to single drops of water with the line: "in the bucket near the house the tap stopped dripping, as if the buckets were full, and then the tap dripped one, two, three separate drops in succession" (*The Waves* 165). This initial stopping of water may operate as a reflection of Percival with the dripping's stopping mirroring the same way Percival's life literally stops in death. Further, the three drops that then fall sequentially represent the three soliloquies that follow the revelation of Percival's death — an unusual amount given that until this moment of the novel, the natural interludes had only occurred after each character had delivered a soliloquy — which document Neville, Bernard, and Rhoda as they attempt to grapple with Percival's death.

While the mirroring of characters in the literal bodies of water that populate the novel is shown most predominantly in the natural interludes, it must be noted that it does occur within the soliloquy portions of the text too. An example of this includes the moments that follow the characters' final dinner together when Louis notes:

> The water is broken by silver, by quivering little fish. Now leaping, now lashing, they are laid on shore. Life tumbles its catch upon the grass. There are figures coming towards us. Are they men or are they women? They still wear the ambiguous draperies of the flowing tide in which they have been immersed.
>
> (*The Waves* 231)

Within this moment, Louis and Rhoda are momentarily presented as being unable to identify their friends as they are described as approaching the pair whilst wearing "the ambiguous draperies of the flowing tide". Here, both Louis and Rhoda utilise water anthropocentrically to grapple with notions pertaining to their friends, their own sense of selfhood, and their very understanding of the communality of their identity. In the same way water streams together and is so thoroughly

integrated that it cannot be separated into parts, so are the characters so intermeshed in each others' lives that they cannot be told apart with Rhoda and Louis fusing together Bernard, Neville, Jinny, and Susan so completely that they cannot even tell if the figures approaching them are men or women because they exist as a complete amalgamation.

Moreover, the ambiguity that surrounds the characters is noted, by Louis and Rhoda, to be a result of their "immersion" in a "flowing tide". Here, the characters conceptualise their understandings of their identity as being both singular, and communal, in existence through their constant application of watery imagery. In the same way that the characters cannot be separated from each other, they too "are scarcely distinguished from the river" as water continually operates in the novel as both a reflection of their lives, and an extension of their very own being (*The Waves* 233). Though it is clear that water continually loops back to the characters within *The Waves* and provides a structural framework for them to grapple with numerous notions regarding their identity, it is vital to consider how water does not only circle back to the humans of the novel, but ultimately loops back to Woolf herself as she continually incorporates her own being into her novel.

3.4.

Throughout the novel, water is continually utilised anthropocentrically by both Woolf, and her specific structural construction of her novel, and the characters themselves who consistently use water to ground their metaphoric descriptions of aspects of themselves and others, and to conceptualise their identity, the process of time, and the very notion of life itself. Furthermore, this anthropocentric navigation of water is done with a distinct consciousness as the characters express both an awareness of their use of water as a structural framework and a clear cognisance for how water operates as an extension of their own being. In portraying her characters as being aware of their manipulation of water, Woolf once again indicates her own consciousness regarding her anthropocentric manipulation of water. In *The Waves*, she uses water to seamlessly slip into her fictional work to ground her own exploration into crucial moments of her own life, comprehend her growing fixation with the notion of death and drowning, and grapple with her very own sense of selfhood.

Though *The Waves* is her only novel that is "not ostensibly concerned with family life or inheritance", it is undoubtedly grounded in Woolf's own reality as the characters that populate the text find their origins in people from Woolf's real life (Lee 248). Percival acts as an elegiac tribute to her brother Thoby Stephens whom "she perpetually remembered and reimagined" across her

writing in the years following his death (*A Writer's Diary* 165; Lee 108-112). Once more, Vanessa Bell and Julia Stephens merge together in the novel as the "fecund, brooding Susan" whilst Lytton Strachey, a close personal friend who vaguely inspired the characters of Terence Hewet in *The Voyage Out*, and William in *Night or Day*, is the primary basis for Neville (Lee 356).

Further, Woolf's acquaintance, Mary Hutchinson, is the inspiration for Jinny, though the character does possess a fragmentation of Woolf herself through both her name, and her comparison of herself to a goat, as both were childhood nicknames of Woolf's (*The Waves* 176; Lee 351;503; Scott 2016:327). Louis is grounded in T. S. Eliot, though Lee (1999) does note in her biographical writing on Woolf that "in the late 1920s and early 1930s Virginia Woolf thought a great deal about her Englishness, even as she was writing increasingly about her alienating scepticism towards English social structures and politics" (507). In considering this, I would suggest that there are remnants of Woolf in Louis too as both grappled with their identity, particularly is it pertained to their respective nationalities.

While vague fragments of Woolf exist in several of the novel's characters, it is through Rhoda and Bernard that Woolf most explicitly incorporates herself into her text. In constructing both characters as fiction replications of different aspects of her own being, Woolf uses their connection to, and manipulation of, water to mirror how she anthropocentrically manoeuvres the element to explore her own identity. In considering Lee's (1999) suggestion that Woolf and Rhoda are both "imprisoned alone inside their violent feelings of horror at the human race and their inability to communicate", and that Woolf gives to Bernard her "perpetual warfare" against "life and Death", both characters can be understood as being ultimate extensions of Woolf's own being (160). While Bernard is the more blatant fictional echo of Woolf in *The Waves*, Rhoda and her constant aqueous presence in the text operate as the primary vehicle through which Woolf grapples with her own mental health and suicidal tendencies, and her lifelong fascination with the concept of death.

Throughout the novel, Rhoda is perpetually associated with watery aesthetics. Bernard refers to her as "the nymph of the fountain, always wet" twice within the text, including the moments after she commits suicide (*The Waves* 117;259). Further, Jinny describes Rhoda as constantly dreaming "of plants that flower under the sea, and rocks through which the fish swim slowly" whilst Rhoda herself describes her own body as being "flowing" and "warm, porous" (*The Waves* 42;57). While Rhoda is intrinsically linked to Woolf through her aqueous presence in the text, she particularly operates as Woolf's fictional echo through her anthropocentric utilisation of water to explore her internal being and processes of her mind. This includes the moment when she

uses water metaphorically to explore her fear of the world around, and her subsequent retreat into herself:

> But I am not composed enough, standing on tiptoe on the verge of fire, still scorched by the hot breath, afraid of the door opening and the leap of the tiger, to make even one sentence. What I say is perpetually contradicted. Each time the door opens I am interrupted. I am not yet twenty-one. I am to be broken. I am to be derided all my life. I am to be cast up and down among these men and women, with their twitching faces, with their lying tongues, like a cork on a rough sea. Like a ribbon of weed I am flung far every time the door opens. I am the foam that sweeps and fills the uttermost rims of the rocks with whiteness; I am also a girl, here in this room.
>
> (*The Waves* 107)

In understanding how she feels as though she will be "derided all [her] life", Rhoda specifically compares herself to being "like a cork on a rough sea". She also describes the impact her interactions with the external world have on her when she notes that she feels like "a ribbon of weed" that is flung aside when a door opens. Through the application of watery imagery, Rhoda grounds her understanding of how, when engaging with the world around her, she immediately feels the need to flee away from the interaction and instead retreat internally into herself. This retreat into the internal is one that Rhoda does throughout her appearance in the novel, and it closely ties her to Woolf. While Woolf constantly loops the natural world back to her characters within her texts, she also consistently circles her writing, and particularly her written utilisation of the element of water, back into herself in an almost hermetic manner.

Furthermore, within the above passage Rhoda attributes herself a description that she quickly echoes — "the foam that sweeps and fills the uttermost rims of the rocks with whiteness". This repetition is found only a few moments later in the novel when Rhoda reveals that she feels as though she is "the foam that races over the beach… or a bone or a half-eaten boat" (*The Waves* 130). Through the comparison of herself to the foam left over from the waves crashing on the rocks and beach, Rhoda uses the watery remnants to ground her understanding of the way in which she feels left behind from her social group as she always lags behind them in the same way foam lags behind the initial wave break. I would also like to draw attention to the latter description's inclusion of the image of a "half-eaten boat". Not only does this further emphasise how Rhoda feels left behind, as she compares herself to the decaying remains of a marine vessel, but it

establishes her as being a clear echo of Rachel who frequently likened herself to a ship in *The Voyage Out*. In addition to being cemented as Woolf's replication through her reference to a sunken ship — an image that remains at the centre of Woolf's conscious and writing — Rhoda is also further aligned with Woolf through her operation as an echo of Rachel, Woolf's first novelistic double.

While the notion of drowning, and death conceptualised through water, recurs throughout Woolf's writing — and is arguably found most prolifically in *The Voyage Out* — it is a fixation that is subtly echoed in both *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*. In *The Waves*, this is primarily found through Neville's repeated references to the death of an unnamed man. This reference is first found in the opening part of the novel where he recalls hearing "about a dead man through the swing-door last night when cook was shoving in and out the dampers. He was found with his throat cut… He was found in the gutter. His blood gurgled down the gutter. His jowl was white as a dead codfish" (*The Waves* 24). Neville later refers to this specific incident two more times (*The Waves* 124;152).

Further, both Bernard and Susan allude to the notion of death, and particularly death associated with water. Susan not only attends a funeral for "the dead shepherd" who lived near her, but she also recalls how one Christmas "a man drowned sitting in his cart" (*The Waves* 45;191). Bernard, whilst writing a letter, specifically references his attendance at "the service for the man who was drowned" and he is later the one who reveals Rhoda's death to the reader (*The Waves* 78;281). An additional, subtle, reference to the particular notion of drowning happens in the final natural interlude of the novel where the night is described as being "as if there were waves of darkness in the air, darkness moved on, covering houses, hills, trees, as waves of water wash round the sides of some sunken ship" (*The Waves* 237).

The first thing to consider here is how the passing of time is conceptualised through the image of water. Though not tied to any particular character like the previous conceptualisations of time, this example indicates Woolf's own anthropocentric application of water as she conceptualises the close of day as being an encompassment in dark waters. Further, not only does Woolf describe the darkness that descends with nightfall as being like waves washing over houses, hills, and trees, completely engulfing — and essentially drowning — the nonhuman space, but she once more draws specific attention to the image of a sunken ship.

This image acts as both a reference to Woolf's fixation with the *Titanic* — which is heavily focused on in *The Voyage Out* and subtly alluded to in *To the Lighthouse* — and the more general notion of a drowned oceanic vessel which is representative of Woolf's obsession with the notion of

being completely engulfed by water. While I have previously explored how specific mentions of drowning are found sporadically throughout the novel, the topic is found most explicitly through Rhoda who, in the moments that follow Percival's death, feels as though she rides "rough water and shall sink with no one to save" her (*The Waves* 160). This idea of sinking below watery depths is also found in her very first appearance in the novel where she is transfixed by a basin of water:

> 'All my ships are white,' said Rhoda. 'I do not want red petals of hollyhocks or geranium. I want white petals that float when I tip the basin up. I have a fleet now swimming from shore to shore. I will drop a twig in as a raft for a drowning sailor. I will drop a stone in and see bubbles rise from the depths of the sea… I have picked all the fallen petals and made them swim. I have put raindrops in some. I will plant a lighthouse here, a head of Sweet Alice. And I will now rock the brown basin from side to side so that my ships may ride the waves. Some will founder. Some will dash themselves against the cliffs. One sails alone. That is my ship. It sails into icy caverns where the sea-bear barks and stalactites swing green chains. The waves rise; their crests curl; look at the lights on the mastheads. They have scattered, they have foundered, all except my ship, which mounts the wave and sweeps before the gale and reaches the islands where the parrots chatter and the creepers . . .'
>
> (*The Waves* 18-19)

Through her first soliloquy, Rhoda is immediately engulfed in watery imagery, and bonded to the literal presence of water as she rocks her brown basis "to and fro", garnering a sense of comfort from her interaction with water. This sense of finding comfort in the literal bodies of water is once again directly echoed from the characters of Rachel and Nancy in *The Voyage Out* and *To the Lighthouse* respectively. Rhoda is further bonded to Nancy through the way she controls the watery space of the basin in the same way Nancy had authoritative control over the tidal pool that she peered into at the beach (*To the Lighthouse* 85). In this first soliloquy, Rhoda is also instantly presented as being preoccupied with the notion of drowning, with her very first moments in the novel seeing to her heavily referencing a death by an engulfment in water. This reference to drowning is found in her opposition to the idea, as she expresses her desire to try and stay afloat in the water. She describes dropping "a twig" into her basis which she hopes will act "as a raft for a drowning sailor". Only moments later, she emphasises her desire to have all her picked flower petals swim, and not sink. Further, she notes that while her rocking of the basin has caused all the

other ships, "except *her* ship" to founder and scatter, her boat "mounts the wave and sweeps before the gale and reaches the island", surviving all the tempestuous movements of water she causes.

In addition to being aligned with the characters of Rachel and Nancy, I would suggest that Rhoda is also immediately aligned with the character of Cam from *To the Lighthouse*. Both characters are introduced with Sweet Alice flowers in their possession, and both are seemingly granted a sense of authority within the natural world — Cam in her defiance against Mr Bankes, and Rhoda in her withdrawal from the social space around her and her retreat into the internal where she rocks *her* brown basin and *her* imagined ships (*To the Lighthouse* 25; *The Waves* 106). This sense of ownership over the basin, and its water, is further emphasised when Rhoda calls herself the "mistress of [her] fleet of ships" (*The Waves* 106). Additionally, both Rhoda and Cam are introduced in a space that clearly replicates Woolf's own childhood vacation spot. While Cam is located at the Ramsay's holiday home, a near identical reconstruction of the space of St. Ives, Rhoda is located in a garden that is both near the ocean and contains a white house that possesses a faint resemblance to Talland House (Lee 28).

Throughout her appearance in the novel, Rhoda is not only indicative of Woolf through her constant anthropocentric manipulation of water but also through the way in which Rhoda's escape to the watery space of her mind no longer provides her with the comfort it once did. Woolf explores her own weakening mental health through Rhoda, and her anthropocentric utilisation of the element to try to grapple with her growing fixation with the notion of drowning. Where Rhoda once felt in control of the watery world she constructed, and found it to be a place to contemplate life and the struggle against the notion of death and drowning, her view of the space slowly alters in the moments that lead up to her suicide. She no longer finds herself focused on staying afloat, but rather feels as though everything in her constructed basin will sink:

> "Rippling small, rippling grey, innumerable waves spread beneath us. I touch nothing. I see nothing. We may sink and settle on the waves. The sea will drum in my ears. The white petals will be darkened with sea water. They will float for a moment and then sink. Rolling me over the waves will shoulder me under. Everything falls in a tremendous shower, dissolving me"
>
> (*The Waves* 206)

Here, the earlier image is considerably altered as the petals that she once ensured swam now "darken with sea water" and sink. The specific reference to the sea drumming in Rhoda's ears is an

additional echo back to a previous text as it circles Rhoda back to Mrs Ramsay who finds herself momentarily upset by the crashing of waves which she describes as being a ghostly beat of drums that mark her mortality (*To the Lighthouse* 19-20). In considering this, the scene above alludes to Rhoda's own impending death as she feels as though "everything falls in a tremendous shower, dissolving me". As the novel progresses, Rhoda no longer explores the notion of drowning by being in opposition to it. Rather, she embraces the idea the closer she gets to her own death. In one instance, she asks the ocean to: "consume me, carry me to the furthest limit" and in another, Louis states that "Rhoda has rocked her ships to shore. Whether they have foundered, whether they have anchored, she cares no longer" (*The Waves* 205;225).

Through the progression of Rhoda's understanding of drowning — her initial resistance to the idea and her subsequent acceptance of it — she operates within *The Waves* as a patent parallel to Woolf as she encapsulates Woolf's own growing fixation with the notion of drowning. Though this is the most evident example of Woolf's construction of Rhoda as a channel through which she is able to explore her own conceptualisation of the notion of death — particularly through their mirrored fixation with water — it is crucially important to consider a very brief moment that occurs whilst Rhoda is in London that I believe distinctly cements her as a fictional echo of Woolf herself. Though quite short, this scene acts as a solidifier for the clear connection that exists between Rhoda and Woolf, and is referenced twice more within *The Waves*. The scene, which sees to Rhoda encountering a puddle in the city streets and finding herself completely transfixed by the space and unable to cross, reads:

> I came to the puddle. I could not cross it. Identity failed me. We are nothing, I said, and fell. I was blown like a feather, I was wafted down tunnels. Then very gingerly, I pushed my foot across. I laid my hand against a brick wall. I returned very painfully, drawing myself back into my body over the grey, cadaverous space of the puddle. This is life then to which I am committed.
>
> (*The Waves* 64)

When Rhoda encounters the puddle again, she describes the incident in a similar manner:

> There is the puddle… I hear the rush of the great grindstone within an inch of my head. Its wind roars in my face. All palpable forms of life have failed me. Unless I can stretch and touch something hard, I shall be blown down the eternal corridors for ever. What, then, can

> I touch? What brick, what stone? and so draw myself across the enormous gulf into my body safely?
>
> (*The Waves* 158-9)

This moment of extreme helplessness that Rhoda experiences is an exact replication of one that Woolf herself experiences. The paragraphs above capture an encounter that is difficult to understand on its own as it is unclear what bothers Rhoda so intensely the she feels her identity has "failed [her]" and "all palpable forms of life have failed [her]" and that she needs to "painfully" draw back into herself. However, the meaning becomes more transparent when Woolf's biographical writing is taken into account. In talking of her own experiences with a puddle in London retrospectively in *A Sketch of the Past*, Woolf writes:

> What then has remained interesting? Again those moments of being. Two I always remember. There was the moment of the puddle in the path; when for no reason I could discover, everything suddenly became unreal; I was suspended; I could not step across the puddle; I tried to touch something... the whole world became unreal.
>
> (*A Sketch of the Past* 78)

By considering Woolf's own experiences, Rhoda's strange encounter with the puddle in the streets of London can be understood as being indicative of an internal struggle as both Rhoda and Woolf seek out something tangible, within reach around them, to help draw them safely over the watery puddle. For Woolf, the moment she writes of occurred shortly after the passing of her brother, Thoby, and I would suggest that she consciously incorporated a fictional replication of this moment into her novel because, as noted by Stewart (1972), the act of writing *The Waves* "revived grief for her brother's death and a sense of 'fighting something alone'" (433).

Further evidence of this patent mirroring of her personal experience into her text is found through the chronological placement of the incident within the novel. While Rhoda's first experience with the puddle occurs towards the beginning of the novel, her second one happens after the death of Percival. In considering this, I would further suggest that the internal struggle that both Rhoda and Woolf experience in these respective moments is that of a grappling with the notion of loss and the subsequent feelings of intense grief. In both incidents, the literal presence of water not only elicits a deep emotion within both Woolf and Rhoda, but it reveals how water becomes a meditative space to contemplate the notion of loss and death. Moreover, this scene not only furthers the argument that Woolf's novels operate as an extension of her own mind, rather than being

fabricated worlds of complete imagination, but it is also clear that the characters who guide the majority of her writing are shadows of her own identity.

In fragmenting herself, and attributing small aspects of her own being to her characters, Woolf constructs bodies that are not only made in her likeness, but are rather channels through which she is able to grapple with her own notions of identity and her own conceptualisations of life and death. Within *The Waves*, Rhoda is a clear literary recreation of Woolf. Not only does she operate as an echo of the other textual characters who are fictional duplicates of Woolf, but her constant rocking of her basin becomes a microcosm for Woolf's own mind, and her own ultimately anthropocentric navigation of water when conceptualising notions of her own being, her deteriorating mental health, and her comprehension of her ever-growing consciousness around the topic of drowning.

While Rhoda exists within the text as a fictional recreation of fragmental pieces of Woolf's own being, she is not the only one. Rather, Bernard becomes a clear mirror image of Woolf and exists within *The Waves* as her most prominent literary duplication. Throughout *The Waves*, Bernard is not only explicitly aware of the watery spaces around him, but he is also acutely conscious of how he uses watery metaphors to describe daily phenomena and frame his own notions of identity, and comprehend his experiences and emotions. Bernard is continually aware of how water engulfs his existence as he uses water to conceptualise the process of writing and understand the very notions of life and mortality. In the same way that the "sea pervades most of [Woolf's] novels and surfaces recurrently in her short stories, diaries, and essays" so does water filter into every one of Bernard's soliloquies, and thus into every moment of his life that is captured in the novel (Muscoguiri 101). Just like Lily and Mrs Ramsay before him, Bernard is presented as being conscious of the literal presence of water around him as he is noted in the very first section of the novel to hear "the murmur of the waves in the air" (*To the Lighthouse* 72;161; *The Waves* 18).

Although Woolf was adamant not to write *The Waves* as an ode to her own childhood — as she had done in her other fictional works — she does undoubtedly incorporate herself into the novel (*A Writer's Diary* 141). This is done vividly through the character of Bernard who Woolf uses to navigate many of her concerns about her own sense of selfhood. Examples of this include the way the very model for the communal and internal explorations into the self that transpire in the novel are based on her own experiences, as "though she lived in Bloomsbury, she also defined herself in opposition to it" (Lee 428). Her time in Bloomsbury would become the "model for this dual movement — between a struggle for self-definition and a need to belong" (Lee 248). *The Waves* embodies this "alternation between the public self and the private interior self", and while Woolf

briefly explores the private, internal workings of the mind through the character of Rhoda, she does it thoroughly through Bernard (Lee 531).

Throughout the novel, Bernard is consistently aware of how his sense of being is dependent on those around him and how he exists not in isolation, but rather in concurrence with his friends. He notes that he and the others "melt into each other with phrases" and that they are "not single, [they] are one" (*The Waves* 16;68). He also constantly refers to the fact that he is "not one and simply, but complex and many" and that when he is with his friends he is "many-sided" (*The Waves* 76;116). Bernard explores this connection with the others, and his public, communal self most explicitly through the image of a flower which he draws attention to during the two dinners he has with his friends. At the first one, he describes this natural element as being "a seven-sided flower, many petalled, red, puce, purple-shaded, stiff with silver-tinted leaves — a whole flower to which every eye brings its own contribution" (*The Waves* 127).

Here, the flower becomes a natural representative of the characters and their existence as so deeply enmeshed in each other that they cannot be considered apart. Also, in using the flower as a metaphor for the characters and the "interconnection of their selves", Bernard is further paralleled to Woolf who herself understood flowers as being representative of belonging to a greater whole (Mattison 74). Mirroring Woolf, Bernard understands his own identity as being a communal experience and that which exists in conjunction with his friends' identities. After Percival's death — and thus the loss of one of the seven that constituted his identity — Bernard revisits this image of the flower and alters it slightly, noting that now "the red carnation that stood in the vase on the table of the restaurant when we dined together with Percival, is become a six-sided flower; made of six lives" (*The Waves* 229).

Though he exists in the novel as the most patent indication of Woolf's clear awareness of the interconnectedness of the self, I must briefly draw attention to how he is not the only character to understand himself as being amalgamated with the others. Neville explores this connection when he notes that because Percival "feels bored; [he] too feel[s] bored", thus revealing that his own emotions are not only dependent on others around him, but rather they are a direct mirror of those that Percival feels (*The Waves* 38). Furthermore, Louis is not only aware of his connection to others through his identity hinging on a legacy of existence, but he also notes at one point that he and his friends come together "like separated parts of one body and soul" (*The Waves* 137). However, while both Neville and Louis partly explore the connection that they have with the others, it is Bernard who is continually depicted as being aware of how his life blends into the lives of others. In understanding his identity as not being a solitary experience, he describes himself as being "not

one person" but rather "many people; [he does] not altogether know who [he is] — Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis; or how to distinguish [his] life from theirs" (*The Waves* 276).

The very multiplicity of Bernard's identity is a subtle echo of the way Woolf herself is a being constructed of multiple pieces. Throughout her life, she fragments herself into her biographical writing as she shares a look into the workings of her mind through her consistent diary entries, the copious amounts of letters written during her lifetime, and her various autobiographical works. Further, she fragments herself into her fictional writing as she allows parts of her life to filter into her works and become the very basis of each text — be that in the form of the plot, the location, or the recurring element of water. Moreover, Woolf ascribes parts of herself to the characters she writes and allows her own voice to slip into her fictional work through her characters' unwavering utilisation of water to scaffold their conceptualisation of their own being. Thus, in the same way that Bernard exists in conjunction with his group of friends, so can Woolf be thoroughly explored through an investigation of all her writing and particularly through an examination of the assortment of characters she creates in her likeness.

A further way Bernard can be understood as operating as Woolf's fictional replication in *The Waves* is through the way he inherits the role of artistic duplication from Terence and Lily before him, and is used by Woolf to explore her understanding of her role as author. This mirroring of the role of writer in Bernard is found through the way in which, just like Woolf, he struggles to find the right phrases to use when he notes:

> There is nothing one can fish up in a spoon; nothing one can call an event. Yet it is alive too and deep, this stream. Immersed in it I would stop between one mouthful and the next, and look intently at a vase, perhaps with one red flower, while a reason struck me, a sudden revelation. Or I would say, walking along the Strand, 'That's the phrase I want', as some beautiful, fabulous phantom bird, fish or cloud with fiery edges swam up to enclose once and for all some notion haunting me, after which on I trotted taking stock with renewed delight of ties and things in shop-windows.
>
> (*The Wave*s 255-6)

Bernard specifically implies his inability to find the correct phrasing to explain his mind when he mentions that there is "nothing one can fish up in a spoon; nothing one can call an event". Here, he directly mirrors Woolf who herself wrote of the struggle to find the correct wording that matched "what is so vivid to [her] eyes" (*A Writer's Diary* 128). I would also like to draw attention here to

how Bernard expresses a blatant awareness for his anthropocentric utilisation of nature as a platform to provide him with inspiration. After viewing the "one red flower" or "some beautiful, fabulous phantom bird, fish, or cloud", Bernard is struck with "renewed delight" as the natural imagery grounds the images and phrases he seeks to write.

This obvious awareness for his anthropocentric manipulation of nature to benefit his own being, and his writing process, is further found when he notes that "whatever sentence [he] extract[s] whole and entire from this cauldron is only a string of six little fish that let themselves be caught while a million others leap and sizzle, making the cauldron bubbly like boiling silver, and slip through [his] fingers" (*The Waves* 256). Not only does Bernard compare the stringing of sentences together as being like the capturing of fish from water, but he reveals his awareness for the way water operates as a foundation for both his conceptualisation of the process of writing and his own writing as he continually utilises water as metaphoric basis for his comparisons and expressions. This conscious and constant utilisation of the natural world, and particularly watery imagery, as a basis for language is something that Woolf herself expresses throughout her diary as she continually refers to the final writing days of her novel as being "the last lap" she has to endure (*A Writer's Diary* 158).

Furthermore, in setting the opening portion of *The Waves* near the ocean, Woolf once again returns to the space of Talland House — the locus that is the primary inspiration for many of the principal locations in all her fictional writing. In the particular case of *The Waves*, the way in which Bernard's earliest memories include a moment of distinctly noting the sound of the waves in the garden reflects Woolf's own earliest memory that is marked by watery noise. This parallel is further found when Bernard describes the bathing time that occurs during his childhood in a scene that is clearly based on Woolf's own childhood recollection. The scene reads:

> Mrs Constable, girt in a bath-towel, takes her lemon-coloured sponge and soaks it in water; it turns chocolate-brown; it drips; and, holding it high above me, shivering beneath her, she squeezes it. Water pours down the runnel of my spine. Bright arrows of sensation shoot on either side. I am covered with warm flesh. My dry crannies are wetted; my cold body is warmed; it is sluiced and gleaming. Water descends and sheets me like an eel. Now hot towels envelop me, and their roughness, as I rub my back, makes my blood purr. Rich and heavy sensations form on the roof of my mind; down showers the day — the woods; and

> Elvedon; Susan and the pigeon. Pouring down the walls of my mind, running together, the day falls copious, resplendent.
>
> (*The Waves* 26)

Not only does water evoke a deep sensation within Bernard as it engulfs his entire being — even "his dry crannies [being] wetted" — but there is also the return to the association between water and memory as, moments after the water descends upon him, "heavy sensations form on the roof of [his] mind". Furthermore, this scene holds numerous elements that are present in Woolf's own first memory which she documents as being:

> If life has a base that it stands upon, if it is a bowl that one fills and fills and fills — then my bowl without a doubt stands upon this memory. It is of hearing the waves breaking in the nurses at St. Ives. It is of hearing the waves over the beach and then breaking one two one two behind a yellow blind.
>
> (*A Sketch of the Past* 64)

In the provided passages above, this clear mirroring is revealed through the inclusion of microscopic, and almost identical, elements in both recollections. This includes Woolf's specific mention of "a yellow blind" and Bernard's emphasis on the "lemon-coloured sponge". The inclusion of such a small detail in both passages aligns the scenes together and reveals Woolf's clear replication of the scene in *The Waves* off her own life. In drawing a parallel between both Bernard's early recollection and her own memory, Woolf fluidly flows into the character of Bernard, constructing him in her image and allowing his anthropocentric manipulation of water to mirror her own manoeuvring of the element.

Furthermore, the colour yellow is returned to at a later point in the novel when Bernard, towards the novel's conclusion, describes his life as being like "the pipes have burst. We stand a yellow tin bath in the middle of the room" (*The Waves* 213). The particular reference to the centrality of the bath's placement reveals both the importance of the image as it becomes a crucial pinnacle point in Bernard's life. Here, just as Woolf continually returns to the memory of waves crashing outside the nursery of St Ives as her life "stands upon this memory", so does Bernard continually return to his own first moments of childhood which define both him, and his friends, for the rest of their existence.

The notion of Woolf's own life's basis being the memory of her time in St Ives is crucially important to consider as Talland House permanently etched itself into Woolf's consciousness and

she continually returned to her childhood beachside setting across a majority of her writing. Further, the sound of waves that Woolf recalls as being part of her first moments of consciousness are paramount in understanding both her own fixation with water and her consistent insertion of water into all her writing. In the same way that Bernard notes water engulfs his entire being — noting that "in the beginning, there was the nursery, with windows opening on to a garden, and beyond that the sea" and that "the falling waves which had sounded all [his] life — so does water completely engulf Woolf herself" (*The Waves* 239;291).

In drawing one final comparison between Bernard and Woolf, and concluding my argument that Bernard is Woolf's fictional replication in *The Waves* — and thus the channel through which she is able to anthropocentrically navigate water to understand her own being, her struggles with mental health, her grappling with the notion of mortality and death, and her own identity — one of the very first lines of the novel must be considered. In the opening line of the very first soliloquy section of the novel, Bernard states: "I see a ring… hanging above me. It quivers and hangs in a loop of light" (*The Waves* 9).

This line immediately ascribes Bernard with an angelic image, with the "loop of light" being representative of a halo. It further indicates the ultimately circulatory nature of the novel as Bernard is described as being an angel in his opening soliloquy — a figure often associated with the notion of the afterlife — and directly addresses Death in his final soliloquy that occurs on the very last page of the novel (*The Waves* 297). Furthermore, the very notion of a circulation existing in Woolf's writing is not unique to *The Waves*, but is rather found throughout her archive and her life. In considering the way she wrote in "Modern Fiction" that "life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end", I would suggest that Woolf's own understanding of her life is that of a constant circulation, and a repetitive looping, back to moments of her past, particularly those that are associated with the space of Talland House. Furthermore, both her life and her literature are completely "enveloped" by her recollection of her watery memories made at St. Ives, and not only does Woolf allow water to flow into all her writing, but she ultimately utilises water as a means of entering into her fictional archive and conceptualising notions of her own being, throughout the medium of her writing.

CONCLUSION

As both a literal presence which acts as an extension, and a reflection, of the characters in the novel, and a metaphoric basis and conceptual grounding of the construction of the very notion of identity, water becomes a clear site of anthropocentric manipulation within *The Waves*. Within this chapter, I concluded my examination into Woolf's conscientious attempts to integrate the human and nonhuman and finalised my argument that while she does successfully transcend the traditional andropocentricism of the binary, she ultimately continues to reestablish the anthropocentrism of it. In considering Woolf's constant circulation of the nonhuman world back to the human, focus was particularly drawn to Louis and his utilisation of the image of roots, and later water, to grapple with his sense of belonging and his construction of an identity.

Furthermore, close attention was drawn to the natural interludes in the novel, and how they are both personified into becoming humanistic presences in the novel, and operate as reflections of the characters within the novel. I drew further attention to how the characters manipulate water into being a conceptual metaphor that they utilise to construct their very notion of selfhood and comprehend their existence in the world around them. Here, I focused on Susan and her utilisation of water to understand the process of time, and Bernard who frames his thorough exploration into his own internal processes and experiences through water.

Finally, I explored how Woolf constructs her characters as replications of herself, and as expansions of various aspects and interests of her own. Here, I focused on Rhoda as being a replication of Woolf's internal struggles, her deteriorating mental health, and her growing fixation with the notion of suicide. Bernard was also examined as being Woolf's artistic duplicate in the novel as he anthropocentrically utilised water to explore the process of writing. Further, I suggested that his constant awareness of his identity as being a communal experience, and his circling back to his moments of early memory in the novel, solidified him as a direct reflection of Woolf who herself continually returned to her past to ground her novels.

In constructing her characters as clear duplications of her own being, Woolf allows herself to slip into her text and aligns herself with their clear metaphoric, literal, and conceptual manipulation of water. In doing this, Woolf not only consistently loops water back to the characters of her novels, but she ultimately, and essentially inwardly, circles it all back to herself as her appropriation of water becomes not only ultimately anthropocentric, but potentially solipsistic, as she uses her texts as a meditative space upon which to consider notions of her own tumultuous past, and grapple with her own conceptualisations of her existence and being.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I have argued that Woolf's representation of water throughout her novels *The Voyage Out*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Waves* is ultimately anthropocentric. In beginning with *The Voyage Out*, a clear exploration into Woolf's first approach to water in a novelistic work has been conducted. In applying notions stemming from ecological criticism and taking into consideration ideas originating in studies around the Anthropocene, an investigation into Woolf's awareness of the actual artificiality of the traditional division between the human and nonhuman has been performed. This included close textual readings of the novel which revealed Woolf's attempts to transcend the traditional separation. However, in the moments where she does integrate the human and nonhuman spaces, she presents the nonhuman world — particularly the natural space, and the element of water — as ultimately being a metaphoric basis, and conceptual framework, to explore the humans within her novel.

Throughout the novel, numerous characters ascribe natural — and particularly watery — descriptions to both themselves and those around them. They turn to the literal bodies of water that populate the pages of *The Voyage Out* to either provide them with comfort in moments of distress, or to provide them with a comparative base to explore notions of their own being. Furthermore, water becomes a clear conceptual framework through which characters explore their fluctuating emotions and their varying experiences. While the anthropocentric manipulation of water to develop conceptualisations of the self is not done as consciously in *The Voyage Out* as it is in the later works of *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* where the characters possess a clear awareness of their utilisation of water, the anthropocentric manipulation is still evident in *The Voyage Out*. Here, the chapter drew close attention to Rachel's final moments. Not only did the literal bodies of water in the novel — the ocean and the storm — operate as a clear reflection of the characters in the novel, but water was used to describe and conceptualise the very notion of unconsciousness and death.

Furthermore, my chapter critically analysed how Woolf's anthropocentric manipulation of water does not end on the pages of her fictional writing, and rather how such a manoeuvring of water becomes the primary point through which Woolf slips her own voice into her text. While all of Woolf's writing includes traces of her family, and varying reconstructions of Talland House, Woolf's first novel is her work that focuses particularly on Woolf herself. Woolf's incorporation of her own voice in *The Voyage Out* was explored through a consideration of her fragmentation of her

own being into the numerous characters that populate the text, including Evelyn Murgatroyd, Susan Warrington, and Miss Allan.

Specific attention was also drawn here to the connection between Woolf and Terence Hewet, who shares Woolf's interest in the art of the novel and acts as a predecessor to her more obvious artistic duplicates — Lily Briscoe and Bernard (*To the Lighthouse; The Waves;* Lee 160). In the same way that Terence desired to write about that which is not said — "Silence" — Woolf used her own writing to address aspects of her childhood, and later selfhood, that she might not have voiced without the medium of her text. This chapter examined how *The Voyage Out* operates as one of the first textual spaces that Woolf uses to explore notions of her own identity, reconcile herself with moments from her tempestuous childhood, and begin her investigation into her absolute fascination with the notion of death, and drowning. Woolf does this primarily through her creation of Rachel, who, so inextricably bonded to water, ships, and deaths, operates as a direct reflection of Woolf herself in the novel.

The notion of Woolf's inclusion of a fictional duplication of herself in her writing is explored in the chapters dedicated to both *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*. Furthermore, while I argued that *The Voyage Out* is the novel that is most personal to Woolf, and most focused on her as an individual, her manipulation of water and fragmentation of her own being into her characters is not unique to her first novel. Rather, it becomes a staple across her subsequent works as she continues to circle the natural world back to the human, and ultimately back to herself as she reveals her anthropocentric utilisation of the constantly present, and incomparably important, element of water.

Throughout the chapter dedicated to *To the Lighthouse*, water was thoroughly explored as being "unfathomably deep", where into it "had spilled so many lives. The Ramsays'; the children's; and all sorts of waits and strays of things besides" (*To the Lighthouse* 22). Woolf anthropocentrically utilises water as a means of exploring human identity and comprehending numerous notions about life and existence. This chapter focused particularly on the Ramsay women, and how Woolf attempts to present them as thoroughly integrated with the literal bodies of water around them — Mrs Ramsay and Cam with the ocean, and Nancy with her tidal pool. However, in attempting to merge the human and nonhuman spaces, Woolf backgrounds the natural world and makes it a passive recipient of the human individual's projections as it ultimately takes on the role of providing a basis upon which the characters are able to grapple with notions pertaining to various aspects of their selfhood.

Furthermore, this chapter drew acute attention to how the characters of the novel not only consistently use water anthropocentrically themselves, but also how they are conscious of their blatant manipulation of water. This is particularly evident when comparing *To the Lighthouse*'s characters' awareness of their manipulation of water to the seemingly unconscious manner in which the characters of *The Voyage Out* use water. Here, I explored how the characters are acutely aware of how water ultimately operates as a conceptual metaphor as it frames their narratives of existence, structures their notions about their identity, aids in grappling with their emotions, and helps them explore grander notions about death.

This chapter also explored the Ramsay's holiday home as being a clear recreation of Woolf's own childhood home, Talland House, in close detail. It explored how Woolf's attempt to provide a glimpse at the house without the presence of humans ultimately furthers her anthropocentric reading of water, and nature. Unable to present the natural world as completely apart from the human, Woolf instead illustrates an abandoned home that is filled with distinctly human-like natural phenomena. In her distinct anthropomorphisation of the natural world that inhabits the house during the years that the Ramsays are away, Woolf once more foregrounds the human over the natural and projects the notion of human-centrality into her novel.

Once again, the anthropocentric navigation of water was also explored as extending beyond the pages of the novel, and into Woolf herself. This chapter focused on how Woolf created her novel as a clear reflection of her childhood. She recreates her childhood home of Talland House, and she populates her text with characters who find their origins in her own reality. Mr and Mrs Ramsay are textual duplications of her parents, whilst the Ramsay children come to mirror the Stephen children. Furthermore, Woolf slips her own being into the text through her shared concerns with Mrs Ramsay and the characters of Lily Briscoe, who captures Woolf's own attempts to recreate Talland House during a time before the passing of her parents, and Cam Ramsey, who is absolutely drenched in natural — and particularly watery — imagery.

In creating the novel as a reflection of her childhood, Woolf operates the text as a therapeutic space upon which she can meditate on her memories of her childhood, pay tribute to her parents, and explore her own comprehensions about her identity. This chapter focused on how, in *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf does this through an examination of her role as an author and her recurring fixation with the notion of death (particularly as it relates to drowning). Furthermore, where Lily and Cam inherited the role of being Woolf's fictional echo within her writing from Rachel and Terence in *The Voyage Out*, they quickly passes it along to both Bernard and Rhoda in *The Waves*. Whilst Woolf finally settles the image of her parents in her mind through her

completion of *To the Lighthouse*, she continues to utilise water throughout her literary archive as a means of exploring her characters, and ultimately herself, in a manner that is ultimately anthropocentric.

The chapter dedicated to *The Waves* began with a final investigation into the ways Woolf attempts to merge the human and nonhuman. Despite there being clear moments when she succeeds in revealing her understanding of the co-existence of the human and nonhuman presences, she ultimately circles the nonhuman space back to the human. In exploring how she does this, focus was drawn to the metaphoric application of the natural world as the characters of the novel all use nature to describe aspects of themselves or those around them. Furthermore, attention was drawn to the character of Louis and how he uses nature to explore his own identity and particularly his struggle of being the only Australian in his group of English friends.

In extending this exploration of the anthropocentric utilisation of nature, I explored how water is constantly used as a conceptual framework by the characters as they examine notions of existence, time, and death through watery images. The exploration into how water is used to understand the passing of time focused closely on Susan and Bernard whilst the investigation into how the characters use water to understand their bond to each other, and manner in which their identities are merged and dependent on each other, focused on Bernard, Louis, and Neville. Further, focus was also drawn to how Bernard most consistently utilises water to conceptualise processes of his own internal workings and his existence in the world he inhabits.

In this chapter, I also drew attention to both Rhoda and Bernard who act as Woolf's fictional reflections in the text. I did, however, note that Woolf does further fragment herself into the characters of Louis and Jinny in a manner similar to the way she ascribes her personal attributes to an assortment of characters in *The Voyage Out*. In exploring Rhoda, the chapter focused on how she operates as a channel through which Woolf explores her own internal workings and expresses her feelings of isolation and her wavering mental health. Rhoda also becomes the primary channel through which Woolf explores her ever growing fixation with the notion of drowning. This chapter also focused closely on Bernard, and examined his role as Woolf's artistic duplication within *The Waves*. He constantly, and consciously, uses water as a metaphoric basis for the world around him and as a conceptual grounding to explore his own identity, particularly as it relates to his group of friends. Also, Bernard's constant recollection of the early scenes of the novel (which document his early childhood in a space that once more mirrors Woolf's memories of Talland House) cemented him as a clear reflection of Woolf herself, and thus indicative of Woolf's own anthropocentric utilisation of water that fills the novel.

Throughout Woolf's literature, water becomes a clear site of anthropocentric manipulation. As a literal presence, it acts as an extension of, and a reflection to, the characters in the novel. As a metaphoric basis, and a conceptual framework, it is utilised by the characters to construct notions of selfhood, understandings of experiences, and grapple with the very notions of life and death. In constructing her characters — particularly Rachel, Lily, Rhoda, and Bernard — as patent replications of herself, and as expansions of various aspects of her own being, Woolf allows herself to seamlessly slip into her text. In doing so, she reveals her own ultimately anthropocentric approach to water.

Overall, while close readings of my three chosen novels do show clear moments where Woolf attempts to transcend the human and nonhuman binary, she ultimately circles the nonhuman space back to being of service to the human. Through her metaphoric, literal, and conceptual utilisation of nature, she specifically uses the element of water to create and explore all the characters that appear within *The Voyage Out*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Waves*. The chapters above chart a fascinating progression of this constant circling back to the self, as this looping becomes progressively tighter, and more consciously performed.

While Rachel is presented as not being blatantly aware of her anthropocentric utilisation of water despite her constant use of the element to metaphoric describe herself and those she encounters, Mrs Ramsay expresses a more acute awareness of her use of water as being an extension, and reflection, of her being and a conceptual framework through which she constructs her understandings of herself and those around her — particularly her daughter, Cam. Further, she constantly uses the element metaphorically as she ascribes watery metaphors to herself and all those who stay in her home. Bernard is the character most explicitly aware of his anthropocentric utilisation of water as both a metaphoric means of inspiration for his writing, and as a conceptual framework for his exploration into notions of his own experiences, existence, and the identity he shares with his friends.

Despite the characters all understanding their utilisation of water in varying degrees, they all come to reflect back on each other as there is a constant circling back that occurs not only within the texts (particularly with the nonhuman looping back to the human) but between the texts too. This is most notably found in Woolf's later work where clear references to her earlier writing echo throughout her later archive. Clarissa Dalloway first appears in *The Voyage Out*, but she later slips into numerous short stories and becomes the central focus in *Mrs Dalloway*. The way Rachel seeks comfort in the literal watery bodies around her is mirrored in both Mrs Ramsay and Rhoda, and her awareness of the pipes that lie underneath London is directly referenced by Louis when he clearly

notes the pipes that exist under the earth. Bernard and Louis are both aware of the audibility of the literal water in their novel in the same way that Mrs Ramsay and Lily are in *To the Lighthouse*. Furthermore, both *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* include recurring, subtle references to sunken ships which circles back to *The Voyage Out* and the novel's inclusion of explicit allusions to the *Titanic*.

Finally, the reflection that occurs between the texts is found most prominently with the characters who populate the various novelistic works. Bernard echoes Lily, who echoes Terence as an artistic presence. All three sketch aspects of Woolf's own writing process, and her artistic pursuit to capture what she could not put into words. Mr and Mrs Ramsay possess traces of Ridley and Helen Ambrose, with both couples being indicative of Woolf's parents. Rhoda reflects back on Rachel, with their undulating fixation with the engulfment in water, and their untimely deaths at the conclusion of their respective novels. Furthermore, all the texts include references — both implicitly and explicitly — to Talland House and Woolf's constant recreation of her first moments of being in her fictional works. Not only does this interweave and interlock the texts so tightly that they become almost hermetic in nature, but it further cements the notion that all three works ultimately circle back on Woolf herself.

The third interlude of *The Waves* captures an image that I find to be most reflective of Woolf's writing process. It describes a "rain drop on the hedge, pendent but not falling, with a whole house bent in it" (*The Waves* 74). "Within the compass of a single drop of water", Woolf seamlessly slips into each of her novels as she anthropocentrically manipulates water to constantly loop back onto the human presences within her writing, and ultimately circulate back to herself (*The Voyage Out* 219). She does this primarily through her ascription of her own fascination with water to the characters that populate her texts, and through her constant inclusion of her own recollections of her past, particularly the "whole house" — Talland House.

By considering Woolf's literary works during the time of the Anthropocene, I was able to navigate an exploration into Woolf's depiction of water — and nature quite generally — in a much more radical manner than has been done before. Despite her concerted efforts to transcend notions of human-centrality, her conscientious attempts to foreground the natural world, and her success in departing from the traditional andropocentrism of the binary, I closely examined the ways in which Woolf ultimately reestablishes anthropocentrism in her writing. This clear limitation of her ecological consciousness becomes pronounced when her work is examined from the perspective of an epoch that is marked by the continual centralisation of the human, and the devastating effects that human-sovereignty has had over the world at large. Furthermore, despite Woolf's radical

experimentation in the novel form, and her ostensible concern with the natural world, she is ultimately unable to transcend the modernist novel's focus on the human individual as she rather manipulates the waterscapes within her writing into being metaphoric and conceptual foundations for the exploration into human identity.

Finally, with the fragmentation of herself into the characters that populate her texts, Woolf aligns herself with their clear metaphoric, literal, and conceptual manipulation of water. Her characters' ultimate looping of the nonhuman back to the human, as they utilise water as a basis, foundation, and reflection of their own being, becomes an echo of Woolf's own ultimately anthropocentric and, almost solipsistic, understanding and navigation of the aqueous element that engulfed her whole literary archive and continued to transfix her throughout her entire existence.

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