

Why Woolf?

More than sixty years after her death, Virginia Woolf continues to interest students and scholars. Woolf, the woman and the writer, is fascinating for many reasons, among them the experimental nature of her fiction, her participation in the Bloomsbury group, the appearance of mental instabilities, and her suicide. These reasons, however, only partially account for the plethora of books and articles written about her, or why she is still studied in a new century. Readers are privy to not only Woolf's novels and short stories, but also to her personal writings such as journals and diaries, and her husband's biography of her. So, with this wealth of printed material from and about Woolf, why are students and scholars still trying to discover her? Woolf is read and reread because she evades capture. Her writing resists simple symbols and clear explanations; therefore, critics during the time Woolf was writing, and since her death, have been arguing over what her books and stories are about, without many clear answers.

In their quest to define Woolf and her writing, critics have tended to focus their arguments on one of the following five cruxes: Woolf's personal biography, the role of art, the nature of reality, the structure of her novels, or they focus their arguments on gender-based criticism. Often, when critics

attempt to explain Woolf through any of these categories, they succeed in constructing borders around her writing that minimize the multiplicities outside them. The subtlety with which Woolf writes can drive critics to create structures around Woolf's work in order to make sense of it. However, these constructs that seek to order and control Woolf often cannot contain her because the nature of her writing evades totalization and unity of form.

Poststructuralist theory helps to open up difference in Woolf's writing, specifically, the theories of Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Their book, *A Thousand Plateaus*, allows readers of Woolf's novel, *To the Lighthouse*, outside the confines some past critics have put around it. Deleuze and Guattari use metaphor in their book in order to explain how one can experience life in a way that is limitless. Select Deleuze and Guattarian metaphors, when applied to Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, highlight multiplicities of the novel and make it seem limitless, too. The Deleuze and Guattarian metaphors that are most successful in opening up difference in *To the Lighthouse* are strata; the Body without Organs; becoming; milieu and rhythm; and smooth and striated spaces.

I apply these metaphors to a representative sampling of modernist critics. The term modernist is problematic because

boundaries of time and prominent figures who are lauded as exemplary examples of the term surround it. I use the term modernist to mean traditional thinkers who exhibit the modernist tendency to create order out of what is fragmented. Modernist critics do achieve insight through their structures, and current scholarship of Woolf owes much credit to them. I pursue, however, what happens when we refuse to articulate closure like they do, and instead, embrace difference in Woolf's writing. I have set up a representative sampling of modernist criticisms to act as a backdrop for Deleuze and Guattarian openings in order to appreciate the drastic difference between the two styles of criticism. I focus on the five main cruxes of Woolf criticism: Woolf's personal biography, the role of art, the nature of reality, structure, and gender based criticism. The application of D & G metaphors to these cruxes as they relate to *To the Lighthouse* allows the limits of some past critics' analyses to be observable.

More Than a Daughter

Since the release of Woolf's journals and diaries to the public, some critics have focused on Woolf's personal and public history, in order to find meaning in her works. While Woolf's personal writing can give context to her creative writing, approaching Woolf primarily through her journals and diaries can also stymie discovery of meaning. The nature of Woolf's work is elusive and experimental. Therefore, it resists categorization in only biographical terms because that limits its scope. Coordinating Woolf's literature with her actual lived life can narrow the significance of her art to Woolf's life, alone. Some critics have done this a few different ways. Some search for Woolf within her novels by way of madness, or the appearance of madness in her characters. A few are so entranced by Woolf's history of perceived mental illness, that madness colors their analysis in a way that distracts from other aspects of Woolf's writing. Another way some critics have captured Woolf by her own history is by assigning her characters real-life counterparts. This type of criticism can promote the histories of Woolf's family over her writing. Woolf's personal writings and perceived mental illness can help inform readers about the conditions under which Woolf wrote, but if treated with too much authority, they can overshadow the writing itself.

Among the critics who focus on madness in Woolf and her novels are Elizabeth Hardwick, Daniel Ferrer, and Nancy Topping Bazin. Hardwick sees Woolf's madness coming through in characters of *To the Lighthouse*. Hardwick identifies Woolf's madness in the complaints characters make about people they encounter and how they are nudged or interrupted by life. In *Virginia Woolf and the Madness of Language*, Daniel Ferrer traces how Woolf can be found in her novels through depictions of madness. Ferrer's criticisms are contradictory because while he announces that Woolf believed writers should write unconsciously in a way that is de-centering, Ferrer places Woolf at the center of her works and fixes all his analysis around what he knows of her. With respect to *To the Lighthouse*, Ferrer assigns Mrs. Ramsay the role of Woolf's mother. He does a Freudian analysis, in which an Oedipal struggle takes place against the Father, but under the surface, it is Mother who is attacked by way of Father. Ferrer perceives the fluid of the Mother (maternal fluid) as both poisonous and nurturing. He then connects this maternal fluid to the fluidity of Woolf's own writing, thereby making Woolf the center. Finally, Nancy Topping Bazin also attaches the value of madness to behaviors within Woolf's novels and makes these perceived bouts of madness one with Woolf's own experiences. Bazin further assigns gender roles to certain

behaviors. For instance, Bazin asserts that Woolf would call her manic periods a "feminine vision of life" and her depressive experiences, masculine. Bazin believes that when characters behave manically or depressively, Woolf is coming through. These critics focus on Woolf's mental/emotional struggles, which inform Woolf's work somewhat, but not entirely. Their readings of Woolf are limited because they minimize other possibilities for Woolf's writing that do not directly link back to the known history of Woolf's mental life.

Another way critics have tried to capture Woolf in her own biographical history is by making her characters into symbols for her family members. Two critics who do this are Carolyn Heilbrun and Elizabeth Hardwick. Carolyn Heilbrun, in "Woolf and Androgyny," assigns real-life counterparts not only to the characters, but also to the objects in *To the Lighthouse*. According to Heilbrun, Mr. Ramsay represents Woolf because he reads and is capable of writing. She argues with past critics who assign Mrs. Ramsay the role of Woolf when she states, "The Mrs. Ramsays not only cannot write novels, they do not even read them" (76). Also, Heilbrun believes the lighthouse is a symbol for mother and father to James. She shows how it has feminine and masculine characteristics and therefore, represents mother and father. Elizabeth Hardwick also champions assigning Woolf's

characters real life counterparts. In "Victim and Victors," Hardwick calls Woolf's books "family books" in that they are nostalgic and follow the "drift of life" (136). Hardwick believes *To the Lighthouse's* Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay are representations of Woolf's father and mother. Delegating characters to represent real people in Woolf's life makes Woolf and her family partly into symbols. To say that Mr. Ramsay is Woolf places characteristics of Woolf and Mr. Ramsay into assigned roles. Differences between them have to be reduced in order for the symbol to stand.

Some critics do see the harm in containing meaning to the biographical information we have of Woolf. Bette London and Gillian Beer are two such critics. London, in her article, "Guerrilla in Petticoats or Sans-Culotte? Virginia Woolf and the Future of Feminist Criticism," argues that a reliance on "authentic" texts, such as Woolf's diaries and journals, undermines Woolf's feminist critiques because "authentic" texts are inherently masculine. Relying on Woolf's histories fixes her in her personal writing, which only reinforces patriarchy. Instead, London suggests, we should "disentangle" feminism from Woolf and produce a new reading to add to the multiplicity. Beer argues against the matching game critics play with Woolf's characters and family members. In her book, *Virginia Woolf: The*

Common Ground, Beer loosens the hold Woolf's personal history has over *To the Lighthouse*. Beer states, "Virginia Woolf attempts to honour her obligations to family history and yet freely to dispose that history. In the course of doing so, she brings into question our reliance on symbols to confer value" (30). Beer describes *To the Lighthouse* as a post-symbolist novel and underscores how symbolism is constantly questioned in the novel. According to Beer, *To the Lighthouse* questions bringing stable accord to inner and outer, past and present "to seal the contradiction of subject and object through symbol" (42). Beer states that Woolf's writing evades permanence by escaping the symbolic.

London and Beer's arguments can be aided by the theories of Deleuze and Guattari. The stratum is an important Deleuze and Guattarian metaphor through which to discuss the biographical content of *To the Lighthouse*. Deleuze and Guattari call structures that bring rigid structure and order *strata*. Strata can come from external sites such as rigid institutions and from mechanisms like those found in church and government. These institutions can result in the stratification of individuals because they are highly ordered machines that can impose their order over the individuals within them. The government is supposed to be one institution working for a unified goal;

therefore, anyone working within the government who has the goal of unification is stratified. If there is diversity within a stratum, it is under the surface and not available to those complicit within the machine. Deleuze and Guattari write:

A given stratum retains a unity of composition in spite of the diversity in its organization and development. The unity of composition relates to formal traits common to all of the forms or codes of a strata, and to substantial elements, materials common to all of the stratum's substances or milieus. (502)

Deleuze and Guattari claim that the stratum is not an enemy to be fought against because diversity does exist within it. This diversity must be extracted, however, from the broader commonality of all its traits.

Stratification can also come from internal sources as found in subjectivity and conscience. Just as in external strata, internal strata are made up of codes and hierarchies. One's judgments and conscience are determined by the rules of stratification. Deleuze and Guattari write that one should always be engaged in the process of becoming destratified from these structures because they limit thought and production. This effort is a continuous movement toward destratification. Stillness in this world of D & G is equal to death.

Destratification is pursued through continuous production and resistance to the forces that seek to structure one's life. At the same time, strata can be used in becoming destratified. Becoming destratified implies not just ignoring the structures of daily life--vocation, government, religion, and conscience--but playing with them in order to produce difference.

Analyzing Woolf's texts through the lens of her personal history can be limiting because it can force the characters and Woolf into strata of organizational hierarchy and static being. If we state, as some critics have, that Mrs. Ramsay is Woolf's mother, or Mr. Ramsay is Woolf or her father, then we make Woolf stratified into a family triangle that dead-ends every time we read the novel. Within a family triangle, each person has a distinct role to play. The mother is the nurturer, the father is the disciplinarian and breadwinner, and the child is a tabula rosa who is a product of his parents. Although there may be truth in the statement that Mrs. Ramsay is inspired by Woolf's mother, *To the Lighthouse* is a much more open text than simply a family triangle. If read through Deleuze and Guattari's strata metaphor, *To the Lighthouse* expresses the debilitating effects that containing meaning in the biographical can have. In fact, within the novel, Woolf comments on the limiting effect of thinking of oneself entirely in an assigned familial role.

In her own way, Woolf promotes becoming destratified through Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Ramsay is shown many times to be bound in his thoughts by strata. When Mr. Ramsay separates himself from his family to think, he obsesses on capturing the elusive R. However, Mr. Ramsay is stuck in a stratum of organized thought and a stratum of the family triangle. For Mr. Ramsay, thought is much like an organized and hierarchical structure. He believes the history of thought flows from A to Z and each letter is an idea that can be traced and captured because it does not change. Therefore, his thoughts exist in the same static manner. Mr. Ramsay never goes beyond R because his energy is spent in memorizing A through Q as they are known by philosophers who have come before him. Mr. Ramsay's achievements are stunted by his belief that thought has been captured by great minds in the past and he too can know what they knew. If Mr. Ramsay perceived of thought in a destratified manner, he would not be captured; he would be more flexible and able to morph as his ideas morphed. Being destratified, Mr. Ramsay would be able to see diversity and perhaps move beyond the static alphabet he believes in.

The physical steps Mr. Ramsay takes in his private thinking mirror how he is captured by the strata:

Hours he would spend thus [. . .] thinking up and down and in and out of the old familiar lanes and commons [. . .] all very brisk and clear; but at length the lane, the field, the common, the fruitful nut-tree and the flowering hedge led him on to that further turn of the road where he dismounted always[. . .] It was his fate, his peculiarity, whether he wished it or not, to come out thus on a spit of land which the sea is slowly eating away, and there to stand [. . .] and so to stand on his little ledge facing the dark of human ignorance, how we know nothing and the sea eats away the ground we stand on. (43-44)

Mr. Ramsay stops when the familiar falls away and the unknown is open before him. He easily follows the path that past thinkers have left for him, but grows uncomfortable just when he is presented with an opportunity to jump on his own private line of flight. Mr. Ramsay's goal is simply to trace and memorize what others have already found--A through Z. His mind is rooted like a tree on the solid ground of the past. Woolf recognizes this when she writes, "He turned from the sight of human ignorance and human fate and the sea eating the ground we stand on, which, had he been able to contemplate it fixedly might have led to something" (44). Instead of exploring the unknown, Woolf shows Mr. Ramsay escaping what he does not know to live on the top

layer of the stratum, where all is ordered and stratified. On the top layer of Mr. Ramsay's stratum is his alphabet of knowledge and his family. Mr. Ramsay physically and mentally turns his back on the unknown, the sea, and heads back to the familiar, his family.

Mr. Ramsay chooses to not delve into diversity of thought because he thinks of himself as primarily a Father, whose responsibilities lie within his household, not in the world of the mind. Woolf shows Mr. Ramsay within the unified stratum of the family. Just as in any other stratum, all components, no matter how diverse, melt into one unified form. Woolf tells her readers that Mr. Ramsay's struggle is that he cannot get beyond his role as Father. Mr. Ramsay turns from the darkness where he may have been led somewhere to find "consolation in trifles so slight compared with the august theme just now before him" (44). These trifles include the hierarchy of his family. Mr. Ramsay turns from the unknown thinking, "But the father of eight children has no choice" (44). Mr. Ramsay blames the conventions of fatherhood for stunting his achievements when he is too timid to strike out on his own thoughts. In contrast with the distinct paths he follows as a husband and father, as a young man he used to think in "those sandhills dwindling away into darkness [. . .] where no one had been since the beginning of

time" (69). He used to be freer physically and mentally. Now however, Mr. Ramsay has made his domestic attachments into chains on his mental production. Mr. Ramsay's fixed vision is a sign that he is captured in the stratum that assigns him the totalizing role as Father. Mr. Ramsay is not moving below the stratum where multiplicities exist. Deleuze and Guattari state, "A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature" (8). Neither Mr. Ramsay's role as the Father of eight children, nor his alphabet of ideas is capable of changing. Both strata rely heavily on subject and object; where it may seem he is the subject and his children and alphabet of ideas are the objects he is supposed to master. However, Woolf reveals by Mr. Ramsay's thoughts and physical movements that he is controlled by his *ideas* of knowledge and family just as much as it seems they are controlled by him.

Mr. Ramsay's identity is stuck in the stratum of the familial triangle. As we just saw, his intellectual pursuits are stunted by his capture in the family. A telling sign of his capture is the heavy burden Mr. Ramsay puts on others, especially his wife, to affirm his worthiness. For example, in the first part of the book, Mr. Ramsay approaches his wife as he

denigrates his own work, calling himself a failure. The reader is told:

It was sympathy he wanted, to be assured of his genius, first of all, and then to be taken within the circle of life, warmed and soothed, to have his senses restored to him, his barrenness made fertile, and all the rooms of the house made full of life. (37)

Mr. Ramsay requires domestic comfort, not only reassurance of his intellectual greatness, because he views himself as Father. However, Woolf is telling us that being Father is never enough because he is never satisfied with the comfort he receives from others.

Reading Mr. Ramsay through Deleuze and Guattari reveals strata at work in *To the Lighthouse*. These strata are factors that limit exploration and creativity in Mr. Ramsay. One stratum Mr. Ramsay seems to be held back by is the family. Being Father and Husband and believing in structure as a way of knowing do not help Mr. Ramsay's intellectual contributions to the world. In fact, Woolf reveals how they limit Mr. Ramsay's production. If Woolf believes being Father is not sufficient to produce quality work, then being Daughter certainly is also insufficient. Therefore, placing Woolf in a familial triangle

is counter-productive in the pursuit of finding meaning within Woolf's work.

Desiring Production, Desiring Art

Another important aspect of Woolf's work is the role of art and the artist. Modernist criticism tends to unify difference, to make an organized structure out of what is chaotic. There are not many processes quite as chaotic as the production of art. So, it is both understandable and curious that some Modernists would attempt to bring order to the art and artists in Woolf's novels. Some of these critics' analyses reduce the importance of the artistic process by focusing on the end result. These critics have given art a directive other than being or producing more art. To some, art is supposed to achieve some goal, or it has failed. One of these goals is that art in Woolf's texts works toward the discovery of truth. Some critics also perceive a polarity where on one side resides life and on the other, art. In this polarity, a person should strive for the middle ground in order to achieve balance.

Jean O. Love in *Worlds of Consciousness: Mythopoetic Thought in the Novels of Virginia Woolf* traces the fulfillment of art in completing certain directives through Woolf's novels. Love perceives that art is fighting for permanence, or power, but is eventually overcome by that which is impermanent. Love

traces the power art has through Woolf's novels chronologically. She determines that art is made futile by death, time, and decay. According to Love, Woolf's novels lead up to the failure of art to resolve a dialectic, which Love describes as change in consciousness. Love sees Woolf's final book, *Between the Acts*, affirming that "the dialectic is paramount to reality" (236). Love attempts to show Woolf making a cyclical pattern of breaking old views, or consciousness, making the world whole again, then breaking consciousness again. According to Love, indefiniteness overpowers art's influence and is essential in the work of Woolf.

Another critic who traces art's directives in Woolf's novels is Mitchell Leaska in his analysis of *To the Lighthouse*. Leaska claims that art works through life, love, and death to create a clear vision of truth. The problem with Love and Leaska's criticism is that they believe that the artist is using her art in a quest for power and truth. When one believes that art should produce results, especially as narrow as "truth," one has to ignore the importance of the process. In many ways, as we will see in *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf reveals the process of creating art to be as important as, if not more important than, the end result.

In addition to espousing the importance of results, some critics delineate a difference between art and life. Some critics believe Woolf's artist is a person who exists in the extremes to her own detriment and needs to be pulled back into the everydayness of life. In "The Waters of Annihilation" Norman Friedman perceives such a tension between art and life in Woolf's characters. Friedman sees a need for balance between the detached philosopher/artist and the task oriented characters in *To the Lighthouse*. Friedman blames Lily's aloofness toward life of standing "in the way of her acceptance of her sexual role and consequently block[ing] her achievement of artistic maturity" (77). According to Friedman, Lily comes to understand that she must have a double vision of art and life in order to have fulfillment in both. Friedman is taking pains to reveal a sense of order in the novel that supports existence in a structured field like strata and the creation of art. He attempts to use the novel's characteristic of indefiniteness to this end, so that the very aspects of the novel that are subversive to unity are appropriated in Friedman's creation of order. In Friedman's analysis, art becomes another stratum capable of unifying difference.

Pamela Caughie, however, criticizes this tendency to make art into symbols for truth and unity. She attacks two

assumptions critics have made with respect to the artist. One assumption is that Woolf is searching for the nature of art in its relationship with life and that frustration and doubt in the artist mean failure or despair. Caughie states that these assumptions lead to fragmented, contradictory, tenuous, and imitative interpretations of the text. She writes, "Our failure to acknowledge the norm against which we measure Woolf's and her artists' productions as failed communication, frustrated effort, or fragmented form encourages us to read all of these novels in the same way" (30). Instead of discussing the nature of art, as past critics have, Caughie suggests discussing the *function* of art. She claims Woolf is less concerned with the *nature* of art and life, than with *how* they are narrated, which explains their functions.

Caughie's criticism begins to open a space for Woolf and her characters. Reading Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari further explodes the system of balanced order leading to completion. A useful metaphor of Deleuze and Guattari's in discussing the role of the artist is that of becoming a *body without organs*. A body without organs, or BwO, can be understood as a vessel with no imposed structure or hierarchy. If a body with organs is a system of intricate balances, duties, and defined production goals, then a BwO is a

non-system of open production. Becoming a BwO is opposed to a thusness that is static; it is concerned with doing rather than being. Deleuze and Guattari state that becoming a BwO allows the continuation of production and that to achieve an end goal and stop producing is equal to death. Deleuze and Guattari write, "the BwO reveals itself for what it is: connection of desires, conjunction of flows, continuum of intensities" (161). A BwO has disassembled the organization of organs that limit production making the BwO free to allow a multitude of desires to pass through it. These desires go beyond the sexual; they are desires for production, creativity, and movement. Desiring production is the force that propels the BwO into action. Fulfillment is what captures desiring production, thus production ceases. If one is to see Woolf's artists as dependent on truth or a balanced approach to life, then one cannot see any character becoming a body without organs because only the end goal is considered important. Also, if the end goal is wholeness or artistic maturity, then it is not production that is underscored, but completion and subsequently, capture of desiring production. Perceiving the movements and changes of the artist as heading toward a specific state limits the importance of how art is produced and what it does.

Looking at Lily in *To the Lighthouse* with this metaphor in mind helps to bring to light some of the problems of past criticism as well as complications within the text. Lily is not using her art as a search for truth and she does not view her art as separate from life, as some critics believe. Through Lily, Woolf takes her readers into the process of the artist. The reader is shown Lily's painting from conception--desiring production through her relationship with Mrs. Ramsay--to completion--her vision at the end of the novel. What is pronounced is not simply what Lily's painting looks like, how it represents its subject, but *how* Lily produces it. Woolf's narrative of Lily is Lily's narrative of her painting, which is the process of opening herself to her desires and allowing connections to be made. Instead of viewing Lily as an artist who reaches artistic maturity by achieving a balance between her art and her imposed role as a woman, it is more useful to see her as an artist struggling against forced structure and stasis. Insisting that Lily's struggle is in finding balance limits the significance of her artistic vision. Looking through a Deleuze and Guattarian lens, one sees Lily not struggling for balance, but for freedom from a structure that would demand balance and permanence. Lily's achievement is in her ability to undermine

totalizing structures in order to produce new meanings that would otherwise not exist.

The conception stage is wrought with doubt and confusion for Lily. Mrs. Ramsay intrigues her because the established woman inspires in Lily a desire for production. Lily wants to paint Mrs. Ramsay in a way that expresses their relation, but she seems to bring a weight of importance to the production of her painting that stuns her into stillness. Lily's artistic ability stops:

in that moment's flight between the picture and her canvas that the demons set on her who often brought her to the verge of tears and made this passage from conception to work as dreadful as any down a dark passage for a child.

(19)

Lily's production stalls as soon as she puts brush to canvas. In the beginning of the novel, Lily is determined to produce Mrs. Ramsay as she understands Mrs. Ramsay. Because Lily places such importance on the end result, accurate representation, she is restrained from creating.

Lily believes she is in love with the Ramsay's life that seems complete, but at the same time, she is saddened by completeness. Lily thinks, "'I'm in love with this all,' waving her hand at the hedge, at the house, at the children" (19).

However, it is this idyllic scene that Lily resists. This resistance is evident in her artistic eye. Looking at the movement of a sailboat on the bay with William Bankes, "with a natural instinct to complete the picture, after this swift movement, both of them looked at the dunes far away, and instead of merriment felt come over them some sadness--because the thing was completed partly, and partly because distant views seem to outlast by a million years the gazer" (20). Her feelings about the scene on the bay echo the tension she feels about Mrs. Ramsay and her artistic vision. Lily wants to remain open to her desires and use them in the production of her art, but she is intimidated by the thought that her art may remain permanent. Lily's production is stunted because she is more concerned with what her painting is than with the connections and flows she can make. Lily is placing the importance of her painting on the final outcome instead of the lines of flight she can take in the process. As a BwO, Lily would be able to move into production because her energy would be set on production and not on fulfillment, which is what captures desiring production.

The tension Lily feels is informed by her relationship with Mrs. Ramsay and Mrs. Ramsay's relation to the strata. The struggle between what is fixed and complete and what allows for movement, change, and creation is what ultimately motivates Lily

to paint. In Lily's second stage of production, Woolf reveals Lily beginning to find not just confidence in her ability to create, but joy as well. At Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party, Lily finds a solution to her morning's dilemma in moving a tree in her painting. It is important that Lily opens herself more to her creative process just when Mrs. Ramsay imposes on Lily certain codes of conduct. Lily senses Mr. Tansley's desire to assert himself, but wants to deny him the opportunity because she resents the role she is asked to play as a woman. Also, in the past he has said to Lily that women can't write or paint. Lily knows Mrs. Ramsay's desire for her to come to Mr. Tansley's aid. Lily thinks:

There is a code of behavior [that] says that on occasions of this sort it behooves the woman, whatever her own occupation may be, to go to the help of the young man opposite so that he may expose and relieve the thigh bones, the ribs, of his vanity, of his urgent desire to assert himself. (91)

Lily's struggle in this moment is not one of finding balance in the system, it is a struggle to subvert the system and experiment with her own desires. Lily wants to see what would happen if she does not engage Mr. Tansley. However, Lily eventually gives in to Mrs. Ramsay's silent pleadings. Lily

finds solace from her submissive action in her ability to paint the next day. After giving in to Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Tansley she thinks, "she would move the tree further towards the middle, and her spirits rose so high at the thought of painting tomorrow that she laughed out loud at what Mr. Tansley was saying. Let him talk all night if he liked it" (93). Although Lily does not successfully resist the hierarchical order of the dinner party, she finds a way that she can subvert structure--her art. Lily's passions are revived when she considers the opportunity she has to leave Mrs. Ramsay's structured dinner party and produce her own line of flight. This marks the beginning of Lily's experiences as a BwO.

Mary Lou Emery, in her article "'Robbed of Meaning': The Work at the Center of *To the Lighthouse*," plays with the idea that Lily undermines traditional, Victorian standards. Emery states that Mrs. Ramsay's values are subverted by the increasing authoritative voice of Lily as the novel progresses. She also concludes that Lily ultimately attains her goal of subverting Victorian standards. Lily's fulfillment with her final brush stroke undoes traditional colonial patriarchies and the opposition of male/female relationships by reversing values, then replacing them. Emery rightly points out Lily's increasingly authoritative presence in the novel. Lily is able

to resist the pleadings of Mr. Ramsay for sympathy in the last third of the novel, whereas she gave in to Mr. Tansley at the dinner party.

However, Emery overreaches Lily's position by claiming she has succeeded in her struggle against traditional male/female relationships. It is not as if Lily can rest from the struggle. She must always be working to subvert the systems that try to capture her. It is in producing that Lily is able to resist the demands that her structured society places on her.

Also, a BwO is not isolated from the system, but relies on it to produce its intensities. Emery does suggest this in her statement that Lily plays with traditional male/female relationships by reversing them and replacing them. Deleuze and Guattari's metaphors show that Lily uses the system, or strata, in order to produce difference. When Mr. Ramsay approaches her with his need for sympathy, she knows that her assigned role as a woman is to comfort him and "surrender herself up to him entirely" (151). However, she remains silent until she finally praises Mr. Ramsay's boots. This compliment succeeds in distracting Mr. Ramsay from his dramatic cry for sympathy because it reminds Mr. Ramsay of what he has preoccupied himself with all these years, the trifles of life. Lily feels that Mr. Ramsay is play-acting when he sighs heavily and demands her

womanly attention. So, she makes a comment about something that Mr. Ramsay cannot dramatize. She does not really care about his boots, but she knows he takes great pride in them. In drawing Mr. Ramsay's attention to such a trifle, Lily frees herself from the role demanded of her, or the strata. Deleuze and Guattari write that "It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight" (161). Freeing a line of flight is what Lily does in this moment because after Mr. Ramsay leaves her she is able to concentrate on her painting and finish it. By not only resisting him, but pleasing him in a way he did not expect, Lily can produce her art as her own person and not as the woman Mr. Ramsay expects her to be. Lily shows that there is no way to overcome a stratum; instead, one must know how to manipulate it in order to experience a moment as a BwO. This is a constant struggle because each moment is wrought with demands from strata.

In Lily's final stage of creation she is no longer preoccupied with the nature of her painting, but with the act of creating it, and this frees her to have her vision. She no longer thinks of her painting as what she sees, which is what she wants in the beginning, but as an "attempt at something" (208). Also, Lily no longer cares about the permanence of the

painting. She thinks, "It would be hung in the attics [. . .] it would be destroyed. But what did it matter?" (208). To Lily and Woolf, impermanence does not matter at this stage because life as a BwO embraces movement, change, and creation. As stated, this movement and creation comes from desire. Lily creates her painting out of her desire that comes from her relation with Mrs. Ramsay. It is a desire that can never be fulfilled because Mrs. Ramsay will always remain unknowable to Lily, which is why it helps her produce her art. When desire is fulfilled, it ceases to be desire and thus ceases producing. Lily thinks, "Fifty pairs of eyes were not enough to get round that one woman with" (198). Lily is not creating a representation of Mrs. Ramsay that one can look directly on and see the whole woman. Lily knows the futility of such a goal. Instead, Lily's movement is a dialectical one. She understands that to approach her creation directly would be absurd because:

one got nothing by soliciting urgently. One got only a glare in the eye from looking at the line of the wall, or from thinking--she wore a grey hat. She was astonishingly beautiful. Let it come, she thought, if it will come. For there are moments when one can neither think nor feel.

(193).

When one neither thinks nor feels, one is a BwO making connections freely. Lily is freed to create when she releases herself from her idea of an accurate representation of Mrs. Ramsay. Lily thinks, "But this is one way of knowing people [. . .] to know the outline, not the detail" (195). Lily's art is a production of her desire and it is not what some call truth. Like the process Lily goes through creating it, it will change and live like Lily, unfulfilled in its desire, yet always moving and connecting.

The line Lily draws down the center of her painting is not a symbol, as some have said, of the wholeness and unity the novel achieves at its end. Lily's art is not about that kind of wholeness that captures desire and ends the artist's production. The line she draws is "an abstract line without contour, a line of nomad art" (D & G 507). Lily's concern as she finishes her painting is not how well it represents its subject, Mrs. Ramsay. Her concern is how she interacts with it. Woolf gives the reader little indication of the aesthetic value of Lily's art because that kind of judgment about it is not the point. The value of the piece is in the intensity with which Lily has produced desire and interacted with its production.

Analyzing Lily's creative process through the metaphor of the Body without Organs reveals the importance of the process in

creating art. The sense of completion that the end of *To the Lighthouse* exudes is less about whether Lily's painting fulfills any directives, or inhibits Lily from a balanced life, as some Modernist critics believe. It is more about the subversion of the strata. Readers are taken through Lily's process not to show what art can do, but to show *how* art is created. For Lily, art is created out of desire for production and freedom from strata. Deleuze and Guattari's *Body without Organs* metaphor gives us a name for this freedom.

Becoming Light

The subject of reality in Woolf's fiction is one that is full of possibilities. Because Woolf writes almost exclusively about the inner lives of her characters, readers are privy to characters' impressions of their surroundings. Woolf's language allows her characters' consciousness room to expand and give way to a multiplicity of other impressions. Her language allows for multiplicities because she uses metaphor so often. Her metaphors leave much room for readers to form their own impressions, much like her characters. For example, In *To the Lighthouse*, Lily is wondering why she cannot get at the essence of Mrs. Ramsay. She asks herself:

How then [. . .] did one know one thing or another thing about people, sealed as they were? Only like a bee, drawn by some sweetness or sharpness in the air intangible to touch or taste, one haunted the dome-shaped hive, ranged the wastes of the air over the countries of the world alone, and then haunted the hives with murmurs and their stirrings; the hives, which were people. (51)

The same elusive compulsions and erratic patterns of the bees' flight that Lily imagines are what reading Woolf is like for readers. In this world where the wanderings of bees describe the difficult nature of knowing others, it seems almost anything is possible.

Critics have long been interested in Woolf's depictions of reality. They, too, sense an elusiveness on her part. Many critics describe Woolf not as a realist, but as an impressionist who does not attempt to uncover a secret or dark reality, but instead, tries to create for the reader her unique vision of reality. As critics work at capturing Woolf's vision, they alight on two distinct components of her vision--chaos and the individual consciousness. Many critics understand Woolf's depiction of reality as a struggle between one's inner life and a threatening outside force that seeks to destroy that

consciousness. Two critics who analyze Woolf's reality this way are Michael Rosenthal and A.C. Hoffman.

In his article, "The Problem of the Fiction," Rosenthal credits Woolf for striving to reproduce her own vision of reality. He believes critics have misjudged Woolf in claiming she attempts to tear down misogynous edifices and misconceptions. Rosenthal states that Woolf's quest has more at stake than a feminist vision of reality. For him, her novels create a "form which makes comprehensible the way various impressions and colors and darkness together constitute the texture of human life" (191). This form that Woolf creates is her vision of reality, according to Rosenthal. He is careful to pinpoint Woolf's creations of reality as impressionistic, where she creates "shapes" through which the reader can see what Woolf meant her to see. Woolf's purpose to make shapes that "will make lasting sense of the fluidity of life--is reflected within her novels by people who are engaged in the same kind of search" (193). The only description Rosenthal gives of the characters who share Woolf's vision of reality are that they are trying to order their worlds against chaos. Rosenthal's analysis is interesting and open, but he does not do much to describe what Woolf's vision of reality looks like beyond showing a conflict between order and chaos.

Hoffmann discusses reality in *To the Lighthouse* in terms of subject and object. Hoffmann describes two competing understandings of reality in the novel--a Platonic world of sense and illusion and a world of impressionism. Hoffmann believes the tension created between these two philosophies is the major theme of the novel. The tension reveals that the individual consciousness is threatened by chaos and disorder and the material world is destroyed by time. While Hoffmann offers an alternative to a certain reality in the impressionist world, he negates that alternative by attaching negative value to the effects of time and chaos. Hoffmann does not say that only the Platonic world is threatened or destroyed, but even the Impressionist world is, as well.

Analyses like Rosenthal and Hoffman's make some strides in discovering Woolf's vision of reality, but the one-sided nature of their analyses do not address what is gained through uncertainty. They view forces that act outside the individual consciousness only in negative terms. To these critics, tension within a character's consciousness is limiting. They are ignoring much of Woolf's vision of reality by leaving out the benefits of inner conflict.

For Deleuze and Guattari, reality is a matter of how an individual interacts with multiple impressions, even ones that

may disrupt one's consciousness. Multiple realities can be created by openness and production, while singular reality, or the sense that one's inner consciousness is unchangeable, is complicit with strata. Stratified reality is singular and rigid; it is not possible to manipulate this reality, unlike the reality of multiples. Deleuze and Guattari use the term *becoming* to describe a reality of multiples. Becoming is a verb that is open, as opposed to a noun, "being," that is fixed and static. Becoming is a way of speaking about an individual who has not one fixed identity, but multiple ways of being. Becoming is not an action that ever leads to being because it is a continuous movement that is antithetical to being. Becoming is also not known by any characteristics of the object one is becoming. Deleuze and Guattari explain it this way:

Becoming is a rhizome, not a classificatory or genealogical tree. Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something; neither is it regressing-progressing; neither is it corresponding, establishing corresponding relations; neither is it producing, producing a filiation or producing through filiation. Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, 'appearing,' 'being,' 'equaling,' or 'producing.'"

(239)

Becoming does not resemble anything. Becoming is movement toward multiplicity. Like a rhizome, connections are made between becomings and the verb "to be" is undone. Deleuze and Guattari do not speak of fixed characteristics when they explain becomings because fixed characteristics identify what something *is*. What one *is* is not as important as what one *does*. Just like the rhizome, movement, change, and intersections are crucial to becomings. Characteristics should be thought of as temporary and malleable.

Reality to someone entering into becomings is constantly changing. One is multiple things, people, animals. Becoming requires relinquishing who or what one is for new possibilities. It means disbelieving in a knowable identity. In the world of what is as opposed to becomings, reality is static. One has a fixed identity that can be known by certain characteristics. In the world of becomings, reality consists of connections, not identifiable objects.

Uncovering becoming in *To the Lighthouse* will multiply the ways the novel is known in terms of how reality is represented in the novel. Mrs. Ramsay's idea of reality moves in and out of a static, fixed reality and a reality of becomings. Mrs. Ramsay's fluctuations help to explain more about becoming versus being, as well as Mrs. Ramsay's influence on *To the Lighthouse*.

Mrs. Ramsay inhabits a structured reality when she is thinking of her husband and her duties as wife and caretaker for the house. She is seen, for instance, surveying the fading colors of the carpet, the wearing out of the furniture. When she conducts these surveys she thinks of herself in a constant battle. Mrs. Ramsay feels she is in transaction with Life, "in which she was on one side, and life was on another, and she was always trying to get the better of it, as it was of her" (59). In these moments, Mrs. Ramsay is in the world of what is. She observes time's destructive influence on her family's things and can not reconcile that observation with what *should* be. In the world of isness, doors should remain closed and windows open. Furniture should be treated delicately and floors kept clean. In these moments, Mrs. Ramsay lives in a reality of "should." She is exhausted by the rules set down on her--mostly, the rules she sets down on herself.

Mrs. Ramsay is aware of an alternative, however. This alternative is the world of becomings and she connects it with childhood. She believes her children will never be so happy as they are in their youth. She thinks of mornings with them:

They came bustling along the passage. Then the door sprang open and in they came, fresh as roses, staring, wide awake, as if this coming into the diningroom after breakfast,

which they did every day of their lives, was a positive event to them, and so on, with one thing after another, all day long, until she went up to say good-night to them, and found them [. . .] still making up stories about some little bit of rubbish--something they had heard, something they had picked up in the garden. They had all their little treasures. (59)

Her children's days are filled with thousands of lines of flights and becomings. At the Hebrides Mrs. Ramsay watches Cam race through the yard apparently blind to the others there. Mrs. Ramsay thinks, "She was off like a bird, bullet, or arrow, impelled by what desire [. . .] It might be a vision--of a shell, of a wheelbarrow, of a fairy kingdom on the far side of the hedge; or it might be the glory of speed; no one knew" (54). Mrs. Ramsay calls Cam over to her and has to repeat her instructions twice in order to draw Cam out of her reality and into Mrs. Ramsay's. Mrs. Ramsay takes joy in her children's becomings. She lets her children bring in crabs, seaweed, dirt, in order that they develop their curiosity and talents. Despite the toll her children's adventures have on the cleanliness and propriety of the house, Mrs. Ramsay allows them because "they were gifted, her children, but all in quite different ways" (27). Mrs. Ramsay can sympathize with her children's chaotic

realities, but she still observes the effect those realities have on her reality of "should." She thinks as a result of her children's adventures, "things got shabbier and got shabbier summer after summer" (27). This is her tension, the conflict between the being of "proper" things and the freedom of becomings.

Mrs. Ramsay's world of fixed reality also includes Mr. Ramsay. Her husband makes demands of her, which she grants, despite her exhaustion. She thinks it her wifely duty to comfort her husband, even at the expense of her health. Mrs. Ramsay struggles with what Mr. Ramsay demands of her because she does not necessarily believe what she assures him of. For example, Mr. Ramsay interrupts Mrs. Ramsay reading to James out of his need for sympathy. Mrs. Ramsay, in her way, assures Mr. Ramsay of his talent and the full life they have. She assures him "by her laugh, her poise, her competence [. . .] that it was real; the house was full; the garden blowing" (38). Mrs. Ramsay's confidence is what brings Mr. Ramsay solace. However, Mrs. Ramsay's confidence is not effortless. After this exchange between Mrs. and Mr. Ramsay, Woolf writes, "So boasting of her capacity to surround and protect, there was scarcely a shell of herself left for her to know herself by" (38). What drains Mrs. Ramsay is not the demand of her husband, as James thinks, but

the dissonance Mrs. Ramsay feels between what she says and what she believes. In the world of what is, it is proper that Mrs. Ramsay be able to protect her large family and not cause strain on her husband whom "[Mrs. Ramsay] did not like, even for a second, to feel finer than" (39). Mrs. Ramsay is exhausted with keeping up appearances for her husband. She feels she can not approach him with the expense of the greenhouse repairs or what she really thinks of his books. She thinks she has to "hide small daily things, and the children seeing it, and the burden it laid on them--all this diminished the entire joy, the pure joy, of the two notes sounding together, and let the sound die on her ear now with a dismal flatness" (39). The static reality of propriety is sapping Mrs. Ramsay's imagination and joy.

Mrs. Ramsay's relation to her husband conflicts with her relation to her children. Her children inspire desiring production, while her obligations to Mr. Ramsay confine her to the marital stratum. The moments when we see Mrs. Ramsay with her husband reveal that she is aware of an alternative reality--one where she does not have to be a perfect version of herself. Mrs. Ramsay struggles while she is present in her static reality, because she understands the nature of multiplicities,

too. Through her children, Mrs. Ramsay understands becomings, connections, and flows.

There are moments, however, when Mrs. Ramsay releases her grip on the structure she desires and allows herself the experience of becoming. Mrs. Ramsay finds herself alone and without obligation and it is in this moment she experiences freedom from her futile struggle. This freedom is marked by her becoming the light in the lighthouse. Alone, "she found herself sitting and looking, sitting and looking, with her work in her hands until she became the thing she looked at--that light" (63). When this moment happens, there is no judgment of the "reality" of matters. Mrs. Ramsay opens herself up to all possibilities, lines of flight, and modes of production. She releases the stratum she is attached to and experiences becoming light, which is limitless in its reach. Mrs. Ramsay recognizes her shift in reality and thinks, "When life sank down for a moment, the range of experience seemed limitless" (62). It is not life that Mrs. Ramsay is in a battle with, as she thinks, but her rigid and solid reality that does not permit becomings because of its insistence on her being the perfect version of herself. When this reality sinks down, however, another one rises and Mrs. Ramsay understands it as a becoming. She contemplates her relationship with the light and thinks, "if one

was alone, one leant to inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers; felt they expressed one; felt they became one; felt they knew one" (64). This happens when she is alone because it is for others that Mrs. Ramsay tries to be her perfect self. She does not believe in the rules she lives by, but she does believe in how they affect others.

Alone and full of possibilities, Mrs. Ramsay enters into becoming light, which is:

the pitiless, the remorseless, which was so much her, yet so little her [. . .] but for all that she thought, watching it with fascination, hypnotised, as if it were stroking with its silver fingers some sealed vessel in her brain whose bursting would flood her with delight, she had known happiness, exquisite happiness, intense happiness, and it silvered the rough waves a little more brightly.

(65)

The part of her brain the light is fingering is freedom from her structured reality and others' impressions of her. It is important that Mrs. Ramsay is becoming the light in the lighthouse because it shines itself without judgment for what it is illuminating. The light does not have to please others or make excuses for failings. Mrs. Ramsay seems to desire freedom from the judgments of others and herself which seek to fix her

in unifying strata. This is why she chooses inanimate objects to become. They are impervious to beliefs about what should be.

Mrs. Ramsay is aware of two realities. Her awareness of them is evident throughout *To the Lighthouse*, but only near the end of the first section--the only section she is bodily present--does Mrs. Ramsay indulge in becomings. It is a brief moment and her line of flight into becoming light is abruptly ended. This moment and the others where two realities are observable work to inform the reader that Woolf's vision of reality is not singular or unified in *To the Lighthouse*. She understands that reality can be inhabited as a structured place with rules and hierarchies and also as a free place full of movement and connections. It would not be out of line to believe the reality of becomings is appealing and not something to be feared because the so-called propriety of one's inner consciousness might be altered.

Collisions and Rhythms

To discuss structure and form as they relate to Woolf's novels is an almost impossible task. Woolf's experimentation is done through disrupting the traditional form of the novel. One form she plays with is the role of plot. Woolf's novels are written through her characters' inner lives more than their

actions. The narrator of traditional novels dissolves into what many have called a stream-of-consciousness that flows among many characters in Woolf's works. When critics analyze the structure of Woolf's novels, they often choose to discuss it in terms of streams-of-consciousness. They recognize that Woolf's novels happen through the inner lives of her characters, but this term does not allow for multiplicities because the term implies the same long ribbon curving through different characters. When critics use the term, they often have to ignore conflicts that arise outside the stream's borders. The following three critics are examples of the different ways that critics try to impose order and structure on Woolf's experimental work through streams-of-consciousness.

Bernard Blackstone attempts to impose a centralizing force on Woolf's novels in his article, "Virginia Woolf." He states that Woolf's cunning understanding of human insufficiency brings her work constantly toward a center, away from world events. While Blackstone does alight on Woolf's stream-of-consciousness writing as an illustration of how interconnected we are on a moment-by-moment basis with our thoughts, memories, reactions and obsessions, he tries to impose order to the interconnectedness of people by suggesting that stream-of-consciousness is a centralizing force. Blackstone brings

together the differences he perceives in Woolf's form by giving the differences a center around which to flow.

J. Hillis Miller also sees a singular unity present in Woolf's work in his article, "Mrs. Dalloway: Repetition as the Raising of the Dead." The omniscient nature of the narrator implies for Miller a connectedness of all the minds in the novel, and therefore a universal mind. Although the characters may live according to abruptness, Miller believes they achieve continuity through "the ease with which images from their pasts rise with them to overwhelm them with a sense of immediate presence" (59). This continuity allows Miller to perceive a center in *Mrs. Dalloway*, which then lends meaning to the whole text.

Likewise, David Daiches in "The Semi-Transparent Envelope" creates a definite pattern in *To the Lighthouse's* form. Daiches believes "The characters in *To the Lighthouse* are carefully arranged in their relation to each other, so that a definite symbolic pattern emerges" which is a "movement from egotism to impersonality" (62). Daiches creates his symbolic pattern by imposing this movement on each character. Daiches' imposition creates a tracing of each character's movement that ignores any movement that deviates from Daiches' tracing. Instead of allowing the novel to move on its own, Daiches imposes his order

on it. Furthermore, he describes the lighthouse as "a symbol of the individual who is at once a unique being and a part of the flux of history" (63). Making the movement of the novel into a definite pattern and explaining the objects and people as static symbols, Daiches captures Woolf in the controlled significance he finds for the novel.

These interpretations limit the form of Woolf's novels because they move only in circular ruts, chasing their own tails and never producing much beyond what their imposed centers allow. These attempts to order Woolf's texts minimize difference in order to impose a unified order. If these differences are exploited, the text opens to multiple ways of seeing.

The term "stream of consciousness" implies a unified form. A better way to talk about *To the Lighthouse's* form without forcing a center or unity on the novel is through milieu and rhythm. In French, milieu means "middle," "medium (as in chemistry)," and "surroundings," but Deleuze and Guattari use milieu to mean all three (xvii). Milieus are what is all around; they are heterogeneous, always changing, and cannot be essentialized. Deleuze and Guattari write that living things are made up of milieus. They write, "the living thing has an exterior milieu of materials, an interior milieu of composing

elements and composed substances, an intermediary milieu of membranes and limits, and an annexed milieu of energy sources and actions-perceptions" (313). Although the milieus are coded (exterior, interior, and intermediary), they are not isolated. Deleuze and Guattari write, "not only does the living thing continually pass from one milieu to another, but the milieus pass into one another; they are essentially communicating" (313). When milieus interact with each other, interesting events transpire. There is first a clash of difference and then rhythm takes over. This is wholly unlike stream-of-consciousness writing where no clashes exist because the stream is unified throughout the novel.

The communication of milieus brings about rhythm. Outside of milieus is chaos, which is all around them and seeking to destroy them. Milieus use rhythm to order the chaos, but not make a center for it. Deleuze and Guattari believe the in-between is common to both chaos and rhythm. They write:

What chaos and rhythm have in common is the in-between-- between two milieus, rhythm-chaos or the chaosmos: *'Between night and day, between that which is constructed and that which grows naturally, between mutations from the inorganic to the organic, from plant to animal, from animal to humankind, yet without this series constituting a*

progression.' In this in-between, chaos becomes rhythm, not inexorably, but it has a chance to. Chaos is not the opposite of rhythm, but the milieu of all milieus. (313)

Rhythm happens in between two milieus. It is not metered because meter is opposed to rhythm. It changes directions and does not follow chronology or time as meter does. Rhythm is irreducible to space/time. It is not a musical rhythm that is subordinated to compositional unity of the whole, but more like waves of different lengths interacting to produce new waves and wavelengths. It also does not need an agent to make it happen; as in a chemical process it happens on its own.

Deleuze and Guattari's milieus and rhythm work well in the context of *To the Lighthouse*. It is beneficial to describe the structure of the novel in terms of rhythm as opposed to trying to find the center or pattern the way previous critics have. Rhythm allows the novel's structure to contain multiples, not one unified vision or truth. Although the narrative is fluid, one should not suppose what is produced is uniform. Discussing the narrative of each section as a milieu opens a space for difference in the novel to exist. The novel moves by way of the rhythm that is produced when the characters' milieus intersect. These intersections happen in all of the three sections that make up the novel: "The Window," "Time Passes," and "The

Lighthouse." An explanation of one occurrence where milieus clash to create rhythm is sufficient to explain how rhythm moves the novel along.

In "The Window," there are many milieus intersecting. This section is full of noise, chaos, and movement, all of which we can discuss as rhythm. The narrative moves in and out of multiple characters' thoughts, many of which are happening simultaneously. Mrs. Ramsay is reading to James and inwardly torturing herself with others' opinions of her, while Lily paints on the lawn consumed with the struggle of creation and trying to understand Mrs. Ramsay. At the same time, Mr. Ramsay is pacing his trails considering his life's work. Each character inhabits his/her own milieu and is, therefore, a medium of communication. Within each milieu, s/he is fighting with the chaos outside that wants to enter. The chaos is in the form of Mrs. Ramsay's struggle between two realities, Mr. Ramsay's stratification, and Lily's flight into becoming a body without organs. The characters order their chaos through rhythm rather than resolution. Also, the novel moves along by way of the characters' interacting with each other, which can be called the rhythm of the novel.

An example of the clash of milieus and production of rhythm in the first section is an exchange between Mr. Ramsay and Mrs.

Ramsay and James. Mr. Ramsay has been pacing the lawn contemplating the elusive R that he has not reached yet in his alphabet of knowledge. He is isolated in his own milieu thinking about the many years he has behind him and struggling with how to end his quest for R. He begins to believe that he will never reach R. He gives himself two options. One option is to give up life with the relinquishing of the quest. Like a soldier dying on guard, Mr. Ramsay links his life only in terms of the one and only goal he has set for himself--to reach R. If he were to take this course of action, Mr. Ramsay's milieu would not intersect with any others even if his physical life continued. He would be dead intellectually and he finds pride in the thought that "when the search party comes they will find him dead at his post, the fine figure of a soldier" (36). This option does not interact with the outside chaos to produce rhythm. Instead, it is a picture of a black hole in which Mr. Ramsay dissolves himself into nothingness because he refuses to deal with the conflict between his inability to know as he believes he should know (as a tracer of the alphabet) and another way of knowing (the chaos outside himself).

Mr. Ramsay, however, does give himself another option, which he follows up on. He is not willing to die at the post and so he looks at what is outside his milieu and he sees "his

wife and son, who, very distant at first, gradually come closer and closer, till lips and book and head are clearly before him, though still lovely and unfamiliar from the intensity of his isolation and waste of ages" (36). Life, his other option, means interacting with Mrs. Ramsay and James. Instead of dying alone in his milieu, Mr. Ramsay decides to "[do] homage to the beauty of the world" (36). This is Mr. Ramsay recognizing the chaos outside as beauty. Earlier, in his musings, he blames his wife and eight children for his inability to reach R or further himself in the alphabet. However, now we see Mr. Ramsay needing his inner consciousness disturbed in order to escape the black hole of self-pity, a unified but empty deadness.

Mr. Ramsay approaches his wife in need of sympathy and assurance of his worth. His energy is at a fever pitch as he approaches the quiet scene of Mrs. Ramsay with James. The clash of the two milieus--one noisy and at great velocity, the other quiet and still--is felt in James. As Mr. Ramsay breaks in to the milieu containing James and Mrs. Ramsay, James thinks, "most of all he hated the twang and twitter of his father's emotion which, vibrating round them, disturbed the perfect simplicity and good sense of his relations with his mother" (37). James tries to get his mother's attention back, but their calm milieu

has been broken into by another, more chaotic one. Mr. Ramsay stays only briefly, so the rhythm that is established is done in his father's physical absence. Mrs. Ramsay is exhausted by the collision, and her exhaustion helps reestablish their milieu in the wake of Mr. Ramsay. Before Mr. Ramsay's entrance, both James' and Mrs. Ramsay's attentions were on the story of the Fisherman's Wife. After Mr. Ramsay leaves, Mrs. Ramsay is consumed with worries about the structured reality created around her that she would like to break free from, as discussed in the previous section. The collision of their milieus also allows Mrs. Ramsay to deal with the outside chaos, which eventually leads her to becoming light.

James and Mrs. Ramsay's milieu takes on a higher velocity than before due to James' dislike of his father and Mrs. Ramsay's more ephemeral conflicts. Mr. Ramsay's velocity is reduced after being soothed by his wife. He is slowed down in his thoughts because instead of the pacing he had been doing prior to meeting his wife, he goes out to watch the children play cricket. Thus, the rhythms of both milieus are altered. It happens like particles colliding at different velocities, where one particle slows as its velocity is transferred to another, causing that one to increase speed. The novel moves along by this intersection and others like it.

The collision of milieus in *To the Lighthouse* allows the characters opportunities to experience disrupted consciousness. These disruptions not only result in multiplying the characters' ways of knowing the world, but they also help the novel to move. Discussing the movement of the novel in terms of streams-of-consciousness is not a sufficient explanation of *To the Lighthouse's* structure because streams do not account for the energy produced by the characters' interactions. Streams imply unity and chronology. Much of the action in "The Window" occurs simultaneously and so there can not be a timeline to it. Also, there is no center in the above interaction. The whole novel is written through varying velocities and tempos. The reader is moved along in *To the Lighthouse* by the energy produced among communications. Often, what is said or understood between the characters is less important than the shift that the interaction creates. Because the energy of the interaction is more important than the content, one can say that there is movement and change present, but not a center.

When we apply Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of milieus and rhythm to *To the Lighthouse*, the interconnectedness of people, events, and things is revealed. Some modernist critics, such as Blackstone, also highlight interconnectedness in Woolf. However, the modernists connect only the characters, and build

from them a classically organic kind of wholeness. Woolf writes in multiplicities that these critics ignore. An often overlooked section of *To the Lighthouse* that exemplifies Woolf's rhythmic structure is the middle section, "Time Passes."

If read through knowledge of the milieu, new possibilities open up in "Time Passes," one of Woolf's most experimental pieces. This middle section is the shortest of the three and covers a dramatically larger time span. In this section, the rhythm of the novel is sped up dramatically. Ten years pass, and in them, Prue's marriage and death, along with the deaths of Mrs. Ramsay and Andrew, and Carmichael's publishing success. "Time Passes" offers similar intersections as "The Window," but the collisions are much more spectacular. As a milieu invites multiplicities and connections, so does "Time Passes." In this section, the characters are not the focus they were in "The Window." There is no concrete subject to this section. The reader follows time and nature's effects on the empty house. Any news the reader is given of the Ramsay family is bracketed off from the rest of the prose as if it were minor or tangential information. Instead, the Ramsay vacation house and the environment around it are the ostensible subjects.

In this section, intersections occur between nature and humans and beauty is produced. Nature's multiplicity overcomes

humanity's more structured milieu. First, the landscape of the Hebrides offers connections to the characters who are not physically present. The ivy that crawls up the house and strangles the windows connects to Prue's marriage. The sunset on the sea intersects with Andrew's death. It is impossible to say what anything is in "Time Passes." There is constant change, movement, and connections.

The forces that take over the house in "Time Passes" are multiple. They are ivy, weeds, moss, and cobwebs. They multiply through and over the structure that can do nothing to prevent their presence. The forces that tear at the Ramsay family are similar. Of the Ramsays who are mentioned in this section, all were spoken of in the previous section as having their fates sealed. Prue was to live a charmed life because of her beauty, but she died in childbirth. Andrew was to reach intellectual achievements beyond his father's, but was killed in the war. Paul and Minta's marriage was sealed at the end of the first section, but it turned out poorly. Mrs. Ramsay's beauty and charm were supposed to keep the structure in order. With her passing and the absence of the family from the house in the Hebrides, nature had its way. These multiple forces are not without beauty, however. In the empty house, "loveliness reigned and stillness, and together made the shape of loveliness

itself, a form from which life had parted, solitary like a pool at evening" (129). Although the war brought about Andrew's death, Mr. Carmichael had a book of poems published because, Woolf says, the war revived people's interest in poetry. Woolf's novel affirms the beauty and power of the energy created when milieus collide. These collisions bring about production, which subvert strata, or any forces that demand rigid structure.

Gender Limits

Feminist criticism of Woolf risks capturing her in the same ways as other forms of criticism. Some feminist critics, however, believe they are releasing Woolf from evils like patriarchy or psychoanalysis, when in reality, they are simply renaming the structure into which their analysis places Woolf.

Some feminist criticism tries to make sense of Mrs. and Mr. Ramsay's relationships with the children. Both parents are believed to entirely shape their children's lives, where the children, especially James, have no unique becomings other than what their parents give to them. Heilbrun's analysis is useful in this study because it is a well regarded and often cited explanation of James' role in the novel. Heilbrun, in her article, "Woolf and Androgyny," writes:

James, protected by her excessive maternalism, hates his father, hates his 'masculinity' which, so the boy is led to feel, attacks her, his mother. It is only after her death that, with the parental blessing each child will always wish for--'Well done!'--James can recognize, not just the feminine quality of the lighthouse, its light, but also the masculine, the tower, stark, straight, bare--the vision he and his father share. Cam, who had as a child been attracted to the story Mrs. Ramsay was reading James, is sent away so that Mrs. Ramsay may continue the love affair with her son, the chief temptation of devoted mothers: the making of their sons into lovers. (76-77)

Heilbrun is claiming that Mrs. Ramsay's death and Mr. Ramsay's praise as they reach the lighthouse allow James in some way to see the lighthouse's feminine and masculine qualities. Heilbrun goes on to exclude Cam from James' and his father's vision because she was sent away by Mrs. Ramsay earlier in the book in favoritism to James. So, Heilbrun claims that James is fully manipulated by his parents, and Cam is only an observer of his final androgynous vision because she was not favored by her mother. Heilbrun's analysis emphasizes the landing as opposed to the journey to the lighthouse. Her analysis stops at the lighthouse because ostensibly, that is where James and Mr.

Ramsay's journey ends. This analysis provides a center and structure to the novel. In her analysis, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay's treatment of their children becomes the center of the novel. The Ramsays have the power to form their children's visions of reality, despite other influences around them. The lighthouse, for Heilbrun, is both masculine and feminine, and landing by it allows James to feel completion and pride in his father's praise of him. However, she does not address the connection between James and Cam, or the significance of the journey to the lighthouse. It is a mistake to see Woolf's ending as an ending rather than something more complex and unresolved.

A more recent feminist critic who attempts to ground Woolf in permanence is Jane Goldman. In her book, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf: Modernism, Post-Impressionism, and the Politics of the Visual*, Goldman "places the Woolfian moment in the context of the 'real world'" (1). Goldman opens her discussion of Woolf's writing to include Woolf's politics and argues that in the debate between politics and aesthetics, her moments that seem the most ephemeral, can also be argued as the most concrete. Goldman's concreteness, or permanence, is what she refers to as a "feminist understanding of colour [impressionism]" (9). Goldman takes the uncertain nature of Woolf's writing, which some call impressionism, and solidifies

it by calling it a new feminist language. Goldman succeeds in pointing out patriarchal assumptions past readers and critics have made about Woolf. However, it seems she is fighting against patriarchy using similar tactics that she claims to be resisting. Goldman ostensibly resists the patriarchal tendency to appropriate Woolf for its own agenda, but she also appropriates Woolf by defining a new language for her.

A close reading of the text through the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari finds the ending of *To the Lighthouse* and the roles of Mrs. and Mr. Ramsay to be tenuous and open to many possibilities. Many of the metaphors already discussed will be explored in relation to the ending and Mrs. and Mr. Ramsay. However, one of Deleuze and Guattari's more poignant metaphors that has not been discussed is that of the *smooth* and *striated* places. The smooth and striated places will be of much use to us as we consider the ending of *To the Lighthouse*.

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari make a distinction between two spaces in which consciousness can exist. One is highly ordered and rigidly structured (like strata) and another is entirely open, like the surface of the ocean. In a striated space, one has rules of engagement and movement. It is not speed that one strives for, but "correctness" and conformity to the lines already laid out. In a smooth space, one is free

to wander in any direction and at any speed one chooses. The smooth space is the place of the nomad. Usually, movement is undirected by any outside force. Deleuze and Guattari are quick to announce that "smooth" does not mean homogeneous. They state, "quite the contrary: it is an *amorphous*, nonformal space" (477). A smooth space allows rhizomes to branch out into any direction because of the lack of striation.

A smooth space, however, can be striated. Deleuze and Guattari use the sea as an example. Once the sea is mapped and navigated according to the map, it is a striated space. However, at times ships ignore the striation, such as in times of war, and the sea becomes a smooth space. Ironically, smoothing the sea as one does in a time of war "is for the purpose of controlling striated space more completely" (480). This example proves that striated and smooth are not locked out against other in a simple binary. Nor does one operate in one or the other exclusively. One can find smooth space between the lines of the striated. Deleuze and Guattari do not suggest that one should destroy consciousness as one knows it, because such an act would result in schizophrenia or catatonia. They suggest one work in between rigid rules, move off the traced territory and start mapping one's own space.

Velocity is controlled differently by both spaces. In a striated space, one proceeds cautiously so as to not wander outside the lines. Therefore, thought is slowed to accommodate the rules of striation. Within a smooth space, however, one's thoughts are free to speed along at any velocity. One is not bound to rules of engagement and therefore, may adjust velocity according to one's needs.

Not only creativity, but also integrity of consciousness depends on freedom. Being bound to striation forces one's thoughts within preformulated boundaries and thus stunts rhizomes from forming. With speed comes rhizomatic thought. *To the Lighthouse's* final section exemplifies this idea. The sea in *To the Lighthouse* is uncertainty; it is a smooth place. Just as Mr. Ramsay's structured thoughts end as he reaches the shore when he is on his walks through the garden, so his and his children's thoughts expand vertically and horizontally when they are out on the sea. Within the boat to the lighthouse, speed is shown in parallel correlation to expanding thought. On the way to the lighthouse the boat races along and the characters are freed of each other and experience lines of flight and rhizomes. Cam lets her hand slice the water "as her mind made the green swirls and streaks into patterns and, numbed and shrouded, wandered in imagination in that underworld of waters" (183). As

the boat stops because the wind does, Cam becomes painfully aware of the others. Her imagination stops and "Everything became very close to one" (183). The family is trapped together on the boat because their thoughts have ceased, their velocity is no more and they stagnate in familial tensions.

In the same way that D & G describe the sea as able to be both smooth and striated, so it is in *To the Lighthouse*. Mr. Ramsay's sea is knowable by the compass, whereas, Cam's sea erases the paths and trails that striate the land they are fleeing at great velocity. Mr. Ramsay cannot understand the smooth place Cam occupies and he mistakes it for a "vagueness of mind" (167). However, it is not vagueness that hinders Cam from translating their position on the sea to the points of a compass. Instead, her mind is racing at great velocity, and in many directions. So, distinctions like north and south have little meaning to her because they are so narrow. Mr. Ramsay is trying to get Cam to understand their position on the sea in relation to the house they left, but Cam cannot see the house. Cam "is thinking how all those paths and the lawn, thick and knotted with the lives they had lived there, were gone: were rubbed out; were past; were unreal, and now this was real; the boat and the sail with its patch" (167). Cam has moved on, past their lives in the house and the death of her mother. Cam is

not chained to some exclusive family circle that Mrs. Ramsay, even in her death presides over. Cam is, instead, happily outside the family striation. Instead of the ride to the lighthouse bringing Cam and James closer to their mother, as some have suggested, the ride seems to free Cam of the "memory of dead people, which [Cam and James] hated" (165). The speed and direction of the sailboat actually frees Cam of familial obligations of mourning or reminiscence, which seems to be what Mr. Ramsay expects of them. Cam is not a pawn of her parents as some critics have suggested. The smooth space of the sea expands Cam's understanding because it releases her from believing that her father is simply a tyrant.

The journey out to the lighthouse allows Cam to see her father in less striated terms than she had perceived him on the shore. On the shore and at the outset of the ride, Cam is fierce in her criticism of Mr. Ramsay as a tyrant, whom she and James will "resist to the death." Cam's opinion of her father is similar to critics' views of him. Cam's opinion, however, is not static and uncompromising. As Cam is entranced by their movement on the water, which she likens to "escape" and "adventure," she begins to see her father's complexity in a way she didn't on the shore. Instead of focusing on his abruptness, Cam recognizes Mr. Ramsay's generosity and gentleness (190).

Cam is able to perceive her father in more complex ways because she is no longer bound to the rules of the shore. On the shore, Cam is bound only to James in their pact. Racing along on the bay, Cam is more tenuously tied to James, and less stringently at odds with her father. Cam thinks, "The sea was more important now than the shore" (191). Here, Cam is beginning to be freed of the structures around her, including her own obstinance.

James is also freer on the sea. His impressions are able to expand in ways they never did on the shore. His impressions of the lighthouse, specifically, become less striated as they reach it. He sees the structure in two distinct ways. James remembers that he perceived the lighthouse when he was a child as, "a silvery, misty-looking tower with a yellow eye, that opened suddenly, and softly in the evening" (186). Older, now, James reaches the lighthouse and sees "the white-washed rocks; the tower, stark and straight; he could see that it was barred with black and white" (186). The soft, welcoming image he has of the structure, as a child, has become an image of obstinance and hardness. James, however, considers that both versions of the object are the lighthouse. He concludes, "nothing was simply one thing" (186). Certainly, in this novel nothing is simply one thing. The form of the novel allows multiples

because Woolf places her characters not only within the striated places, but the smooth, as well.

When *To the Lighthouse's* final section is read through Deleuze and Guattari's smooth and striated spaces, it becomes less of a completion and more of an opening. Reaching the lighthouse does not bring closure to James or Cam, but allows them a different perspective from which to view their lives. Entering into the smooth space helps Cam to see herself outside her striated role within the family. Despite her pact with James, Cam gains perspective on her father that is multiple compared to her singular vision of him in the striated places. Likewise, James's perspective of the lighthouse opens beyond how he knew it on land. Just as James says, Deleuze and Guattari and Woolf would agree; nothing is simply one thing.

Final Thoughts

Traditionally minded critics have added much insight and understanding to a writer as elusive and complex as Woolf. Certainly, they have laid a groundwork with their analyses that informs the criticisms of future students and scholars. I do not mean to discredit the value of these traditionally minded criticisms. I have sought to show that a poststructuralist

approach to Woolf produces solutions to some of the stratifications modernist scholarship can create.

Other poststructuralist approaches have made similar openings of the critical discussion, but with different emphasis. For example, in "Virginia Woolf's Postmodern Literary History" Beth Carole Rosenberg aims to open up feminist placement of Woolf so that Woolf does not only contribute to a "woman-centered literary history" (1112). Rosenberg takes a Foucaultian approach to Woolf in order to show not that not only are there numerous historical narratives in which to place Woolf, but also that Woolf wrote different kinds of histories. Rosenberg reveals Woolf as postmodern "in the way she approaches truth and subjectivity; she makes us read history as a series of unrelated moments, moments whose unity comes through a narrative that tells us more about its own construction than it does about the past" (1128). Rosenberg claims that Woolf's presentation of history acknowledges not a search for truth, but a breakdown in essential identity and a loss of self. Rosenberg frees Woolf from time and views her writing as postmodern because doing so releases Rosenberg from the burden of establishing truth of Woolf's writing. Rosenberg's emphasis is on socio-historical meanings in Woolf's writing. She is interested in what Woolf has to say about histories that informed her own.

Another critic who puts Woolf in postmodern perspective is Kathryn N. Benzel in her article, "Virginia Woolf: Precursor of Postmodernism." Benzel acknowledges that modernist writers accepted fragmentation, but they also sought to rewrite culture so that future harmony is possible. Postmodernism, however, finds difference in relations between literary practices and social conventions. Benzel makes the claim that Woolf also saw these differences and that she exploits language's inconsistencies to reveal an accurate view of culture. Benzel's emphasis is similar to Rosenberg's. However, Benzel is interested in Woolf's ideas about culture, rather than history. Analyzing Woolf's ideas about culture in the context of her literary criticisms is a recent trend in poststructuralist criticism of Woolf.

These more recent critics' works signal that criticism has shifted the character of the conversation. Earlier, modernist, criticism tends to organize that which is chaotic in Woolf's writing, and focus primarily on literary history. Postmodern critics embrace fragmentation, and open the discussion up to Woolf's politics. They do not seek to pull essential truths out of difference in Woolf, which minimizes difference. Instead, they exploit dissonance. While Rosenberg, Benzel, and I all attempt to exploit difference, Deleuze and Guattari's theories

are better suited to the task of opening up meaning in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* because they have given us terms by which we can understand that which is unstructured as something other than simply chaos. Rhizomes, becoming, BwOs, and smooth spaces provide a way to talk about difference in Woolf's work without attempting to structure it. Their metaphors allow for a more Woolfian analysis because neither D & G, nor Woolf rest their ideas on symbolism, binaries, or totalizations. Earlier, more traditional, criticisms of Woolf do succeed in opening discussion on Woolf. Often they cannot, however, explain Woolf by themselves. Shifting criticisms can only help to open up understanding of Woolf.

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