TERRITORIALIZING MODERNISM: A DELEUZO-GUATTARIAN READING OF *TENDER BUTTONS*, *NIGHTWOOD,* AND *THE WAVES*

by

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ABSTRACT

NICOLE D. GANTZ. Territorializing Modernism: A Deleuzo-Guattarian Reading of *Tender Buttons*, *Nightwood*, and *The Waves*. (Under the direction of DR. LARA VETTER)

This examination of Modernist literature uses the philosophies of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in close readings of three texts with labyrinthine depictions of social production, alienation, and desire. In their work, I argue Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes, and Virginia Woolf destabilize building blocks of social-production in a "becoming-minor" of language, temporality, and consciousness. As a result of this continuous production, these Modernist texts illuminate the institutions and ideologies that regulate semiotics, temporal rhythms, and expressions of identity. Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic model of production eliminates hierarchical organization by untethering the production of meaning from a particular regime of signs. This approach is particularly well-suited to Modernist studies, as they both prioritize the subversive flows of life over those that maintain the status quo of ruling regimes. Each chapter of this study also bridges Deleuze and Guattari's philosophies with more contemporary theory to bring this discussion of Modernist texts into the twenty-first century.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

As industrial capitalism flourished in early 20th century Europe and America, rapidly growing urbanization demanded not only new modes of production, but new styles of literary representation that could expound the socio-economic changes of modernity. The collision of coal and countryside inspired many writers to turn away from Enlightenment's realism in favor of impressionistic work that explored subjectivity in a more atomized society; and a growing awareness of the world beyond one's window engendered fresh interest in understanding oneself in relation to the socius. Modernists wrote self-consciously about their milieu, "making bold and speculative incursions into history in order to carve out niches for their own positions" (Quinones 23). Facilitated by innovative experimentations in language and style, Modernist literature rejected objectivity and challenged conventions with "fragmented forms, discontinuous narratives, and random-seeming collages of different materials" (Klages 154). At the same time, the increasing political and economic tension of the era necessitated more enigmatic confrontations with society's most sacrosanct traditions. This led many Modernists to disguise taboos by writing in the shadows. As Kate Haffey notes, "It is the fragmentary, disconnected techniques of modernism that often-allowed clear desire to be articulated in ways that were indirect or ambiguous" (13).

Modernist Literature often reflected the prejudicial systems and social hierarchies that defined the progress of western civilization. This examination of Modernist literature uses the philosophies of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in close readings of three texts with labyrinthine depictions of social production, alienation, and desire. In their two-volume collaboration *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari delineate the

history of production and desire. They use a combination of Marxism and psychoanalysis to probe the ways in which systems of exchange not only inform but are embedded within one's psyche. This interdisciplinary approach is particularly well-suited to Modernist studies, as their method of analysis prioritizes the many fragmentations and disruptions within the "sphere of extremes," rather than the established practices of the "norm and the normal" (*AO* xvll). As this thesis will illustrate, writers like Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes, and Virginia Woolf destabilized conventional use and representations of language, temporality, and consciousness to challenge presupposed principles and practices of society.

In the first volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), Deleuze and Guattari seek to reconcile "the flows of money and capital that circulate in society" with "the flows of desire, the fears and the anxieties, the loves and the despairs that traverse the social field" (xviii), asking the question: Why does the subject desire their own repression? They blame the Oedipus Complex, or the psychoanalytic model that reduces "desire" to the desire for a missing object (specifically the mother) rather than a positive flow of productive connections (Colebrook 99). Through psychoanalysis, individuals are produced as subjects of repressed desire (child-mother) who are then organized by an authoritative body (child-father). The relationship between subject and authority is synthesized as "a transcendent, absent something [. . . .] called phallus or law, in order to designate 'the signifier that distributes the effects of meaning throughout the chain and introduces exclusions there" (*AO* 73). As Claire Colebrook explains, the signifier is an illusion of sense, or a "representation of some preceding meaning" produced by "some transcendent or incorporeal power that appears as the very law of

synthesis" (120). There is a clear connection to semiotics here. However, Deleuze and Guattari also connect the "despotic signifier" to capitalism through the triangulated synthesis of meaning-making, delineating how the myth of Oedipus undergoes an incorporeal translation into the myth of capital as society enters modernity. They argue under capitalism the flows of life–the productive connections of desire–become the flow of capital.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari expand their field of study by using multiple mediums of production (ex., language, music, animals, etc.) to elucidate how desire's productive flows of connection are continuous and multiplicitous "becomings." These flows of life produce difference through synthesis or severance. They describe this process in terms of a machinic assemblage:

> One side of a machinic assemblage faces the strata, which doubtless make it a kind of organism, or signifying totality, or determination attributable to a subject; it also has a side facing a *body without organs*, which is continually dismantling the organism, causing asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate and attributing to itself subjects that it leaves with nothing more than a name as the trace of an intensity. (*TP* 4)

In other words, machinic assemblages have stratified arrangements (both corporeal and incorporeal organisms) and non-corporeal, destratified potentialities that produce nothing and exist only as virtual "space" where flows of intensity are undefined and untethered–an unorganized and unarranged liminal space without territory. They call this space the body without organs. In terms of language, Deleuze and Guattari describe the corporeal arrangements of machinic assemblages as "the intermingling of bodies in society" (*ATP*

90), while the incorporeal arrangements (of language) are called "collective assemblages of enunciation." Collective assemblages of enunciation are discursive assemblages in which "things, qualities and relations are expressed through nomenclature, jargon, and [semiotics]" (Wise 80). Therefore, collective assemblages of enunciation operate *within* machinic assemblages as discourses that "imply particular modes of assemblage and types of social power" as they relate to the arrangement and organization of bodies (*ATP* 7).

My analyses will demonstrate how the innumerable connections within any assemblage can be translated to other "becomings" within Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic model of production. As they explain,

> A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles [. . . .] There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines. [. . . .] A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines. (*ATP* 7-9)

The rhizomatic structure eliminates hierarchy, placing all things on a plane of immanence. Building off their discussion in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari argue psychoanalysis and other systems of hierarchical organization (like the patriarchy, imperialism, capitalism, fascism, etc.) produce blocks in a rhizome. These blocks transform the rhizome into an arborescent model of desire production.

In a rhizome, desire flows unchecked; it is not interpreted or given significance. Deleuze and Guattari argue regimes of signs block productive flows with

territorializations of desire. However, "despotic signifiers" can be deterritorialized and decoded to liberate desiring-machines.[1] Following these free-flowing lines of flight constitutes their method of Schizoanalysis, which "treats the unconscious as an acentered system [. . .] as a machinic network of finite automata (a rhizome), and thus arrives at an entirely different state of the unconscious" than psychoanalysis (*ATP* 18). With Schizoanalysis, the subject is not produced through the repression of desire but through productive connections in a continuous *becoming* of desire.

At its core, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is about how to address the problem of the subject. This greatly resembles the experimental exploration of the subject in Modernist Fiction. Throughout my thesis, I will not only be using *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* but also other work from Deleuze and Guattari.[2] Additionally, each chapter will bridge Deleuze and Guattari's philosophies with more contemporary literary theory that will further enrich the close readings of each Modernist text by bringing the discussion into the twenty-first century. One limitation of this study is language itself, as it is only the exchange of signifiers that meaning can be made; there is no (intelligible) method of making arguments and drawing conclusions without an arborescent system of signs. However, as Deleuze and Guattari argue in *What is Philosophy?* (1991), every concept is "a *becoming* that involves its relationship with concepts situated on the same

[1] The process of deterritorialization-reterritorialization can be defined as "the selection or extraction of some set of intensities in order to compose them or place them in a different relation to one another" (Adkins 49). This process makes the structure intelligible, but it does not actually distribute meaning. It is through the decoding process that the value of the intensities—and, in turn, the structure—is discovered. Recoding redistributes meaning in a way that gives the structure significance.

[2] As Deleuze and Guattari's philosophies evolved over the course of their careers (including in the time between the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*), many of their concepts are reimagined with different names and variable definitions. Delineating the evolution of their framework would unnecessarily inflate and confuse the focus of this thesis. Therefore, the scope of my analyses for each text will be more clearly defined in each chapter to avoid the awkwardness of overlapping definitions.

plane" (18). In other words, the proceeding concepts are simply plateaus of "becoming." It is my intention to keep lines of flight–or the flows of desire–as open as possible during my analyses, obstructing them just long enough to draw connections to the proposed framework before providing escape once again.

In the first chapter, I explicate two poems and an excerpt of prose from Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* using Deleuze and Guattari's postulates of linguistics (*ATP*). My goal is to demonstrate how Stein subverts semiotic judgment with a "becoming-minor" of the order-word, or the incorporeal translations of signification according to the grouping of order-words into collective assemblages of enunciation. "Becoming-Minor," Deleuze and Guattari argue, is the process of opening language up to minoritarian forces–minority or marginalized ideologies and institutions–by rejecting majoritarian reference points and dissolving the constant form territorialized by capitalism and psychoanalysis (*TP* 104). Deleuze and Guattari argue the territorialized or privileged "order-word" is "made not to be believed but to be obeyed" (7); it is the dominant voice, the loudest note. In a Stein poem, however, order-words are exploited to expose alternative sounds and meaning and, in effect, the tension between the social forces that influence and condition them. This purposeful invocation of passwords then makes meaning explicitly ambiguous, reflecting the multiplicity of the "indirect discourse" that determines language (77).

When examining Stein's use of language, I not only use Deleuze and Guattari's postulates of linguistics but also feminist theories that analyze domestic time and space. This approach reveals the intimate connections between semiotics, gender/sexuality, and desire within the capitalist-machine as it existed in the early twentieth century. I will also look to biographical texts that build connections between Stein's life and her work. The

supplementary theory and scholarship enrich the explication of the selected texts by contributing more recent lines of flight through Stein's order-words, providing unique approaches to meaning production. With this analysis, I am able to elucidate how Deleuze and Guattari's "becoming-minor" of language can be used to locate *Tender Buttons* in Modernism and the capitalist machine to which the movement responds.

In the second chapter, I employ Deleuze and Guattari's theories on Anti-Oedipal genealogy from *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, as well as Deleuze's reworkings of Stoicism's Aion and Chronos temporality from *Logic of Sense* (1969), to examine temporal rhythms of desire in Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*. I will demonstrate how temporal rhythms or schemes can be manipulated and "naturalized" by social productions–like heterosexual, nuclear family units–under the political economy of early twentieth century Europe. I also look to contemporary Queer Studies, using theories from Kate Haffey's *Literary Modernism, Queer Temporality: Eddies in Time* (2019) and Elizabeth Freeman's *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010). These texts help bridge the eternal present of Chronos and the heteronormative temporal regimes that benefit an Oedipal society.[3] Additionally, I will propose a queer reading of the Aion,[4] expanding readings of queer temporality to include cyclical disruptions along with the sequential and chronological.

Significantly for this chapter's focus, queer temporality can also be connected back to Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome through a mode of "becoming" they call *becoming-animal*.[5] Just as queer temporality is a subversion or rejection of sequential

[3] Chronos: Eternal present continuously absorbing past-future (*LoS* 150)
[4] Aion: present as an infinitely divisible past-future (*LoS* 150)
[5] As they explain in *A Thousand Plateaus*, "becoming-animal" is a response to Sigmund Freud's case study about Little Hans and his fear of horses. After the little boy's mother threatened to castrate him if he did not

temporal regimes under the Oedipal capitalist-machine, becoming-animal is a disruptive escape from arborescent identity structures–not a transformation into an animal, but a deterritorialization of all lines of flight that connect an individual to society's "subject." With this framework, I can analyze *Nightwood*'s narrative and character construction to locate social productions that cause Felix Volkbein to desire his own repression as a man of Jewish ancestry, perform close readings of select scenes to elucidate blockages in machinic assemblages of motherhood and sexuality in Robin Vote, and locate the temporal lines of flight as they are restricted or liberated by each character's productions of desire.

In the third and final chapter, I read Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* through Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome to investigate the territorializations of significant "bodies" in Rhoda's narrative. From this analysis I can elucidate her suicide as an effect of becoming-minor in the turbulent socio-political superstructure of early twentieth century Europe.[6] With the six main characters of her novel (in whom she embeds a group consciousness),Woolf explores the merits of social collectivism over individualism. In contrast, the interludes that precede each chapter depict bodies and forces of the natural world that re-emerge throughout the novel in the character's long, fragmented soliloquies. I contend the machinic assemblages shared between individual soliloquy, group consciousness, and objective narration of the natural world produce a *collaborative*

stop playing with his penis, Freud interpreted Little Hans' phobia as a fear of the horse's large penis–thus linking the case to the Oedipus Complex (*ATP* 4).

[6] As British Imperialism continued to decline during the Modernist era, social collectivism (i.e., individual as socius) came about as an antidote to the increasingly competitive individualism of the capitalist-machine.

productive unconscious,[7] a site of "becoming" for the intersections of psyche, socius, and natural world. Including the natural world in my analysis acknowledges production processes that do not originate with humanity, as the self-organizing chaos of Nature–like forces of energy, innate physiological processes, or the original spark of life–produce lines of flight capable of escaping social production.

In addition to Deleuze and Guattari's philosophies, I will use Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* (2009) in Chapter 3 to explore the "vital materiality" of affective bodies within the collaborative productive unconscious of *The Waves*. As vital material, the bodies of the natural world that Woolf uses to demarcate significant feelings, experiences, and relationships in Rhoda's life cannot be reduced to how humanity chooses to perceive and represent them (Bennett 5). Instead, these bodies retain a "vital materiality" that "can never really be thrown 'away,' for it continues its activities even as a discarded or unwanted commodity" (Bennett 6). An exploration of the affective bodies or vital materials of the collaborative productive unconscious enables me to locate the syntheses and severances of productive flows in Rhoda's narrative. This analysis produces a map of a "becoming-minor" that is not entirely intelligible, as lines of flight beyond human perception are blocked by anthropocentrism. From this exploration, I can demonstrate how Rhoda–a subversive body that exemplifies Nature's disordered chaos–is cut off from lines of flight that would enable her to conceptualize the affective forces of nature that contribute to her innate non-conformity. Without this intrinsic validation, Rhoda's sense of "self" is at the mercy of social productions she cannot abide.

[7] In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari refer to a "productive unconscious," claiming it houses "the direct confrontation between desiring-production and social production," as well as "the repression that the social machine exercises on the desiring-machines, and the relationship between psychic repression and social repression" (54).

The distinct modes of production in *The Waves*, *Nightwood*, and *Tender Buttons* exemplify Deleuze and Guattari's radical modus operandi. The texts all challenge socially accepted constructions of identity by producing new connections that continuously deterritorialize and decode social norms. This narrative technique is inclusive of a minority voice whose oppression is rooted in a defense of hierarchical superstructures. In their work, Stein, Barnes, and Woolf demonstrate how arborescent structures of social production repress the subject by deterritorializing building blocks of social-productions in a perpetual state of "becoming." This process redistributes the potential for meaning in a multiplicity of directions—both inside and outside of social conventions. As a result of this continuous production, the chosen Modernist texts illuminate the institutions and ideologies that control desire-production through semiotic regulation and identity repression.

CHAPTER I: “Supposing” in Gertrude Stein’s *Tender Buttons*

It is tempting to read *Tender Buttons* like one would attempt to put together an impossible puzzle, but the heterogeneity of Stein’s work prevents its reducibility to a univocal resolution; we cannot anticipate the form the text will take solely by the way she shapes the signs. *Tender Buttons*’ mixed reception is a testament to its nebulous definition. An anonymous reader wrote in the *Detroit News*, “After reading excerpts from [*Tender Buttons*] a person feels like going out and pulling the Fime Bank building over onto himself” (Curnutt 14); another anonymous reader wrote, “[t]he new Stein manner, so it has been explained to us, is founded on what the Germans call "Wort-salad," a style particularly cultivated by crazy people” (15). Other reviews ranged from regretfully baffled, “I confess that I am not adequate to this book. Eager as I am to know and to welcome all manifestations of the new spirit in art and letters, yet, here I must confess myself beaten” (21), to strong rebukes against her critics, “[*Tender Buttons*] is not a work for boneheads. [...] The common earthworm will gag at such filaments of fancy. They will demand a special education. They presuppose a Cubist and resilient cerebrum” (14-5). The varied response to Stein’s experimental text continues to this day, as many readers–and scholars–have written Stein off as being “confusing and irritating” (Dydo and Rice 63), or “unmistakably [...] paternalistic” (Monroe 196). Others, like psychologist B.F. Skinner, argued attempts to interpret *Tender Buttons* was a waste of time because it was simply an experiment in automatic writing. Indeed, as Lisa Ruddick notes, many readers have even “insisted that any pursuit of continuous meanings amounts to a betrayal of the polyvalence of the texts” (7).

My approach to reading Stein is modeled after Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's method for entering texts: I view *Tender Buttons* as a body with a multiplicity of internal connections, as well as multiple points of entry and escape–of which none are privileged. They argue, "the principle of multiple entrances prevents the introduction of the enemy, the Signifier and those attempts to interpret a work that is actually only open to experimentation" (*Kafka* 3). Each individual poem in *Tender Buttons* can be thought of in this way, as well. Entry points into the poems must not be privileged, only obeyed as order-words: "Language is made not to be believed but to be obeyed, and to compel obedience" (*TP* 7). Stein, ever the disobedient (self-proclaimed) genius, transforms order-words into something new, thwarting most attempts to make sense of her expressions.

Though interpretation is an important part of reading Stein, my primary goal is not hermeneutical. Any themes or discourse unearthed will be byproducts of following the lines of flight from entry to internal points of contact, until the line eventually escapes the "machine" of the poem. Upon escape, the order-word is deterritorialized from the majoritarian social forces that impose discursive regulations and decoded to become a "pass-word" that produces new points of entry–and new meanings–in the poem's body or machine. Deleuze and Guattari call this a "becoming-minor" of literature, or language. In a minor literature, they argue, "language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization" (*Kafka* 16), "everything is political" (*Kafka* 17), and "everything takes on a collective value" (*Kafka* 17). Minor literature produces new meanings with "incorporeal transformations" of discursive and non-discursive bodies that change previous expressions of attributes and determine new orders of categorization that challenge the status quo (Bogue 111). Put more simply, a minor literature subverts

literary conventions by experimenting with language and style in a way that advances socio-political discourse in new and multiplicitous directions.

Stein's *Tender Buttons*, like many literary works, "deterritorialized linguistically enacted relations of power" to articulate a collective voice of resistance. It challenges established cultural norms that limit social progress and austere literary traditions that erroneously privilege some writers, genres, and styles over others (Bogue 112). Roland Bogue's description of the Minor writer can be applied directly to Stein:

> Minor writers make language stammer; they deform and transform its regular patterns in such a way that the language itself stutters, as the language's virtual lines of continuous variation are actualized in new and unpredictable combinations. And in the process, minor writers contest and undo the power relations immanent within the dominant, major usage patterns of language. (113)

Stein's poetry contains threads of sense all woven together into unpredictable knots of nonsense that must be untangled to be intelligible. This untangling process takes place in a Deleuzo-Guattarian "body without organs," which is "an inevitable exercise or experimentation" that makes way for the "body" to enter into "new relations, new combinations" (*ATP* 149). In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari say the body without organs is the "identity of producing the product–not the product itself" (8). Deleuze and Guattari suggest we follow one thread–or line of flight–at a time, from the moment it's woven around a word, a comma, an extra space, and follow it through the body without organs, through the knots of "becoming," where sense takes on new attributes from the other threads it tangles with, and then follow the thread all the way out of the text; only

then can we understand how a text works in the literary machine–the modernist machine–and in which ways it confronts hegemonic systems of power.

Writing *Tender Buttons*

Stein published *Tender Buttons* in 1914, eleven years after she moved to Paris and five years after she met Alice B. Toklas, the woman with whom she would spend the rest of her life. The book is broken up into three sections: “Objects,” “Food,” and “Room.” Each poem varies in length, from a couple words to several pages long, and named according to theme: “A Carafe That is Blind Glass” or “A Piece of Coffee” in the “Objects” section; “Roastbeef” or “Mutton” in the “Food” section; and “Room,” a longer piece that blurs the line between poetry and prose as it meditates and meanders through space. In this way, *Tender Buttons* is a character study of everyday objects, spaces and lived experiences:

> Stein exploits the vocabulary, syntax, rhythms, and cadences of conventional women's prose and talk, the ordinary discourse of domesticity, to create her own new "language." [. . .] While bringing cubist perspectives to bear on the domestic sphere through language, she intimates her unconventional domestic relationship with Alice B. Toklas through a discourse strewn with sexual riddles. (Murphy 383-4)

Though meaning is often obscured in her work, Stein’s esoteric interpretation of everyday objects signal, at the very least, a desire to elevate what might otherwise be considered straightforward. As Rita Felski’s “The Invention of Everyday Life” argues, “everyday life is not simply a neutral label for a pre-existing reality, but is freighted down with layers of meanings and associations” (30).

In her exploration of the quotidian in *Tender Buttons*, Stein often showcases the three most important elements of her daily life: writing, art, and Alice. Stein's support of–and contribution to–Modernism's cubist movement brought her closer to a number of celebrated Modernist artists. The most influential on her work is arguably Pablo Picasso, with whom she shared a close friendship. In *Picasso*, Stein writes that cubism "came about" because "the framing of life, the need that a picture exists in its frame, remain in its frame was over" (12). Stein's admiration for Picasso's resistance to traditional form and structure is reflected in *Tender Buttons*, as the language flows erratically around the page, between the lines, and beneath the surface. Just as Picasso painted "not of things seen but of things expressed" (2), Stein wrote of things set in motion–of things witnessed and heard, of things touched and felt. An object in *Tender Buttons* is stressed for its materiality, rather than its use or definition; it is given an unordered texture of pure expression set against the backdrop of everyday life. Stein's semiotic code was Picasso's artistic cube, "and one does not see a cube in its entirety" (35).

In *Two Lives: Gertrude and Alice*, Janet Malcolm writes, "Stein's language draws attention to itself in the way the brushstrokes of modernist paintings do. It forces re-reading" (136). Stein's artistic voice creates exhibitions of intersecting interests that play off one another, generating a kind of double-speak, so that she can write about multiple things–produce multiple assemblages–at the same time. While art and other aspects of culture were a vital components of Stein's creative process, her romantic relationship with Alice B. Toklas territorializes much of the language she employs throughout *Tender Buttons*. Marguerite Murphy argues, "there is undeniably covert erotic language in these prose poems, but also veiled explanations concerning Stein's general living arrangement

with Toklas" (384). The domestic roles Stein and Toklas played in the home they shared contributed to "the flowering of Stein's genius;" that is to say, it's reported that Stein sat around doing nothing all day while Toklas did all the housework (Malcolm 40). However, Stein did not write about the everyday object; she wrote about the everyday object's intersections–its territorialized assemblages–which often included Toklas. Never is this process more apparent than in the third section of Tender Buttons, "Rooms," which features long descriptions of the daily life she shared with Toklas. Though their relationship was fraught at times,[8] Malcolm notes that Toklas was instrumental to Stein's success, as she "recognized Stein's originality" early in her career, "when Stein's self-confidence was at its lowest-ebb" (40).

Though Stein's work habits, relationships, and life experience will be considered in this chapter, my goal is not to explicate Stein's life through her poetry. At the same time, to ignore or deny the unavoidable influence of her experience suggests the poems are arbitrarily written. This understanding of Stein's work dishonors the artistry of her process. As Dana Watson argues, "to assume that Stein chooses her words more or less randomly, that she is merely being playful, is to ignore the careful contextualization that makes such play possible" (44). The nuance of this difference can be difficult to locate, as Stein's text does not express itself through conceptualization like more traditional forms of literature (*Kafka* 28). Instead, Stein subverts connections between forms of content and expression by disrupting and disorganizing grammatical conventions that traditionally produce meaning in texts; she offers polyvocal signifiers on the surface, only

[8] Janet Malcolm reports a fair amount of tension throughout Stein and Toklas' many years together. One instance claims Toklas demanded Stein replace every instance of the word "may" with "can" because of Stein's previous love affair with a woman named May (176).

to dismantle semiotic chains with rhizomatic cross-streams of signification that are continuously deterritorialized to prevent fixed interpretations. In other words, reading Stein often feels like reading nonsense. However, even without clear connections between signifier and signified, lines of flight–or "becomings"–produce continuous connections inside and outside the text.

"Becoming" in *Tender Buttons*

The ways in and out of Stein's text rely on a "becoming" of Deleuze and Guattari's "order-words:" "There are pass-words beneath order-words. Words that pass, words that are components of passage, whereas order-words mark stoppages or organized, stratified composition" (*ATP* 110). Order-words "become" pass-words through transformations within assemblages, or a grouping or collection of things–objects, attributes, discourse–that expresses something. These transformations occur on two planes: concrete machinic assemblage of bodies and collective assemblage of enunciation; or assemblages of "discourse, words, 'meanings,' and non-corporeal relations that link signifiers with effects" (Wise 80). Collective assemblages of enunciation transform order-words into pass-words via decoding, or incorporeal transformations that reorganize bodies to produce new effects (Adkins 71).[9] Pass-words "become-minor" when they are recognized as the newly created inverse of the order-word. In other words, pass-words are discursive conditions of production that "[allow] the development of something new in a language" (Adkins 69).

[9] Deleuze and Guattari's concept of assemblages relies heavily on J.L. Austen's theory of "speech acts," which claims speech actually does something: "Austen calls these instances where the action is part of the utterance' illocutionary.' Based on Austen's claims here, Deleuze and Guattari argue that language is inseparable form action" (Adkins 67).

Deleuze and Guattari's framework for entering texts provides an advantageous mode of discovery; by entering the text through order-words and their assemblages, I can locate "other points [an] entrance connects to, what crossroads and galleries one passes through to link two points, what the map of the rhizome is and how the map is modified if one enters by another point" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 3). By following the lines of flight through an order-word's collective assemblage of enunciation, I can analyze its discursive themes and effects through processes of deterritorialization and decoding. This approach is logistically complicated, as the Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizome opens Stein's already polysemous text up to innumerable interpretations–many of which will be outside the scope of this examination. Therefore, despite unearthing a multiplicity of connections within each poem's desiring-machine, I will limit my analyses to the assemblages directly related to targeted socio-political discourse within the Modernist movement, particularly subversive representations of identity, intersections of consciousness, culture, and the capitalist machine, and "the alienation of the self in the modern urban setting" (Weiss 12). This alienation enables what Lynn Weiss calls the "modernist impulse to make visible the ways in which social forms [...] and literary practices [...] are culturally determined and culturally relative. As such, [...] Stein's discursive strategies are important instances of cultural critique" (15). By reading *Tender Buttons* as a piece of Deleuzo-Guattarian "minor literature," I can situate both Stein and her poetry within the modernist machine to which she both belongs and responds. In this way, I too become a part of the modernist machine, tracing lines of flight through different determinations within *Tender Buttons*: "[t]o enter or leave the machine, to be in the machine, to walk around it, to

approach it–these are all still components of the machine itself: these are states of desire, free of all interpretation" (*Kafka* 7).

It's important to note that incorporeal transformations are not exclusive to semiotics, as *Tender Buttons* contains visual and auditory "becomings" as well. Critic Robert Emons Rogers noted the vitality of sound in Stein's poetry in 1914 in the *Boston Evening Transcript* (Curnutt 16):

> She cannot read her own work on the written page; it means nothing to her. From this we can gather that the effect must be gained through sound alone. A page read aloud, quite apart from its sense or nonsense, is really rhythmical, a pure pattern of sound, as Picasso's canvases are pure patterns of color. Some feel a curious hypnotic effect in her sentences read aloud. By complicated repetition and by careful combinations does she get the effects she wishes for. And to some listeners there comes a perception of some meaning quite other than the content of the phrases.

The sounds that echo throughout Stein's poetry produce their own lines of flight that create measured rhythms and discordant notes that swell and settle in multiple variations of signification. Rachel Blau DuPlessis argues, "[l]istening is not pre-signification [...] it is the simultaneous *sine qua non*, that without which, there is no signification" (100). Reading Stein requires listening, not just to the literary devices that contribute to the overall effect and meaning of the poem, but also to the pronunciation of individual words. Stein creates auditory chains of semiosis that bounce from English to French through translation and pronunciation–sometimes both at the same time. Similarly, there's an

ekphrastic component to *Tender Buttons*, a visual reorganization of bodies that will be explored at greater length later in this chapter.

My analyses of Stein's order-words will follow lines of flight through of morphology, orthography, pronunciation, semiotics, discourse, and Stein's own lived experiences to locate *Tender Buttons* and its poems in the modernist-machine. This framework enables an exploration of desiring-machines that liberate the psyche from social repressions born of the restrictions handed down by hegemonic institutions of power. Stein uses the discursive conditions of the Everyday to transform the majoritarian social forces that locate her in a heteronormative, patriarchal society into a "becoming-minor" of literature that "attempts to articulate the voice of a collectivity that does not exist yet" (Bogue 114). In my intention to examine how the assemblages of enunciation in *Tender Buttons* work to subvert linguistic conventions that perpetuate the social repression Stein's poetry seeks to escape, I will explicate a poem or excerpt from each of the three sections of Stein's book. Each explication traces order-words through their many deterrorializations while also providing unique approaches to meaning production. With this analysis, I hope to demonstrate how Deleuze and Guattari's "becoming-minor" of language can be used to locate *Tender Buttons* in Modernism and the capitalist machine to which the movement responds

What do you suppose.

Suppose is an ironic order-word; it makes one aware of their power not to obey an order-word while directing their thoughts around the words that follow it. Suppose I have a piece of cake on my desk. Suppose my coffee has gone cold. Suppose I dislike reading Stein. All of these statements are instructions; "suppose" is an order of imagination.

Suppose I am eating. Suppose I am sleepy. Suppose I throw *Tender Buttons* out my window. "Supposing" is a game of imagination that isn't strictly defined until accompanied by other order-words. Though your cognitive response is compulsive, you can respond to "suppose" in many ways. But what if I said, "suppose desk eat" or "suppose Stein window." What are you being ordered to imagine? If you hadn't heard my prior instructions, how would you find the thread of sense in the nonsense? Meaning *can* be made without access to my intentions, because even without my prior "supposing" your consciousness will find a way to fill in the gaps. The nonsense of "suppose gone sleepy" is one variation of "a series of variables set in constant motion" (Adkins 80), a collective assemblage of enunciation produced by order-words that have been removed or inversed; it *is* language, but it doesn't mean anything in this configuration without a "becoming" to account for what's missing. Tracing the order-word–becoming–pass-word production process illuminates how Stein's "nonsense" can become something meaningful.

Tracing the becoming-minor of "suppose" in Stein's poem "Suppose an Eyes," reveals the way psycho-social forces control the production of meaning through instructed imaginings (16). Putting the title aside for the moment, Stein starts the poem with a location, status, and time of reference, all of which create concrete significations: "[s]uppose it is within a gate which is open at the hour of closing summer." The order-words that follow offer different lines of flight through the rest of the poem, each one belonging to a collective assemblage of enunciation that produces different realities: "white dress," "lace," "different sizes," and "little sales ladies" allude to a shopping trip on labor day. The patriarchal social forces that territorialize "white dress" to "wedding

dress" and black tuxedo pants from "seats are needing blackening" can be subverted by a becoming-minor of "seats" and "in sign:" (suppose) it is "receipts" that need blackening (i.e., transcribed purchases), and it is the white dress' presence on a "For Sale" sign that signifies it as being in season (i.e. after labor day).

Continuing along this line of flight, some of the other words become-minor and shape around this labor day shopping experience; "lace," "size to," rubbed purr" (rubber), and "leather" point to shoe shopping, which means "go red go red, laugh white" can become "go ahead go ahead, left right." While it's reasonable to cast off this peculiar deterritorialization of sound, Deleuze and Guattari argue:

> [L]anguage compensates for its deterritorialization by a reterritorialization in sense. Ceasing to be the organ of one of the senses, it becomes an instrument of Sense. And it is sense, as a correct sense, that presides over the designation of sounds (the thing or the state of things that the word designates) and, as figurative sense, over the affectation of images and metaphors (those other things that words designate under certain situations or conditions). (*Kafka* 20)

Along with the other order-words in the "labor day" assemblage, "suppose" has deterritorialized the sounds and images I associate with "go," "red," "laugh," and "white" from their traditional semiotic meaning or metaphorical connotations and reterritorialized them in a way that makes sense for the assemblage in which they have been located along the line of flight for "suppose."

The auditory becoming of "go red go red, laugh white" opens up other opportunities to become-minor through manipulations of sound. Returning to the title, the nonsense of "suppose an eyes" might be made meaningful when its intensities are set in

variation. Stein, being proficient but not fluent in French, not only used the sounds of English words to play with meaning, but she also used French words. “Eyes” in French is *les yeux* (le.z‿jø), which sounds remarkably like “leisure” in English. So, “suppose a leisure”– suppose a day of leisure, a person of leisure, a trip of leisure. The juxtaposition of labor and leisure accounts for the “season” of the white dress (i.e., only wealthy people can wear white after labor day because those who work will get white clothes filthy) and the “soldier” who may or may not be able to read (a leisure activity).

However, the auditory becomings within the “labor day” assemblage create new lines of flight that must also be traced, opening the poem up to even more French translations and pronunciations: “seat” becomes “siege” through *siège,* “gate” becomes “port” through *portail*, and “in sign” becomes “insignia” through *signe.* These becoming-minors suggests Stein’s soldier is a U.S. Naval officer, specifically a high ranking Naval officer because he is dressed in white, which was reserved for Commanders and Chief Petty Officers in the early 1900’s.[10] Suppose it's also significant that “boat” in French sounds like “battle” (*bateau*) and “can read” sounds similar to “sail” (*sait lis*), that “lace” is also a cord used to support a hanging object–most often a weapon, and that “twenty-four” is shorthand for a piece of heavy artillery found on warships (the 24-pounder long gun). These “becomings” fall within the labor/leisure assemblage through “seats are needing blackening” and “soldier:” High ranking Naval officers, the men who “can read” in their crisp white uniforms, are not the soldiers that would be performing the gritty, back-breaking labor that blackens the uniforms of the lower ranking officers. “All the

[10] “Uniforms of the U.S. Navy 1900.” Naval History and Heritage Command, *United States Navy*, https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/heritage/uniforms-and-personal-equipment/uniforms-1900.html

seats are needing blackening" is also a polemic against the more leisurely lifestyles of the high-ranking officers if you know that, at the time of this poem's writing, a seaman called "soldier" (sojer) was considered useless.

This variation of intensities is further complicated by another slang use of "soldier": at the time of *Tender Buttons* publication, "soldier" was also used to signify a red herring. Significantly, the OED entry for the "useless seamen" definition of soldier states that they were also called "loafers." So, suppose then that "twenty-four" is simply a reference to the hours in the day and "shutting up twenty-four" refers to closing up shop for the day. Suppose you hear the "sold" in "solider," "sale" instead of "sail" (from the French translation of "can read" (*sait lis*), and "sell" instead of "saddle" (s*elle*). With these "supposings" we've made our way back to the labor day sale–but we never really left. Stein scrambles the variables within the series so that you are forced to rearrange, exchange, and sometimes ignore significations with each sound, before and after every word.

For example, if we return to "go red go red, laugh white" and "a collapse in rubbed purr, in rubbed purr get," the labor day sale assemblage can continue with deterritorializations/decodings related to clothing or shoe material, but it can also shift the poem into expressions of sexuality: The combination of "go," "get," and "purr" can be heard as "go get her." As is common in Stein's poetry, *allez* (French for "go") may also refer to Stein's longtime lover, Alice B. Toklas. This variable lends meaning to the erotic energy that can flow out of "a collapse in rubbed purr," which is quickly aborted with "get." These becoming-minors support one of the most common explications of "Suppose an Eyes," which I will only briefly touch on to avoid redundancy. Lisa Riddick, for

example, looks at “Suppose an Eyes” as a commentary on how “it is dangerous to allow one's ‘purr’ to be ‘rubbed’ by a suitor” before a woman is sold off into a marriage that will eventually repress her desire. She explains,

> [A]t the moment the text tells of a repression, it also tells of erotic energies that defy repression. (Since both eros and patriarchy are compulsions, their conflict is unending.) [...] "rubbed" can mean either "stroked" or "rubbed out"; "go red" can mean either "become red" or "redness, depart. In each instance, one meaning points to sexuality, the other to its repression. (207)

With the inclusion of female sexuality, Stein opens up the poem again, this time hanging women instead of dresses on the sales rack. That doesn’t change the fact that “saddles of mutton” can still translate to sheep leather shoes (or, I suppose, *cheap* leather shoes) with rubber soles and beautiful bows (*beau*); or–if you’re properly stretched and want to reach–I suppose “mutton” could still be decoded from “sheep” or “leather” and reterritorialized/recoded to the U.S. Navy’s mascot, the goat.[11] Riddick–perhaps more reasonably–suggests “saddles of mutton” refers to a “band of traitorous matchmakers” (204), or women being saddled like animals and sold to men–or beaus–who can read the signs that announce women for sale.

Stein’s poem illustrates the intrinsic incompatibility of disorder and freedom. From the semiotics of “suppose” to the socio-political discourse produced by its deterritorializations, “Suppose an Eyes” forces a visualization of privilege–privileged meanings, privileged genders, privileged classes–and connects it to the “unchecked energies” of market capitalism, which “negates individualism as well as community,

[11] Apparently, sheep did “not take well to sea life [...] Goats were the only livestock able to maintain ‘sea legs,’ in all weather, and under all conditions” (*U.S. Navy*).

creating a world at once homogenous and anarchic" (Comentale 10). Knowing Stein liked to write about what she was actively observing, it isn't unlikely she was watching this abstract machine–the labor day shopping trip, the Navy officer's day of leisure, the commodification of women–from an outdoor cafe or her own bedroom window. Whatever assemblages she encountered and participated in, the flows of intensity were closely related–even directly intertwined. As Edward P. Comentale notes, "Left? Right? Capitalist culture simultaneously erects and erases all such differences" (64).

Despite the poem's invocation of the negative discourse surrounding patriarchal capitalism, Stein's use of language mirrors industrial production, where utility is devalued in favor of continuous production *of* production, or desiring-production (*AO* 6). Like the little sales ladies with their "saddles of mutton," Stein takes meaning off a conveyor belt and places it in the hands of consumers. However, as consumers (or readers) create meaning–in their purchases and acquisitions or in language–they unconsciously filter their understanding through presupposed ideologies instituted through hegemonic systems of power that use psychological and social forces to repress desire-production (i.e., restricting the semiotic chain or regulating determinations of value in people, products, and property). In this way, "Suppose an Eyes" is an example of the Deleuzo-Guattarian productive-unconscious, which houses "the direct confrontation between desiring-production and social production," as well as "the repression that the social machine exercises on the desiring-machines, and the relationship of psychic repression with social repression" (*AO* 54). Stein confronts these intersections with subversive "becomings" that can only be traced by following the transformations and territorializations of order-words.

Supposing Death with Cake

Order-words, even when moving in the same direction, will not always create the same passages of flight. For example, "suppose" does not appear in "Way Lay Vegetable" until the second line, creating a slightly more restricted process of meaning production in the first line. That isn't to say Stein wants readers to think only literal terms (that is unlikely to ever be the case), but in a poem where three out of four sentences begin with "suppose," its absence in the first line is noticeable. "Suppose" in this case is territorialized *in absentia*, which limits its collective assemblage of enunciation to variations of its inverse, or "*do not* suppose." This could be a demand, "do not imagine," or it could be a statement of fact, as in: "There is no imagination in reality." The first line of "Way Lay Vegetable," therefore, is given some semblance of a dichotomous root system; any meaning derived from the lines that follow should be ground in nature or nature's inverse. What is the inverse of nature? This question and its exploration may be the most significant products of "Way Lay Vegetable."

One collective assemblage of enunciation in "Way Lay Vegetable" produces the naturalization of the capitalist machine through discourse surrounding life, death, and the afterlife. Artifacts of market capitalism are dropped into overflowing buckets, baked into communion cakes, ground into meal, and yet Stein's transcendent agriculture retains some of nature's innocence, some of the "babes" of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (88).[12] However, the productive violence of "Way Lay Vegetable" indicates Stein cannot

[12] Stein listed Whitman as one of her sources of inspiration in *Narration*: "In the American writing the words begin to have inside themselves those same words that in the English were completely quiet or very slowly moving began to have within themselves the consciousness of completely moving, they began to detach themselves from the solidity of anything, they began to excitedly feel themselves as if they were anywhere or anything, think about American writing from [. . .] Walt Whitman [...] and you will see what I mean [...] word left alone more and more feel that they are moving and all of it is detached and is detaching

wholeheartedly relate to Whitman's insouciant approach to death and the afterlife. Her connection to nature and the material world is marked differently as a Jewish woman, not only because there is no afterlife in Judaism,[13] but also because every aspect of life and death is controlled by men. Stein negotiates this power imbalance by applying "new codes over an already existing code" (Adkins 58).

As previously demonstrated, bilingualism is often a component of Stein's code. Decentering English and playing with the sounds of French translations in the first line of "Way Lay Vegetable" invokes the ekphrastic placidity of Picasso's *Landscape with Two Figures*,[14] which depicts two anthropomorphized trees in the foreground of a rolling countryside.[15] But as she produces varying audio-visual territories with multiple assemblages, Stein fragments meaning and produces different modes of consumption. If you didn't hear "laze (*laisse*) in" in the first notes of the poem,[16] then the beginning appears far less serene. Featuring scattered corpses, piles of bodies, and a deadline for the process and duties of death, the first line of the poem also answers Whitman's call for peaceful acceptance of death with macabre practicality. The paradoxes within Stein's linguistic turn are revealed only when intensities of an order-word are set in motion and the multiplicity of language is embraced.

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anything from anything and in this detaching and in this moving it is being in its way creating its existing" (10).

[13] Malcom writes: "Readers of *Everybody's Autobiography* may recall Stein's account of her rueful early realization that 'there was no mention of everlasting' in the Hebrew Scriptures. 'When I was about eight' she writes, 'I was surprised to know that in the Old Testament there was nothing about a future life or eternity. I read it to see and there was nothing there. There was a God of course and he spoke but there was nothing about eternity'" (76-7).

[14] As she makes clear in her biography of him, Gertrude Stein and Pablo Picasso were close friends. In *Picasso*, she writes Picasso's work around the time he painted *Landscape with Two Figures* concerns "the opposition between nature and man in Spain. The round [of nature] is opposed to the cube [of man]" (24).

[15] Pablo Picasso, 1908 (autumn), *Paysage aux deux figures* (*Landscape with Two Figures*), oil on canvas, 60 x 73 cm, Musée Picasso, Paris.

[16] The French translation of the noun "leaves" is *feuilles*.

Opening “Way Lay Vegetable” up to new dimensions of meaning “transforms the components of order into components of passage” (*TP* 110). Relieved of overt judgment, “vegetable” becomes more than a symbol of agriculture and “nervous bed rows” extend beyond the anxiety of one’s mortality; through “suppose” these order-words also become connections to the everyday femininity that permeates the entirety of *Tender Buttons*. For example, “potato” in French translates to “apple of the ground” (*pommes de terre*), which Stein bakes into a charlotte, a dessert named after Queen Charlotte’s love of apples–a fruit historically associated with femininity through Eve. Charlotte means “free” in French, and in Hebrew, Charlotte is a “free woman.” If “new mercy” is a variation of the Christian’s New Testament–or Christ’s mercy–then Stein’s “suppose a new mercy and leave charlotte and nervous bed rows” may become “suppose it is Christianity that frees a woman from her grave.” As I enter this collective assemblage of enunciation, an incorporeal transformation of religion and death produce icons of nature, of natural processes experienced everyday by everyone, and this entire process is feminized by the becoming-minor of “potato.”

Unlike “Suppose an Eyes,” “suppose” in this poem becomes-minor not through imaginative orders but with targeted assassinations of strict binaries that bury women under their kitchens. Women’s mortality is directly connected to both cooking and (sapphic) eating, producing an assemblage that houses both the heteronormative domesticity that oppresses women and the continuous violence of production. Stein’s disorienting abuse of signification facilitates aggressive movements between the labor of production, the exploitation of consumption, and the thievery of decomposition. In her

juxtaposition of a woman's life cycle with an agricultural supply chain, Stein makes explicit Deleuze and Guattari's assertion that there is:

> no distinction between man and nature: the human essence of nature and the natural essence of man become one within nature in the form of production or industry, just as they do within the life of man as a species. Industry is then no longer considered from the extrinsic point of view of utility, but rather from the point of view of its fundamental identity with nature as production of man and by man. (*AO* 4)

Like the title of the poem, throughout "Way Lay Vegetable" humanity and nature are both detained–immobilized by the immaterial–but even in stasis they remain in a continuous state of production, because they are "composed of the intersecting needs and desires" that maintain the everyday habits that ensure the perpetuation of capitalism's status quo (Comentale 20).

The expeditiousness of production is present in the active second half of the first line. "Skip" is a slight bound or spring, a bucket for conveying materials, and a crewman on a ship that exports goods mowed into piles. Each of these territorializations can be supported by the auditory "becoming" of the English word "flutter" into the French word for float- *flotter*. Or, with Picasso's lazy (*laisse*) figure in mind, "have a skip" is permission to have a kip, or a nap. In this assemblage, "hurry you up flutter" is a call to the more hidden figure on the right side of the painting, the figure that looks as if it is reaching into the sky, ready to fly away from the roots that anchor it to the earth. Like "Way Lay Vegetable," Picasso's *Landscape with Two Figures* shines a spotlight on the liminal space between man and nature, exposing that space as the "false consciousness"

Deleuze and Guattari assign to the capitalist being (*AO* 4). The religious "supposing" that follows this hypothetical meditation on Picasso's painting suggests the first line of the poem is a secular "supposing" of life after death. The body "becomes" nature; it molds itself back into its origins.

The temporality of language's many translations in "Way Lay Vegetable" creates a chaotic mimesis of signification that also culminates in a revision of Whitman's peaceful acceptance of death. Like "charlotte," when Stein's theme is considered, "sam" becomes the name of an iconic figure: the prophet Samuel, who played an important role in the preservation of the Israelites' heritage. In Hebrew, Samuel means "God has heard" or "Name of God," and his death–or afterlife–was interrupted by a call from King Saul, who was then chastised by Samuel and rejected by God. Certainly Stein's "suppose it is sam" is just as easily a play on *semoule*, the French word for ground meal, but the religious "supposing" also produces a reflection on the Christian afterlife: Not everyone is welcome. Still, the reterritorialization of "meal" to "ground up food" returns to the "ex a cake" and the decomposition of dead bodies. Which is why, in a reverse and repeat of the last two sentences of the poem–because with Stein "a single phrase or sentence can mean antithetical things at once" (Riddick 206)–Stein muses on the value of "supposing." After all, the earth makes a meal out of all of us. All death is the same.

Stein's exploration of man, nature, and the progress of society in "Way Lay Vegetable" is very reminiscent of her comments on Picasso's work:

> It was natural that it was a Spaniard who understood that a thing without progress is more splendid than a thing which progresses. The Spaniards who adore mounting a hill at full speed and coming down hill slowly, it is they who were

made to create the painting of the twentieth century. They did it, Picasso did it. (*Picasso* 49)

Stein casts the "progress" of the early twentieth century in direct opposition to the stability of the natural world in a "becoming-minor" of literature that investigates unnatural hierarchical social structures–like gender roles, sexual preferences, and religion–through their shared assemblages with the organic materials that populate the poem. She compares the natural and cyclic process of growth, consumption, and decomposition to the capitalist-machine's mass production process, naturalizing the "material conditions that shape all cultural expression" and their deadly effects in a way that exposes the inherent violence of production (Comentale 24). In this way, "Way Lay Vegetable" accounts for Comentale's criticism that, "as long as cultural production depends upon a romantic conflation of sign and essence, as long as it remains captive to auratic manipulations of capital, it should be dogged by an art that exposes the terms of production" (24).

Questions without Inquiry

As a transitive verb, "suppose" in "Suppose and Eyes" and "Way Lay Vegetable" operates as an implicit demand. When Stein writes "suppose," she's directing your thoughts–however loosely–in some way. She adds an additional element to this order-word in the final section of *Tender Buttons*, "Rooms," which reads like a map of Stein's day; from the moment she opens her eyes–a "wide action" that "is not a width" (43)–to the bedtime list of regrets and complaints that drift into peaceful acceptance before she falls asleep (52). It is a continuous series of descriptions that, as Elizabeth Frost notes, "functions as a kind of parataxis that refuses the reader a temporal or spatial orientation, a

linear sense of tense or a hierarchical sense of foreground and background" (69). I have illustrated Stein's disorienting approach to meaning-making thus far through the deterritorialization and decoding of order-words, sounds, and visualizations, but I've yet to examine how Stein produces meaning through punctuation. The questions Stein writes in "Rooms" fail to adhere to linguistic conventions, and therefore become significant sites of analysis.

A question mark typically constructs parameters around responses to the presented assemblage of enunciation, restricting replies while still providing a measure of space for deterritorialization. This restriction or repression of production classifies questions as order-words: "Order words do not concern commands only, but every act that is linked to statements by a 'social obligation.' Every statement displays this link, directly or indirectly. A question, a promise, these are order-words" (Deleuze and Guattari, *TP* 79). Questions, like the order-word "suppose," resemble fairly open routes of discovery while actually producing a tendency toward stasis; there are only so many ways to answer a question according to social expectations and conventions. Stein's non-questions, however, operate rhetorically, in that they are presented "only to produce an effect, rather than to elicit an answer or information" ("[rhetorical]"). Without the question mark, any attempt to respond sensibly is thwarted by an actual absence of inquiry. When Stein writes, "who is man" (45), "why is there rain" (46), or "is there any use in changing more doors than there are committees" (48), she places these assemblages into variations directly related to previous territorializations and codes—especially assemblages with question marks. What appears to be an obfuscation is actually a deterritorialization: "When language users subvert standard pronunciations,

syntactic structures or meanings, they 'deterritorialize' the language, in that they detach it from its clearly delineated, regularly gridded territory of conventions, codes, labels and markers" (Bogue 111-2). In other words, Stein's rhetorical non-questions are explicit examples of language's becoming; becoming-other, becoming-molecular, becoming-minor.

As we have seen, language "becomes" through incorporeal transformations within assemblages of enunciation populated by order-words. Deterritorialization of structure and decoding into pass-words produces something new–something expressed and understood differently. This difference is produced by repetition:

> Thought is transmitted through a form of relay where the injunction is to repeat what cannot be represented, and (thus) repeats as different. There is a tangential relationship between thoughts, where the component of one problem becomes a component of a new, and necessarily different, problem. (McMahon 50)

Through repetition, Stein triggers a psychosocial process of differentiation that produces something new. This is in line with Felski's argument against the social conventions that restrict women to repetitive tasks that prevent progress. Felski theorizes that repetition serves as a framework for existence, whether it be through natural or social cycles, and it is repetition of the quotidian that leads to innovation. Felski asserts, "that which was previously taken for granted becomes newly visible, in both its new and its traditional, disappearing forms" (p. 16).

Consider this line in "Rooms:" "If comparing a piece that is a size that is recognised as not a size but a piece, comparing a piece with what is not recognised but what is used as it is held by holding, comparing these two comes to be repeated" (45).

Stein creates difference when she repeats the relationship between "piece" and "size:" "piece" is recognizably *sized*, meaning size is an attribute of "piece," but "piece" is not defined *by* its size. The repetition of "that is" and "size" also produces different fragments of statements, like "a size that is recognized as not a size," which is an incorporeal transformation of "size" into a recognizable body disconnected from "piece." Adding "but a piece" back into the isolated fragment establishes that the independent "size" is also a "piece," but it is different enough from the first "piece" to be recognized as a separate piece. In the first clause of the first sentence, therefore, Stein produces two "pieces" of different sizes.

Repeating "comparing" in the second clause recalls the dependence of the first clause, which was an implicit command to "suppose" a comparison between "piece" and "piece." "What is" is a phrase that implies a question ("what is not recognized;" "what is used") but operates as a command to establish the parameters of comparison. Stein asks readers to compare the "pieces" by "what is used" as the "piece" "is held by holding," suggesting the utility of "piece" is a defining characteristic of its existence. Anything defined or territorialized necessitates deterritorialization, which means "piece" can also be defined by its ability to be recognized. As Stein writes, the comparison of these two pieces–the "piece" *that is* sized and the "size" *that is* a piece–is repeated every time they are used.

"Suppose" becomes the star of this explication again as Stein continues her comparison with five clauses of "supposing:" "Suppose they are put together, suppose that there is an interruption, supposing that beginning again they are not changed as to position, suppose all this and suppose that any five two of whom are not separating

suppose that the five are not consumed" (45-6). The repetition of "suppose" retains the assemblage of comparison while producing differences that contribute to further territorializations of the "pieces." These differences produce a scenario in which the two "pieces" are used; then their action is interrupted, before they're used again without changing positions. When she attributes numbers to this scenario, the assemblage of this scene transforms to include "any five of two," which immediately recalls common things that can be defined by those numbers. With previous deterritorializations and potential decodings in mind, Stein's scene abruptly takes shape around a pair of hands performing a task. In this assemblage of enunciation, one transformation produces the two "pieces" as "finger" and "hand:" Comparing a "piece" of the body (hand) with a "piece" of the other piece (finger), where both hands and fingers are "held by holding." Stein's series of "supposings" are then territorialized as a series of actions involving Alice ("all this"), Stein ("that any"–the reflection of "all this"), and two of Stein's five fingers that "are not separating." The lack of punctuation between the two "supposings" in the fifth clause signal a continuation of the first "supposing" in the first part of the clause–creating a space of repetition. The second "supposing" in the clause is therefore produced by that repetitive space: "the five are not consumed" can therefore be decoded to an attribute of a sex act being performed on Alice.

The rhetorical non-questions that follow fit into the sex act's assemblage of enunciation as curious statements about Alice's ability to orgasm, echoing an earlier line: "comparing these two comes to be repeated" (45). Because Stein directly establishes these statements as questions, the punctuation deterritorializes the statements from opportunities for response and reterritorializes them to opportunities for expression. A

question without a question mark is a rhetorical question, rhetorical because she is not asking us–or is not asking anyone–for a response. The next sentences read like an internal monologue tinged with anxiety, questioning her performance and her ability to rectify any mistakes she made. The last three sentences may connect to the sex act's assemblage through Alice's indeterminately sized response (i.e., silence or sounds of pleasure). In the end, Stein appears to have successfully received a favorable response. Stein's relationship with Toklas and the production of difference through repetition creates a performative space, one that is dramatized erotically by Stein's narration.

However, the last two sentences repeat the word "letter," which produces difference in their consumption. If we return "letter" to its majoritarian territorializations, "letter" can be both a "piece" of writing and a "piece" *of a* "piece" of writing; that is, a (L)etter of correspondence and an alphabetic (l)etter. As homonyms, "letter" and "Letter" will repeatedly be compared. Stein's series of "supposings" then deterritorialize from present action and reterritorialize to a circumstance that has already occurred, which can be decoded to an interruption while in the process of writing a letter. Suppose "any five two of whom are not separating" refers to the word "letter," itself, as there are five letters with a pair of "t's" in the middle. Suppose the letters are not read or erased. The rhetorical non-questions that follow are disconnected from the flowing narrative of Stein's interrupted writing session: "Is there an exchange, is there a resemblance to the sky which is admitted to be there and the stars which can be seen. Is there" (46). "Exchange" recalls that the letters did "not changed as to position" after being interrupted, which suggests an "exchange" is not an exchange of bodies but an exchange of ideas. After being interrupted, does the letter resemble what she had planned to write–

what she was in the middle of writing–before being interrupted. Does an interruption of thoughts transform the letters you know into a Letter you do not recognize. These questions are posed as statements, implying that Stein knows the answer: Yes. Interrupting her train of thought disconnects meaning from the words even if they are still physically connected on the page. "Fitting a failing"–or any attempt to overcome the problem of interruption–must account for the alteration in thought as an effect of the failing itself. In other words, as she returns to her letter to finish it, the interruption will not affect the size of the letters, but it will affect the length of her Letter. This collective assemblage of enunciation of "letter" is transformed by the effects of deterritorializations and decodings in the order-words that direct trains of thought.

Stein's invocation of the Everyday in the objects and the actions within this short excerpt from "Rooms" embodies Felski's assertion that one should "think of the everyday as a way of experiencing the world rather than as a circumscribed set of activities within the world" (p. 31). The first time I read this description of an everyday moment, I was able to trace the "letter" assemblage before I recognized the "sex act" assemblage. However, I found my entrance into the "letter" assemblage with the territorialization of "letter" at the end of the paragraph; it wasn't until I was tracing "letter" from the beginning that a new line of flight was produced: "any five of two of whom are not separating" was territorialized as two fingers of a hand gripping a writing instrument until the absence of a comma between the two "supposings" of the fifth clause created a continuous space where only two of the five fingers are consumed. At that rhizomatic branch, I began tracing the territorializations of the "sex act" assemblage all the way through the paragraph's body.

Repetition produces the differences that deterritorialize/decode discursive words, sounds, images, and components of linguistics and reterritorialize/recode them as a production of something new, as "becomings" that "act as a capturing, a possession, a plus-value but never a reproduction or an imitation" (*Kafka* 13). Pass-words are not imitations but repetitions of difference that can be coded by new territorializations or remain decoded with diverse deterritorializations. Therefore, as Brent Adkins explains,

> [A]n assemblage of enunciation is thus a particular relation of order-words. Different assemblages will have different relations of the same order-words and include some order-words not found in others [...] there are always multiple assemblages operating and overlapping in a given time and place. (72)

Both "suppose", and Stein's rhetorical questions produce explicitly creative spaces for territorializations of expression that are deterritorialized according to the relation of order-words. Deleuze and Guattari argue these relationships are fundamentally relations of power, the major vs. the minor, which is reflected in the psychosocial repressions of the productive unconscious. Explicating this paragraph into a description of a sex act is a demonstration of becoming-minor, a demonstration of subverting the hegemonic power structures that determine the social and linguistic conventions that might translate "piece" to "letter" before "finger." It is this "struggle between the decoding and recoding" of meaning that "can be considered the central drama of capitalism" (Holland 58), as this struggle is really a struggle of a desire repressed by psychosocial productions in a capitalist society. Deleuze and Guattari argue, "[s]ocial repression needs psychic repression precisely in order to form docile subjects and to ensure the reproduction of the social formation, including its repressive structures" (*AO* 118). In other words, desire is

repressed because desire challenges the productive capital that perpetuates hegemonic systems of power. Therefore, by challenging the status quo, Stein's experimental exercise in comparing two "pieces" liberates her–however fleetingly–from the patriarchal, heteronormative society that alienates her.

Conclusion

My Deleuzo-Guattarian analysis of Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* elucidates a "becoming-minor" in literature that undermines "stable power relations and thereby [activates] lines of continuous variation in ways that have previously been restricted and blocked" (Bogue 114). In its subversion of the majoritarian social forces that restrict and repress meaning, *Tender Buttons* creates a rebellious space for transformative deterritorializations and liberating decodings that reject traditional semiotic processes of production and signification. Language in Stein's hands escapes strict definitions, pushes the boundaries of convention, and challenges discursive conditions of capitalist production. This production process triggers transformations of the despotic signifier in a "becoming-minor" of language that connects *Tender Buttons* to the modernist machine–to Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome–through disruptive breaks in semiosis. These breaks force readers to create something new with every syllable, letter, word, or phrase until meaning has undergone the process of deterritorialization and decoding so many times, the only hope of understanding what an assemblage can do rests in starting the trace all over again. And again. And again.

CHAPTER II: "Chrononormativity and The Event: Queering the Aion in Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood"*

As the first chapter demonstrated, the abstract aesthetics of Modernist literature reflected a play with language, sound, and meaning to disrupt contemporaneous methods of meaning-making and explore or challenge the ideologies behind majoritarian order-words. As this chapter's discussion of Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* will demonstrate, the "despotic signifier" can also be subverted by destabilizing traditional use and representations of space, time and form. In *Literary Modernism, Queer Temporality: Eddies in Time*, Kate Haffey argues Modernist texts that "break convention" and "rearrange or ignore patterns of accepted narrative" upset chronological and sequential movements of time in ways that disrupt conventional stages in plot development, at times denying readers satisfactory climax or closure (Haffey 5). "Narrative incoherence" in this capacity is also *queer temporality*, a form of resistance that subverts chrononormative temporal rhythms. Elizabeth Freeman argues in *Time Binds* that chrononormativity–or "the interlocking temporal schemes necessary for genealogies of descent and for the mundane workings of domestic life" (Freeman xxii)–perpetuates repressive social conditions through the naturalization of temporal rhythms organized by the institutional power structures to which we are bound–like eating, sleeping, and working. As she explains, "People whose individual bodies are synchronized not only with one another but also with the larger temporal schemae experience belonging itself as natural" (4); while the people who subvert those expectations experience a profound sense of alienation.

Modernist fiction like Barnes' *Nightwood* unsettles sequential and genealogical time through depictions of queerness, a narrative strategy that combines two levels of subversive social production (homosexuality and nonsequential time) in a confrontation with chrononormative temporal schemas. Though all the main characters of *Nightwood* will be discussed in this chapter, the main focus is Robin Vote–the avian coded sleepwalker nominally entitled to freedom. Barnes uses Robin's wandering as a metaphor for aimless or interrupted intervals of time, where Robin's experience plunges blindly ahead or becomes arrested in development. These "queer moments" disrupt traditional narrative sequences to challenge social productions that would otherwise repress queer expression. As Leah Lynch argues, "In playing out processes founded upon a linear understanding of temporality, including Robin's subjection, *Nightwood* disrupts and draws attention to straight time – the chrononormative – as a device of social regulation and disciplinary control" (86).

In addition to contemporary theories of queer temporality, I will also be employing Deleuze's conceptualization of Chronos and Aion temporalities to locate temporal schemas within the rhizome. For Deleuze, Chronos is the "living present," where past-future are continuously being absorbed into the present. In this way, Chronos is *time as motion*, time as its own definitive and uninterrupted passage, self-organized and undefined by any regime of signs. Though Deleuze's Chronos and Freeman's chrononormativity both refer to chronological time, chrononormativity defines heteronormative temporal schemes that operate under a "despotic signifier" (i.e., language, Oedipus, capitalism, etc.). The passage of time only appears meaningful when lines of flight are restricted by blockages in the rhizome–when chronology is given a

name. As a definition of chronological time under Oedipus Capitalism, chrononormativity restricts productive flows of time to rhythms of sex and capital. While the queering of temporal schemas under Oedipus Capitalism produces an "incoherent" narrative in *Nightwood*, the passage of time itself remains unaffected by Robin's queerness. This distinction is important to understand as I move on to Chronos' complement: the Aion.

Instead of "a present which spreads out and comprehends the future and the past," in the Aion, "an unlimited past-future rises up here reflected in an empty present which has no more thickness than the mirror" (*LoS* 150). The Aion is *time as a perceivable, continuous unit;* time as an eon, a life, a cycle, or a trend. Deleuze writes, the Aion "has no other present than that of the mobile instant which represents it, always divided into past-future, and forming what must be called the counter-actualization" (151). Like Chronos, the Aion is not limited by a "despotic signifier" that controls the exchange value of temporal markers–there is no underlying regime of signs that organizes the *concept* of a temporal unit. Temporal schemas like chrononormativity and queer temporality are used to explain social productions of sequential and genealogical time under Oedipus Capitalism, but I contend normative and queer temporal schemas of the Aion can be similarly used to explain social productions in cyclical and impersonal time. As Deleuze argues in *Logic of Sense*, "Time must be grasped twice [...] as the living present in bodies that act and are acted upon [...] as an entity infinitely divisible into past and future" (*6*).

In *Nightwood*, the impersonal Aion can be as expansive as the early 20th century, as fathomless as sleep, or as periodic as a song. The "normative" Aion under Oedipus Capitalism might translate these same temporal units to The Second Industrial

Movement, sleep dictated by a work schedule, and a popular love song. In the queer Aion of *Nightwood*, 20th century recodes to Modernism; sleep translates to inebriated unconsciousness, and the song becomes a sordid history of lesbian love affairs. Though the actors have more open lines of flight in the queer Aion, they're still confined to their temporal archetype, unit, or territorialization. This distinction can also be understood through Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the machinic assemblage. Queer temporality is a rhizomatic *de/reterritorialization* of chrononormative temporal schemas: It *extracts intensities* from chrononormative schemas to make them intelligible in new variations, but it does not assign a specific value to a set of relations. I suggest it is the queer Aion that distributes meaning to temporal schemas by *decoding intensities* of normative temporal schema and *recoding* them in accordance with a queer reading of the text. Rather than "jam the mechanisms" of narrative coherence with temporally queer disruptions in sequence or chronology (Haffey 3), the queer Aion pokes holes in "normative" events–or events given meaning through social productions–by placing intensities within the Aion's "theme" into variations that disrupt the "despotic signifier" of the ruling regime.

Throughout this chapter, *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* will also inform my schizoanalytic readings of the Volkbein line and its role in Robin's adherence to chrononormative temporal schemes, as it is Deleuze and Guattari's anti-psychoanalytic method of analysis that provides a framework to examine the intersections of sexuality, socio-economics, and the psychology of the subject who desires. *Schizoanalysis* is interested in repressed desire–specifically how a subject's own desiring machine can "be made to desire its own repression," and how "the death drive" connects "desire to the

social sphere" (*AO* 105). "Death" here does not necessarily refer to biological mortality– though it can and often does. Death itself is desire; it is *productive*. Setting limits of desire ablaze, it is the rebel citizen that is on a death mission. The productive flows of desire that follow lines of revolutionary flight deterritorialize "normative" social investments, decode significance, and invent themselves anew via soaring escape. This is what Deleuze and Guattari call "becoming-molecular," "becoming-animal," and "becoming-imperceptible." All of these "becomings" are absolute deterritorializations, they are untethered potential. In other words, the death instinct may be nothing more than a desire to break free of one's cage and fly away.

However, in the instant of escape, the present has already happened and it will happen again; it is not present even as it undergoes continuous division by past-future. The present is a paradox. In this way, the queered temporal schemes in *Nightwood* can be seen as Aionic death marches: "Like death, the present never exists, but is instead the nonexistent limit or frontier that endlessly decomposes into the past and future; it 'is' simply the border at which the past and future meet and separate" (Johnson 278). Thus, *Anti-Oedipus*' Schizoanalysis can play a vital role in exploring how temporal rhythms of desire in *Nightwood* can be manipulated and "naturalized" by social productions of the political economy. Through this analysis, I hope to elucidate the ways in which Barnes uses queer temporality to produce a modernist counter-narrative of the socio-political norms that organized temporal schemas through social productions designed to maintain the interests of the ruling regime, Oedipus Capitalism.

Das Volkbeins vs. La Somnambule

I will begin my analysis at the very beginning of the novel, as it depicts an event that establishes social norms within the narrative:

> Early in 1880, in spite of a well-founded suspicion as to the advisability of perpetuating that race which has the sanction of the Lord and the disapproval of the people, Hedvig Volkbein, a Viennese woman of great strength and military beauty, lying upon a canopied bed of a rich spectacular crimson, the valance stamped with the bifurcated wings of the House of Hapsburg, the feather coverlet an envelope of satin on which, in massive and tarnished gold threads, stood the Volkbein arms—gave birth, at the age of forty-five, to an only child, a son, seven days after her physician predicted that she would be taken. (3)

Barnes codifies the tradition and expectation of motherhood when Hedvig Volkbein's introduction is supplanted by her son's miraculous birth, but she takes care to delay the inevitable through excessive detail, as if her own pen is reluctant to immortalize the act. The language she uses implies some level of autonomy for Hedvig while maintaining an air of reluctance, suggesting the circumstances under which Hedvig lies on the bed are not necessarily of her design or within her control. In killing Hedvig almost immediately after giving birth, Barnes submits maternal death as an acceptable–even natural–sacrifice for the continuation of bloodlines. There is also the suggestion that Hedvig's advanced age largely contributed to her death, which serves as an indirect thrashing for delaying the chrononormative timeline for reproduction in the capitalist-machine. Geriatric (and certainly deceased) parents may not adequately care for and ready their children for productive-labor, thereby producing economic drains on the system until the child is of age to join the workforce.

Barnes weaves the tradition and expectation of maternal temporality and productive labor into this childbirth scene through vivid descriptions of blood and ancestry, rooting Felix Volkbein to the institutions and traditions that presuppose his existence and control his life's trajectory. However, as Deleuze and Guattari point out in *Anti-Oedipus*, "[T]he family is never a microcosm in the sense of an autonomous figure, even when inscribed in a larger circle that it is said to mediate and express. [. . . .] Families are filled with gaps and transected by breaks that are not familial" (96). Though Felix's father, Baron Guido Volkbein, self-issues his aristocratic title to create a blockage in his Jewish ancestry, the impetus to do so lies outside the familial. Guido is submissive to the perceived historical weight of his blood, unctuously embracing social productions that would otherwise keep him at the lowest rung; and Felix–whose greatest wish to have "a son who would feel as he felt about the 'great past'" (42)–eagerly adopts his father's faux title along with his mother's Christianity. Here, despite both his parent's early deaths, the Oedipal complex serves as a "means of integration into the group, in [. . . .] the adaptive form of its own reproduction that makes it pass from one generation to the next" (*AO* 103).

Additionally, the anti-Semitic undertones throughout the novel suggest Felix is unable to escape his Jewish ancestry despite the lines of flight his father attempts to block by denying his bloodline. Tropes like the "wandering Jew" or wealth acquisition are somewhat parodied by Barnes, as Felix's "wandering" includes Christian practice and his wealth is acquired–albeit mysteriously–in accordance with his fake noble status. Still, Felix's Jewish ancestry is frequently degraded through social production. Though the Doctor moderates antisemitism with disparaging remarks about his own Irish ancestry,

his assertion to Felix that "the Jew" is "[n]ever anything higher than a meddler" exemplifies the kind of offhand callousness a minority might regularly encounter (34). As a result, Felix outwardly represses his Jewish ancestry, while subconsciously, his desiring-machine emulates his Jewish father: "Guido had lived as all Jews do, who, cut off from their people by accident or choice, find that they must inhabit a world whose constituents, being alien, force the mind to succumb to an imaginary populace" (5). In this way, Felix's invented title is every bit as performative as the circus group he gravitates toward–though the circus performers' motivation is steeped in their desire to appear "mysterious and perplexing, knowing well that skill is never so amazing as when it seems inappropriate," while Felix "clung to his title to dazzle his own estrangement" (14). Thus, Barnes' "Baron" is an ornament meant to cover the rotting stench of a decaying tree among a thriving grove–a trick only as effective as one's sense of smell.

The perceived inferiority of his Jewish ancestry brings Felix a great shame he attempts to ameliorate with a profound respect and admiration for the aristocracy, nobility, and royalty of "Old Europe" (11). Written in 1936, *Nightwood* casts "the great past" of "Old Europe" as the era before Imperialism's decline; a time defined by an expansion of British territory, economy, and culture at the expense of the minority, or less powerful nation. As a man of Jewish ancestry in post-World War I Europe–a time when fascist anti-Semitism was gaining considerable support–Felix's sense of identity is under considerable threat. Fascism, Deleuze and Guattari argue, is a "perversion" of desire, "constructed on an intense line of flight, which it transforms into a line of pure destruction and abolition" (*ATP* 270).

Under a fascist regime, Felix's desiring-machine creates connections that will repress minoritarian social investments (like characteristics associated with Jewish ancestry), theoretically producing a legacy that would escape anti-Semitic persecution while abolishing the potential for Jewish self-identification. Whether he survives the coming years or not, Felix's desiring-machine is self-annihilating: His desire to be a part of the Imperial-machine equates a desire for his own repression, a phenomenon Deleuze and Guattari connect to a version of Freud's death drive. In Felix's case, the new or revolutionary lines of flight he follows are those associated with a false identity. His march toward death is not an escape from Anti-Semitism, as it is Anti-Semitism that propels him forward; it is the death of Jewish ancestry–the death of the "Jew"–that produces Felix anew.

Felix's desiring-machine also limits productions of genealogical time to the Imperial age, a form of fascist organization that destroys lines of flight and limits the capacity for difference–or the potential for change. A chrononormative temporal scheme such as this maintains the hierarchical structure of social investments, like the superiority of Christian practice, and perpetuates repressive social conventions–like heterosexual nuclear family units. However, Barnes tempers Felix's chrononormative desiring-machine through his relationship with Robin Vote, whose introduction mirrors Hedvig's in the lushness of imagery and prose:

> On a bed, surrounded by a confusion of plants, exotic palms and cut flowers, faintly over-sung by the notes of unseen birds, which seemed to have been forgotten–left without the usual silencing cover, which, like cloaks on funeral urns are cast over their cages at night by good housewives–half flung off the

support of the cushions from which, in a moment of threatened consciousness she had turned her head, lay the young woman, heavy and disheveled. (38)

With Robin's introduction, Barnes reimagines the avian coding from Hedvig's childbirth scene, transforming the "wings of the Hapsburg" and "the feather coverlet" into the enshrouded caged birds, which Barnes compares to ashes in an urn. Unlike the "rich spectacular crimson" and "tarnished gold threads" of Hedvig's birthing bed, Robin's place of rest does not explicitly mention color. The Rousseau painting is but a suggestion of life, territorialized but not coded, an untenanted verdancy. Existing in a liminal space between life and death, Robin's condition is antithetical to Hedvig's, who is introduced as a woman in the midst of childbirth (which is just as much a social production as it is a production of life).

In this room, Robin's presence interrupts chrononormative "sleep" temporal schemes for a woman of her age and social status by being asleep in the middle of the day. In the queer Aion, Robin is in a state of continuous decomposition after fainting from drunkenness. Both readings of queer time present Robin as a rebel, one who marches toward the death of the institutions that impose meaning onto the event. The difference in these readings of time is the point of actualization: The first reading is "the moment in which the event is embodied in a state of affairs, an individual, or a person, the moment we designate by saying '*here*,' the moment has come" (*LoS* 151); the second reading of time looks to the components of the event–or what is being communicated as lines of flight are "effectively liberated from the limits of individuals or persons" (LoS 105).

Stated more plainly, the queer Aion is read in the actualization of subversive recodings: as exhaustion is de/recoded to drunkenness and falling is de/recoded to fainting, Robin becomes an actor of her own event in a counter-actualization of sleep under Oedipus Capitalism. Robin's body–producing only through decomposition–is thus deemed deviant, because it is not producing in the best interest of ruling socio-political regimes. Typically, the way a dominated or exploited individual spends their time coincides with what is in the best interests of ruling socio-political regimes; their labor, domesticity, or heterosexual coupling is productive for the state. As Freeman argues, "[i]n the eyes of the state, this sequence of socioeconomically ''productive'' moments is what it means to have a life at all" (Freeman 5). Perhaps this is why *la somnambule* is half-dead upon introduction. She is a victim of the "despotic" events that "wait for us and invite us in. They signal us: my wound existed before me, I was born to embody it" (*LoS* 148).

The language Barnes uses to introduce Robin is consistent with reading Robin as a victim of normative temporality. Like Felix's birth, Robin's introduction as a subject is delayed through an abundance of qualifiers; but she is also a temporally-defined variable in the reactivity of events in the scene: out of "over-sung," "forgotten," "left," "cast," "half-flung," "turned," and "lay," only two verbs directly pertain to Robin herself, and only one of those is in the present tense. As a transitive verb, "lay" is followed by a direct object that receives the action of the verb, and the noun "young woman" is an incarnation of that action–the receptacle of a "becoming-prostrate" in the subject of the sentence. With this verb choice, Robin is denied full agency in her introduction. Conversely, Hedvig is given some sense of agency through a conjugation of the *in*transitive verb

"lie," which does not automatically necessitate an external actor; how or through whom Hedvig came to lie on her birthing bed is obscured by the incarnation of the occurrence itself, the present participle "lying." Thus, Hedvig's introduction is timeless through sexual reproduction, while Robin's introduction eludes the (society approved) present–not through a chronological diversion (Chronos)–but through an infinite division into past-future decodings, or what Deleuze and Guattari call "an indefinite time of the event" (*ATP* 262). With this in mind, "lay the young woman" can be decoded to include a kind of "empty present" of pure expression that counter-actualizes the presupposed "birthing bed" event (*LoS* 150).

In the counter-actualization of the capitalist-machine "birthing bed," Barnes connects Robin to different kinds of non-human reproduction, all of which are also morbidly intertwined with a primal degeneration of life:

> The perfume that her body exhaled was of the quality of that earth-flesh fungi, which smells of captured dampness [. . . .] Her flesh was the texture of plant life, and beneath it one sense a frame, broad, porous and sleep-worn, as if sleep were a decay fishing her beneath the visible surface. (38)

Here, sleep eats through Robin as she lies motionless in a death-affirming sea of decomposition. While she simultaneously shares the intensities of fungi, plants, and fish in a full comprehension of past and future in the present, Robin is also being infinitely divided with every instant of their meeting. She is inundated with affect but devoid of meaningful substance, which propels her in every direction without need or purpose. In this way, Robin's temporal queernesss can be understood as something that "kills [her] relation to normativity" (Haffey 22). With every deterritorialization of normative

expression Robin moves closer to death, but with every decoding comes a new line of flight, and she is born again.

Barnes writes around and within Robin's body like she would write ash to paper—an impossible affair—given life only when taken out of coherent time and space: "[L]ife lay through her in ungainly luminous deteriorations—the troubling structure of the born somnambule, who lives in two worlds—meet of child and desperado" (38). On one hand, Robin's body is lavishly mismatched in time and experience; she can exist simultaneously as the child she once was, the decaying drunk she is now, and the prophesized renegade she will become. Her lack of clearly defined origin or purpose can be constituted as "a continuing moment," or a preservation of the temporally queer future via echoes from the temporally queer past (Haffey 9). On the other hand, Robin's infinite division into past-future is also an infinitive event "where chaotic events diverge rather than repeat" (Beighton 152).

Motherhood in the Aion

Through the prying eyes of Doctor O'Conner and Felix Volkbein, Robin's constitution is initially confined to everything she is not in relation to their milieu: not plant, animal, or housewife–not even *conscious*–she is an enigma to the men who stand before her. But if she does not belong to the world of the living–not to the garden, to the kingdom, nor to Adam–to what or whom does Robin Vote belong? Barnes sacrifices her to "carnivorous flowers" in "a jungle trapped in a drawing room," or a civilized space that cages primitive forms of life; but then she adds, "in the apprehension of which the walls have made their escape" (38). This suggests the property's "unseen *dompteur*, half lord, half promoter" traps Robin there not through force but through discourse. The

juxtaposition of a caged animal and its trainer casts western civilization as a despotic regime–or a determining organism–lain over the "organs" of biological life processes. As a consequence, Robin is subject to man's intervention: the Doctor (with Felix in tow) is implored to rouse Robin from her "pose of annihilation" (39) as she sleeps off her latest bender. Thus, the "picture forever arranged" is thrust into a chrononormative timeline (40).

Though Barnes initially writes Robin out of normative temporal schemas by delaying her signification in the sentence meant to introduce her, the moment she is "othered" by the men who disturb her, Robin is perceived through a system of difference that conforms to the institutional ideologies that territorialize and code her as a subject (i.e., capitalism, British imperialism, Fascism, patriarchy, etc.). However, a system of signs can only designate presence through absence. Claire Colebrook explains, "We desire presence, to have what *is*, but our desire must be articulated through a system that *is not*" (17). In despotic systems of organization, desire is based in "lack," a logic Deleuze and Guattari argue against: "If desire is the lack of the real object, its very nature as a real entity depends upon an 'essence of lack' that produces the fantasized object" (*AO* 25).

Therefore, under the regimes unto which she was written, Robin is only intelligible through her differentiation from the fantasized "ideal" woman: she is *not* overtly feminine, she is *not* a good mother, and she is *not* a monogamous lover. However, none of these characteristics approach the true complexity of "Barnes' *la somnambule*– the sleepwalking "beast turning human" who inspires such hunger in us all: "[W]e feel that we could eat her, she who is eaten death returning, for only then do we put our face

close to the blood on the lips of our forefathers" (41). The savagery of Robin's composition casts genealogical time as a mode of oppression and violence–especially violence against women–and presupposes her own reproductive role in time's passing.

When Felix encounters Robin for the first time, Barnes writes them into matrimony of the beastly kind, evoking a sense of mythic destiny alongside that of coupled flesh:

> Sometimes one meets a woman who is beast turning human. Such a person's every movement will reduce to an image of a forgotten experience; a mirage of an eternal wedding cast on the racial memory; as insupportable a joy as would be the vision of an eland coming down an aisle of trees, chapleted with orange blossoms and bridal veil, a hoof raised in the economy of fear, stepping in the trepidation of flesh that will become myth; as the unicorn is neither man nor beast deprived, but human hunger pressing its breast to its prey. (41)

However, while he gazes upon her, Felix's self-deprecation (in the form of invented self-importance) compares Robin to "a figurehead in a museum" that "seemed yet to be going against the wind" (41), suggesting Felix recognizes how untouchable Robin remains despite any biological imperative or anchorage in a society that demands the use of her body (as Hedvig's introduction illustrates). Barnes foreshadows Robin's coupling with Felix when she writes that Robin is "the infected carrier of the past [. . .] the converging halves of a broken fate, setting face, in sleep, toward itself in time, as an image and its reflection in a lake seem parted only by the hesitation in the hour" (41). In her composition of Robin's proposed motherhood, Barnes demonstrates an unapologetic cleaving of traditional time, a reckoning without resolution. Read through the neutral

Aion, this suggests an impersonal, pre-individual liberation from socio-political limitations (*LoS* 151); but, as Robin exists in a system built to confine her, she manifests as a kind of corporealized dissonance, a "catastrophe that had yet no beginning" (53).

Despite "conceiving herself pregnant before she was" after Felix asks her "why is there no child?" (45), Robin's lightning flash pregnancy culminates in an enraging and bewildering experience, from which Barnes writes "Robin was delivered." With this statement, Barnes not only implies Robin "was delivered" from the pain and fury of childbirth, she also suggests Robin was delivered from the compulsive wandering she embarked upon after conceiving. With this, Barnes suggests the "wandering Jew" lives on through Guido, who propels Robin's body forward–to the countryside, to Berlin, to the Catholic Church, where she took a vow–she exists as a pawn in genealogical time. Robin's pregnancy therefore exists across time, propagating social productions that repress desiring-machines. However, the phrasing of "Robin was delivered," also suggests Robin gave birth to herself (52).

Repeatedly described as having a boy's body, Robin's form appears to reflect the body she would later birth, her son Guido. Childbirth–an Aion event–is queered through Robin's self-disarticulations, the components of the event are deterritorialized to subvert "normative" components of the Aion. Robin counter-actualualizes normative temporal schemas of heterosexual reproduction by giving birth to herself. Thus, Barnes inverts the Oedipus complex, inflicting Robin with an incestuous desire for the Mother. This not only ignites desire-production under the incest taboo, it establishes Robin's body as spatio-temporally queer, existing as both mother and child in a "turning away from narrative coherence" (Sedgwick 4). Similarly, Freeman argues a queer body can be "less

a metaphor for time than it is the means for the effect of convoluting time, and consequently the smooth Machinery of political power, or the mode of the state's reproduction" (14). Robin's pregnancy–in which she "[conceived] herself pregnant before she was" (45)–is an echo in the continuous present of patriarchal power structures; but Guido's presence is a monumental interruption to the chrononormative temporal scheme. Guido, meant to be Felix's link to the past and future, actually seeks the priesthood, making him the last child in the Volkbein line. This truncates Felix's ancestry, making Robin's place in *Nightwood*'s genealogical timeline obsolete.

This incarnation of queer temporality is more than subverting expectations or bucking tradition: Barnes casts Robin as the vector that corrupts the hour and infects generations, demonstrating an intrinsic incompatibility with heteronormative procreation. In the same vein, there is an active rejection of genealogical time when Robin abandons her family, preventing future offspring by breaking up the family unit. Reflecting what Kate Haffey argues are "nonnormative, nonreproductive desires that emerge in the spaces outside genealogical time" (23), Robin shows very little interest in establishing meaningful bonds with her husband or child. However, Robin's choice to leave Felix and Guido should not be confused with her inability to stay; for the former implicates surface-level cognitions, while the latter exemplifies the subversive disarticulations that run through the "blood that animate[s] her" (62). Robin cannot stay with Felix for the same reason a compass directed at Polaris points north. By following a queer temporal scheme, any compass Robin's possesses is intrinsically depolarized, leaving her to wander aimlessly through space.

Lesbian Shadows & Animal Becomings

After Robin leaves Felix and Guido, the narrative falls out of time even as it continues, with Robin disappearing for months and then reappearing within a paragraph of her departure. When she reappears, it is in the company of Nora Flood, the woman who fulfills Robin's desire to be with her mother. As the Doctor tells Nora, after Robin has left her: "You, who should have had a thousand children and Robin, who should have been all of them" (107). Barnes juxtaposes the shame of incest with the perceived deviance of homosexuality to explore desire under impossible conditions, where both relationships are doomed by social productions. As such, Nora serves as the novel's "lesbian shadow figure," a common trope in modernist literature that "disrupts and reforms modernism's Master Narrative of heterosexuality" (Haffey 12). The queer temporality of Robin and Nora's relationship interrupts the already fragmented narrative to subvert common depictions of love affairs.

Presented mostly in gray-scale, the lesbian sexuality of *Nightwood* is watered down through time jumps and chronological scrambles that (narrowly) avoid any direct mention of sex. As Haffey argues, "there was a profound and indelible link between lesbian sexuality and aesthetic experimentation" in modernist literature written by women who practiced "normative sexuality" (12). However, Barnes–who openly stated Robin's character was inspired by her longtime lover and friend Thelma Wood[17]–gravitates toward aesthetic abstractions of lesbian sexuality despite her intimate experience with it. This suggests depictions of queerness in Modernist Literature are just as much social productions as they are reflections on a writer's personal milieu. The fine line between aesthetic experimentation and sexual sacrilege is decided in the court of the people, and

[17] "I'm not a lesbian. I just loved Thelma" (Fields 37).

homosexuality was still very much a taboo at the time of *Nightwood*'s writing. As Andrew Field writes in his biography of Barnes, "If one understands the spirit of the Thirties at all, it is quite clear that, in spite of its arch language and manner [. . . .] *Nightwood* does not speak only to the question of lesbianism or the private life of Djuna Barnes but also to its time" (214).

Barnes's depiction of Nora as a woman who is "born unprovided for" while also inheriting property demonstrates a spatio-temporal queerness, one that subverts heteronormative territorializations of land and property in the early twentieth century (58). That she should not only own a home, but a church and a graveyard as well, signals an expansion of feminine influence into religious realms, a domain typically reserved for men. However, Nora's queer spatiality is not for her own benefit; she serves as a space for *other* people to "reconstruct themselves," as an empty vessel into which one can pour their secrets (58). As a child might collect trinkets and place them in their mother's pocket, it is within Nora that Robin finds space to wander and display time's artifacts. It is also within Nora's presence that Robin develops an unconscious desire for stability: "[A]s if she were aware, without conscious knowledge, that she belonged to Nora, and that if Nora did not make it permanent by her own strength, she would forget" (60). As Field notes, "Robin Vote's animality is both ferocious and domestic. She will not be controlled in any way, but at the same time she feels an intense need to be kept and sheltered like a wild pet" (149).

Nora's own hope of permanency suspends her in time, as she never moves anything in the house they share in Paris for fear Robin "might lose the scent of home" (61). Here, Barnes once again invokes animalistic behavior in her characterization of

Robin's relationship to her surroundings, this time casting Nora as the ineffective "*dompteur*." Panayiota Chrysochou points out that Nora's dehumanization of Robin is "also reminiscent of the fearful flesh-eating sirens in Greek mythology-half-woman, half-bird who lured sailors on to their destruction" (140). The birds once caged in the hotel room of Robin's introduction now freely sing through her–songs of personal origin and ceaseless expectation, constantly reflecting on the past and the future—but she never sings anything Nora can recognize, never anything she can claim for herself. For Nora, these songs are territorialized by their intensities' placement in relation to one another and coded according to her love for Robin: The songs mean *something* to her—something jealous and unsettling— but those feelings are not given full definition. The narrative behind the song remains in a perpetual state of decoding. These infinitive moments of heartache are devoid of anything beyond their torturous past-future divisions, obscuring Robin's feelings and intentions toward Nora in a way that disrupts the "love affair" narrative. Significantly, the mother-child dynamic between them excludes any hope of temporal synchronicity, as Kathryn Stockton notes, "This figurative mother-child relation [. . . .] dooms them to a time that it seems cannot arrive: the time when mother and child will inhabit the same generation or be accorded permission to wed" (105)

If Robin's songs are instances of queer past-future division, the demolition of the doll Robin and Nora share represents an explicitly "queer moment," or a moment that "not only represents a present that is haunted by the past, but also a present that stretches into the future, making a counterclaim against [its own] obsolescence" (Haffey 16). Nora tells the doctor she considers the doll–gifted to her by Robin–to be a child they share, as she believes "when a woman gives [a doll] to a woman, it is the life they cannot have, it

is their child, sacred and profane" (151). However, in a toddler-like fit of rage, the doll is thrown to the floor by Robin upon learning Nora did not remain at home while she went out for the evening, a circumstance that resembles a scene from earlier in the book: "One night, Felix, having come in unheard, found her standing in the centre of the floor holding the child high in her hand as if she were about to dash it down; but she brought it down gently" (52). Robin's instinct in both instances of being left home alone is to punish her partner by harming their child, just as a disgruntled child might break a friend's favorite toy. Robin's actions denote another rejection of motherhood–as a doll is an "effigy" of a child; it foreshadows future maternal abandonments (151), but the doll's destruction is also a subversion of the heteronormative schemas that codes the doll as Robin's actual child. The "queer moment" of the doll's destruction may reach into the past and extend into the future, but a doll's child-mother coding is a cyclical event that is best read under the Aion. Robin's childishness is both a disarticulation of self that deterritorializes the doll of heteronormative temporal schemas in an eternal present *and* a counter-actualization of motherhood that decodes the doll of its child-mother cycle. As Freeman notes, as "a cultural symbol" women are "correlated with the endless returns of cyclical time, as well as the stasis of monumental time" (5).

As Robin's behavior continues, Barnes depicts Nora's growing paranoia and need for control as expressions of a desiring-machine that produces intimacy through shared spatial restriction, a condition inherently incompatible with someone who only ever "robbed *herself* " of anything (57, emphasis added). As Robin spends less and less time at home, her presence becomes akin to a forced absence, a symbol of denied stasis characterized as "an amputation that Nora could not renounce" (65). As Robin leaves a

vacancy inside of Nora, Barnes writes "in Nora's heart lay the fossil of Robin, intaglio of her identity, and about it for its maintenance ran Nora's blood" (61). Though the maternal life Nora provides Robin is significant, the use of "lay" rather than "lies" is of note as well, as "lay" has previously been associated with death while "lying" has been paired with life. Nora's epithet of Robin suggests a preservation of love even after death: "To keep [Robin] [. . .] Nora knew now there was no way but death. In death Robin would belong to her" (63). As Nora wants to save Robin more than she wants to keep her, she releases herself from Robin's boundless potential, holding her image like a statue in her mind upon the realization that it is the "successive arms of women" that keeps death from taking her.

Taken literally, Nora's conclusion is a morbid account of possible suicide ideation in those who experience queer or sexual repression/suppression; but if we look at Robin's promiscuity as a form of *production*, her sexual encounters become producing-products of desiring-machines that "experience institutions themselves as mortal" (*AO* 63). With Robin's revolving door of lovers, Barnes disrupts patriarchal institutions (like chrononormative, heterosexual marriage), revealing institutional norms and investments as constructions of a repressed social field. In this way, what Nora describes as Robin's life-saving promiscuity is also an expression of the death instinct–a product of "institutional creativity" that disarticulates chrononormative lines of flight in a the "becoming" of the temporally queer subject (*AO* 63). In contrast, Nora's metaphorical "final breath" upon the dissolution of her relationship with Robin is an immortalization of the queer moment in which it was drawn–a goodbye that forever remains (70).

Barnes breathes what little life Nora has left into Robin's relationship with Jenny Petherbridge, who imposes herself on other people, their memories and relationships. Jenny is given the least forgiving description in Barnes' entire cast of quirky characters, emerging as an unpleasant jigsaw of mismatched forms. She wants for everything but can give back nothing of value, as everything she has–and everything she is–does not belong to her. Barnes writes, "[s]he had a continual rapacity for other people's facts [. . .] She was avid and disorderly in her heart. She defied the very meaning of personality in her passion to be a person" (74). In their coupling there is a mésalliance, an absurdity born out of the innate incompatibility of squatter and sleepwalker: one is immobilized by greed, the other wanders for want of nothing. Barnes describes this relationship as a continuing moment of contentiousness with starts and stops of infinite divisibility, a queer temporality without rhythm or design:

> Jenny was always early and Robin late [. . .] Jenny leaning far over the table, Robin far back [. . .] thus they presented two halves of a movement that had, as in sculpture, the beauty and the absurdity of a desire that is in flower but that can have no burgeoning [. . .] they were like Greek runners [. . .] eternally angry, eternally separated, in a cataleptic frozen gesture of abandon (75-6).

These irreconcilable differences eventually push Robin into a relationship with herself, as Jenny can offer her nothing but poor imitations of that which Jenny has previously pilfered. Barnes writes, "Jenny could do nothing with her; it was as if the motive power which had directed Robin's life, her day as well as her night, had been crippled" (176).

As she is composed solely of pieces of other people, Jenny Petherbridge is more mannequin than machine, producing nothing more than an impression. Though Barnes

initially uses Jenny's curious composition to reflect Robin's baser instincts (as is made evident when Jenny attacks her in a jealous rage, and Robin is somehow won over by this territorializing display), Jenny becomes "hysterical" when Robin takes to communing with primal forces beyond her reach (177). The temporally queer Robin sacrifices nothing to reach outside of time and connect with her animal ancestry; but Jenny, who "could not let her time alone, and yet could never be a part of it" (74), is bound to an immediacy that will always remain elusive. While I agree with Deleuze when he argues "becoming" eludes the present, I'd argue Jenny's experience with elusive time suggests not a "becoming" in the general sense but a targeted reckoning. Like the doll that lies propped up against the pillows of Jenny's bed when Nora comes to confront her about her relationship with Robin, Jenny's presence is a substanceless echo of Robin's own history, something Jenny cannot abide: "She did not understand anything of what Robin felt or did, which was more unendurable than her absence" (177).

Upon leaving Jenny, Robin takes to the woods around Nora's land, and it is here where Barnes earns the title of her book, *Nightwood*.[18] As Robin passes through stages of insanity under the cover of night among the trees, Barnes writes that the woods were "frightened into silence by her breathing" (178) as if her madness is universally understood, felt by plant, animal, and man alike. Having only spoken on a few rare occasions, Robin's silence here is expected; and it is the quiet–and perhaps reluctant–acceptance into Nature's woods that locates Robin at her most beastly composite. She bridges these worlds with toys from her human life, bringing them to Nora's "decaying

[18] 1.a "wood." adj.–Out of one's mind, insane, lunatic (OED); 1.b. "wood" adj.–A Rabid dog or beast. (OED)

chapel" and placing them among flowers and candles at the Madonna's altar. This is where Nora finds Robin, dressed in boy's clothing and standing before the altar, but her appearance startles Nora so severely, she runs head first into the door frame and knocks herself unconscious. With both mothers before her, who was Robin really returning to?

What follows is a strange and disturbingly erotic confrontation between Robin and Nora dog, something that was foreshadowed by the Doctor earlier in the novel: "Nora will leave that girl some day; but though those two are buried at opposite ends of the earth, one dog will find them both." Dogs are often used in Nightwood to signify men of a lower class or mankind's baser instincts, most notably when Nora asks Robin to "[d]ie now, so you will be quiet [. . . .] so you will not take my heart and your body and let them be nosed by dogs–die now, then you will be mine forever" (154), and in Doctor O'Conner's speech to Felix about nobility and his desire to have a son:

> 'So you must have a son,' he paused. 'A king is the peasant's actor, who becomes so scandalous that he has to be bowed down to— scandalous in the higher sense naturally. And why must he be bowed down to? Because he has been set apart as the one dog who need not regard the rules of the house, they are so high that they can defame God and foul their raf-ters! But the people—that's different—they are church-broken, nation-broken—they drink and pray and piss in the one place. Every man has a house-broken heart except the great man. The people love their church and know it, as a dog knows where he was made to conform, and there he returns by his instinct. But to the graver per-mission, the king, the tsar, the emperor, who may relieve themselves on high heaven—to them they bow down—only.' (43)

At the altar of the Madonna in the dusty and forgotten church on Nora's land, Robin and Nora's dog engage in a power struggle that resembles the doctor's assertion. As a woman, Robin is King–unwilling to bow down; but as a child, Robin is a lost girl turned prince;[19] man nor beast, Robin exists between worlds, infinitely divisible in an unlimited past-future, embodying an event that "is no longer only the difference of things or states of affairs, it affects subjectivity, it carries difference into the subject itself" (*LoS* 143).

Her choice to get down in the dirt on her hands and knees, challenging the dog's protection of Nora, signifies an abdication of some kind–a fall from grace, from royalty, from mankind; Robin meets the dog at its level and becomes-animal, not by acting like a dog but by becoming variable, deterritorializing realms of stability in humanity in favor of a rhizomatic structure that ruptures established institutional norms (Bruns 703). Like all becomings, becoming-animal is a deterritorialization of stable organisms that transform arborescent structures into rhizomes; but becoming-animal specifically refers to the subject, or what can "become" of the subject. Deleuze and Guattari argue becoming-animal is the "becoming-animal of the scapegoat," which is "sent out into the desert wilderness" while the subject on the other line of flight is "sacrificed" to a regime of signs (ATP 116). In other words, becoming-animal entails the complete deterritorialization of despotic signifiers–a revolution that frees an individual from the blockages in their rhizome. It's important to note that becoming-animal does not have to actually refer to an animal, nor does it involve the imitation, representation, or reproduction of an animal. Crucially, the confrontation between Robin and Nora's dog must involve a true becoming-animal in order for the generational time that sustains the

[19] While consoling Nora, the Doctor states, "The girl lost, what is she but the Prince found? [. . .] and in the boy it is the girl that makes a prince a prince—and not a man" (145).

mother-child relationship between the lesbian lovers to be subverted. At the moment of Robin's "becoming-animal," the temporal schemes of "Old Europe" are queered, thus disrupting the doomed lovers' narrative with an "inextinguishable" queer moment (Haffey 9).

In the very last moments of the novel, Barnes returns to Robin the agency she'd been denied upon introduction.

> Then she began to bark also, crawling after him–barking in a fit of laughter, obscene and touching. The dog began to cry then, running with her, head-on with her head, as if to circumvent her; soft and slow his feet went padding. He ran this way and that, low down in his throat crying, and she grinning and crying with him; crying in shorter and shorter spaces, moving head to head, until she gave up, lying out, her hands beside her, her face turned and weeping; and the dog too gave up then, and lay down, his eyes bloodshot, his head flat along her knees. (180)

Another juxtaposition of "to lie" and "to lay" recalls the earlier question of body autonomy, with Robin being more explicitly in control of her body this time. Instead of being laid on a bed while unconscious, Robin chooses to lie at the foot of an altar in a heap of exhaustion after facing off with Nora's dog. In contrast, Barnes suggests the dog "lay down" via external force, as if made to bow under the pressure of Robin's "becoming." Stockton argues, "The dog is undoing the effects of a metaphor (women lovers as "mother" and "child") when he and Robin lie down side by side; when she herself is like a dog. [. . . .] a lateral movement of lovers toward each other . . . if one consents for a time to being dog" (105). The question of who shall bow down is thwarted by the horizontalization of all parties. As Freeman notes, such profound queer

deterritorializations have the potential to "dissolve forms, disintegrate identities, level taxonomy, scoring the social and even repudiate politics altogether" (xiii). With Robin and Nora sharing space and finally operating outside of genealogical time, Barnes suggests a glimmer of hope for their future. However, Nora is unconscious and Robin is becoming-animal, so the circumstances of their coupling remain largely mysterious. Barnes denies readers a solid resolution, instead folding Robin and Nora into an infinite past-future that eludes present definition.

Conclusion

Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* depicts genealogical time as a construction of socio-political institutions that benefit from heteronormative reproduction, thus narrativizing a counterpoint to "reproductive futurism," or the "temporality that positions the child as the symbol of the future" (Haffey 7). Through the inarticulable intensities of a language limited by spatio-temporal signifiers, Barnes introduces characters she will subsequently write *out* of coherent space-time, producing a narrative that communicates through reversals, inversion, subversions, and counter-actualizations. By analyzing *Nightwood* through Deleuze's Chronos and Aion under the umbrella of queer temporality, I have performed a double reading of time in the novel–two complementary conceptions of temporality that can expand the field of temporal analysis to uncover the disrupting or "queer" moments that Barnes uses to parody, criticize, or subvert social productions of the early twentieth century. I have also used Deleuze and Guattari's Schizoanalysis to examine genealogical time in *Nightwood* to subvert Oedipal readings of the novel. While Deleuze and Guattari contend that it is "correct to question all social formations starting from Oedipus" in "our patriarchal and capitalist society," they maintain that analyses of

desire-production produce more understandings than analyses that operate under Oedipus, because the Oedipus Complex relies on an internally justified structure that serves as a limit (i.e., an organism), while the desiring-machine has a multiplicity of potential connections (*AO* 174-5). With her depiction of family–or familialism– Barnes demonstrates a "de-colonization of everyday life," disrupting or subverting heteronormative means of reproduction and liberating the subject from the endless cycle of Oedipus Capitalism's temporal schemes.

CHAPTER III: Rhoda Against the Imperial Machine: Becoming-Minoritarian in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*

In *The Waves*, Virginia Woolf employs protracted and impressionistic soliloquies written in a stream of consciousness to depict the lifespan of six friends during the decline of the British Empire. Each character is given distinct challenges, motivations, and desires; but in their diversity, Woolf constructs a cohesive group consciousness that reflects a more aggrieved and despondent Modernism than either of the previously discussed texts. On this more melancholic Modernism, Seth Moglen writes, "It's a literature often angry, and usually grief stricken, about the alienating effects of advanced capitalism–but it records these catastrophic developments within literary forms that present a contingent historical process as *natural and inexorable*" (emphasis added, 9). In *The Waves*, Woolf writes herself–and her melancholia–into pieces, which she shreds into wisps of thread that can be woven into a multiplicity of directions. As Hermione Lee notes in her biography of the author,

> [*The Waves*] had taken her method of formalising and acting out the secret unspoken inner life of the self as far as it could go–so far, that there had to be an artificial incongruity between the rhythmic, patterned texture of the characters' speeches (all of which sounded as if uttered by 'the same person'), and the obscure, troubled areas of their personality. (629-30)

The complicated web of her characters' inner "selves" plays out against a backdrop of the sensations and perceptions of Woolf's own past–memories she transforms with fiction designed to interrogate the overwhelming influence of other people; the "invisible presences who after all play so important a part in every life" (*MB* 80).

In this chapter, I use the Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizome to explore a multiplicity of "invisible presences" in *The Waves*. This framework follows bodies of nature through an intricate web of psychosocial connections to elucidate Rhoda's fantasy island as a manifestation of the affective forces that produce her psyche, the socius, and the natural world.[20] I call this assemblage of affective force the *collaborative* productive unconscious.[21] Bodies in this assemblage are simultaneously and continuously territorialized and de/reterritorialized by Rhoda's unique capacity for difference, social productions under despotic regimes,[22] and the self-organizing vital materials of the natural world that "[refuse] to dissolve completely into the milieu of human knowledge" (Bennett 3). Recognizing Rhoda's fantasy island as a collaborative productive unconscious disrupts the tendency to reserve consciousness for the sensational subject, or the actively 'perceiving' body, and grounds language and the resulting narrative in the power of immanent assemblages, of which agency is distributed equally among all the "bodies" therewithin. I contend this reconfiguration of subjectivity provides deeper insight into ontogenetic lines of flight that produce feelings of loss and alienation in minoritarian subject groups.

Conceptualizing Rhoda's island fantasy as a manifestation of the *collaborative* productive flows within psyche, socius, and natural world necessitates some

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[20] In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari define "socius" as a social machine that produces capital: "The prime function incumbent upon the socius, has always been to codify the flows of desire, to inscribe them, to record them, to see to it that no flow exists that is not properly dammed up, channeled, regulated" (33).
[21] The first chapter established the productive unconscious as housing "the direct confrontation between desiring-production and social production," as well as "the repression that the social machine exercises on the desiring-machines, and the relationship between psychic repression and social repression" (*AO* 54).
[22] By this I mean any tyrannical system of psychosocial organization as implemented by hegemonic power structures (ex. British Imperialism, Capitalism, Patriarchy, Anglo-phallocentrism, etc.), rather than the more specified "despotic machine" Deleuze and Guattari argue produces manic-depression and paranoia in the repressed subject. This is in contrast to the "capitalist machine," which they argue produces a sense of schizophrenia (*AO* 33).

discrimination between the three realms. First, the boundaries of Rhoda's unique capacity for difference must be parsed out to understand her organization into a minoritarian social group within the greater socius. Starting with her introduction, I first look to Woolf's use of language in early childhood to identify the most formative body of nature that contributes to Rhoda's sense of "self." Following lines of flight through the rhizome of *The Waves*, this analysis illustrates how a body of nature can be linked to Rhoda's "singular essence" (*S* 27), or the intrinsic spark of life that differentiates her from the other characters. As bodies in the collaborative productive unconscious act and are acted upon they contain and exert force that is both present and historical, material and virtual (Bennett 24); this is a productive flow of syntheses and severances that can be followed through the rhizome to locate moments of becoming-minoritarian. Though minority groups are "objectively definable," Deleuze and Guattari argue "they must also be thought of as seeds, crystals of becoming whose value is to trigger uncontrollable movements and deterritorializations of the mean or majority" (*TP* 106). In other words, unique forces, materials, or subjects arise in the rhizome through a becoming-minor of the major.

However, individuality in *The Waves* is often blurred by the group consciousness Woolf constructs out of the characters' soliloquies. As Michael Tratner points out, "The novel in effect presents only one character, a six-lobed creature that consists, not of physical bodies, but of the emotional interconnections between people" (218). The validity of this reading is supported by Bernard in his final soliloquy: "I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am–Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis: or how to distinguish my life from theirs" (205). As the archetypical

patriarch of the novel, Bernard's assertion reflects the unnatural subsumption of the minor into the major: Bernard catalogs their shared perceptions and sensations as totalities of subjectivity–as if their humanity eclipses their individuality. This assumption erases the unique experience of the minoritarian subject–the people society labels "deviant:"

> You will be organized, you will be an organism, you will articulate your body—otherwise you're just depraved. You will be signifier and signified, interpreter and interpreted—otherwise you're just a deviant. You will be a subject, nailed down as one, a subject of the enunciation recoiled into a subject of the statement—otherwise you're just a tramp. (*ATP* 159)

Bernard's perspective of himself and his relationships with his friends diminishes the diverging experiences of severity in psychosocial repression and socio-political oppression, which attempts to erase the "deviant" from the multiplicity. In contrast to Bernard's explanation of the group consciousness, Deleuze and Guattari's reading of *The Waves* accounts for both the socius and the individual:

> In *The Waves*, Virginia Woolf—who made all of her life and work a passage, a becoming, all kinds of becomings between ages, sexes, elements, and kingdoms—intermingles seven characters, Bernard, Neville, Louis, Jinny, Rhoda, Suzanne [sic], and Percival. But each of these characters, with his or her name, its individuality, designates a multiplicity [. . .] Each is simultaneously in this multiplicity and at its edge, and crosses over into the others. (*ATP* 252)

The difference is in how one perceives the relation of bodies: Bernard sees a static group–a composite of meaning with an identifiable genesis; Deleuze and Guattari speak

of production–the continuous process of arranging and organizing bodies. In *The Waves*, bodies within an individual psyche undergo countless disarticulations by the group consciousness (and the natural world) without changing their essence, or what Deleuze calls a body's "capacity to be *affected*" (*EPS* 94 emphasis added). My reading of the friends' group consciousness will be structured around Deleuze and Guattari's understanding: as a multiplicity of intersections that do not reduce individual characters to a byproduct of their collective social experience.

Though the formation of the characters' group consciousness in the beginning of the novel has a tendency to erase individuality, it also provides a valuable starting point for analyzing the affective forces of the socius, or social machine, on the psyche. Each character's capacity for being affected produces bodies of varying levels of acceptance within ruling ideologies. Deleuze and Guattari's "micropolitics" addresses this disparity by examining the value-exchange between certain social investments in a way that makes sense of hegemonic power structures.[23] A society ordered by hierarchical investments–in qualities, commodities, and bodies–will read personal investments "as signifiers of some individual essence" (Colebrook 45); as a consequence, non-privileged investments are considered subversive. The "arborescent pseudo-multiplicities" of despotic power regimes, which restrict lines of flight toward the creation of something new or multiple (*ATP* 8), create an *illusion* of hierarchy that, in turn, produce systems of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, nationalism, heteronormativity, etc.). These hierarchical systems of power, in turn, influence one's perception of "self."

[23] For example, Anglocentric patriarchy privileges individual investments like "white," "male," and "heterosexual," which increases the value of investments like "heteronormative masculinity."

In this way, each chapter of soliloquies in *The Waves* obscures expressions of difference in the six friends by producing and following ontogenetic lines of flight interwoven into an *unequally* balanced collective of subject, friendship group, and greater socius.[24] As Deleuze and Guattari point out, "expression" in this capacity "should be understood not simply as the face and language, or individual languages, but as a semiotic collective machine that preexists them and constitutes regimes of signs" (*ATP* 63). In other words, expressions of difference at the beginning of the novel have already undergone significant psychosocial repression under British Imperialism. Each character's "singular essence" dictates their manners of perception, but pre-coded expressions restrict how they can communicate those perceptions.

But what of the forces that come before the code? The contributions of the natural world further complicates the task of parsing Rhoda's psyche from the collaborative productive unconscious, as the interludes *The Waves* that precede each chapter narrate affective forces that *pre-date* the despotic regimes that establish and enforce the significance of signs. The interludes are omniscient descriptions of the natural world at distinct moments in time over the course of one day, organized to correspond to a chronologically paralleled era of the character's lives. In these depictions of Nature, "the world is 'seen without a self,' and the sights and sounds of nature withdraw from human perception" (Henke 462). However, as *The Waves* is a construction of reality as imagined by Virginia Woolf, there are important distinctions to be made in regard to Nature and the natural world.[25] On one hand, bodies of nature are "vivid entities not entirely reducible to

[24] I will use "group" consciousness when discussing shared consciousness between the six children, and "collective" unconscious when discussing the shared unconscious of psyche, group, and greater socius.
[25] I will capitalize Nature when discussing the force and effect of its power; nature will be lowercase when discussing the bodies and beings of the natural world.

the contexts in which (human) subjects set them, never entirely exhausted by their semiotics" (Bennett 5). In a rhizome, bodies of nature and their assemblages are *self*-organizing; they exist independent of discrete affective force and can therefore be de/reterritorialized in a multiplicity of ways. Humanity's de/reterritorialization of the natural world does not diminish the affective forces beyond human perception. Despite being grouped into virtual landscapes that reflect conditions of ideology in *The Waves*, in a rhizome, assembled bodies exist within "one virtual whole of being that is given or actualised through an infinity of perceptions, including the worlds and 'souls' of animals, plants, rocks, and other machines" (Colebrook 54). Therefore, Woolf's interludes can be read as conceptualizations of bodies and beings under conditions produced by assemblages of nature as they exist externally to the conditions of the text's production.

On the other hand, the interludes can be read in terms of their emergent properties. In *Vibrant Matter*, Jane Bennett argues, "Mineral material appears as the mover and shaker, the active power, and the human beings, with their much-lauded capacity for self-directed action, appear as *its* product" (11).[26] From this perspective, the structure of Woolf's novel can be read as a creation story: Nature delivers humanity, subjects produce themselves. In this capacity, "Nature" becomes more God than biosphere, revealing an element of transcendent spirituality in Woolf's conceptualization of consciousness. As Creator, she inserts bodies of nature into assemblages according to anthropocentric patterns of perception as they correlate to her intended narrative (i.e.

[26] Jane Bennett's framework draws heavily on Deleuze and Guattari's work while recognizing the affective forces of the natural world to a greater degree. *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari describe man as the "eternal custodian of the machines of the universe" (4), as if these bodies are incapable of production outside human influence. In contrast, Bennet argues "things" have a "productive power of their own" that amounts to a sort of "thing-power" beyond human perception (*VM* 1).

nature-inspired literary devices) and uses the established definitions and patterns of spatio-temporality within the Anthropocene to maintain the continuous interrelation of subject, group, and socius, thereby naturalizing the inescapable power of a collective social unconscious through assemblages beyond human intervention (like the progression of the sun over the course of one day).[27] In this way, Woolf's interludes are akin to Rhoda's island fantasy–both serve as virtual landscapes of psychosocial intersection. The waves, the sound of birds chirping, the ocean's sediment, the mineral materials of the marble column and the stone pillar–all of these bodies of nature in *The Waves* are grouped thusly because they have been deterritorialized by human perception and sensation, reterritorialized by anthropocentric systems of signification, and placed into machinic assemblages that restrict production of meaning to processes that create the illusion of stasis or meaning.

Woolf uses the affective bodies of nature in Rhoda's island fantasy–a manifestation of the collaborative productive unconscious–to create an intricate web of cultural bodies that connect psyche, socius, and the natural world under Imperial Britain's regime. As Tratner notes, "the drawing of a line between culture and nature is essential to *ideology*: by classifying some things as cultural and others as natural, ideology naturalizes power relations" (my emphasis, 230). My analysis will illustrate how Woolf territorializes the affective bodies in Rhoda's fantasy island to naturalize the decline of British Imperialism in a "particularly socialist interpretation" that appears to favor the social collective over individual expression (Tratner 221). I suggest Rhoda's isolation,

[27] "Anthropocene" as defined by OED: "The epoch of geological time during which human activity is considered to be the dominant influence on the environment, climate, and ecology of the earth [. . . .] The Anthropocene is commonly taken to extend from the time of the Industrial Revolution to the present."

depression, and suicide are consequences of a tragic flaw in Woolf's collective *anthropocentric* perspective: without true consideration of Nature in subjectivity–that is, forces beyond humanity's influence in one's understanding of "self"–the "singular essence" of the minoritarian subject is weaponized against them, as any separation from the collective is subject to suppression. By obscuring expressions of difference through forced assimilation or self-annihilation, Woolf's anti-individualist narrative effectuates similar wounds to despotic regimes that silence minoritarian voices through hierarchical power structures.

Despite Woolf's anthropocentric collectivist fantasy (i.e., individual as socius; the natural world as secondary to both), reading Rhoda's fantasy island as a collaborative productive unconscious rather than a social collective unconscious presents a subjectivity equally affected by the "invisible presences" of the psyche, the socius, and the unfathomable forces of Nature. This framework addresses how the affective force of Nature's chaotic self-organization enables subversive bodies to arise from systems built to restrict expressions of difference, even when humanity funnels, shapes, and spins bodies into symbols of representation or commodities for exploitation and profit. Thus, Rhoda's melancholy can be elucidated as an effect of becoming-minor in both the socius and natural world, or a "becoming-embodied voice" of the missing subject. "Melancholy" in this capacity negotiates Freudian melancholia with grief over a lost sense of "self" in a minoritarian subject that is aware *in absentia* of the bodies and forces deterritorialized from their milieu with every new "becoming" in the collective social consciousness; it is a sense that one has lost their "natural" self–the "me" before

society.[28] Therefore, melancholia as experienced by a minoritarian subject is the grief-induced dissolution of boundaries between 'subject of the socius' and 'unknown force of vital material,' an inhospitable liminal space that can only lead to assimilation or self-annihilation.

Subject to the Collective

The first interlude and the first few exchanges of dialogue in *The Waves* are some of Woolf's own memories from her childhood bedroom, pieces of nostalgia she inserts into a group consciousness that simultaneously undergoes *and* enacts continuous de/reterritorializations of meaning in accordance with the affective forces of psyche, socius, and natural world. In the first interlude, the self-organizing–or *dis*organizing–forces of Nature assemble into a sunrise in an uninhabited space. The interlude's placement before the chapter of soliloquies illustrates the ontogenetic effects of the "vibrant matter" that contributes to semiotic subjectivity (or an unconscious privileging of order words) while maintaining a distinct tendency toward non-anthropocentric stability (Bennett 3). The intrinsic vitality of these materials may "lend itself to an atomistic rather than a congregational understanding of agency," but Bennett (in agreement with Deleuze and Guattari) stresses "agency always depends on the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces;" though the components of the interlude are individual "actants," they do not act alone (20-1).

Much like the birdsong that accompanies the interlude's sunrise, the six children's first utterances carve out spatio-temporal fields of impersonal differentiation–folds of

[28] Prolonged feelings of grief over a lost object that one internalizes so severely the boundaries between the griever and the lost object are not clearly defined (Freud 245).

reality that ripple and close in and around significations determined by external forces. These territories are not completely subjective, in that perception, sensation, and consciousness are effects of a reality not strictly bound to humanity. In this way, each child's observation in the first chapter of the novel is not an utterance of personal perception, but a product of the collaborative productive unconscious, which produces manners of perception that influence an individual's awareness and understanding of their surroundings. These observations give voice not to the subjects and objects within the utterance but to the forces that assemble bodies according to the combinatorial affect *and* effect of other bodies. As the third character to speak, Rhoda's observation is a product of the assemblages that produce the scene *and* Bernard and Susan's prior observations. This necessitates a brief analysis of their first lines to situate Rhoda's response in both the group consciousness and the collaborative productive unconscious.

Bernard's observation, "I see a ring [...] hanging above me. It quivers and hangs above me in a loop of light" (4), deterritorializes the objective physicality from the first interlude– which poetically depicts a sun rising over the ocean's horizon–and anthropomorphizes the landscape through subjective manners of perception. The interlude's images do not "naturally" offer themselves to semiotic definition or representation, because humanity does not see the landscape; we attempt to understand the *effects* of the landscape through our own subjective perspectives. Though Woolf appears to imply that the children are blank slates when the interlude states, "[t]he birds sang their *blank* song" (3), the song is only blank because the children cannot understand it, not because it is actually absent of content. Therefore, Bernard's young mind *imposes* significance onto the landscape through social productions. Woolf introduces Bernard

first for precisely this reason: he's the storyteller; it's his regime of signification that distributes meaning throughout *The Waves*.

Susan's response, "I see a slab of pale yellow [. . .] spreading away until it meets a purple stripe," reterritorializes the already anthropomorphized landscape to include new compositions of subjective intensities (i.e., color) in a productive coupling event of rhyme, repetition, and signifiers (gender, shape, directional movement, etc.). In this way, Susan's statement territorializes her as a thematically echolalic "body": Bernard's regime of signification restricts Susan's response to established conventions of language–semiotics, phonology, morphology–deterritorializing the natural landscape of its infinity of affects and reterritorializing the perceived effects of the landscape to reflect an anthropomorphized conception of interacting bodies. That is to say, Susan's response mimics the human reproduction process: intermingling bodies repeating individuating affects in the process of creating something new. This territorializes Susan as a reproduction-machine. Her archetypical "Mother" narrative and spatio-temporal preferences (i.e., her desire to remain in the time and space of hearth and home) is an effect of her territorialization by Bernard's signification-machine. Under his anthropomorphized regime of signs, Susan's response must *mean* something in relation to humanity; it must appear to produce an effect (like a desire to raise children on a farm). However, her statement does not actually produce meaning. Susan's response is a wound of the despot's cruelty. She does not reproduce because she wants to be productive; she reproduces because she sees no other method for existence under the established regime of signifiers. Susan undergoes deterritorializations unique to the feminine experience: her desiring-machine reflects a continuous contentiousness that is prototypical of living under

a patriarchal structure that molds women into parasitic hosts of the capitalist-machine. This distinction is essential to addressing the novelty of Rhoda's subsequent response.

Rhoda creates a new line of flight that deterritorializes the landscape of human sight and reterritorializes it to a *sound*scape of the natural world's effects: "I hear a sound [. . .] cheep, chirp; cheep, chirp; going up and down." In *The Soundscape*, R. Murray Schafer notes, "the affective language of certain birds has been shown to bear a relationship to the shapes of human vocal and musical expression" (31). In *The Waves*, the bird's song is placed in opposition to the visual images reported by Bernard and Susan, suggesting Rhoda's manners of perception are intimately connected to those of a bird's. Understanding the content of the bird's song compels Rhoda to comment on it, whereas Bernard and Susan–unable to parse the bird's "blank song"–favor visual stimuli. This ability highlights the whispery thin veil between Rhoda's psyche and the natural world. Her attraction and mimicry of the bird song may therefore be functional, as a well-placed territorial call produces a defined (acoustic) space for erecting psychological, physical, or social boundaries. This is particularly important if Rhoda's auditory observation also signifies underdeveloped eyesight, as Rhoda would then primarily rely on sound waves to interact with her environment. Deleuze and Guattari argue when flows of desire are blocked by despotic regimes–in this case anthropomorphized senses and conventions of language and speech–the "organs" of bodies, or the affects and intensities of bodies, are reorganized to reflect the restrictive effects of social production. As Rhoda interacts with her environment, she follows the lines of flight available to her under the regime of signification reterritorialized to soundscape until she encounters a limit of desire, in this case the auditory process that would enable her to contribute to Susan and

Bernard's observation. Rhoda's manners of perception expose sight (or light waves) as a privileged investment, subjugating her response to receptions prepared for the existing manner and style of observation and delivery. When her expression of difference does not conform to established social conventions, she is organized into a minoritarian group. In other words, Rhoda undergoes a becoming-minor immediately upon introduction.

In the interlude that precedes the first section, Woolf writes, "One bird chirped high up; there was a pause; another chirped lower down" (3). Rhoda's observation of the interlude's landscape deterritorializes the natural world's soundscape by anthropomorphizing the birds in a bird-becoming-child and de-anthropomorphizing Bernard and Susan in a speech-becoming-cheep. Rhoda's comment partially disarticulates the affects and intensities of bodies in her immediate soundscape, stripping them momentarily of anthropocentric signification and becoming a body without organs that resists "linked, connected, and interrupted flows" by setting up "a counterflow of amorphous, undifferentiated fluid" (*AO* 8). The "becoming" of the soundscape obscures the spatio-temporality of the interlude's birds–which were introduced within a defined space and time–by making the sound waves explicitly continuous; "going" rather than "high up [...] pause [...] lower down."

One line of flight to follow here is the incorporeal transformation of "see" and "hear," and the collective assemblage of enunciation that operates within and alongside the deterritorializations of the machinic assemblages in the scene: Bernard's "ring" hangs; Susan's "slab" of pale yellow spreads; and Rhoda's "cheep, chirp" is incorporeally territorialized by the directional "becomings" of those observations. However, this takes for granted Rhoda's ability to connect to the territorializations of

Bernard or Susan's speech. If she cannot consciously relate to what Bernard or Susan say and image-sound becomings are blocked by the "singular essence" that affects her manners of perception, Rhoda is introduced as a child who *privileges* sound while having an asocial auditory processing disability–or an ability to understand but not find meaningful connection in human speech. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, "In order to resist using words composed of articulated phonetic units, [the BwO] utters only gasps and cries that are sheer unarticulated blocks of sound" (*AO* 8). Rhoda's inability to connect to the other children does not prohibit her from emitting intelligible speech; she's simply operating on a different frequency. The internal rhyme and repetition of sound in Rhoda's first words echo the vibrations of the crashing waves, calling forth an impersonal consciousness that "implicat[es] a multiplicity of other sounds" (Monaco 28). Where Susan's observation is reproductive in the group consciousness, Rhoda's observation is echolalic of the natural world.

Affects of Absence

From the analysis of Rhoda's first line of speech, I suggest the sound wave from a bird is the most formative affective body in the ontogenesis of her "singular essence." Privileging sensational processes of sound over image indicates some level of sensory deprivation during the most formative moments of Rhoda's childhood. Woolf shapes the "invisible presence" of this sensory deprivation into a physiological connection to forces of Nature not specific to humanity. Like all known migrants, birds use information from the Earth's magnetic field to orient themselves, suggesting an intrinsic biological force that relates directly to machinic assemblages of nature's bodies (i.e., proprioception via measurable forces of Nature). Within the collaborative productive unconscious, Rhoda's

psyche–which is intimately woven with her "singular essence"–is deterritorialized by the bird's innate composition *in absentia*. This "lack" does not produce a desire for a perceivable magnetic connection to Earth; it acknowledges a potential for "becoming" that has been blocked by Nature's affective force: Rhoda was not born a bird and therefore does not possess a bird's migratory instinct.

This is significant for the next appearance of birds in the novel: Rhoda's chirping friends are deterritorialized as individual children and reterritorialized into a group of birds when she says, "The birds sang in chorus first [. . .] Now the scullery door is unbarred. Off they fly. Off they fly like a fling of seed. But one sings by the bedroom window alone" (5). Rhoda's description of the remaining bird resembles her description of a flower-petal ship she plays with in her first soliloquy: "Some will dash themselves against the cliffs. One sails alone. That is my ship" (11). The similarity between the lone bird and her one ship implies a consistent identification with solitude, which–when read in conjunction with the physiological abilities of birds–suggests Rhoda may be innately limited in her ability to accomplish actions that should come naturally to her: As the other birds use their internal compass to fly away, the lone bird–Rhoda's bird–remains by the window, presumably incapable of joining them. With these suggestions, Woolf continues her portrayal of Rhoda as someone with sensory limitations or abnormalities. This reading is supported by the lone bird's location by the window. As a reflective space that reduces the intensity of light waves, the window casts Rhoda's likeness into darkness. This suggests the only physical "being" Rhoda can connect to as a young child is a shadowed, non-human reflection; an identification that predates her existence.

It is not only the affective forces of the natural world that facilitate Rhoda's dehumanization. The other children in the group consciousness de/reterritorialize bodies of nature to place Rhoda in their assemblages, creating a Deleuzo-Guattarian body without organs "populated by multiplicities" (*AO* 101).When describing Rhoda, Susan says her eyes are "those pale flowers to which moths come in the evening" (9); and Louis describes her as having shoulder-blades that "meet across her back like the wings of a butterfly" (14). While Rhoda identifies with a bird–a sonorous and robust symbol of flight and freedom, Susan and Louis place her into confined assemblages of frailty and silence. As an assemblage of beings forming identity independently and collectively simultaneously under Woolf's pen, the six children are left vulnerable to deterritorializations completely outside of their control, just as they are in a collaborative productive unconscious with the natural world. Rhoda's physiological limitations are "naturally" imposed, but her friends repress and restrict Rhoda's identity formation by entering her into assemblages that devalue her "singular essence." Louis' transformation opens lines of flight only toward feeble expressions of freedom, and the introduction of Susan's flower is a complete blockage in the rhizome. A reterritorialization of flight to a static body with reproductive potential territorializes Rhoda to a producing-product of despotic systems of organization in the socius–or the capitalist machine. Society's implicit demand for women to reproduce laborers and consumers compels Susan to follow lines of flight in an assemblage of reproduction, reterritorializing Rhoda's potential for flight to a flower rooted to the earth. In this way, her freedom exists only in the liberation of her offspring–who are likely to be similarly repressed.

Rhoda's investment in sound, inhuman reflection, and the deterritorializations she experiences as a child effectuate body dysmorphia as an adolescent, a pathology that manifests most plainly while Rhoda and Susan stand in front of a mirror. Despite acknowledging her own reflection, Rhoda describes herself as having *no* face after she "ducks behind" Susan, explaining, "for I am not here" (29). Rhoda's face reflects her rhizomatic consciousness: too muddled with interconnection to parse out distinct identity, while also being inherently limited in her ability to find identification within the given methods of definition. Thus, she expresses too much difference to successfully integrate into the strict hierarchical power structures that would distinguish her. As Annette Oxindine points out, "Rhoda remains invisible, as she is unable to conjure a self that will conform to patriarchal standards. Rhoda's world, her face, her body, even her language are still inchoate–as is the way of writing the thrush about a woman's experience as a body" (219). Forced to compare her reflection to the patriarchal "Mother" in the mirror, Rhoda concludes that she is imperceptible: "I have no face. Other people have faces; Susan and Jinny have faces; they are here. Their world is the real world. The things they lift are heavy. They say Yes, they say No; whereas I shift and change and am seen through in a second.' (29). Rhoda's inability to speak and understand speech like her friends is compounded by negative soundscapes at school; she is laughed at by the housemaid (29), asked questions she cannot answer, and interrupted when she tries to speak (39). Without the solace of the natural world's soundscape at her seaside home, Rhoda's psyche is once again deterritorialized *in absentia*. Her "singular essence" is not deterritorialized, as the "essence" of a body has "a capacity to endure affectations without losing [the] constant relation" that it communicates (Vermeiren 150). As a result, Rhoda

tunes out the sounds around her while *retaining* sound as a privileged investment. She must then rely on physical touch to recognize her physical body in a spatio-temporal field defined by despotic regimes.

The more she is exposed to a world designed to exclude people who do not naturally conform to social expectations, the more Rhoda pulls away from the hard reality of her own subjugation. Rhoda's attraction to Miss Lambert–a subversive expression of sexuality–prompts Rhoda to report that "things are losing their hardness; even my body now lets the light through; my spine is soft like wax, near the flame of the candle" (31). In an imperialist society that relies on reproduction for expansion, Rhoda is expected to express her sexuality heterosexually. Consequently, this subjects her to two paths of femininity: "Mother" or "Lover" (archetypes for Susan and Jinny). Additionally, Rhoda is restricted to identifications centered around humanity, something inherently incompatible with a being that cannot recognize themselves in her environment as it is defined by humanity. We can witness this conflict in Rhoda's sexual exploration, as she filters raw emotion and physical sensation through bodies of nature:

> There is some check in the flow of my being; a deep stream presses on some obstacle; it jerks; it tugs; some knot in the centre resists, Oh, this is pain, this is anguish! I faint, I fail. Now my body thaws; I am unsealed, I am incandescent. Now the stream pours in a deep tide fertilizing, opening the shut, forcing the tight-folded, flooding free. To whom shall I give all that now flows through me, from

my warm, my porous body? I will gather my flowers and present them — Oh! to whom? (40)[29]

The dehumanization of the sex act enables Rhoda to filter pleasure through bodies of the natural world, an assemblage of bodies and "beings" Rhoda bonded with long before she began experiencing sexual urges. She does not physically experience the actants as they exert force against her, making it more sensory friendly, and it retains a fluid eroticism Rhoda had previously associated with Miss Lambert.

Despite the allusion to lesbian sex and the forces of Nature, the words she uses here also suggests a strong connection to the group consciousness, as it is in Louis' first monologue that we hear some of this language for the first time: "My 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 in the centre. Sealed and blind" (6). Louis' roots, like the penetrating force within Rhoda's river-side fantasy, is given arborescent and aquatic coding, but it is also given a hard durability that suggests a direct connection between Louis and Rhoda's fantasized penetration. Being "sealed and blind," the knot that ties Louis and Rhoda together is presented as inescapable and inevitable, occurring with or without their conscious involvement. As producing-products of a collaborative productive unconscious, they are subject to affective forces beyond their perception. While this fantasy has been called an "orgasmic ecstasy," in which Woolf "uses the image of pulsating water to suggest Rhoda's sexual gratification" (Oxindine 213), I'd argue the "pain" and "anguish" Rhoda experiences before climax is hard to ignore. This

[29] Before shifting into this fantasy sequence, Rhoda is in the library reading a book of poems, one of which is likely Percy Shelley's poem "The Question," which describes a dream in which the speaker walks among a variety of beautiful flowers and ponders who they could give the flowers to (Hite 235).

does not discount a queer reading of Rhoda, as the ambiance beside the river is certainly sapphic coded with the feminine moon, waterlilies, and her cry of confusion about who to give her "flower" to. Reading Rhoda's fantasy as a woman's experience with painful penetration places forces of Nature–like sex and water–in the same assemblage as a despotic tools of oppression, like patriarchal violence and compulsory heterosexuality. Crucially, this would also acknowledge the potential for orgasm with or without pain–be it physical or emotional. Woolf's portrayal recognizes the potential for pleasure without allowing Rhoda to experience it undiluted, thereby exposing the dangers of despotic regimes of power that create, restrict, and repress expressions of sexuality. As a queer person in 1931, Rhoda's sexual awakening is traumatic; both its experience and depiction are controlled by heteronormative, patriarchal standards.[30] Similarly, Rhoda's identification with animals alienates her from *any* form of human sex, as is later implied when she says she left Louis because she "feared embraces" (150). Thus, this fantasy sequence marks another defining moment of becoming-minor in Rhoda's narrative.

Building a Fantasy

Rhoda's fear of intimacy with men explicitly emerges at a party she attends with Jinny not long after her sexual awakening:

> The door opens; the tiger leaps. The door opens; terror rushes in; terror upon terror, pursuing me. Let me visit furtively the treasures I have laid apart. Pools lie on the other side of the world reflecting marble columns. The swallow dips her wing in dark pools. But here the door opens and people come; they come towards me. [. . . .] I must take his hand; I must answer. But what answer shall I give? I

[30] "Queer" in in this capacity is used in place of any identity falling within LGBTQIA spectrum.

> am thrust back to stand burning in this clumsy, this ill-fitting body, to receive the shafts of his indifference and his scorn, I who long for marble columns and pools on the other side of the world where the swallow dips her wings. (75)

The forces of Nature blind Rhoda to her own humanity, necessitating the dehumanization of any bodily projection. However, Rhoda is simultaneously subject to definition by the socius, forcibly making her aware that she is "also a girl, here in this room" (77). In the absence of a clearly defined "self," Rhoda must deterritorialize bodies from the collaborative productive unconscious to conceptualize an assemblage of bodies/beings that she can relate to.

The escapist fantasy Rhoda slips in and out of at the party is a coping mechanism, something through which to filter her fear so that she can pretend she understands what's expected of her in a co-ed social setting. Recalling the penetrative force of her riverside fantasy, Rhoda's understanding of sex may be limited to penetration, which doesn't seem to appeal to her when the tiger's aggression is considered. The tiger of the fantasy is a reterritorialization of a man in pursuit of a sexual partner–a prospect she finds terrifying; she cannot recognize herself as a suitable companion for a man any more than a swallow can recognize its partner in a tiger–the primordial "other."[31] In this way, Woolf's interrogation of viable sexual partners decenters humanity to "naturalize" the potential for violence in penetrative sex through the tiger's primal instincts. As Rhoda later tells her friends, the tiger's panting "was like the breath of the wind" (89).

[31] The traumatic eroticism of her riverside fantasy in combination with her description of the tiger that leaps at her during social situations with men, can likely be sourced back to Woolf's own experience with sexual assault as a child, to which she felt a kind of shame that manifested as a beast she saw over her shoulder in her own reflection (*MB* 68-69).

Casting the swallow as the tiger's "other" provides safety in the distance between land and sky, but it is also another effect of the collaborative productive unconscious. The swallow that "dips its wings" in Rhoda's escapist fantasy can be in the same assemblage as the swallow that "skims the grass" in Susan's daydream of home (37). In fact, Woolf frequently pairs the swallow, beloved among sailors looking for home, with Susan, who is organized around a desire to reproduce in stasis–to reproduce in hearth and home. The reterritorialization of Susan's swallow to Rhoda's fantasy signifies the dissolution of boundaries between psyche, socius, and the natural world; a swallow in search of home looks much the same as a swallow escaping a predator. Significantly, Susan's swallow lives somewhere between land and sky, while Rhoda's fantasy casts the swallow as a bridge between sky and "dark pool." Where the grass is solid matter, the pool exists in waves of light, water, or some combination of the two.[32] As a mixture of both water and light waves, the "dark pools" of Rhoda's fantasy muddies reflective surfaces even more than the lone bird's window from the beginning of the novel. This demonstrates a limit of desire-production within an arborescent knot: Rhoda's fantasy world prevents or obscures definitions of self with ambiguous darkness as a melancholic effect of despotic regimes that restrict expression to socially accepted manifestations of "self." In other words, the darkness prevents the swallow from seeing its reflection because Rhoda cannot recognize herself in the body that so often betrays her. Rhoda uses Susan's identification with the swallow to negotiate her own subjectivity, reterritorializing the swallow to a

[32] Woolf connects "pool" to both types of wavelengths in the second interlude: "Blue waves, green waves swept a quick fan over the beach, circling the spike of sea-holly and leaving shallow pools of light here and there on the sand" (19).

dehumanized expression of difference. Woolf accomplishes this obfuscation of "self" by shrouding reflections of "self-other" in the "dark pools" of Rhoda's fantasy.

In the process of conceptualizing a dehumanized subjectivity through the swallow, Rhoda's fantasy suggests other forms of subjectivity *in absentia*: the "dark pools" render the swallow imperceptible while also concealing any point of subjective relation beneath the surface. This manifestation of the collaborative productive unconscious uses subjectivity to demonstrate how "difference" is not a determined relationship but a continuum of differentiation: subjectivity as a *process* of differentiating consciousness, not a discrete difference between self and other. Conceptualizing the space between "self" and "other" necessitates an *a priori* approach to locating lines of flight in the assemblage of Rhoda's fantasy island, as an undifferentiated subject could only arise in an absence of space. Following lines of flight through the abyss of the "dark pool" leads to assemblages of submerged bodies, the first being the mackerel at the beginning of the novel, which Rhoda observes being placed in a bowl and covered with cold water. Unlike the swallow of Rhoda's fantasy world who *dips* her wings in the dark pools, tasting–even swallowing–oblivion without drowning in it, the mackerel lies submerged in a darkness that provides no escape. Without the breath of sound or the movement of the waves, the mackerel's stillness in the abyss foreshadows the inanimacy of the stone that sinks to the bottom of Rhoda's basin of water during her imaginative play:

> 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. (11)

Rhoda plays God by creating a world under her control, a world where flower petals become ships, twigs become rafts, and fish become stone. Retaining the productive power of the mackerel, the stone becomes a drowned sailor through Rhoda's imagination, which is a deterritorialization of an anthropomorphized body of organic life reterritorialized to an inanimate body of nature, de/reterritorialized to a personified body of nature. These productive flows of life illustrate the permeable connection between psyche, socius, and the natural world. In *The Waves*, these connections are blocked by despotic signifiers under British Imperialism, a regime of power Tratner argues is "an extension of the capitalist project of conquering nature and expanding domestic space" (231). Woolf casts Percival–the silent seventh character, universally admired and adored–to represent the ideologies of Imperial Britain that disrupt the productive flows of a rhizome.

As an impersonal manifestation of social consciousness repeatedly territorialized to bodies of the natural world that have been deterritorialized by cultural bodies, Percival is a lot like Rhoda's fantasy island. However, as an adult, Rhoda compares Percival to the stone she drops into her basin of water as a child, claiming he "is like a stone fallen into a pond round which minnows swarm. Like minnows, [. . . .] conscious of the presence of a great stone, we undulate and eddy contentedly" (99). As the minnows swim about the Percival-stone of Rhoda's metaphor, Percival is not internally affected–he *is* the perceived affective force that brings assemblages together. In contrast, the swallow of her fantasy island is ontologically restructured by external forces; as she produces effects, she

is affected. Therefore, Rhoda's conceptualization of subjectivity attempts to account for "the inadequacy of its concepts" by developing "a *concept* of nonidentity" through the demarcations of dehumanized subject and vibrant matter *on an immanent plane* (i.e., without one body transcending the other) (Bennett 15).

Rhoda's stone and minnow metaphor suggests Percival transcends subjectivity, that he is an objective " being" beyond the direct influence of the subject. Percival's god-like status among the six friends only elevates the stone above the minnows, because the metaphor is centered around humanity, around humanity's desire for transcendence. In reality–just like the stone itself–Percival holds none of the "messianic promise" Bennett argues people look for in a transcendent being (17); the friend's idolatry is manufactured through social investments manipulated by British Imperialism. Presented as a reliable source of strength and utility, Percival symbolizes the success and longevity of the Imperial endeavor. This characterization can be mapped through de/reterritorializations of the stone from Rhoda's basin throughout the novel, beginning with his introduction.

While attending a church service, in the moments before he falls in love with Percival, Neville says, "Now I will lean sideways as if to scratch my thigh. So I shall see Percival. [. . . .] His blue and oddly inexpressive eyes are fixed with pagan indifference upon the pillar opposite" (35-6). Percival's disinterested focus on the pillar outside the chapel of their school speaks to a meeting of equals: When standing erect above the surface, both the idolized Percival and the chapel's pillar produce effects without undergoing internal modification. In juxtaposing Percival with a symbol of God, Woolf suggests he too is a symbol for something larger than himself. Bernard makes this comparison explicit in the soliloquy he gives during Percival's goodbye dinner:

> But now, behold, Percival advances; Percival rides a flea-bitten mare, and wears a sun-helmet. By applying the standards of the West, by using the violent language that is natural to him, the bullock-cart is righted in less than five minutes. The Oriental problem is solved. He rides on; the multitude cluster round him, regarding him as if he were —what indeed he is — a God. (98)

Bernard casts Percival as an icon for the "ideal" masculine subject in his glorification of the violent racism of British Imperialism. As Tratner notes, "Woolf compressed into Percival all the political concerns she devoted her life to opposing: militarism, imperialism, male chauvinism, and acquisitive individualism" (226). Therefore, the marble column of Rhoda's fantasy can be mapped as a secularized reterritorialization of the chapel's pillar: As a symbol of western civilization, the column "on the other side of the world" is a bold statement of Anglican self-importance in an otherwise serene landscape. The swallow–the only other body of nature above the surface of the "dark pool"–sings humbly of hearth and home, while the lone marble column stands silently, reticent of its purpose.

Percival reterritorialized as the marble column of Rhoda's fantasy effectuates a juxtaposition between British Imperialism and the repressed subject. Dehumanizing the subject (Susan-becoming-swallow) generalizes the oppressive conditions to all organic lifeforms living under despotic regimes, while anthropomorphizing vital material (Percival-becoming-column) creates distance between the regime and its atrocities. Consider Rhoda's column as a British soldier or a slave ship. As an individual human subject, the soldier is likely to be read more complexly than simply a symbol of British Imperialism; he will be given a name, a history, and an excuse for his behavior. The ship,

on the other hand, would bring the physical violence to the forefront, disregarding the individual plight *and* the destruction of culture throughout the Imperial venture. Comparatively, in the marble column, the affective waves of violence and destruction are masked by the imposing elegance of progress: vital material as a commodity. By conceptualizing the marble column as an anthropocentrized body of vital material, the Percival-column is not only self-organized but self-valued, as well. Therefore, the Imperial phallus that stands beside dark pools on the other side of the world determines its own worth, which is in stark contrast to the homely swallow, whose worth is determined by the despotic regime that immortalizes itself in stone. The affective capacity of the stone that composes the Imperial column retains its power. It is a form that "transforms as [it is] composed and recomposed" (Vermeiren 151); not a "primary matter" but a transformative body of affects and intensities.

The marble columns of Rhoda's fantasy are not only reterritorializations of British Imperialism but reterritorializations of Rhoda's desire to be consumed by tradition; she romanticizes western expansion because she–however mistakenly–believes embracing a collective human experience may offer escape from the individualist order of current society. Rhoda is discomforted by anything undefined; she wants a "plot, reasons, virtues, and truth, all that would make [her] into [a] stable [character] in a coherent narrative" (Tratner 237). Her inability to recognize herself in relation to other people only compounds this problem, making Rhoda's grasp on her "singular essence" as fickle as it is slick. The marble columns of her fantasy promise *sanctioned* stability to the swallow bound for home. In the "real" world, however, Rhoda is forced to undergo social

productions that mark her as an unrecognizable individual set against a swarm of her superiors:

> I hate all details of the individual life. But I am fixed here to listen. An immense pressure is on me. I cannot move without dislodging the weight of centuries. A million arrows pierce me. Scorn and ridicule pierce me. I, who could beat my breast against the storm and let the hail choke me joyfully, am pinned down here; am exposed.

The irony of Rhoda's torture over "being known" is that she doesn't have the faintest clue who she really is. After a childhood and adolescence being reterritorialized as non-human with developmental disorders related to sense and perception, Rhoda cannot find an accurate description for herself as a young woman. In fact, Rhoda struggles to describe other people as well. While looking off a balcony, Rhoda says, "I also see the railings of the square, and two people without faces, leaning like statues against the sky" (77). Rhoda's inability to recognize human beings–their faces or their manner of standing–demonstrates how far removed she is from society. Therefore, a reterritorialization of stone from statue to column would suggest a solidification of the socius–a dissolution of the individual in favor of the grand pillar of societal progress and achievement.

While the marble column is placed in juxtaposition to the statues without faces in a multiplicity of subjective experience within the psyche, socius, and natural world–all existing in equal balance in Nature but unnaturally organized by hegemonic systems of power–Rhoda's island, as I previously mentioned, suggests additional forms of subjectivity *in absentia*, because the "dark pools" obfuscate the swallow (self-other) *while also* concealing any point of subjective relation beneath the surface. The reflected

marble column of the British Empire can be reterritorialized to the God-like Percival stone in the pond, suggesting an Imperial conquest of both land and sea, but it can *also* be in the drowned sailor of Rhoda's basin in a "becoming" of both mackerel and stone. Compared to Rhoda's metaphor, where the God-like Percival-stone is likened to a central point of agency for the minnows that swim around it, the stone of Rhoda's basin is on an equal plane of existence with the other bodies in its assemblage: whether it is a dead fish, a stone, or a drowned man, the affective force of this submerged body remains the same. In the equalizing of bodies previously placed in hierarchy, the dark pool of Rhoda's fantasy subverts transcendent models of subjectivity. This not only maintains a more autonomous space for expressions of difference, but it also foreshadows Percival's death–or the fall of the British Empire.

In the wake of Percival's fall in India, Rhoda finds herself pondering a body of nature she's feared since adolescence–a puddle of water she can't cross without the aid of a hard object–and reiterates an earlier claim that "all palpable forms of life have failed" (115).[33] Throughout her life Rhoda says she "flutters unattached, without anchorage anywhere" (88), connecting her lack of bodily autonomy to a lack of body by repeatedly stating that she "has no face." It is this consistent disarticulation that compels Rhoda towards hard objects, using them to confirm her own physical existence: "'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

[33] A Molly Hite notes in her annotations to the novel, Woolf experienced something similar to Rhoda when she came upon a puddle as a child: "Again those moments of being… 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" (237, *MB* 78).

enormous gulf into my body safely'" (115). Significantly, it is almost always a body of water that propels Rhoda toward existential crisis, but it is also the "dark pools on the other side of the world" that provide some kind of solution. These conflicting territorializations are evidence of Rhoda's fantasy island being a problem-solving exercise, as Deleuze and Guattari argue all concepts are (*WP* 18). They also make explicit the implicit connections between all bodies and beings of the novel: water is both the problem and the solution because it only exists on one plane–*the plane of immanence*– where interacting bodies remain in motion, consistently and simultaneously creating new connections.

Percival's participation in the colonization of other civilizations and his subsequent death locates the puddle as the space between Rhoda and the island on the other side of the world, the place where she believes the collective body of humanity resides. She fears being "blown down the eternal corridors for ever" (115), cast adrift in the abyss between land masses of universal cultural experience, relegated to the whispers of feathers rather than the deafening roar of waves dashing a stone against the rocks. The marble column of her island fantasy anchors Rhoda to colonized land, while the dark pool or "cadaverous" puddle in the intervening space recognizes Percival's sacrifice as the bridge between England and the rest of the world (45). Similarly, Rhoda naturalizes Percival's sacrifice through the de/reterritorialization of the white flower petal ships of Rhoda's water basin to a "penny bunch" of violets she throws into the sea: The Imperial venture created the modern world that produced and monetized the (Imperial) subject, so it's only natural that it should be Nature that subsumes the subject back into a collective experience of humanity. However, this logic treats the natural world as a tool of

humanity, discounting the self-organizing autonomy of vibrant matter and the affective forces that cannot be reduced to conditions determined by the Anthropocene. As Bennett argues, "What is manifest arrives through humans but not entirely because of them (17).

While Woolf uses the "death" of the individual to foreshadow Rhoda's suicide, she also suggests the metaphoric possibility of a transcendent plane where "becoming" culminates into a superior, fully united state of existence. In a transcendent plane of existence, there is a genesis of substance, difference is derived from relations, and desire is based in the lack of a preferred subject/object. However, Deleuze and Guattari argue transcendent models of "reality" are forms of organization imposed by despotic regimes of power that produce subjects via psychosocial repression-machines (i.e., subjugation under ruling ideologies). Instead, they argue reality is a univocal plane of constant connection, where "the multiple must be made, not by always adding a higher dimension, but [. . . .] with the number of dimensions one already has available" (*TP* 6). Though both planes of existence "subtract the unique from the multiplicity," Woolf's conceptualization of collectivism (i.e. individual as socius) in *The Waves* is placed above the individual in a hierarchy of cultural organization, creating a vacuum for signification that is consequently occluded by "signs" of Nature inserted and defined by humanity; hence, cultural constructions are determined to be part of the "natural" order of society.

By juxtaposing the natural world of the interludes to the group consciousness of the chapters without explicitly accounting for the productive power of bodies of nature, Woolf presents a collective cultural unconscious composed of individuals and the environments they control or influence, which sources all affective forces solely to human beings. With this reading, Rhoda's island originates and culminates in expressions

of humanity, where bodies of nature represent an anthropocentric understanding of existence. However–and paradoxically–unlike its structure and symbols, the "real" assemblages within the novel are presented immanently, not distinct bodies to be assimilated or annihilated but products of ever-differentiating perceptions within the evolving "body" of abstract machines. While the psyche of the individual, the culture of the socius, and bodies of the natural world are heterogeneous in affect and intensity–not uniform in tendencies of becoming–*they all exist on a single plane of existence*; affective bodies are differentiated not by divergence from origin but by their capacity for difference–by undetermined potentials for a multiplicity of perceptions and responses. It is in this sense that Rhoda's island is a manifestation of a collaborative productive unconscious.

Consider Rhoda's offering to Percival: the flowers are not only an Imperial blessing, but a reterritorialization of the mackerel/stone/sailor assemblage, as the flower is also a body of nature submerged in another body of nature as an expression of death's inescapable reach. Rhoda romanticizes this assemblage by imagining herself jumping off the cliff of a Spanish hill and becoming one with the sea: "We launch out now over the precipice. Beneath us lie the lights of the herring fleet. The cliffs vanish. Rippling small, rippling grey, innumerable waves spread beneath us. I touch nothing. I see nothing. We may sink and settle on the waves" (151). The plural "we" suggests the other five friends will be launched off the cliff with Rhoda–with or without consent, but Rhoda isolates herself once she is submerged: "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." Though the narrative thus far suggests Rhoda's diverging

fate is representative of her societal "deviance" or her early death, her survival is in the ebb and flow of the waves. Woolf appropriates the unmitigating force of the ocean to reconcile the sustaining power of the collective with the inevitable collapse of the individual. A larger surface area decreases the potential for capsize, but as individual flower petals, the group sinks beneath the surface; it is only in their collective extermination that Rhoda can finally disappear among the waves: "Everything falls in a tremendous shower, dissolving me." Rhoda's morbid attachment to diffusement is an effect of her missing voice in the socius: one silenced cry is virtually indistinguishable in the cacophony of the collective.

In the intervening time between Percival's death and Rhoda's suicide, Rhoda reports teaching her body how to do "a certain trick" in order to appear as though she has a voice and feeling alleviated "when the walls of the mind become transparent" while sharing space as a group consciousness at Hampton Court. But she also says she "is not deluded" into believing she is like any of them (164-8): she "trusts only in solitude and the violence of death" because she resents compromise and "right and wrong on human lips" (170). In her disdain for the individual and the sounds of humanity, Rhoda isolates herself from society, creating in herself that which she hates the most. This melancholic self-annihilation is an effect of the missing "natural" subject, the untainted "singular essence" that has the potential to provide meaning or substance beyond what Rhoda fails to find in the world she inhabits. Rhoda hoped to find this piece of herself on the other side of the world, where the swallow dips her wings, but–as the fall of the British Empire demonstrates–not everything can be territorialized. Through Rhoda's failure, Woolf presents subjugation and alienation as "universal tendencies of human nature–

metaphysical inevitabilities–[that] appear to be irresistible" (Moglen 35). Just as the swallow's reflection is obscured by the assimilating force of society, the body at the bottom of the ocean is shadowed by forces beyond our control.

Woolf's conflicting portrayal of individualism vs. collectivism offers insight into the dangers of both systems of organization, but it does not suggest any particular action toward rectification. The plight of the individual is doomed by an overinvestment in themselves *and* society. It is therefore worth noting Nature's part in the production and portrayal of subjectivity in the novel, as it is bodies and affective forces of the natural world that lead to Rhoda's suicide. As Bennett argues,

> Vital materialism would thus set up a kind of safety net for those humans who are [. . . .] routinely made to suffer because they do not conform to a particular (Euro-American, bourgeois, theocentric, or other) model of personhood [. . . .] Such a newfound attentiveness to matter and its powers will not solve the problem of human exploitation or oppression, but it can inspire a greater sense of the extent to which all bodies are kin in the sense of inextricably enmeshed in a dense network of relations. And in a knotted world of vibrant matter, to harm one section of the web may very well be to harm oneself. Such an enlightened or expanded notion of self-interest is good for humans" (13).

While the affective forces of vibrant matter that operate against stasis on the immanent plane have yet to materialize in human consciousness, simply acknowledging the obscured connections between psyche, socius, and the natural world may improve the human experience. The inescapable shadow of humanity's ignorance does not have to doom us all to Rhoda's fate

Conclusion

As this analysis of *The Waves* has demonstrated, the affective forces that produce Rhoda's fantasy island as a diversified conceptualization of subjectivity necessarily include the vibrant matter of the natural world, a material force that cannot be fully accounted for in a system of signs. Rhoda's fantasy island is not a dyadic model of subjectivity, where each body can be assigned a distinct meaning and level of autonomy. The assemblages that surround the de/reterritorializations of Rhoda's island are composed of innumerable bodies, actions, and discourses constantly interacting to produce a multiplicity of effects and can therefore not be delineated to single points of "being." Though the bodies of her island remain the same, the affective forces that empower those bodies shift according to Rhoda's experience–according to the collaborative productive unconscious–becoming more representative of the minoritarian subject and/or the despotic regime that controls the minoritarian subject with every de/reterritorialization. In recognizing the affective powers of Nature with the collaborative productive unconscious, we acknowledge the unknowable truths that evade both psyche and socius, the "invisible presences" that defy definition.

When personhood is determined by social investments and production of capital, a minoritarian subject who "has no identity outside its specific collocation of forces" experiences profound existential loss (Colebrook 62). The melancholy that follows this loss–though recognizable–cannot be completely reconciled, as the meaning or purpose of life is beyond human perception. Modernists like Virginia Woolf translated this melancholy into explorations of what it means to be human–what it means to think beyond and feel beneath that which confines us to cages self-made. In *The Waves*, it is

this capacity for enlightenment–always arriving, never satisfying–that characterizes both the allure and the tragedy of rhizomatic thinking. Folded into an indiscernible secret, forcibly invited to self-revision, one can watch the patchwork of flights take shape before their pockets fill with stones. Woolf's prose suggests to become-minor is to be devoured by shadows–but the natural light of *The Waves* grew dim under melancholy's black ink. When meaning is untethered–when light has equal opportunity to shine, to become-minor can be to become closer to oneself.

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