Dissolving Identity: Becoming-Imperceptible in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*

by

Celiese Tamara Lypka

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in English

Department of English and Film Studies
University of Alberta

Abstract

This thesis identifies and explores a literary and theoretical correlation between Virginia Woolf's "moments of being" and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of "becoming." It does this by examining the total deconstruction of identity in Woolf's fourth novel, *Mrs Dalloway*. Through her protagonist Clarissa Dalloway, a woman torn between her constructed external self and an internal desire to be united with the universe, and Clarissa's working-class double Septimus Warren Smith, Woolf explored new methods of composing literary representations of being. In this thesis, I implement Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's literary philosophical work from *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, to develop a new vocabulary for discussing the tensions that underlie Woolf's characteristically elusive writing style. Using Deleuzian terminology – a terminology that accepts an open-ended writing style and that does not require pinning down Woolf's intentions – allows for an examination of the dissolving character, "becoming imperceptible," of Clarissa at the novel's end. This consideration of Mrs. Dalloway demonstrates the ways in which Deleuze's philosophy can expand our understanding of Virginia Woolf's poetics of the novel.

Dedication

To the loving memory of family members
lost during the writing of this project.

Lother Talman (1946-2013)
&
Donna Estabrooks (1952-2013)

Style, in a great writer, is always a style of life too,
not anything at all personal, but inventing a possibility of life,
a way of existing.

— Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*

With *Mrs. Dalloway* Virginia Woolf insisted that a life of errands and
party-giving was every bit as viable a subject as any life lived anywhere;
and that should any human act in any novel seem unimportant,
it has merely been inadequately observed.
The novel as an art form has not been the same since.

— Michael Cunningham, *The Hours*

Acknowledgments

I would like to begin by expressing my sincerest love and gratitude to my husband, Mike Evans, for providing me with unwavering love and support. Without you, this thesis would never have made it past the drafting stage and my dreams of pursuing academia would have been long lost.

To my mother, Natalie Lypka, I give the warmest thanks and appreciation to the woman whose unconditional love and guidance fostered my passion for learning and literature. And to my grandmother, Irene Talman, who always pushed me with love to reach further than I thought possible.

I owe a special debt of thanks to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Jo-Ann Wallace, whose enthusiasm and vast knowledge of Virginia Woolf helped guide my research. I am extremely grateful for her patience, conscientious reading of my thesis, as well as continued support and encouragement throughout the writing and editing process.

Thank you to my second reader, Dr. Dianne Chisholm, whose graduate lecture and attentive understanding of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari was a source of inspiration for my thesis. I am truly grateful for her support and recommendations for my project.

I am indebted to Dr. Corrinne Harol for her initial support of my application to the University of Alberta English graduate program, as well as her ongoing encouragement as a Master's student and PhD applicant.

I would like to extend my thanks to the University of Alberta's Department of English and Film Studies and its many talented faculty and students for affording me the opportunity to be a part of a vibrant academic environment. Thank you for the wherewithal to complete the first year of my Master's degree and providing me with the support to secure a Queen Elizabeth II scholarship for my second year.

Thank you to Rachel Rankin, Jennifer Allen, Carrie Noack, and Jessica MacQueen for your friendship and ongoing support. Without your moments of relief from the exhausting task of research and writing, I would not have survived these past two years.

Lastly, I give thanks for the friendship of one Virginia Woolf, whose conversation spans all time and distance.

Table of Contents

	Abstract	ii
	Dedication	iii
	Acknowledgements	iv
	Table of Contents	vi
	Introduction	1
I.	**Unfolding the Discourse of Subjectivity in *Mrs Dalloway***	9
	A Woolfian Theory: Moments of Being	12
	Deleuze & Guattari: The Process of Becoming	20
	Contemporary Reflections of *Mrs Dalloway*	29
II.	**Illuminating Clarissa through Multiple Plateaus of Being and Non-Being**	34
	Molarity: The Cotton Wool of Daily Life	38
	Molecular Intensities in the Streets of London	46
	Line of Flight: the Becoming of Clarissa Dalloway	54
III.	**Becoming-Imperceptible in the Middle of her Party**	60
	An Anomalous Alliance between Doubles	64
	Clarissa's Becoming-Imperceptible	73
	Conclusion **A Deleuzian Vocabulary for Woolf's Writings**	84
	Bibliography	89

Dissolving Identity: Becoming-Imperceptible in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*

Introduction

> To be fully a part of the crowd and at the same time completely outside it, removed from it: to be on the edge, to take a walk like Virginia Woolf.[1]
>
> — Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari

Encountering author Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) — whether as a first time reader or through the well-worn pages of a favorite edition — is an experience quite unlike any other. By engaging with the elusive, yet strangely intimate voice that leaps off Woolf's pages, one meets an experimental author dedicated to writing "life itself" ("Modern Fiction" 161). In all her works, both fiction and non-fiction, Woolf sought to throw light upon the "uncircumscribed spirit," a conception of life's true reality that consumed her until death (161). Her desire to depict the essence of "being," to sketch the varying arrangement of atoms as they whirl across the universe, underlies her collection of novels, short stories, essays, biographies, diary entries and letters, which have affected our engagement with modern literature. The extraordinary beauty of her words, the thematic and formalistic tensions in her works, as well as the often-perplexing depictions of her fictional characters, leaves Woolf's oeuvre much debated and still relevant nearly a hundred years after her first publication.

In 1919, near the beginning of her career as a novelist, Woolf wrote in her diary, "I might in the course of time learn what it is that one can make of this loose, drifting

[1] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 29.

material of life; finding another use for it than the use I put it to, so much more consciously & scrupulously, in fiction" (*Writer's Diary* 13). This excerpt, written with the intent that she might one day turn her diaries into a memoir, encapsulates Virginia Woolf's method of writing; a relentless pursuit to capture "this loose, drifting material of life." The possibility of capturing real life on pages and breaking down the barriers of formal literature excited and haunted her sensibilities. Woolf scattered the pages of her diaries with questions concerning the complexities of life and self-reflexive evaluations of her evolutionary writing method, which developed with each novel to push the boundaries of literary form as she contemplated modern literature's potential "to come closer to life" ("Modern Fiction" 161). Indeed, the dynamic progression from her first novel *The Voyage Out* to the posthumously published *Between the Acts* illustrates Woolf's enthusiasm for style and form. However, despite the varying differences in the structures of her works, there exists a constant thread stitched through her pages: "the essence of personality" as Hermione Lee phrased it (*Virginia Woolf* 8) or, as I will discuss in this thesis, how Woolf expresses life through constructs of the self (apparitions/identities) and being (modes of existing).

Consideration of Identity and the subject in Virginia Woolf's writings are by no means new approaches to her work. Her novels are overtly concerned with explorations of the self, a fact that more than one researcher has attributed to Woolf's own struggle to understand her individual sense of self and being. As a woman, author, and wife suffering from mental illness and poor health, pursuing her own thoughts on feminism, politics, and sexuality in a vastly changing world (Europe between both World Wars), it is understandable that Woolf returns to her fascination with constructs of the self in each

novel. Identity, a social science term unknown to Woolf as it is today, is an intangible concept that's "very obviousness" is easier to conceive of than to pin down with particularities.[2] Notwithstanding, Woolf's interest in depicting the self, of determining if representations in fiction could encompass a true likeness to the complexities of being, created within her writings a delicate examination of the relationship between the inner and external workings of life. Thus, within her novels, Woolf delineates the tensions between the inner lives of individual characters and external societal constraints in an attempt to capture the "ebb and flow" of daily life. Still, Woolf was rarely satisfied that her writing methods revealed the true essence of being and, as a result, she struggled with each novel to find a "voice" that, to her mind, more accurately encompassed the realities of life. An entry from *A Writer's Diary* around the time of publication of *Jacob's Room* (1922) and the early drafts of *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), illustrates this preoccupation: "there's no doubt in my mind that I have found out *how to begin* (at 40) to say something in *my own voice*" (emphasis mine, 47).

Prior to this assertion, Woolf had published two novels that followed a more traditional form and voice in contrast with her latter works. Rachel Vinrace and Katharine Hilbery, the female protagonists of her first novels *The Voyage Out* (1915) and *Night and Day* (1919), are sketches of conventional young women in search of self-discovery and love. Although these first novels are ambitious character studies, it is Woolf's next protagonist, Jacob Flanders from *Jacob's Room*, who presents an experiment in characterization through the vantage points of secondary characters and Woolf's use of stream-of-consciousness. Though Woolf changed the narrative structure of her third novel, and despite Jacob's phantom-like presence and death, the search for a

[2] Gleason, "Identifying Identity: A Sematic History," 910.

stable sense of "Jacob" is still a prominent aspect of the text. It was not until her next novel *Mrs Dalloway* that Woolf began to rethink the stability of identity and to examine more deeply how social constraints affect the progression of her characters and story lines. If we identify the above quote from Woolf's diary as a reference to her beginning work on *Mrs Dalloway* rather than her finished work of *Jacob's Room*, which is possible given the time-line, then her newfound voice in *Mrs Dalloway* deconstructs concepts of identity rather than searching for a secure sense of self, as she had in her previous texts. Where in *Jacob's Room* Woolf begins to question identity's ability to reflect a continual sense of self, *Mrs Dalloway* looks beyond the constructs of identity by destabilizing Clarissa Dalloway's character and subjectivity. In questioning fiction's traditional form and ability to reflect fully its characters' selfhood, Woolf embraces a new approach to writing that explores the possibility of characters who exist in a continual flux, her fiction becoming something that opens up to express a vision of reality that disperses into the universe without a fixed form or subject. This approach to writing aligns with the investigation of identity and difference that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari bring to literary theory.

In Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's third collaboration, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, they state that "the only way to get outside of the dualisms is to be-between, to pass between, the intermezzo−that is what Virginia Woolf lived with all her energies, in all of her work, never ceasing to *become*" (emphasis mine, 277). This is an intriguing quote from their tenth plateau, "Becoming-intense, becoming-animal, becoming-imperceptible …"; however, what do they mean by intermezzo and becoming, and how are these concepts reflected in Woolf's writing? These questions are

important because they further complicate our understanding of Woolf's fiction by suggesting that the thematic and stylistic qualities of her texts are continuously becoming something other than what they appear. By engaging with Woolf's writing from this perspective, Deleuze and Guattari permit us to uncover new considerations within her texts by asking how Woolf creates what they call "lines of flight" and "becoming(s)" on a "virtual plane" of what is yet to come. Their unique approach of questioning the formal elements and examining the creative forces of literature is always evolving and moving within the space of limitless potentiality: the intermezzo. In the intermezzo, a concept borrowed from musical terminology that depicts a melodic rupture between events, Deleuze and Guattari's literary theory connects with Woolf's writings by exploring what is *possible* in a text. Their concepts, which illuminate different facets of Woolf's writing, deconstruct characters and subjects from stable fixed centers, seeing them as rather in a constant flux, passing from one threshold to another.

Woolf has created just such a character in flux with her depiction of Clarissa Dalloway. It is the tensions that I find within the character of Clarissa, between her projected external self and her potential for internal involution, which guides my research in this thesis through an intertwined method of literary and philosophical approaches. First, I turn to *Mrs Dalloway* to approach Woolf's theory of subjectivity. Furthermore, I implement the contemporary social philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari in order to explicate the dissolving character of "Clarissa" at the novel's end. The first chapter is dedicated to establishing the correlation between what I see as two theories of literary subjectivity, namely, Woolf's "moments of being" and Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming. The second and third chapters are examinations of Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway, in

all her forms, throughout the single day of the novel. The second chapter examines closely Clarissa's constructed or, to use Deleuze and Guattari's term, "molar" self from her morning walk in London until Peter Walsh arrives at her party. I will consider Clarissa's sensibilities of "being," while exploring how the interconnection of the secondary characters' molarity juxtaposes Clarissa's moments of heightened connection or "molecularity" that occur in the first section of the novel. The final chapter is a close reading of Clarissa's experience in the drawing room outside her party, which ruptures her identity through the process of becoming something other than a fixed and definable self. Through an investigation of the alliance that forms between Clarissa and Septimus Warren Smith, despite Woolf's intention that the doubled characters never physically meet, this thesis concludes with an examination of Clarissa's becoming sparked by her knowledge of Septimus's suicide. This consideration of *Mrs Dalloway* leads me to questions concerning the impact of Woolf's destabilizing of constructs of identity and the implications of Clarissa's "becoming-imperceptible," a concept that Deleuze and Guattari use in their literary formulations that refers to the "absolute deterritorialization" of a character.

Currently, there is little discussion surrounding *Mrs Dalloway* and the theoretical framework of Deleuze and Guattari; however, there is a respectable and growing discourse established between a Deleuzian literary approach and Woolf's later novels and essays. The most popular connection is the relation of their ideas on cinema – through Woolf's 1926 essay "The Cinema" and Deleuze's two installations *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Focusing on the connection between out-of-time image representations and the power of compositional viewpoints, critiques

suggest the connection between Deleuzian cinematic aesthetics and stylistic counterparts in Woolf's cinematic-like writing in *The Waves*. Published in 1997, John Hughes's *Lines of Flight* is a Deleuzian analysis of four modernist authors that Deleuze "values for [their] experimental qualities" (9). Hughes final chapter in the text is a spatial evaluation of Woolf's *The Voyage Out*, focusing on the stylistic choices Woolf undertakes in terms of movement, encounters, and modes of relational space. Beatrice Monaco's *Machinic Modernism: The Deleuzian Literary Machines of Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce*, is a consideration of how Woolf's writing method relates to Deleuze's literary machine through close readings of metaphysical representations in modernist thought. This small sampling of research points towards a larger affinity between Deleuze's literary theoretical framework and the stylistic and thematic qualities of Woolf's writing, which I find prevalent in my reading of *Mrs Dalloway*.

In his introduction to *The Singing of the Real World: The Philosophy of Virginia Woolf's Fiction*, Mark Hussey cautions against any readings of Woolf's work that attempt to elicit a particular philosophical movement:

> Some critics have traced a philosophy in Woolf's writings to sources in, for example, Bergson, Moore, and even McTaggart.[3] It is not my concern here to trace any such (real or imagined) debts but rather explore the deep concerns of Woolf's art, which is implicitly philosophical. I would concur with Harvena Richter[4] that "one does not draw a particular philosophy or discipline from [Woolf's] work. One can only conclude that her

[3] Henri Bergson (1859-1941), G. E. Moore (1873-1958), J. M. E. McTaggart (1866-1925); 19th-20th century Western philosophers.
[4] Author of *Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage* (1970) and *Virginia Woolf's Reading Notebooks* (1983).

> examination of her own encounter with lived experience was transmuted into the novel's form: modes of life became modes of fiction." (xi)

I implement Deleuze and Guattari's literary concepts from *A Thousand Plateaus* not with the intent to wrench the form of Woolf's writings to fit into their philosophy. Rather, Deleuze and Guattari offer a philosophical approach and unique vocabulary to illuminate, not enforce answers to, Woolf's distinct style that characteristically denies closure and eludes definite meaning. This investigation of *Mrs Dalloway* illustrates how Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical framework supports the "implicitly philosophical" nature of Woolf's work by reinforcing the ways in which her writing complicates normative concepts of form, temporality, and subjectivity. Moreover, Claire Colebrook suggests in her essay "Woolf and 'Theory'" that Deleuze's literary theory is indebted to Woolf's work by illustrating the significant influence her novels had on Deleuze's theoretical philosophy: "It is fruitful, then, to consider the unique mode of Deleuze's philosophy as enabled in part by a different engagement with literary modernism, a thought of writing, sexuality and becoming that was energized by Deleuze's reading of Woolf" (69). For Colebrook, as for this thesis, it is vital to acknowledge how Deleuze's reading of Woolf enriched his philosophy through her desire to capture moments of "lived experience" with her fiction. Reiterating Richter, Deleuze and Guattari's appreciation of Woolf is an investigation and celebration of how in her novels "modes of life [*become*] modes of fiction" (emphasis mine, Hussey ix).

I. Unfolding the Discourse of Subjectivity in *Mrs Dalloway*

> If we need to be convinced that selfhood is not a given in Woolf's work, let us turn to *Mrs Dalloway* for [a] thorough meditation of the nature of self and identity as there is in her fiction.[5]
>
> — Perry Meisel

"She would not say of anyone in the world now that they were this or were that," Mrs. Dalloway reflects as she walks the streets of Berkley Square on her way to purchase flowers for the party she is hosting that evening (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 50). This sentence, one of several refrains Virginia Woolf implements throughout *Mrs Dalloway*, is arguably the concern of her fourth novel and aesthetic philosophy: is it possible to create real characters, without pinning them down with "they were *this* or were *that*"?

The tensions of subjectivity in *Mrs Dalloway*, between external social roles and internal consciousness, arise from this question of character. However, unfolding the answer proves to complicate further the framework of a novel that, beneath its straightforward plot, contemplates such complex concepts as reality, identity, and being. Thematically significant throughout Woolf's oeuvre, these ontological concepts are of particular importance in *Mrs Dalloway*, a novel focused on the inner and outer workings of its subjects. Set over the course of a day in June 1923, the novel depicts a myriad of characters fixed in the motions of daily life or contemplating their space and connection within the chaos of being. The title character, Clarissa Dalloway appears to be stuck somewhere in between these categories, at once the "perfect hostess" in her societal role and at other times spreading out "like a mist" internally connected with everything and

[5] Meisel, *The Absent Father: Virginia Woolf and Walter Pater*, x.

everyone (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 51). Julia Briggs notes, in *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life*, how the character of "Clarissa is humanly inconsistent," displaying a state of being in constant flux as she moves between the sensations of her daily experiences (137). Woolf implements this in-betweenness of Clarissa's sense of self in an effort to work through her own thoughts about subjectivity and reveal in her writings a closer engagement with the inner workings of her characters.

Despite these intentions, when *Mrs Dalloway* was published in May 1925 there were mixed reviews of Woolf's new form of characterization. One such review from P. C. Kennedy in the *New Statesman* divulged the reader's inability to connect with any of the characters of *Mrs Dalloway*:

> Mrs Woolf has extraordinary gifts; the only doubt is whether they are the specific gifts of the novelist. She excels in description of mood or sudden scene; but the mood might always be anybody's; anybody might occupy the scene. In all this brilliant novel (and the brilliance is at times quite dazzling) there are no people . . . . If Mrs Woolf had created a single character, I cannot conceive that she would have *wanted* to deviate from the ordinary manner of the novelist . . . I want to weep with Peter Walsh and leap to death with poor Septimus Warren Smith; and my trouble is that I can't. (165-7)

Indeed, Woolf wanted to "deviate from the ordinary manner of the novelist" in order to create characters that were closer to life than the one-dimensional flat and static characters she read in her predecessors. As she notes in a diary entry of 19 June 1923, one of her intentions with *Mrs Dalloway* was to dismantle literature's formalist structure

in order to illustrate the problems of societal (and literary) constructs: "in this book I have almost too many ideas. I want to give life and death, sanity and insanity; I want to *criticise the social system*, and to show it at work, at its most intense" (emphasis mine, *Writer's Diary* 57). Alex Zwerdling highlights in his essay "*Mrs Dalloway* and the Social System" how, historically, scholarship on Woolf focused on her lyrical writing rather than her contributions as a polemic author. Zwerdling argues that in "using the language of observation" Woolf displays her ability not only to be an accomplished poetic novelist, but also a satirist and provocative social critic who evaluated how social environments shape individuals (69). Following Zwerdling, by connecting *Mrs Dalloway* to Woolf's desire to write the "uncircumscribed spirit," the novel's critique of the social system at work moves beyond a consideration of the relationship between individuals and society to articulate a "real" consciousness that exists outside the constructs of *this* or *that*.

A novel of lived experiences and character insight, of being or becoming interconnected, *Mrs Dalloway* is an experiment in the bounds of the subject, an exercise that ruptures the constraints of an identity limited to only to *this* or *that*. Woolf's attempts at "conveying the true reality" within the novel (*Writer's Diary* 57), through her experiments with subjectivity she creates moments of being, a concept from her memoir essay "A Sketch of the Past," which elicits a transcendence of heightened experience for the characters. In her memoir, Woolf describes the "moment of being" as a feeling where, "for no reason that I know about, there was a sudden violent shock; something happened so violently that I remembered it all my life" ("Sketch of the Past" 71). There are moments within *Mrs Dalloway* where a "sudden shock" pulls Clarissa away from her constructed role and alters her character, sometimes briefly and sometimes beyond repair.

A Woolfian Theory: Moments of Being

Woolf's poetics of the novel evolve from her desire to capture in writing the sensations of "being" and "non-being." Published posthumously in 1976, "A Sketch of the Past" is a short memoir Woolf wrote three years before her death in 1938, which illuminates her theories on writing, subjectivity, and being. She writes, "the real novelist can somehow convey both sorts of being"; he or she is able to communicate to the reader moments that are experienced both consciously (as in moments of being) and unconsciously (as in the daily tasks of non-being) by the characters (70). The theory behind moments of being and non-being, linked with her desire to capture the uncircumscribed spirit, altered Woolf's engagement with fiction, causing her to create her own method of writing that would support a different approach to characterization. Woolf contemplated this new method in her renowned essay "Modern Fiction," published a few weeks before *Mrs Dalloway*, in her first collection of *The Common Reader* (1925). The essay expresses her thoughts on the changes occurring in the form — or collapse in form — of modern novels. Originally published in *The Times Literary Supplement* as "Modern Novels" in 1919, "Modern Fiction" was Woolf's articulation of her modernist vision of writing:

> If a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style . . . . the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it. (160)

Although vague in its use of abstract concepts regarding literary criticism, the essay reflects Woolf's desire to change what she saw as the previously controlled form of Victorian and Edwardian novel writing. By suggesting a movement away from the materialists — as she terms Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells, and John Galsworthy[6] — Woolf questions the form of "two and thirty chapters" these traditional authors implement in order to create sound novels that, despite their well-crafted form and plot, are unable to evoke real life in their pages: "life escapes" (160). Moreover, the essay gestures towards Woolf's own process of writing, one that advocates for a looser interpretation of the novel's form in favor of pursuing an open-ended style that allows for a greater expression of life's spark.

Within the first page of *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf imparts this particular style of writing outlined in "Modern Fiction" by starting in the midst of the action with Clarissa Dalloway already in motion, contemplating the philosophical nature of life and moments of connection, and without addressing the formal setting or providing biographical information about the protagonist. Before knowing anything of her character, the reader is "plunged" into Clarissa's thoughts as she leaves her house, musing about "how one sees [life], making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh" (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 46). Instantly, Woolf's experimental style is apparent. After a short, annotative sentence from the narrator, the prose switches to a free indirect style that suppresses normative literary devices by slipping in and out of various modes of narration and perspectives, as well as breaking conventional temporality by allowing the past to infringe itself upon the present. Woolf's modernist stylistic aesthetic quickly

[6] Arnold Bennett (1867-1931), Herbert Gorge Wells (1866-1946), John Galsworthy (1867-1933): traditional authors of the late 19th century and early 20th century.

establishes her desire to complicate and explore not only the form of the novel, but also the overarching ontological concepts of reality, being, and constructs of the self.

After several unfavorable criticisms of Woolf's previous novel *Jacob's Room*, particularly with regard to her supposed inability to create realistic characters, it is no surprise that Woolf undertook *Mrs Dalloway* in the form of a deep-rooted character study. In his essay, "Is the Novel Decaying?" (1923), Bennett openly criticized *Jacob's Room*, claiming that the only successful component of novel writing is "character-creating and nothing else," a skill he found lacking in prominent modernist authors, specifically Woolf (193). Bennett went on to state that the younger contemporary authors ultimately fail at novel writing because they are more concerned with their clever innovations in the form of the novel, rather than in creating convincing characters: "the first thing is that the novel should seem to be true. It cannot seem true if the characters do not seem to be real" (191). As a response to Bennett's article Woolf's wrote "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown" (1924), which initially agrees with Bennett's view that the driving force of literature is character development. However, Woolf disagrees with Bennett that Georgians — as she terms herself and contemporary authors Forester, Lawrence, Strachey, Joyce, and Eliot[7] — are less likely to create real characters than their Edwardian counterparts.

In "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown," Woolf imagines how authors Bennett, Wells, and Galsworthy would write a story about Mrs. Brown, a fictional character Woolf employs to represent "human nature." In Woolf's depiction, their Edwardian approach to the novel might focus exclusively on details such as train stations or the advertisements

[7] E. M. Forester (1879-1970), H. D. Lawrence (1885-1930), Lytton Strachey (1880-1932), James Joyce (1882-1941), T. S. Eliot (1888-1965): modern authors of the late 19th and early 20th century.

in train-cars, rather than evoking the character of Mrs Brown. Consequently, Woolf alleges that the characters of Edwardian novels are not "real" but rather exists merely as products of their constructed environments and illustrations of their author's social theories. According to Woolf, Edwardian conventions for writing the novel rest upon the "fabric of things" rather than "realis[ing] character" ("Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown" 18, 9). As such, Woolf and other modernists took on the task of disposing of the expendable writing tools of the past, used to build character's houses and elaborate settings, in favour of new methods of writing that attempt to come closer to their character's reality and "atmosphere." [8]

In this respect, "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown" gives an example not only of Woolf's interest in character development, but also insight into what she envisages when she uses the terms truth or reality. While Bennett and his contemporaries address the concept of realistic characters in terms of their life-likeness, or more specifically their ability to reflect a projection of external human behavior in a convincing way, Woolf uses the term "real" in a different manner. As Hussey claims in *Singing in the Real World*, "Virginia Woolf's art tells us not about an external, objective Reality, but about our experience of the world. One of the most salient points she has to make is that the experience of being in the world is different for everyone and is endless, a process of constant creativity" (xiii). For Woolf, disjointed scenes, use of stream-of-consciousness, and ambiguous characters, create a greater sense of realism and are "closer to life" than any description of a character's family history or his or her material and social setting. Woolf's version of reality is at the height of tension between the internal and external,

[8] Woolf states, in "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown," that when writing of Mrs. Brown "the important thing was to realise her character, to steep oneself in her atmosphere" (9).

between *this* and *that*; it is an experiment in consideration of the human experience, where existence can occur without succumbing to categorization and definition.

Throughout *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf creates tension between moments of separation through external constructs of society, and connection through experiences of heightened reality. The creation of characters, both primary and secondary, using stream-of-consciousness and free indirect discourse, allows the reader to engage with the tensions the characters experience both consciously and unconsciously. Almost immediately in the opening of *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf creates a moment of conscious connection when Clarissa is walking to purchase flowers in the early morning and is swept up in a moment that elicits a connection with her surroundings. "In people's eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June" (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 46). As Clarissa walks through London, the bustle of life surrounding her assaults her senses. She is drawn into the city life by her feelings of connection and allows the moment to overcome her, sparking her brief musing on "an indescribable pause, a suspense" (45) that light-heartedly reminds her of her love for life: a moment of being. Woolf creates these moments of being, as delineated in "A Sketch of the Past," as a way of guiding her poetics of the novel.

Perhaps the simplest method of unearthing Woolf's theories on life and writing, a topic widely debated in Woolfian scholarship, is to address the autobiographical sketches from *Moments of Being*. In these sketches, Woolf provides glimpses, if not full outlines, of her considerations of the abstract concepts that haunt her fictions. In her introduction

to the collection of Woolf's memoirs, editor Jeanne Schulkin summarizes her reading of Woolf's concept of the self, as found within the pages of the memoirs:

> [Woolf] believed the individual identity to be always in flux, every moment changing its shape in response to the forces surrounding it: forces which were invisible emerge, others sink silently below the surface, and the past, on which the identity of the present moment rests, is never static, never fixed like a fly in amber, but subject to alteration as the consciousness that recalls it. As [Woolf] writes in "A Sketch of the Past" . . . . "It would be interesting to make the two people, I now, I then, come out in contrast. And further, this past is much affected by the present moment. What I write today I should not write in a year's time." (12)

As Schulkin notes, there is a unique observation in Woolf's writing of not only the inner and outer workings of her subjects, but also of how the character's consciousness interacts with both the past and the present moment. Several considerations of Woolf's work, including Makiko Minow-Pinkey's *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject* (1987) and Julia Briggs' *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life* (2005), make similar claims about Woolf's depiction of the subject and identity by highlighting her resistance to pinning down characters to one place, time, or self. While some of Woolf's contemporary critics describe this phenomenon in her writings as an inability to make decisive statements about life and being, her stylistic choice of depicting characters in flux during multiple time-lines is her means of working through the problems she experienced in her own life; it was a way of expressing the reality she knew. Woolf did not write her novels with the intention of giving answers or suggestions, rather her writings point towards the problems

of life and reality, as if to say here it is – do what you will. As Woolf admits in her memoir sketch "Old Bloomsbury" written in 1922, her excitement in writing about abstract concepts of life is not in finding answers to the problematic, but in expressing "the feeling that something important had happened" (190).

Woolf expresses another thought regarding representing the flow of life and being in her earliest autobiographical sketch "Reminiscences" written in 1907, three years after her move to Gordon Square, in which Woolf begins to sketch out her growing philosophy of being. While contemplating her sister's life, Woolf writes "[w]hen I try to see her [Vanessa] I see more distinctly how *our lives are pieces in a pattern* and to judge one truly you must consider how this side is squeezed and that indented and a third expanded and none are really isolated" (emphasis mine, 30). The pattern Woolf references is an essential element in her unfolding philosophy of life and being, as well as a recurrent theme in her writings to describe the mysterious connection of the world and the people in it, in all their forms and time-lines. In *The Voyage Out*, Terence Hewet speaks of "an order, a pattern which made life reasonable, or if that word was foolish, made it of deep interest anyhow, for sometimes it seemed possible to understand why things happened as they did" (311). Katharine Hilbery from *Night and Day* expresses human connections as "tracing out the lines of some symmetrical pattern, some arrangement of life, which invested, if not herself, at least the others, not only with interest, but with a kind of tragic beauty" (266). In *Jacob's Room*, the feeling of the pattern as a stable force that "made life reasonable" is altered into "a very queer feeling . . . of force rushing round geometrical patterns in the most senseless way in the world" (160). And in *Mrs Dalloway*, the chaotic forces of the universe come together as Septimus Warren Smith

remarks on the pattern as the "gradual drawing together of everything to one centre before his eyes" (56). Over nearly twenty years, Woolf's concept of the pattern evolved in her writings to reflect her developing philosophical thoughts on writing real life.

Woolf revisits her concept of the pattern in "A Sketch of the Past" for a final summation of her "philosophy": "[f]rom this I reach what I might call a philosophy; at any rate a constant idea of mine; that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we—I mean all human beings—are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. . . . we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself. And I see this when I have a shock" (72). Woolf's "philosophy" attempts to describe how she experiences life, being, and the moments of shock that illuminate reality. Here, Woolf suggests that moments of being give way to the pattern "hidden behind the cotton wool of daily life. . . . a token of some real thing behind appearances" (72). The pattern embraces life as a fluid experience that encompasses all beings as integral to one another, almost indistinguishable in their connection to the chaos of life. Woolf goes on to address how her intuition of the pattern in life "proves that one's life is not confined to one's body and what one says and does; one is living all the time in relation to certain background rods or conceptions. Mine is that there is a pattern hid behind the cotton wool" (73). This pattern or connection of Beingness, though often evoking a sense of the enigmatic, draws everyone and "everything to the centre" of the non-personal experiences of real life, which Woolf attempts to capture in her writings of the uncircumscribed spirit.

With Clarissa Dalloway, a character Woolf had been experimenting with for several years,[9] she endeavored to examine the intricacies between subjectivity and being. *Mrs Dalloway* is a novel compiled around the voice Woolf finds to reveal a sense of the external and internal workings of the life of Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway. A character who despite contemporary views of her incompleteness is a Woolfian realistic being. She embodies a vision of impersonal experiences that resonate with a Deleuzian understanding of existence, without succumbing to the organization of *this* or *that*.

Deleuze and Guattari: The Process of Becoming

"To leave, to escape, to trace a line," writes the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995), is the "highest aim of literature" (Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues* 35). An escape through a line of flight, a deterritorialization, a becoming, is to actualize creative potential as reality on a virtual plane of immanence. It is a movement of difference in becoming something other, not by means of imitation or imagination, but through a real break or rupture, not as an end point but as another change in the perpetual flow of being. From this viewpoint, we can draw a parallel line of thought between Woolf's sense of literary potential and her theories of subjectivity and Deleuze's literary philosophy. Both represent the novel not as systematic form but as a process of experimentation and expression, of breaking down normative structures and writing against the grain, of exploring the spaces "in between" events, all in an attempt to capture some essence of the chaotic reality of being. In his reading of Woolf, Deleuze finds an

[9] Clarissa Dalloway appeared as a secondary character in Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out*, as well as in a series of short stories published posthumously in 1973 titled *Mrs Dalloway's Party*.

understanding of life and being as a continual state of flux, arising from the author's desire to "trace a line" of immanent potentiality: "she made all of her life and work a passage, a becoming, all kinds of becomings between ages, sexes, elements, and kingdoms" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 252).

Deleuze's "nomadic"[10] philosophical works, as well as his collaborations with psychoanalyst Félix Guattari (1930-1992), are elusive and often difficult to unpack — much like the modernist texts *Finnegan's Wake* or *The* Waves.[11] Readers approach the works of Deleuze and Guattari with apprehension and fear when attempting to decipher the sheer volume, overwhelming vocabulary, and evolving concepts that populate their idiosyncratic writings. However, Deleuze and Guattari intend their particular postmodern theory to be liberating, not confounding, "a smooth space of thought"[12] where there are no limits for engaging with works of art. Instead, there is a celebration of consistency – "not in the sense of a homogeneity, but as a holding together of disparate elements"[13] – in all their infinite possibilities. In terms of literature, Deleuze and Guattari's approach is synonymous with their other ontological considerations; they are interested in an investigation of difference in the fragmented pieces that create chaosmos, "a composed chaos – neither foreseen nor preconceived," involving relations of speed and slowness that form and dismantle multiplicities (*What is Philosophy* 204). Literature is a question of creation, potentiality, and vitality. They write in the introduction to *A Thousand*

[10] Brian Massumi, in the forward to *A Thousand Plateaus* defines the Deleuzian nomadic thought:

> "Nomad thought" does not immure itself in the edifice or an ordered interiority; it moves freely in an element of exteriority. It does not repose on identity; it rides difference. It does not repose between the three domains of representation, subject, concept, and being; it replaces restrictive analogy with a conductivity that knows no bounds. (xii)

[11] James Joyce published *Finnegan's Wake* in 1939; Virginia Woolf published *The Waves* in 1931.

[12] Massumi, *A Thousand Plateaus*, xiii.

[13] Massumi, *A Thousand Plateaus,* x.

Plateaus, "[w]e will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed . . . . Literature is an assemblage. It has nothing to do with ideology" (4). For Deleuze and Guattari, as for Woolf, the novel is, or rather should be, a limitless creative space of non-conformity for the author, critic, and reader.

In his essay, "Life and Literature," Deleuze states, "[to] write is certainly not to impose a form (of expression) on the matter of lived experience. . . . Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any liveable or lived experience" (*Critical and Clinical* 1). Coinciding with Woolf's theories of writing, Deleuze illustrates in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, how literature relates to philosophy in terms of its creative potential for exposing life's continual fluidity through a non-personal view of lived experience. An experience that expresses an unobstructed objective consideration of life rather than merely a subjective reflection or representation of the world. Deleuze stresses the importance of authors like Woolf, who continually create lines of flight, opening up to the cosmos, and become-other in striving for imperceptibility. He maintains that few authors achieve this awareness of opening up writing to reveal "the life in things" (2). For Deleuze, a writer's inclination for composing becomings and connecting with the virtual goes against traditional methods of writing; it resists normative structure, continuously passing from one threshold of an assemblage to another, not to achieve a fixed resolution, but to merge with the world and compose becomings on a subjectless plane of immanence. "To

become is not to attain a form (identification, imitation, Mimesis) but to find the zone of proximity, indiscernibility, or indifferentiation where one can no longer be distinguished from a woman, an animal, or a molecule−neither imprecise nor general, but unforeseen and nonpreexistent, singularized out of a population rather than determined in a form" (1). Here, there is a definite parallel between Deleuze's concepts of expression, lived experience, and becoming with Woolf's ideas of writing, subjectivity, and moments of being. As a becoming-literature, a non-institutionalized form of writing, *Mrs Dalloway* is an example of Woolf's affinity with Deleuzian concepts through its exploration of escape and lines of flight, extracting from a moment the passing into a new threshold through a zone of proximity, and through its expression of becoming-other without particularities.

Returning to the theoretical collaborations of Deleuze and Guattari, the two-volume collection of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, including *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), are philosophical collections rather than criticisms that playfully uncover their essential concepts of artistic methods. In the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari compose a rhizomatic understanding of "books" to unfold their philosophy of writing, literature, and becoming(s). Their concept of a rhizome, a non-hierarchical organic map of connection that grows outward from the middle with "multiple entryways" and passageways, no center or periphery, with lines of strata that connect at any point, governs their interactions with literature, which work to rupture conventional standards of literary analysis through "all manner of becomings" (2). They note, "contrary to a deeply rooted belief, the book is not an image of the world. *It forms a rhizome with the world*, there is an aparallel evolution of the book and the world; the book assures the deterritorialization of the world, but the world effects a

reterritorialization of the book, which in turn deterritorializes itself in the world" (emphasis mine, 11). According to Deleuze and Guattari, writing is a creative discipline that is expressive rather than representative, a constant becoming that ruptures the world. Rather than confronting a literary text with the desire to identify absolute truth, they access the potentiality and creative forces of literature that deterritorialize/reterritorialize the world. As such, Deleuze and Guattari elucidate the reciprocal nature of art and the chaotic world through territorial relationships, evoking an image of interconnectedness that is reminiscent of Woolf's concept of the pattern from "A Sketch of the Past": "we are the thing itself." When considering these two passages, there is a mutualism between the power of art's potential for change and the connection of things behind conventional appearances. According to Woolf, it is a shock that gives way to the pattern behind the cotton wool; for Deleuze and Guattari it is an event that ruptures the self through a deterritorialization into a becoming-other.

Deterritorialization, a "coming undone" (*Anti Oedipus* 322), is a fundamental concept in Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical framework, as well as a crucial component of a becoming. Although broadly defined throughout their oeuvre, the important aspect of deterritorialization, or line of flight, is its classification as a creative movement that produces change within an assemblage. In their tenth plateau under "Memories of a Plan(e) Maker," Deleuze and Guattari categorize chaos under multiplicities attributed towards two planes. The first is the plane of organization, which "always concerns the development of forms and the formation of subjects" (*Thousand Plateaus* 265). This is the plane of the molar, of "non-being," of the daily motions of structure and stratification. The second plane is the plane of consistency, composition, or immanence, "which knows

only longitudes and latitudes, speeds and haecceities" (266). It is the plane of molecular intensities, of "being," of the non-personalized expression of affect and destratification. Between these two planes, there is opposition, since an assemblage "continually passes from one [plane] to the other, by unnoticeable degrees and without being aware of it, or one becomes aware of it only afterward. Because [assemblages] continually reconstitutes one plane atop another, or extricates one from the other" (269). The plane of organization is a "hidden structure" within the chaos of daily life, where assemblages and multiplicities remain in a state of relative stability, only occasionally interacting with the molecular (265). When an assemblage experiences an event, it composes a molecular line that deterritorializes it from the plane of organization towards the plane of consistency: the process of a becoming. One such event in *Mrs Dalloway* occurs for Elizabeth Dalloway when she explores an area of London that she has never been to before. The intensities of the city life around her spark a molecular feeling of connection with the world; she becomes a "pioneer" in central London (*Mrs Dalloway* 156), a version of herself more in-tune with the molecular plane of consistency. As Deleuze and Guattari disclose, within this state of molecular motion, the assemblage can deterritorialize into a new multiplicity, reterritorialize after the event back into the plane of organization — as Elizabeth does when she returns home for her mother's party — or become swept away by a continuous becoming in a line of flight, towards a becoming-imperceptible.

In consonance with Deleuze and Guattari, Woolf's moment of being is also an event, one that alters a person by a new appreciation or understanding gained from the experience. It is a moment of heightened consciousness, as Woolf describes in "A Sketch of the Past," recalling when she first realized as a young girl that a flower was a small

part of a larger circle of connection with the world. Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari employ the concept of becoming as establishing the immanent relationship that sparks a change between assemblages and multiplicities: "becomings [bring] about the deterritorialization of one term and the reterritorialization of the other; the two becomings interlink and form relays in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialization ever further. There is neither imitation nor resemblance, only an exploding of two heterogeneous series on the line of flight composed by a common rhizome" (*Thousand Plateaus* 10). An involution forms between the catalyst that sparks the event and the subject that composes a change because of the event, causing movements of change (deterritorialization/reterritorialization) for both assemblages. Related to Woolf's moment of being, the deterritorialization of an assemblage marks a moment of connection with the heightened experience of the virtual or the pattern behind the cotton wool, where the creation of intensities explodes the foundations of the molar, non-being world. As expressed by Woolf in another moment of being: "[t]here was a moment of the puddle in the path; where for no reason I could discover, everything suddenly became unreal; I was suspended; I could not step across the puddle; I tried to touch something … the whole world became unreal" ("A Sketch of the Past" 78). This moment in Woolf's childhood is a deterritorialization into a line of molecularity; she experiences a moment outside of herself, where her assemblage crosses over the border into an "unreal" territory. The moment is brief and ends abruptly, but the experience stays with Woolf long after the moment passes. However, this moment from "A Sketch of the Past" reveals Woolf's feelings of the unreal as compatible with Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of molecularity and the virtual.

Further examples of connection and separation, deterritorialization and reterritorialization, are found throughout *Mrs Dalloway*, where Woolf composes moments of being for her characters as they go through the motions of a mid-June day. There is rarely stillness in the novel; if the characters are not "rambling the streets of London" like atoms beneath a microscope (Woolf, "Street Haunting" 20), they are traveling back in time through memories or connecting with people they have never met on another plane of being. In the scene with the skywriting advertisement, the image of the writing reflects not only ambiguous letters but also the movement of the characters on the streets below trying to decipher the meaning: "Only for a moment did they lie still; then they moved and melted and were rubbed out up in the sky" (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 61). The event of the advertisement causes "everyone to look up" and come together in a moment of confusion and awe, where they unconsciously, but collectively, contemplate the mysterious "mission of the greatest importance that would never be revealed," before breaking apart to the rhythm of their separate lives (60-1).

Furthermore, if ever the reader overlooks the constant movement within *Mrs Dalloway*, the punctual ringing of Big Ben or the echoed chimes of St. Margaret's draws the reader's attention back to the outlined day's motions. Woolf employs movement in the text, whether molar non-being or molecular being, as modes of expression rather than representation. This is a mode of writing also taken up by Deleuze and Guattari, as Colebrook notes:

> Following the lead of [Woolf's] specific mode of writing, Deleuze and Guattari open up any experience of "the" subject to all the sounds and figures of history . . . . A different mode of modernism – one focused less

> on the limits of language than on broadening perception – would allow Deleuze and Guattari to create a new concept of becoming: what if literature were neither the representation of the world nor some radically detached set of signifiers, but a mode of expression? ("Woolf and 'Theory'" 66)

Finding the need for a new method of writing, one that looks for expression rather than representation, that embraces the in-betweenness of movement and change in "a different mode of modernism," epitomizes the desire of Woolf's writing as well as Deleuze and Guattari's literary analysis. Both are disinterested in explicit explanation in favor of composing a feeling of experiences, a process that leaves their work — for some critics — vague, impersonal, and lacking in the reality factor.

However, as Deleuze contends in his essay "On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature," "[i]n reality writing does not have its end in itself, precisely because life is not something personal. Or rather, the aim of writing is to carry life to the state of a non-personal power. In doing this it renounces claims to any territory, any end which would reside in itself" (*Dialogues* 50). Renouncing the traditional concepts of writing and being, overcoming the borders of territories, becoming non-personal or imperceptible, these are the crucial steps in writing that allow an author to reach the closest reality of "this loose, drifting material of life." Though some critics feel that Woolf's fiction is removed from the realities of daily life, with her phantom-like characters and escape into the unknown, Deleuze disagrees stating that "[t]he great and only error lies in thinking that a line of flight consists of a fleeing from life; the flight into the imaginary, or into art. On the contrary, to flee is to produce the real, to create life, to

find a weapon" (49). The impersonal is real, removed from the generalities of subjective experience to capture life that resonates with the multiplicities of being, an expression of life's "singularity at the highest point" (Deleuze, *Critical and Clinical* 3).

Contemporary Reflections of *Mrs Dalloway*

Though this thesis focuses on considerations of the Deleuzian concept of becoming and Woolfian moment of being, it is important to note a few studies on *Mrs Dalloway* and subjectivity that I found useful in my research. One of the many difficulties in reading Woolf is finding an approach to unfolding the tensions one inevitably finds within her novels. Moreover, the literary criticism pertaining to Woolf's experiments in subjectivity and consciousness in *Mrs Dalloway* continues to persist nearly a century after its publication. Examined extensively through the lenses of psychology, metaphysics, feminism, as well as social philosophical readings from Platonism to Marxism, Woolf's novel continues to evoke considerations of what her modernist subjectivity entails. As Briggs indicates in *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life*, Woolf's modernist subjectivity invites readers to explore the literary tensions within her novels: "Woolf intended her [experiments in writing] to bring the reader closer to everyday life, in all its confusion, mystery and uncertainty, rejecting the artificial structures and categories of Victorian fiction" (130). However, despite Woolf's desire to capture a sense of the elusive threads of life, critics continue to attempt to pin down her intentions.

Written in the late eighties, Makiko Minow-Pinkney's *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject: Feminine Writing in the Major Novels* addresses the revival of Woolf as a polemic author with a strong foundation in "feminist subversion of conventions" (ix). Her third chapter is an examination of *Mrs Dalloway,* which focuses largely on Woolf's specific use of language within the novel to create a general "effect of subjective haziness" so as to defy the constrictions of the social order (54). Minow-Pinkney investigates the "systematic use of free indirect speech" as a means to unravel the seemingly contradictory nature of Clarissa Dalloway, stating that Woolf implements a smooth transition between interior and exterior subjectivity as a way of undermining the patriarchal symbolic order (54). She also contends that Woolf's writing method is "a denial of the unified subject" since "[t]he narrative consciousness in her writing, if indeed there is one, has stopped judging, interpreting, explaining; it has no single identity or position" (59).

Annalee Edmondson argues in her essay "Narrativizing Characters in *Mrs Dalloway*," that it is Peter Walsh and Clarissa Dalloway's narrative "intersubjectivity," the way their "consciousnesses [ability to] register the other consciousnesses they encounter," that is most crucial to discussions of subjectivity in *Mrs Dalloway* (19). Focusing on Woolf's purposefully ambiguous use of indirect speech, Edmondson analyzes the narration of the novel to suggest that its importance lies not in creating whole characters for a realistic depiction but rather in illustrating "how people attempt to account for their minds as they exist in reality" (20). She argues that Woolf does not allow the reader complete access to the inner workings of a character's subjectivity; instead in *Mrs Dalloway* the reader is granted limited access to multiple consciousnesses

as a more realistic depiction of daily life. If the characters are unable to fully realize the inner workings of each other, neither should the reader. However, Edmondson also notes that Peter and Clarissa are privy to "character-reading qualities" that elude the other characters; both display the ability to "cut to the core" of other character's inner subjectivity even when there is no dialogue or they are separated by space (26). In her reading, Peter's intersubjectivity with Clarissa throughout the novel is fragmentary, since he is unable to determine completely her character despite his desperate desire to "explain" her. Edmondson closes her essay by arguing that within the novel "Clarissa's interiority has not been completely revealed to us. On the contrary, she continues to elude us, even as her very presence provokes our affective narrativizations" (32).

Ban Wang's essay "'I' on the Run: Crisis of Identity in *Mrs Dalloway*" implements theory from Deleuze and Guattari's first collaboration, *Anti-Oedipus*, as well as a Lacanian understanding of the symbolic order to address issues of the breakdown of consciousness and identity in Woolf's novel. One of the few available arguments for a Deleuzian investigation of *Mrs Dalloway*, Wang describes the social structures of the novel "not so much as a systematic penetration into individual consciousness but as an exploration of the way an individual tries or fails to establish his or her identity as the subject of the state" (179). For Wang, as for Zwerdling and Minow-Pinkney, Woolf uses language to confront the "factitious nature" of the state that constructs or imposes itself upon individual consciousness, particularly in the city scenes where a community of people are affected by the passing of a motorcar or an ambiguous skywriting advertisement. Using the sense of community established in these scenes and a Lacanian understanding of language and the state symbol, Wang illustrates how Septimus Warren

Smith, Clarissa Dalloway's double, escapes identity due to his "schizophrenic" deviance from the community of symbolic order. According to Wang, this rupture from the state order in Deleuze and Guattari's mode of thinking is liberating, creating a positive subjectivity that has not been "organized" by a state-system and has the potential to design a collective human unconsciousness among those outside of the state order; rupture is an affirmative "life force" in flux, rather than an adverse social exclusion (184). Wang argues that, for Septimus, his "schizophrenic experiences, unconscious drives, and imaginary union with nature, with animals, and with the dead are exactly part of the process that annuls and disrupts any sure foundation of self and identity," which allows him to connect on a level beyond the symbolic order (186).

Wang also contends that Clarissa and her other double, Peter Walsh, similarly experience temporary schizophrenic breaks that allow them to escape and connect on the level outside the symbolic order. These moments are easily recognizable by the characters' stream-of-consciousness musings about the connection they feel to nature, other people, and the general life force that spreads out like a mist. Though Wang notes this break from the symbolic order in all three main characters, it is Septimus, through his defiance of Sir William Bradshaw's implementation of "proportion" and sense of symbolic balance, who Wang suggests permanently escapes the "well-marked territories of language" dominated by the symbolic order. Connecting Septimus's character to Woolf's own struggle with constructed identity, Wang proposes that Woolf's creation of Septimus and her decision to have him, rather than Clarissa, leap to his death breaks down the formal barriers of the pinned-down symbolic order, "dissolving" his identity. His conclusion is that "[i]f *Mrs Dalloway* gives an expression to this idea [of escaping

identity], then it is very political indeed. It is not simply political in its criticism of the social system, but in its profound and radical questioning of the symbolic order, of the very stuff that makes us what we are and who we are in society" (190). Though I agree with Wang's approach and political argument for *Mrs Dalloway*, I would argue that implementing theory from *A Thousand Plateaus*, as opposed to *Anti-Oedipus*, when examining the influence of Woolf on Deleuze's concepts gives a clearer understanding of not only the experience of life that Woolf is writing in *Mrs Dalloway* but the idea of capturing the "reality" she finds in that experience. As I address in Chapter three, Septimus, rather than being a character who has no identity, is akin to the Deleuzian figure of the "Anomalous," which draws Clarissa into her eventual becoming-imperceptible; hers is a true breakdown of identity that escapes the symbolic order without succumbing to death.

These essays on *Mrs Dalloway* differ in their strategies and theories, but generally leave a feeling of the creative force of Clarissa, the "in-betweenness" of the writing style, and the sense of whole characters who are somehow impersonal but deeply engaged in their connection to the experience of life. As Lee points out early in her biography *Virginia Woolf*, "[Woolf] is one of the most self-reflecting, self-absorbed novelists who ever lived. Yet she is also one of the most anxious to remove personality from fiction" (17). For Woolf, the experience of life, removed from the specificity of personalized subjectivity, is the ultimate consideration of life in writing: an anticipatory Deleuzian becoming.

II. Illuminating Clarissa through Multiple Plateaus of Being and Non-Being

> Woolf's use of the various aspects of self — whether *quantitative (time/memory)*, *qualitative (emotional)*, or *mythic (also emotional)* — makes possible for the reader not only the illusion of participating in the constantly shifting perceptual and emotional stimuli of the character but also the sense of living inside a personality whose very essence is that of variation, motion, and internal change.[14]
>
> — Harvena Richter

There is no denying that Clarissa Dalloway captivated Virginia Woolf. Clarissa, Woolf's most often written character of her oeuvre, first appeared as a secondary character in *The Voyage Out* before progressing into a series of short stories,[15] which soon after turned into the eponymic novel *Mrs Dalloway*. In these appearances, Woolf's treatment of Clarissa evolved from a primarily external characterization of an upper class society woman, to an examination of the multiple layers of a comprehensive character. As Woolf commented in her diary after the publication of *Mrs Dalloway*, there was a moment of conscious change in her writing of Clarissa: "I remember the night at Rodmell[16] when I decided to give it up, because I found Clarissa in some way tinselly. Then I invented her memories. But I think some distaste for her persisted. . . . and one must dislike people in art without its mattering" (*Writer's Diary* 79). This quote reveals Woolf's commitment to creating full characters that compose a realistic sense of being, with all their qualities, faults, and memories intact. By inventing her characters' memories, a process Woolf also referred to as "tunnelling," she created a method of

[14] Richter, *Virginia Woolf: The Inner Voyage*, 127.
[15] The Hogarth Press published these stories in 1973 under the title *Mrs Dalloway's Party*.
[16] Virginia and Leonard Woolf owned a cottage (Monks House) in Rodmell, Sussex.

writing that connected to her modernist vision of coming closer to life. She wrote of the process, "I should say a good deal about [*Mrs Dalloway*] and my discovery: how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters: I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humour, *depth*" (emphasis mine, *A Writer's Diary* 60).

Several scholars have previously discussed this idea of "depth" that Woolf addressed in her diary entry. In her essay "Mrs Dalloway," Hermione Lee comments on the difference of the two portrayals of the Dalloways as evidence of Woolf's evolution into a more sophisticated character depiction: "[t]he Dalloways in *The Voyage Out* are considerably different from the later Dalloways . . . . The satire [of the characters] in the later books is more complex and less obvious" (17). Lee describes Woolf's character development as the "maturing of characters" in *Mrs Dalloway*, suggesting that the depth of the latter characters focuses on satirizing the social arena of the Dalloways, rather than merely making light of the frivolous secondary characters in *The Voyage Out*. Moreover, Jo-Ann Wallace notes in the introduction to her Broadview edition of *Mrs Dalloway* that "with each iteration [Woolf] painted Clarissa with greater depth, sympathy, and poignancy …. Woolf turned repeatedly to the character of Clarissa Dalloway, as if holding her up to the light to reveal new facets of her personality" (19-20). Woolf's desire to shed light on the varied "facets" of Clarissa's personality and create a deeper impression of her being, can be read as the author's attempt to "impart character" as outlined in "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown": "[t]he study of character becomes an absorbing pursuit; to impart character an obsession" (6). As such, Woolf's "obsession" compiles a novel around Clarissa and her memories, composing a holistic sense of the internal and external workings of the life of Mrs. Dalloway. Clarissa Dalloway is a character who,

despite certain criticisms of being incomplete, is a Woolfian realistic being who resonates with the realities of life, without succumbing to the categorizations of *this* or *that*.

Although Clarissa appears to evade the dualisms of being either *this* or *that*, through "a constant state of assembling and dissolving" (Minow-Pinkney 62), there remains a looming question at the novel's end: what *becomes* of Clarissa Dalloway? It appears as though something is continuously happening to Clarissa's sense of being throughout the single day of the novel; she feels as though she is connected to a larger pattern of life as the non-linear temporality of the novel brings memories to the surface, where they are re-experienced intermittently through the activities of the present moment. In these molecular moments, interconnectivity and blocks of sensation saturate Clarissa's experience, causing her to meld with everything surrounding her. There occurs a vibratory interaction between Clarissa and something outside of her subjective self; something that eludes definition; something that creates what Deleuze and Guattari term a "multiplicity." A multiplicity is a substantive assemblage that occupies space outside of the dualisms of the planes of organization and consistency; "multiplicit[ies are] precisely what happens between" strata on the plane of organization and virtual intensities embodied on the plane of consistency (Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy* 152-3). In short, a multiplicity has no object or subject, exists outside of the dyad of One or Many, and is a rhizome of lines and movement. This is where our title character – Mrs. Dalloway, Mrs. Richard Dalloway, Clarissa Dalloway, Clarissa Parry, Clarissa, her self, *she* – spends the better half of the novel, floating between the tensions of her states of non-being and being, as a multiplicity of in-betweenness.

In order to trace these tensions in Clarissa's states of being, I turn to Deleuze and Guattari's eighth plateau "Three Novellas, or 'What Happened?'" where they delineate three lines of life that correspond to the different states of being that Clarissa experiences in *Mrs Dalloway*. According to Deleuze and Guattari, "we are made of [life] lines," which fabricate a tripartite of interconnected lines that are in constant motion and conversation with one another (*Thousand Plateaus* 195). The first is the molar or "rigid line of segmentarity on which everything seems calculable and foreseen, the beginning and end of a segment, the passage from one segment to another. Our lives are made like that" (195). The molar connects to Woolf's concept of non-being, where well-defined aggregates draw out fixed territories of organization from one segment to another, like a linear temporality of the daily motions of life. This line of molarity, which "ensures and controls the identity of each agency," relates to forms and subjects found on the plane of organization (195). The second is the line of molecularity or supple segmentation, which takes "detours" from the temporality of daily life and crosses over into new thresholds by exposing "the existence of another [molecular] life" (196). The molecular is a line of flux that moves by way of deterritorializations, reterritorializations, or becomings between the other two life lines. Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that the molar and molecular lines "are constantly interfering" and "reacting upon one another" (196). They overlap and intermingle in all multiplicities: "[e]very society, and every individual, are thus plied by both segmentarities simultaneously: one molar, the other molecular" (213).

The final life line is a line of flight, a rupture, an absolute deterritorialization that Deleuze and Guattari call a "pure abstract line," which "no longer tolerates segments; rather, it is like an exploding of the two segmentary series" from which there is no return

(*Thousand Plateaus* 197). The line of flight appears to "arise" and "[detach] from the other two" life lines into an unknown future beyond forms or subjects on the plane of consistency (197). However, as Deleuze acknowledges, the line of flight is not transcendent over the molar or molecular lines, but rather, like all three states of being, is a line of immanence that "has always been there, although it is the opposite of destiny" (Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues* 125). As such, the three lines are always connected and caught up in one another; there is no hierarchy between the lines, none is better or more effective than the other, and they all exist to support assemblages and multiplicities. In Deleuze and Guattari's summation, "*there is a line of flight, which is already complex since it has singularities; and there is a customary or molar line with segments; and between the two (?), there is a molecular line with quanta [of deterritorialization] that cause [the assemblage] to tip to one side or the other*" (*Thousand Plateaus* 203).

Molarity: The Cotton Wool of Daily Life

The composition of Clarissa Dalloway is a powerful means through which Woolf arrives at a new fictional exploration of her theories on subjectivity and being. In her previous novel, *Jacob's Room*, Woolf had already begun to question the problem of dualism, specifically, the split between the individual inner self and the socially external self. In *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf considers the subjectivity and internal consciousness of every character who crosses the novel's pages, whether a primary or periphery character: as in Ellie Henderson or Mrs. Filmer. However, Woolf's main concern is the exploration of Clarissa's subjectivity in terms of contemplating her various states of being throughout

the novel. As previously discussed, Woolf's moments of being and non-being correspond to Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of molar lines on the plane of organization and lines of flight on the plane of consistency. Furthermore, there is the molecular line of suppleness that resides between the two planes, which expresses a state of being in-between, neither *this* nor *that*. While most characters within *Mrs Dalloway* reside within one line of being, Clarissa experiences each of these life lines, planes, and moments of being and non-being within the temporality of the novel.

Beginning with the first line of molar[17] segments and rigidity, it quickly becomes apparent that the majority of Woolf's characters in *Mrs Dalloway* reside along this line of non-being. As Deleuze notes, "there is no assemblage which does not include them" (Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues* 128); yet, it is the molar line that Clarissa Dalloway is most often escaping. On the surface, it appears as though Mrs. Dalloway lives a comfortable, if predictable, life. She runs her household and staff, is conscious of her family and her duty to them, and enjoys hosting parties as a way of controlling and bringing people together. As the novel opens, the reader's first glimpse of Mrs. Dalloway reflects this image of a high-society woman in the midst of completing tasks for a party she is hosting that evening. On the front steps of her home, "very upright" and stiffly posed, she ventures out into the busy streets of London to purchase flowers (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 45). While she makes her way to the flower shop, this controlled version of Mrs. Dalloway begins to loosen as she synchronizes with the rhythms of London's streets. Although the rhythms of daily molar life are inherently part of Clarissa's nature, particularly in her considerations of social structures, the molecular lines of potential

[17] Deleuze and Guattari borrow the term "molar" from chemistry and geological ideology that denotes aggregates of matter.

escape continuously press upon the molarity of her non-being – an issue that I address further in the next section. However, in these early passages of *Mrs Dalloway*, the moments of being and molecularity on the streets of London are short lived and within a few lines Clarissa is back to her societal role, musing over how nice it is when people look "pleased" to see her or how she enjoys making "people think this or that" (52). This image of Clarissa as a politician's wife and a social "hostess" rests along the line of molarity. As Deleuze and Guattari note, the molar is a line that "occupies and pervades our life . . . . It would be too easy to say, 'This is a bad line,' for you find it everywhere, and in all the other lines" (*Thousand Plateaus* 195).

Finding molarity everywhere and in all things connects to Woolf's idea of non-being, where "every day includes much more non-being than being" ("Sketch of the Past" 70). There is a consistency (dissimilar in nature to the plane of consistency) in the molar line and moments of non-being related to necessary daily tasks (walking, eating, errands, etc.); it is "a kind of nondescript cotton wool" that covers the ordinary tasks of life that are not "lived consciously" (70). When Clarissa is mending her dress, writing notes, or greeting her guests, she is rooted to the non-being, molar line. This assemblage of Clarissa is most often associated with her role in the home and her married name, Mrs. Dalloway, which she identifies as being bound to her physical body, a body that she describes with language that denotes a lack of being:

> But often now this body she wore . . . this body, with all its capacities, seemed nothing—nothing at all. She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn

> progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; *this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway*. (emphasis mine, Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 52)

In contrast to the previous scene in the novel, where Clarissa becomes one with the molecular rhythms of the city, the above passage emphasizes her territorialized molar line as the "solemn progress with the rest" of the non-being world, triggered by thoughts of her party and her desire to please others with her role as hostess. Furthermore, this expression of Clarissa's non-being as deeply connected to the physical body that she wears implicates not only the molarity of her being Mrs. Richard Dalloway, but also emphasizes her belief that this inscription is not her real self; she is "not even Clarissa anymore." Thus, this "being Mrs. Richard Dalloway" is a molar assemblage that is tied to her sense of self within the Dalloway home, a "nothingness," the cotton wool she cloaks herself in when performing the necessary tasks of being a politician's wife.

Conversely, Clarissa's husband Richard Dalloway feels contentment in his molarity that reflects a life of consistency and support, following the line "marked by a rigidity which reassures" (Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues* 138). Unlike Clarissa, Richard associates his self-identity intimately with his family name, which signifies his attachment to the rhythms of the molar line. This is evident in Peter Walsh's memory of when Richard "awkwardly blurted" out "[m]y name is Dalloway" (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 94). Though Peter and Sally Seton mock Richard for his steadfast manner, Clarissa thinks of him as "the foundation" for her daily life; "[f]or in marriage a little licence, a little independence there must be between people living together day in day out in the same house; which Richard gave her, and she him" (49). More than the foundation, Richard is

the rigid rhythm of Clarissa's molar life. He implements doctor's orders after her illness, taking each word literally and setting up the attic bedroom for her use for "undisturbed" periods of scheduled rest. Not only is Richard a fixed code of territories in his own life, with his involvement at the House of Commons and his various committees, he also draws out territories for Clarissa within their home.

Admittedly, Woolf composes a scene in the novel where Richard attempts to step out of his molar non-being line. After his luncheon with Lady Burton, Richard feels overwhelmed by the thought that life is a "miracle" and becomes intent on telling Clarissa "in so many words, that he loved her" (138). On his way through the city streets back to their home, an image Woolf revisits several times throughout the novel as characters take various walks through London, Richard's internal stream of consciousness begins to layer a molecular refrain of his desperate desire to confess his love to Clarissa. Conversely, the narrator contrasts Richard's internal rhythm with words that reflect his innate molarity: "dependable," "simple," "preserved," and "stiff." Between discovering his need to tell Clarissa that he loves her and his arrival home, Richard's internal rhythms begin to waver, perhaps due to his shocking encounter with the female vagrant in Green Park or the striking of Big Ben, reinforcing the molar rigidity of the day's hours. Regardless of the cause, when Richard reaches Clarissa's room he is unable to tell her, "in so many words," that he loves her. Instead, he interprets her surprise over the flowers he has purchased as an unspoken understanding of his sentiments and allows the conversation to drift towards the comings and goings of their respective day. The moment for Richard to reach out beyond the confines of his molar non-being constructs is gone. His line of molecularity is unfulfilled as Clarissa never

hears Richard confess his love for her – "he stood for a moment as if he were about to say something; and she wondered what? Why? There were the roses" – instead, Richard continues steadily down his linear molar line, bringing Clarissa a quilt for her afternoon rest before returning to his social role of government work (141).

Indeed, the majority of characters in *Mrs Dalloway* establish refrains of daily life as a molar line of non-being. The "admirable" and well-dressed Hugh Whitbread – aptly named to highlight his bland middle-class life – is "the perfect specimen of the public school type" (*Mrs Dalloway* 103). Hugh is a man created from the molar structures of society, serving his life daily in a low-level court position. Another character trapped in the motions of non-being is Lucrezia Smith, a young woman isolated in a life away from her homeland, married to a broken war veteran who demands her support, while self-employed as a hat maker, which requires the fixed precision of stitches and colour patterns. Ellie Henderson, Clarissa's overlooked and dull cousin, literally lies in the periphery of Clarissa's party, only briefly coming to the foreground when other characters happen to take notice to pity her. There is nothing exciting about Ellie's life; she observes the moments of being and molecular life lines in other people, since they are not within her grasp. These characters, along with several others that Woolf writes along the molar line, express congruous categorizations of form and function within society. Their pace is set and calculated, an over-coding of the territories of non-being similar to Big Ben's resounding striking of the hour that structures *Mrs Dalloway*.

Woolf further explores characters who seek control and structure in moments of non-being through the characters of Miss Doris Kilman and Sir William Bradshaw who exemplify the damaging effects of the molar line. Miss Kilman, Elizabeth Dalloway's

history tutor, lives along a line of molarity that generates from her suppressed rage towards society, which she attempts to channel into a purposeful life in order to "subdue" others unto "religious victory" (*Mrs Dalloway* 145). However, her duplicitous stance on morality, particularly in her palpable jealousy of Mrs. Dalloway who has considerably more wealth and means, further exhibits how Miss. Kilman's life is bound to a molar cycle. Her obsession with other people's wealth, desire to enforce humility, and feelings of entitled retribution tether her to a life void of molecular potential. Instead, Miss. Kilman displays a constant desire for control: she had an "overmastering desire to overcome [Clarissa]; to unmask her … But it was not the body; it was the soul and its mockery that she wished to subdue; make feel her mastery" (145). Consumed by her feelings of injustice and moral superiority, Miss Kilman further distances herself from obtaining her desires. She will never subdue Clarissa, nor will she win over Elizabeth's affections; instead Miss Kilman will inwardly continue in the rhythms of her anger and self-pity.

Where Clarissa feels the burden of Miss Kilman's desire to overpower her — "she was never in the room five minutes without making you feel her superiority; your inferiority" (53) — Septimus Warren Smith similarly experiences Sir William Bradshaw's obsessive desire for control and consistency. A renowned psychiatrist, Bradshaw is paradigmatic of an assemblage on the molar line of rigidity with his compulsion for "divine proportion" and "conversion." Although most often noted in scholarship as an incarnation of Woolf's disdain for the medical community or patriarchal oppression, Bradshaw also embodies problematic characteristics of structured molarity. In the following passage, the narrator subtly derides Bradshaw's self-worth and

questions his emphasis on proportion, an on the surface method of achieving health through extreme rest and seclusion from the over-stimulating outside world. However, Woolf also gives insight into Bradshaw's interiority to illustrate his deep connection to the social role he imagines for himself:

> Worshipping proportion, Sir William not only prospered himself but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalised despair, made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion--his, if they were men, Lady Bradshaw's if they were women (she embroidered, knitted, spent four nights out of seven at home with her son), so that not only did his colleagues respect him, his subordinates fear him, but the friends and relations of his patients felt for him the keenest gratitude for insisting that . . . . Sir William with his thirty years' experience of these kinds of cases, and his infallible instinct, this is madness, this sense; in fact, his sense of proportion. (125)

Similar to Richard, Bradshaw's connection to his sense of identity is through his occupation and the esteem associated with his name. His world revolves around the structure of his practice and "his sense of proportion." Moreover, Bradshaw's wife appears to have molar territories drawn out by her husband's demands of the tasks a wife and mother should employ, just as Richard regulates Clarissa's schedule with periods of rest. Bradshaw's interactions with the other characters in the novel, as well as Clarissa and Septimus's aversion towards his need to control and power, illustrate his molar territories as bordered by the dangerous refrains of proportion and conversion.

Deleuze and Guattari's line of rigidity, with assemblages that have "many words and conversations, questions and answers, interminable explanations, [and] precisions" at a constant level of organized movement (*Thousand Plateaus*, 195), help decode the molar territories of Richard Dalloway, Doris Kilman, and Sir William Bradshaw. Woolf's composition of these molar characters represents "[a] whole interplay of well-determined, well-planned territories"; however, and most importantly, these characters "have a future but no becoming" (197). Without the potential for becoming, characters along the molar line have a life of territorial non-being; there is only structure, organization, and implementation. In addition, on the rare occasion when a molecular spark is within reach, the molar characters turn away from it, preserving their societal role in the comfort of their structured lives. As Lee notes in her essay, "[t]here is, then, a recognizable external self [in *Mrs Dalloway*], with characteristics which are appreciated or criticized in different ways by different people; up to a point, it is possible to say of someone that 'they were this or were that'" ("Mrs Dalloway" 23). To assume the identity of *this* or *that* is to embrace the molar line. Although Clarissa relates a small portion of her being to the molar, her role as Mrs. Richard Dalloway attempts to secure her social standing, rather than anticipate the character she has the potential to become.

Molecular Intensities in the Streets of London

Having lived most of her life in London, enjoying the sights and sounds of her own walks amid the bustling city life, Woolf writes the city as a dynamic character that supports the framework of her novels. City scenes are of particular importance in *Mrs*

Dalloway, supplying spaces where characters have the potential to be exposed to the molecular workings of life outside the rigid structure of their homes and social roles. For instance, Clarissa Dalloway's morning walk down Bond Street is a seminal scene, which several scholars have acknowledged as a moment of liberation for Clarissa where she is (temporarily) set free from the constraints of her role in the home setting to enjoy the freedom of city life. In his recent essay "Woolf's London, London's Woolf," David Bradshaw argues against this analysis stating that "Mrs. Dalloway's walk, so often prized by readers for the alfresco city pleasures it brings to her mind, her elated response to the 'divine vitality' of London's street-life, may be seen, from a different angle, as a token of [Clarissa's] gilded confinement" (237). Bradshaw supports his statement by emphasizing how Woolf implements male characters, such as Hugh Whitbread and Scrope Purvis, to monitor Clarissa's walk under a "patriarchal" gaze that reduces her to a feeling of simply being "Mrs. Richard Dalloway" while out in the city. He also notes that in her "freedom" of exploring London, Clarissa chooses to shop in the fashionable district of Bond Street, which further "reveals how deeply and damagingly she is bound to" the restrictions of her class and gender (237).

With intimate knowledge of London's scene,[18] Woolf would have been keenly aware of the implications of having Clarissa shop in Bond Street as opposed to less wealthy areas of London. However, the "patriarchal figures" of Hugh Whitbread and Scrope Purvis are less convincing arguments in Bradshaw's essay. Mr Purvis' small vignette hardly qualifies as a monitoring presence over Clarissa. Indeed, he appears more aptly qualified as another instance of the free indirect consciousness of the people of

[18] Woolf wrote a collection of essays for *Good Housekeeping* from 1931 to 1932, detailing the city of London. The Hogarth Press published it as a collection entitled *The London Scene* in 1975.

London, as a means of allowing the reader to have a closer connection with a character's inner subjectivity. Moreover, the narrator suggests how little of a connection there is between Mr. Purvis and Mrs. Dalloway, since they know each other "as one does know people who live next door" (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 45); his presence would likely have little impact on Clarissa's excursion. As for Hugh Whitbread, who hardly represents an authoritative masculine presence in the novel, his chance encounter with Clarissa sparks a crack away from her molar recounting of life after the Great War into a molecular memory of Peter Walsh that deterritorializes her present moment of non-being errand running. Instead of Hugh's male presence reducing Clarissa to a feeling of non-being, his associations spark what Deleuze and Guattari describe as a movement towards a life line that "is very different from the previous [molar] one; it is a line of molecular or supple segmentation the segments of which are like quanta of deterritorialization" (*Thousand Plateaus* 196). Through an encounter with Hugh on the streets of London, amongst the bustling pedestrians and "cabs passing," Clarissa's interior thoughts express a deeper sense of being: "[s]he felt very young; at the same time unspeakably aged. She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on" (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 50). This sense of Clarissa "slic[ing] like a knife through everything," illustrates her ability to crosscut into new thresholds of experience outside the territories of her molar self. The streets of London, with its potential for unexpected encounters and molecular vibrations, allows for a space in which Clarissa connects with new intensities and creates a moment of being; she is absorbed in the flow of life around her and catapulted into a new molecular understanding of her own self.

Furthermore, this moment echoes the first glimpse we have of Clarissa on the streets of London a few pages earlier, when she notices Big Ben's "leaden circles dissolv[e] in the air" and associates her love for London with the images of city life. In this passage, Clarissa diffuses into the city street, melding into the uproar of carriages, aeroplanes, shop windows, and people's eyes (46). There is no longer a single subject or object, but rather a multiplicity, a rhizome, without a center or structured points; there are only molecular lines that vibrate and desire connection. "Clarissa" ceases, if only for a moment, and becomes simply a woman walking through London to buy flowers. Extracted from her molar line, the rigidity and structure that comprise her daily life as "Mrs. Richard Dalloway," Clarissa passes from the plane of organization into an intense molecular understanding of being. Clarissa is, at once, a wife, hostess, pedestrian, shopper, and a becoming-other: a becoming-multiplicity with the city around her, a possible becoming-London. As Deleuze and Guattari note in their final collaboration, *What is Philosophy*, Clarissa passes into a molecular multiplicity in the streets of London: "It is Mrs. Dalloway who perceives the town [because] she has passed into the town like 'a knife through everything' and becomes imperceptible herself . . . . We are not in the world, we become one with the world" (169). Although they refer here to Clarissa as "imperceptible herself," Deleuze and Guattari are not asserting that at this moment Clarissa is a "becoming-imperceptible," the difference being that in the streets she simultaneously is and is not perceptible as a single subject, as opposed to a moment of complete deterritorialization that ruptures "Clarissa" as an entity. Rather, Clarissa becomes imperceptible to her own daily molarity through her molecular awakening on the streets of London.

To clarify further, Clarissa does not become like the city of London. A "becoming is not a correspondence between relations. But neither is it a resemblance, an imitation, or, at the limit, an identification" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 237). Alternatively, Clarissa's molecular engagement with the chaos on the streets of London is an action of melding into the other, where defined territories of subject and object disappear, not in the imagination but as a real process of deterritorializing the territories of each assemblage. There is a block of becoming between Clarissa and the city streets that rhizomatically connects to the plane of consistency through Clarissa's molecular awareness that her life is spread out along the molecular life line, connecting like "a mist" with everything and everyone:

> somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself. (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 50)

In this moment, Clarissa's connection to the molecular is Woolf's inscription of a moment of being, a supple flow of being that reaches out to the plane of consistency, moving towards the imperceptible. When Clarissa becomes a series of molecular vibrations relating to the city life surrounding her, "laid out like a mist" between what she was (in the molar) and what she is to be (in a future molecular becoming), the interaction challenges the potential of subjectivity by allowing Clarissa to experience a highly

charged molecular feeling of in-betweenness. In "the ebb and flow of things," Woolf articulates what Deleuze and Guattari understand as "proximities between molecules in composition, relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between emitted particles" (*Thousand Plateaus* 275); they awaken a molecular interaction between Clarissa and the London city life.

Clarissa is not the only character of Mrs Dalloway to experience the "ambiguity" of the molecular line, caught between the rigidity of molar structure and the unknown future of a line of flight. Woolf creates a moment similar to Clarissa's molecular experience for Peter Walsh as he wanders the streets of London in the early afternoon. As in the previous passage of Clarissa walking through Bond Street, the image of Peter as he makes his way to Trafalgar Square begins in the molar before opening up to a line of molecularity, caused by an event of connection on the streets of London. Although Peter criticizes others, particularly Clarissa, for being non-adventurous or acquiescing to a bourgeois lifestyle, he fails to realize that his own life line is not immune to moments of non-being and molar lines. In fact, they frequently overtake his life through his obsessive recounting of past conversations as well as criticisms of the lives of those around him while he fingers his pocketknife, a coping mechanism that protects his own fragile sense of self. However, as Peter walks away from Clarissa's home, where her molar life as a married society wife overwhelms him, and into the streets of London, the molarity of his disappointments in life begin to fade. He muses over how "[t]he strangeness of standing alone in Trafalgar Square overcame him. What is it? Where am I? And why, after all, does one do it" (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 86). In this thought, Peter expresses a molecular feeling similar to Clarissa's earlier thoughts in the street when she questions, "why one

loves [life] so." The energy of London's city setting confronts Peter, as it does Clarissa, stirring within him a potential molecular unfolding away from the molarity that consumed his being with thoughts of death and failure. Instead, "he had escaped! was utterly free," as he awakens to a supple flow of being that opens him up to a becoming-adventurer (87).

The adventurer that Peter becomes, "escaping (only of course for an hour or so) from being precisely what he was," is a real molecular process of involution that loosens the defined terms of his social identity (87). When Peter sees a woman in the streets, "shed[ding] veil after veil" to create a vision of his ideal female being (87), he is not merely projecting his sexual desires upon the young woman, but sparking a deterritorialization away from his territorialized self that he views as a failure. "He pursued; she changed. There was colour in her cheeks; mockery in her eyes; *he was an adventurer*, reckless, he thought, swift, daring, indeed (landed as he was last night from India) a romantic buccaneer … *He was a buccaneer*" (emphasis mine, 88). In the process of opening up to the molecular, Peter experiences a becoming-adventurer, a becoming-buccaneer, where he becomes a man of action instead of failure. He connects molecularly with the unnamed woman in the white gloves – despite her unawareness that Peter is in effect stalking her – which sparks a molecular movement for Peter towards identification with his "private name" that only he knows, detached from the molar territories of his social role. There is excitement in his crossing new thresholds of potentiality, of the multiplicity of a real adventurer, which exposes Peter to a moment of molecular potentiality as he follows the woman, and all of the possibilities she holds, through Oxford Street. However, just as Clarissa allows her thoughts of the party to

reterritorialize her to the molar line, Peter is also victim to his thoughts. While "the great moment was approaching," Peter turns on the potential of his molecular creative line of flight when he allows Clarissa's voice to flood his thoughts: then "it was over" (88). With his thoughts once more on Clarissa, Peter imagines that his molecular escape was only "invented, this escapade with the girl; made up, as one makes up the better part of life" (88). Turning his back on the real molecular moment he experienced in the streets, he reiterates a pessimistic view of Clarissa's earlier sentiments of how we create "afresh" the moments in life.

Deleuze and Guattari state that the molecular line "is only a kind of compromise operating by relative deterritorializations and permitting reterritorializations that cause blockages and reversions to the rigid line. It is odd how supple [molecularity] is caught between the two other lines, ready to tip to one side or the other; such is its ambiguity" (*Thousand Plateaus* 205). In these scenes of molecularity, Woolf permits the molecular line to "tip" towards a reterritorialization back into the molar. As previously noted, this also occurs during Elizabeth Dalloway's becoming-pirate, when she climbs to the top of the omnibus to feel the freedom of the wind in her hair or as she travels down Fleet Street like "a pioneer" discovering new territory (*Mrs Dalloway* 159). Her molecularity in the city streets is similarly short lived; realizing that the expectations of her class and gender still have a hold on her future, she returns home to the molar expectations that await her. Clarissa, Peter, and Elizabeth all permit reterritorializations back to their molar non-being. Peter finds ways to pass the time until Clarissa's party, Elizabeth returns home so as not to be late for her mother's party, and Clarissa continues with preparations for the party. Where Peter and Elizabeth have no further encounters with the molecular line

within the novel, the party will unfold a new line of molecular flight for Clarissa, one that carries her off into an unknown deterritorialization.

Line of Flight: the Becoming of Clarissa Dalloway

All types of becoming, from becoming-woman to becoming-imperceptible,[19] emanate from the final life line: the abstract line of flight. Though there are many instances of molar and molecular lines interacting and interfering with one another throughout *Mrs Dalloway*, there are only two lines of (absolute) flight. As previously discussed, Clarissa expresses several "selves" in the varying spaces she occupies within the novel. Although Clarissa experiences both molar and molecular, non-being and being, her line appears to be most often that of supple in-betweenness: "she would not say of herself, I am this, I am that" (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 50). Woolf begins the novel with an image of Clarissa on her front steps as "Mrs. Richard Dalloway," still attached to the activities of her household. However, as she walks away from her house, from the rigidity of her social role as a politician's wife, her "self" disperses like the chimes of Big Ben, the "leaden circles" of her molar life "dissolve in the air" into molecular intensities. These molecular moments of being that Woolf composes, illustrate Clarissa's propensity to meld with the universe and her desire to bring people together. It is through this desire,

[19] In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari map out a continuum of becomings stating, "[a]lthough all becomings are already molecular, including becoming-woman, it must be said that all becomings begin with and pass through becoming-woman. It is the key to all the other becomings" (277). From this point they draw out the first of becoming-woman to the highest possible line of action, becoming-imperceptible (particles):

> A kind of order or apparent progression can be established for the segments of becoming in which we find ourselves; becoming-woman, becoming-child; becoming-animal, -vegetable, or -mineral; becomings-molecular of all kinds, becomings-particles. Fibers lead us from one to the other, transform one into the other as they pass through doors and across thresholds. (272)

supplemented by the first line of absolute deterritorialization in Septimus Warren Smith's suicide, that Clarissa creates her own line of flight during her party. A creative movement that exposes an assemblage to an indefinite molecular future, Deleuze describes the line of flight or deterritorialization as "even more strange" than the molar or molecular line it is "as if something carries us away, across our segments, but also across our thresholds, towards a destination which is unknown, not foreseeable, not pre-existent. This line is simple, abstract, and yet is the most complex of all" (Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues* 125).

Mrs Dalloway illustrates the complexities of the line of flight through Woolf's depiction of the line's impact on the doubled characters of Clarissa and Septimus. Consistent with Woolf's composition of Clarissa's molecularity, Septimus is correspondingly in tune with molecular moments of being. His "schizophrenic" symptoms illustrate his observation of multiplicities, while his desire to share "the meaning of the world" links him to Clarissa's desire to bring people together (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 98). In the course of the novel, both Clarissa and Septimus allow their desires to carry them towards an unforeseen line of flight. In the first half of *Mrs Dalloway*, Septimus encounters several molecular intensities including his interpretation of the "skywriting aeroplane" as a signal of beauty, his unsettling exchange with his deceased comrade Evans in Regent's Park, and his belief that birds are singing his name in Greek. His affinity for molecularity, as well as his increasingly urgent desire to spread the universe's message, causes Septimus to compose a line of flight, which ultimately communicates his message to Clarissa through his act of suicide. Similarly, Clarissa's desire to bring people together outside of the molar territories that mark her social world

sparks a line of flight, an escape for herself and others. Molecular lines expose the characters to experiences outside of the molar rigidity of non-being, and to a life that is full of potential and molecular intensities that strive for connection. The line of flight, in comparison, is a molecular line that reaches further down the plane of consistency to dismantle all that was before. An assemblage on a line of flight "reaches a sort of maximum quantum in [the] supple segmentarity or line of flow beyond which [one] cannot go," thus producing a potential "danger that these vibrations traversing us may be aggravated beyond our endurance" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 197). In their collaborations, Deleuze and Guattari state, "there is nothing more active than a line of flight" (204); it is a type of escape, not an escape from roles or responsibilities, but rather an escape of the binary oppositions, an active creative flight into non-territorialized spaces.

For Clarissa, her line of flight is an imminent work in progress from the opening pages of the novel; the motivation for *Mrs Dalloway*'s plot develops from Clarissa's desire to bring people together, which culminates in her line of flight during the party. Early in the novel, after the reader encounters Clarissa both in molar and molecular states, she contemplates her age and inevitable death while looking in her dressing mirror. In this moment, she gives definition to her sense of self-identity as tied to the "offering" of being a hostess, of bringing people together. The narrator reflects on Clarissa`s inner thoughts, as she "collect[s] the whole of her at one point (as she looked into the glass), seeing the delicate pink face of the woman who was that very night to give a party; of Clarissa Dalloway; of herself" (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 74). The idea of her identity begins with the image of a woman who is giving a party before Woolf

addresses her given names, suggesting that Clarissa is primarily an assemblage of desire that draws others together to create a multiplicity, rather than a single subject. The scene continues with Woolf portraying Clarissa as a deliberately centered image:

> That was her self—pointed; dartlike; definite. That was her self when some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond, one woman who sat in her drawing-room and made a meeting-point, a radiancy no doubt in some dull lives, a refuge for the lonely to come to, perhaps. (74-5)

Clarissa views herself as a "meeting-point" for others and describes her dominant features in rigid terms: "dartlike," "definite," and "diamond." This self that Clarissa catches in her mirror, "of her self" in a pure state, is a construction of her desire to feel unity with the pattern and rhythms of the universe, rather than a reflection of a constructed unified subject in her social role as a politician's wife and hostess. It is ultimately this desire that breaks down Clarissa's constructed molar self of "being Mrs. Richard Dalloway" by carrying her across her segments towards the imperceptible. Deleuze and Guattari state that, "[s]tarting from the forms one has, the subject one is … becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are closest to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes. This is the sense in which *becoming is the process of desire*" (emphasis mine, *Thousand Plateaus* 272). Thus, Deleuze and Guattari disclose the relationship between desire and becoming as a correspondent movement where desire draws a path

for an assemblage, a path that an assemblage engages with to create a line of flight towards his or her immanent becoming.

Therefore, the two lines of flight in *Mrs Dalloway* develop from a similar desire of drawing connections; however, the trajectory of each line has differing outcomes. Clarissa's absolute deterritorialization, which I examine further in the next chapter, creates a becoming that spreads out across the party, verifying Clarissa's philosophy of the pattern of life as an interconnected relationship between all things. Her becoming is a continual molecular movement, an eventual becoming-imperceptible, which dismantles her sense of self by continuing to compose molecular relations down the plane of consistency, into an unknown future. Conversely, Septimus's line of flight creates a path that Deleuze and Guattari caution is the highest danger of deterritorialization. Instead of crossing thresholds to connect and make new lines of molecular intensity, Septimus's line "augment[s] its valence, turning to destruction, abolition pure and simple, the passion of abolition … like suicide, double suicide, a way out that turns the line of flight into a line of death" (229). His suicide is the first absolute deterritorialization of *Mrs Dalloway* and illustrates the line of flight's vulnerability to the molar and molecular. If the line of flight is unable to detach from the other life lines, than the line of deterritorialization faces "the path of greatest regression" by reconstituting the most rigid of segments in a line of death (205).

In Deleuze's conversation with Claire Parnet in *Dialogues*, he concludes his characterization of the final line of flight by specifying that there are "people who do not have this line, who have only the [molar and molecular], or who have only one, who live on only one. Nevertheless, in another sense, this line has always been there, although it is

the opposite of destiny" (125). Many of Woolf's characters in *Mrs Dalloway* have no line of flight: High Whitbread, Sir William Bradshaw, and Ellie Henderson are prime examples of characters who live outside the line of absolute deterritorialization. Though the line of flight is immanent from the beginning, Deleuze and Guattari reinforce in their eleventh plateau on becoming that "[w]e can be thrown into a becoming by anything at all, by the most unexpected, most insignificant of things" (*Thousand Plateaus* 292). Woolf echoes this thought in "A Sketch of the Past" when she describes "exceptional moments" of being as that which "comes to the surface unexpectedly" (71). However, although "unexpected," a line of flight once found is no longer a line that one follows, but a line that one composes. Such a moment occurs for Clarissa in the middle of her party when she learns of Septimus's "message" through his act of suicide and her own sense of being ruptures into an unknown, but immanent, becoming.

III. Becoming-Imperceptible in the Middle of her Party

> Of *Mrs Dalloway* then one can only bring to light at the moment a few scraps, of little importance or none perhaps; as that in the first version Septimus, who later is intended to be her double, had no existence; and that Mrs. Dalloway was originally to kill herself, or perhaps merely die at the end of the party.[20]
>
> — Virginia Woolf

> An encounter with another effects a transformation of the self from which there is no return.[21]
> — Judith Butler

"Identity and Self," the second chapter of Mark Hussey's *Singing in the Real World*, investigates the effect of names, relationships, memories, temporality, and death in *Mrs Dalloway*, concluding that Woolf writes Clarissa Dalloway's existence as a struggle against a feeling of "incompleteness." Hussey states "the simple 'I,' with which Rachel Vinrace [from *The Voyage Out*] was seen to lay claim to an individual identity, gives way to more complex notions. Clarissa is engaged in what may be seen as a search for her ownmost identity," a singular identity that would reconcile the split between her internal consciousness and constructed external identity (25). However, Hussey argues that Woolf's non-linear temporality of the novel, which infuses Clarissa's present moments with past memories, "prevent[s] her from having a sense of continuity in her being" (25). In his reading of the novel, Hussey argues that Clarissa's rooted connection to her past, particularly her "unresolved" love for Peter Walsh and childhood memories of Burton, drives her to find a "sense (not stated) of completion, of unity" (29). This

[20] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, The Modern Library, vi.
[21] Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 28.

search for identity, which Hussey claims Clarissa finds on some level in the final lines of the text through "transcendence" over the multiple identities that haunt her throughout the novel, serves to reinforce a singular essence of "Clarissa." One that would say I am *this*; I am *that*; I am "simply 'Clarissa'" (29).

Hussey's analysis focuses on Woolf's expression "in *Mrs Dalloway* [of the need] for a foundation for individual identity, and [the] yearning for unity that is felt in the character of Clarissa" (31). However, his analysis is at times contradictory, at once stating that the novel attempts to uncover Clarissa's "realization of the self" "purged of all apparitions (identities)," and at other times asserting that Woolf reinforces the desire for a final image of Clarissa that is unified and identifiable for the reader (32). In concluding his arguments on identity in *Mrs Dalloway*, Hussey references Peter Walsh's final utterance in the text, "[i]t is Clarissa," to emphasize the sense of wholeness and stability that he reads in the final image of Woolf's title character. In contrast to Clarissa experiencing a "plateau" of being that stabilizes outside the boundaries of constructed identity, as Hussey suggests, my reading of Clarissa's subjectivity is one of continuous movement. First as a molecular awakening from the molar line into a multiplicity of in-betweenness, then as an immanent creative line of imperceptibility that dissolves forms and subjectivity. Though I agree with Hussey that Woolf expresses a desire for unity in the novel, as addressed in the previous chapter, I argue that what Woolf explores in the novel is Clarissa's desire for unity and connection with the universe, not a desire for unity as a single subject. Rather than Clarissa being a singular essence that has found a stable sense of self outside of the territories of identity, she continues to be a multiplicity of constant movement and creation; there is no plateau of selfhood reached. In the final

image of *Mrs Dalloway,* Clarissa becomes a line of flight into a becoming-imperceptible, which Deleuze describes as "Life, 'without cessation or condition' … attaining to a cosmic and spiritual lapping" (*Critical and Clinical* 26).

In one of Deleuze's myriad of definitions on becoming-imperceptible, his theory of "Life, 'without cessation or condition'" corresponds to a quote from Woolf's "Modern Fiction" in which she addresses her desire to write life not as a depiction of perfectly aligned successions, but rather as an interaction with the continuous flow of being:

> Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? (160)

Both Deleuze and Woolf express in these quotes analogous thoughts on embracing life as a force of continuous movement within the chaos of cosmic space, a "spiritual lapping" or "uncircumscribed spirit" that defies boundaries and limitations. Applying these considerations to the character of Clarissa, we observe how Woolf writes Clarissa within a "luminous halo" that allows space for her to compose her own life line of imperceptibility and interconnectedness amongst the other "symmetrically arranged" characters of the novel. In Deleuze and Guattari's vocabulary, imperceptibility is not a reference to that which is not perceivable. In fact, Clarissa is highly perceived in *Mrs Dalloway* by the other characters and reader. However, through an event of connection at her party Clarissa composes a line of imperceptibility that dissolves her sense of being

and subjectivity, rather than her physical being, into a fluid state of constant change, which can no longer be pinned down and perceived. Clarissa is not alone in her heightened awareness of the interconnectedness of life; she shares this awareness with her double, Septimus Warren Smith. In a letter written to English author Gerald Brenan (1894-1987), Woolf revealed that Septimus's character was "the most essential part" of *Mrs Dalloway*, suggesting that his character somehow influenced Clarissa's progression within the novel (*Letters* 3:189). Though neither Clarissa nor Septimus has a direct knowledge of the other, their life lines correspond through a mutuality, an "alliance," which initiates their individual lines of deterritorialization into new becomings. As Deleuze and Guattari note, "becoming is not an evolution, at least not an evolution by descent and filiation. . . . Becoming is always of a different order than filiation. It concerns alliance" (*Thousand Plateaus* 238).

The alliance between Clarissa and Septimus forms through their complementary theories and understanding of the universe, which Woolf reveals when the characters experience a "spiritual lapping" at Clarissa's party. Although Septimus portrays an "insane" understanding of the world, he often speaks in ways that connect with Clarissa's "transcendental theory" from her youth, where she believes herself to be everywhere and a part of everything (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 167). In a moment of molecular detachment from the molar workings of daily life, Septimus expresses one of his "painfully draw[n] out profound truths" of the universe: "[w]e welcome, the world seemed to say; we accept; we create. Beauty, the world seemed to say. . . . —all of this, calm and reasonable as it was, made out of ordinary things as it was, was the truth now; beauty, that was the truth now. Beauty was everywhere" (100). Septimus's message of the universe's

interconnection, which connects to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the plane of consistency, throughout *Mrs Dalloway* is "essential" as it drives him towards his line of deterritorialization (his suicide), which in turn affects Clarissa. In her understanding of Septimus's message of interconnection in the universe conveyed through his act of suicide, Clarissa correlates Septimus's message in death to her own theories of life, drawing her into her line of imperceptibility.

An Anomalous Alliance between Doubles

Typically, analysis of the connection between Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith leads to interpretations of doubling, a mapping of the echo between the characters in an attempt to bridge the gap between the disjointed scenes of *Mrs Dalloway*. Indeed, Woolf disclosed in her introduction to The Modern Library's 1928 reprint of the novel that Septimus functions as a double to Clarissa; moreover, in an often quoted passage from her diary Woolf wrote, "*Mrs Dalloway* has branched into . . . a study of insanity and suicide, the world seen by the sane and insane side by side" (*Writer's Diary* 52). From these traces of Woolf's intentions, alongside the numerous similarities between the two characters from their "beaked" bird-like appearances to the isolation they experience in their respective social roles, many scholars have understood the structure of *Mrs Dalloway* as a sacrifice of the double, where one (Septimus/insanity) must die so the other (Clarissa/sanity) may survive. As Lorie Watkins Fulton points out in her essay "'A Direction of One's Own': Alienation in *Mrs Dalloway* and Sula," the relationship between the two characters is "one-sided," where "Clarissa alone reaps the benefits of

[the novel's] revelation; Woolf never allows Septimus to meet [Clarissa], much less derive similar benefit from their connection" (128). In this common reading of the double character narrative, Septimus's sacrifice not only ends the schizophrenic "insanity" thread of the novel but propels Clarissa into a new clarity to "feel the beauty"[22] in life (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 2651); thus ending the novel on an affirmative and "sane" perspective of existence.

However, if we support Deleuze's concept of becoming as a process of a "double capture" (Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues* 9), in which Clarissa and Septimus experience a mutual capture from the event of becoming that affects both character's equally, then the intentions normally found in Woolf's depiction of the doubled characters alter slightly. Instead of pinning down the characters to trace their parallels and examine the sacrifice of Septimus's suicide, the "communion" between the two is more aptly perceived as an alliance of concurrent movement between doubles. Therefore, in the novel's ending, Septimus experiences a molecular moment of connection with Clarissa that carries them into new territories, allowing both characters to unfold their subjectivity into the highest singularity of absolute deterritorialization. As such, Clarissa and Septimus as "the two terms of a becoming do not exchange places . . . they are instead drawn into an asymmetrical block in which both change to the same extent, and which constitutes their zone of proximity" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 307). In this consideration of the characters' interconnectedness, Woolf allows Clarissa and Septimus to enter mutually into a zone of proximity, which erupts into their individual lines of flight

[22] Virginia Woolf added the sentence "He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun" to Clarissa's monologue in the American Edition of *Mrs Dalloway*, published by Harcourt Brace at the same time as her British edition was printed by the Hogarth Press in 1925. Interestingly, the sentence appears in *The Longman Anthology of British Literature*, indicating that they decided to publish the American rather than British edition.

through the alliance marked by Septimus's act of suicide and Clarissa's recognition that his "death was an attempt to communicate" (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 192).

As Deleuze notes, the zone of proximity "[is] established between two terms, as if they had reached the point immediately preceding their respective differentiation: not a similitude, but a slippage, an extreme proximity, an absolute contiguity; not a natural filiation, but an unnatural alliance" (*Critical and Clinical* 78). Thus, regardless of the fact that Clarissa and Septimus never physically meet within the text, they are contiguous through the "extreme proximity" of their mutual understanding of the universe as a pattern that extends beyond the territories of being or cotton wool of daily life. In their respective moments of communication with the universe, Clarissa and Septimus compose a conversation with one another that defies space and time to create a zone of proximity across the plane of consistency. When Clarissa learns from the Bradshaws of Septimus's suicide, a moment already charged with the molecular intensities Clarissa feels in the party room towards her guests, Septimus and Clarissa ephemerally link, as she feels "somehow very like him" when considering the message of his death (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 194). This moment of connection follows Clarissa's earlier becoming-London where she aligns with the streets and people of the city. Similarly, the event of Septimus's suicide revealed during her party aligns Clarissa with Septimus, an outside figure who marks a potential territory of imperceptibility.

Before addressing in greater context the "preferential" anomalous alliance that forms between the central characters and the implications that develop as a result, it is crucial to first look more closely at the character of Septimus to establish his role in the text as the outsider figure, which Deleuze and Guattari term, the "Anomalous." In their

delineation of becoming in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari outline the necessary components and interactions that produce becomings by expounding upon the form of becoming-animal, stating "[b]ecoming can and should be qualified as becoming-animal even in the absence of a term that would be the animal become [sic]. The becoming-animal of the human being is real, even if the animal the human being becomes is not; and the becoming-other of the animal is real, even if that something other it becomes is not" (238). Though there is no specific "becoming-animal" in *Mrs Dalloway*, a logistical component that Deleuze and Guattari point out as unnecessary to the actual process of becoming, the image of the animal is helpful in illustrating becoming as real process of change rather than imitation. Moreover, the image clarifies how a multiplicity is "a pack," "defined not by characteristics (specific, generic, etc.) but by populations that vary" through movement (239). In their first principle of becoming-animal, there are two components: a separate assemblage outside of the multiplicity and the pack that the assemblage enters into through an alliance, which sparks blocks of molecular relating. The second aspect of becoming is the Anomalous figure who marks the alliance of a potential becoming: "wherever there is multiplicity, you will also find an exceptional individual, and it is with that individual that an alliance must be made in order to become-animal" (243). It is through the pack and the Anomalous, a figure who has the potential to incite becomings on a molecular level regardless of physical interaction with outside assemblages, which allows Septimus's line of absolute deterritorialization to rupture Clarissa's line of molecular in-betweenness.

Woolf positions Septimus as an "essential" or "exceptional" outsider who is highly attuned to the pattern of the universe, but largely isolated from reality as indicated

by his moments of psychotic fear and panic: "he would cry that he was falling down, down into the flames! Actually she [Lucrezia] would look for flames, it was so vivid. But there was nothing" (*Mrs Dalloway* 158). During the course of the novel, Lucrezia attempts to help her husband into a sane and molar lifestyle by having him treated by Dr. Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw, for "he was not Septimus now," this man "sitting in his shabby overcoat alone, on the seat, hunched up, staring" (63). His molecular awareness and schizoid detachment from post-traumatic stress disorder mark him as an Anomalous, a man removed from others and unable to feel connected to his former life. Thus, Woolf's characterization of Septimus corresponds with Deleuze and Guattari's description of the Anomalous: "[t]he anomalous is neither an individual nor a species; it has only affects, it has neither familiar or subjectified feelings, nor specific or significant characteristics" (*Thousand Plateaus* 244-5). In this respect, Septimus is no longer an individual who functions as a part of a social system, but rather he expresses the deeply integrated affect of his molecular pack: a multiplicity connected to the universe and its "secret meaning." Septimus remarks on how "The War had taught him" to "[feel] very little and very reasonably" and he "congratulates himself" that he is able to detach himself from the unintelligible horrors of war (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 115). However, when the war ends and he returns home, Septimus comes to the realization that he is now socially detached from the world around him and panics: "[f]or now that it was all over, truce signed, and the dead buried, he has, especially in the evening, these sudden thunder-claps of fear. He could not feel" (115). Despite Septimus's inability to feel, particularly the death of his friend Evans or love for his wife, his apathetic position after the war places him along the border of a new territory, heightening his awareness of the

molecular as connected to the chaos of the universe. This "peripheral position," which eludes subjectivity or placement, allows Septimus to "haunt the fringes" of his molecular borders in order to draw Clarissa into an alliance with his molecular understanding of the universe's secret message of life (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 245-6).

Accordingly, one question that the Anomalous figure may prompt is that of specific function: "[w]hat exactly is the nature of the anomalous? What function does it have in relation to the band, to the pack?" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 244). Indeed, Clarissa has previously experienced a line of flight without an Anomalous figure; thus, how does Clarissa's alliance and zone of proximity with Septimus allow her to compose a new passage to the plane of consistency, which would otherwise elude her? Deleuze and Guattari address this discrepancy by clarifying that although molecular awakenings occur through events of deterritorialization, as outlined in the previous chapter, it is through a molecular alliance with an Anomalous that becomings connect further down the plane of consistency, towards the imperceptible. They state:

> In fact, the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities. Each multiplicity is defined by a borderline functioning as Anomalous, but there is a string of borderlines, a continuous line of borderlines (fiber) following which the multiplicity changes. And at each threshold or door, a new pact? A fiber stretches from a human to an animal, from a human or an animal to molecules, from molecules to particles, and so on to the imperceptible. Every fiber is a universal fiber. A fiber strung across borderlines constitutes a line of flight or of deterritorialization. It is evident that the Anomalous, the Outsider, has

> several functions: not only does it border each multiplicity . . . not only is it the precondition for the alliance necessary to becoming, but it also carries the transformations of becoming or crossings of multiplicities always farther down the line of flight. (249)

As such, Septimus, who constantly marks the border of his molecular multiplicity as the Anomalous, watching from the outside the "gradual drawing of everything to one center before his eyes," acts as the threshold to Clarissa's future becomings, her becoming-imperceptible. Although Woolf depicts both Clarissa and Septimus as having a hyper-awareness of the interconnection of the universe — specifically illustrated by their refrain of "fear no more the heat o' the sun"[23] — Septimus, as the Anomalous figure, is able to break free from the molar restraints of his being and show Clarissa the molecular path towards the imperceptible through his act of suicide.

As articulated by Deleuze and Guattari, death is a "pure event," a haecceity that consists of speeds and slowness rather than a stable state, shattering the dichotomy between real and virtual. The event "neither begins nor ends but has gained or kept the infinite movement to which it gives consistency. It is the virtual that is distinct from the actual, but a virtual that is no longer chaotic, that has become consistent or real on the plane of immanence that wrests it from the chaos" (*What is Philosophy* 156). If death is the ultimate event, then Septimus's plunge from the open window creates a haecceity of "speeds and affects," one that unfolds his molecular intensities into the cosmos and

[23] From William Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, as a lament to Imogen's death, "fear no more" and "fear no more the heat o' the sun" appears several times throughout the text of *Mrs Dalloway*. Woolf uses this quote as a refrain to release the fear from death and authority, as well as point towards the interconnection of life. Clarissa first repeats the lines when she is "trying to recover" a sense of her self as connected to the world and existing even after the inevitability of death (51). As an echo, Septimus repeats the refrain at the beginning of the scene where he commits suicide.

reaches out towards Clarissa's territories. When she learns of his death, the molecular interaction pulls Clarissa into a zone of proximity with Septimus, which assembles her theory of subjectivity outside of her molar rhythms or molecular intensities: "[d]eath was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them. . . . There was an embrace in death" (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 192). Even though Woolf continues to compose Clarissa with an awareness of her molar role and her need as "hostess" to return to the party, she allows the alliance to affect Clarissa and break down her fears as she compares her own subjectivity to Septimus's life line. "Then (she had felt it only this morning) there was the terror; the overwhelming incapacity, one's parents giving it into one's hands, this life, to be lived to the end, to be walked with serenely; there was in the depths of her heart an awful fear. . . . She had escaped. But that young man had killed himself" (193). This moment establishes a reciprocal opening up of the self by both the Anomalous (Septimus) and the assemblage outside of the pack (Clarissa); as Deleuze and Guattari note, it is "by means of this anomalous choice that each enters into his or her [becoming]" (emphasis mine, *Thousand Plateaus* 244). Both Septimus and Clarissa form an alliance by their choice to communicate their understanding of life and death, their awareness of the universe's interconnection.

Early in *Mrs Dalloway*, Septimus acknowledges his position as the border of a multiplicity, as the outsider to the pattern of life:

> Septimus looked. Boys on bicycles sprang off. Traffic accumulated. And there the motor car stood, with drawn blinds, and upon them a curious pattern like a tree, Septimus thought, and this gradual drawing together of

> everything to one centre before his eyes, as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was about to burst into flames, terrified him. The world wavered and quivered and threatened to burst into flames. *It is I who am blocking the way*, he thought. Was he not being looked at and pointed at; was he not weighted there, rooted to the pavement, for a purpose? *But for what purpose*? (emphasis mine, 56)

This passage, where Septimus is in the streets of London when a car backfires and stops, offers upon a surface reading support for Septimus's schizophrenic view of the world in relation to his unstable inner consciousness: "the world wavered and quivered and threatened to burst into flames." However, when contemplated from the perspective of Septimus's heightened molecularity, this passage identifies his Anomalous position while posing the question of his purpose within the universe, which Woolf later reveals through his alliance with Clarissa. Furthermore, Woolf illustrates Septimus's fear that his body is "blocking the way" for the connection of the universe, an obstacle he clears when he chooses death as his medium to suppress Sir William Bradshaw's sense of proportion and control, as well as share his message from the universe: "'I'll give it to you!' he cried, and flung himself vigorously, violently down on to Mrs. Filmer's area railings" (165). Additionally, Clarissa chooses to open up to Septimus's death and message when she retires from the party to contemplate the matter: "[h]e had killed himself—but how?" Thus, their alliance actualizes as Clarissa pursues her concordance with Septimus as a feeling of physical connection: "Always her body went through it, when she was told, first, suddenly, of an accident. . . . But why had he done it?" (192). Their alliance forms

from these moments and movements of relating molecularly, through Septimus's choice to spread a message through death and Clarissa's choice to receive it.

Septimus's absolute deterritorialization opens up Clarissa and draws her into her own becoming-imperceptible. As Deleuze stresses, "[i]t is not that the two are exchanged, for they are not exchanged at all, but the one only becomes the other if the other becomes something yet other, and if the terms disappear" (Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues* 73). Throughout *Mrs Dalloway* Septimus's connection to the plane of consistency, unlike Clarissa's, is unbroken by the realities of the molar world. He lived outside of the territories of molarity, on the borderline of the molecular intensities of the universe, without defined terms. His line of death, his becoming-other, his "offering" to the world, creates a new space in the novel for Clarissa's becoming–imperceptible to unfold.

Clarissa's Becoming-Imperceptible

The event of Septimus's suicide happens before Clarissa's party begins, yet his death stretches out along the plane of consistency, reaching out to Clarissa. Woolf composes this "philosophic unity" between the doubled characters without any formal beginning or end (Holtby 143), with the speedlessness of a "haecceity." According to Deleuze and Guattari, the ability to remove from her writings the structures of conventional temporality and plot, stripped of definable forms and subjects, was Virginia Woolf's achievement in *Mrs Dalloway*, the achievement of composing the plane of consistency:

> The plane of consistency contains only haecceities, along intersecting lines. Forms and subjects are not of that world. Virginia Woolf's walk through the crowd, among the taxis. Taking a walk is a haecceity; never again will Mrs. Dalloway say to herself, "I am this, I am that, he is this, he is that." And "She felt very young; at the same time unspeakably aged. She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on.... She always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day." Haecceity, fog, glare. A haecceity has neither beginning nor end, origin nor destination; it is always in the middle. It is not made of points, only of lines. It is a rhizome. (*Thousand Plateaus* 263)

From this perspective of haecceities, as "mode[s] of individuation" outside of temporality (261), we can establish evidence of Deleuze and Guattari's reading of *Mrs Dalloway* as a breaking down of conventional literary "points" for rhizomatic lines, as in the lines of flight that occur for Clarissa, Peter, and Elizabeth in the streets of London. Furthermore, Woolf's inscription of the plane of consistency occurs in the climactic scene of the party, where the alliance between the doubled characters forms, composing a space for Clarissa's future becoming. Through the tensions that emerge between her self "composed so for the world" as a hostess desiring to bring people together and her self that is "coming undone" from a molecular encounter with Septimus, Clarissa opens up in the middle of her party to a flow of being outside of forms and subjects, towards her inevitable imperceptibility on the plane of consistency. As Deleuze and Guattari state, "[e]verything becomes imperceptible, everything is becoming-imperceptible on the plane

of consistency, which is nevertheless precisely where the imperceptible is seen and heard" (252).

The party scene, a common event in Woolf's writings, provides a critical moment of tension between the internal and external workings of being within *Mrs Dalloway*. Writing in her diary, Woolf examines her own ambivalence towards parties: "On the one hand, I shirk the dressing and the journey. On the other, I know that with the first chink of light in the hall and chatter of voices I should become intoxicated, and determine that life held nothing comparable to a party. I should … get a sensation of being on the highest crest of the biggest wave – right in the center and swim of things" (*Moment's Liberty* 5). The party, therefore, is an event of highly charged intensities for Woolf, a complicated mixture of reservation and excitement, which she bestows upon her title character. Following Clarissa's anticipation of her party from the novel's opening, Woolf composes the varying "facets" of Clarissa's personality as a layering of her subjective states of being, ending the novel with the collision of Clarissa's external molar self and her "deeper" molecular self in the midst of the party, "right in the center and swing of things":

> And yet for her own part, it was too much of an effort. She was not enjoying it. It was too much like being--just anybody, standing there; anybody could do it; yet this anybody she did a little admire, couldn't help feeling that she had, anyhow, made this happen . . . . Every time she gave a party she had this feeling of being something not herself, and that every one was unreal in one way; much more real in another. It was, she thought, partly their clothes, partly being taken out of their ordinary ways,

> partly the background, it was possible to say things you couldn't say anyhow else, things that needed an effort; possible to go much deeper. But not for her; not yet anyhow. (*Mrs Dalloway* 181)

In this late passage of the novel, Clarissa addresses the conflicting feelings of her molar role of "being—just anybody" who can host parties, as well as the molecular intensities of knowing that she made "this happen," referencing her gift of bringing people together. Moreover, Woolf provides in the final sentence an intriguing impression – it was "possible to go much deeper. But not for her; not yet anyhow" – implying an impending moment in the text where Clarissa will be able to explore a deeper sense of being.

Hermione Lee observes that Woolf writes "the party [as] the central image" for Clarissa's "involvement with the vivid, energetic pulse of life" ("Mrs Dalloway" 23). However, Woolf begins her depiction of Clarissa at the party with a sense of failure, where Clarissa questions her role as hostess sparked by Peter Walsh's "criticising" gaze: "Oh dear, it was going to be a failure; a complete failure . . . why after all did she do these things" (*Mrs Dalloway* 179). Shortly after, Clarissa observes Ralph Lyon enjoying a conversation and her perspective on the party alters, finding small moments of success as she floats around the room from guest to guest. Parenthetically, Peter's observation of Clarissa at the party notes "her perfect ease" in her hostess role, as well as unearths her connection with the molecular rhythms of the room. His observations give expression to her molecular movement: "[l]olloping on the waves and braiding her tresses she seemed, having that gift still; to be; to exist; to sum it all up in the moment as she passed" (183). Though Clarissa is engaged in the molecular interactions of her party, Woolf persists in composing the tensions of her molar and molecular states of being. Despite her earlier

acknowledgment that people experience multiple states of being, Clarissa views her own state as only the "unreal," molar role of a hostess who must make an effort to connect with her guests. She is unaware that her desire – "to combine, to create; but to whom? An offering for the sake of offering, perhaps. Anyhow, it was her gift" (143) – will align her with Septimus to unfold her "more real" self.

Septimus's death confronts Clarissa at the party, causing her life line to correlate with the "vivid, energetic pulse of life" and unfolding her "deeper" inner self through a rupture into a moment of being. At first, the "very sad case" of Septimus's suicide shocks Clarissa: "Oh! thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death. . . . What business had the Bradshaws to talk of death at her party?" (192). However, in the following sentence, Woolf ignites the "conversation" between the doubled characters as she allows Clarissa to experience the rhythms of Septimus's death: "her body went through it" (192). Without knowing the exact details of his death, Clarissa aligns herself on the plane of consistency with the physical aspects of Septimus's suicide: "Up had flashed the ground; through him, blundering, bruising, went the rusty spikes. There he lay with a thud, thud, thud in his brain, and then a suffocation of blackness. So she saw it" (192). This moment of connection marks Clarissa's alliance with Septimus, of her impending imperceptibility, which ruptures her former self and causes an escape down the plane of consistency. As Lee goes on to comment, "[o]n this plane [Clarissa] experiences a sense of identity with Septimus;" in this state "furthest removed from her 'external,' social self, Clarissa feels the possibility . . . of going beyond the exigencies of time and place to participate in the ebb and flow of existence. This elusive, intangible self awaits death as a release, a way into communication with the general life of things"

("Mrs Dalloway" 24-5). In contrast to the molar "Clarissa" who hosts parties, who "marked a stage, this post that she felt herself to have become" like "a stake driven in at the top of her stairs" (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 181), the molecular "Clarissa" who forms an alliance with the young man who killed himself allows her subjectivity to dissolve like the "leaden circles" and experience life outside of temporality and forms.

Moreover, the musical refrain of Big Ben's leaden circles dissolving in the air, a structure Woolf implements throughout *Mrs Dalloway* as a means of territorializing the molar temporality of the novel, also rings out the unspoken molecular connection between Septimus and Clarissa. "The clock was striking−one, two, three" directly after Septimus's suicide, which Woolf echoes in the scene of Clarissa's final physical presence in the novel when her alliance with Septimus (de)composes her subjectivity in an absolute deterritorialization of the self:

> The clock began striking. The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him; with the clock striking the hour, one, two, three, she did not pity him, with all this going on. . . . she repeated, and the words came to her, Fear no more the heat of the sun. She must go back to them. But what an extraordinary night! She felt somehow very like him--the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. But she must go back. She must assemble. (193-4)

Through her alliance with Septimus, Clarissa experiences a connection with the virtual plane of becomings though her realization of the possibilities of life and death — "he had flung it all away. They went on living. . . . There was an embrace in death" (192) — and

enters into "a common asymmetrical deterritorialization. . . . a conversation" with Septimus that spreads out across the plane of consistency (Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues* 3): "*the words came to her*, Fear no more the heat of the sun." The above passage is the last connection the reader has with Clarissa's inner consciousness; although Woolf emphasizes the image of Clarissa returning to the party before the next section begins, "she came in from the little room" (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 192), there is no further physical image of or internal insight from Clarissa. Woolf dissolves Clarissa's form and subjectivity, creating a moment of being that ruptures into a becoming-imperceptible, not to be lost forever in a line of death but rather reaching the ultimate form of becoming, an absolute deterritorialization found on the plane of consistency.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, imperceptibility is "the immanent end of becoming, its cosmic formula" (*Thousand Plateaus* 279). In this respect, Clarissa has dissolved into the cosmos by becoming-imperceptible, becoming rhythmical with everything and everyone. "But what does becoming-imperceptible signify, coming at the end of all the molecular becomings beginning with becoming-woman? Becoming-imperceptible means many things." Simply stated, "a first response would be: to be like everyone else" (279). Clarissa's form and subjectivity dissolve during the scene of her molecular alliance with Septimus where the narrator no longer refers to Clarissa by her name, only addressing her in the third person form of "she." Deleuze and Guattari argue that pronouns "in no way take the place of the subject, but instead do away with any subject [form] in favor of an assemblage of the haecceity type" (265). Though an argument could be made that the scene directly following Clarissa's alliance with Septimus reinforces a physical image of Clarissa, with Peter restoring her proper name in

the text — "[b]ut where is Clarissa?" (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 194) — this moment decidedly highlights her physical absence from the party. Moreover, in the final sentence of the novel, "[f]or there she was" (200), Clarissa is a formless singularity, a concept that erupts from Peter's lips rather than an inscription of her unified being. Peter's final vision of Clarissa's reiterates his memory of her from earlier in the novel:

> with that extraordinary gift, that woman's gift, of making a world of her own wherever she happened to be. She came into a room; she stood, as he had often seen her, in a doorway with lots of people round her. But it was Clarissa one remembered. Not that she was striking; not beautiful at all; there was nothing picturesque about her; she never said anything specially clever; there she was, however; there she was. (105)

Though physically absent for the remainder of the novel, Clarissa permeates everything, no longer contained by the subjectivity of her form or role as Mrs. Dalloway, she spreads out across the room in the interactions and memories of her party guests. She returns from the side drawing room where she became-imperceptible through her alliance with Septimus and dissolves into the party room like the leaden circles of the striking hours.

In his critical analysis *Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway: A Study in Alienation*, Jeremy Hawthorn maps the progression of "Mrs. Dalloway" from the first lines of the novel to "'Clarissa', a person in her own right," noting that the final image of Clarissa is given "through the eyes" of Peter, which "is dependent upon a knowledge of Clarissa's existence over time" (9). However, in his last utterance, "[f]or there she was," Peter glimpses not the form of the subjective Clarissa that he has known all these years, but rather Woolf speaks through Peter in these final words to express the world of Clarissa's

making after she has dissolved into the cosmos. Becoming-imperceptible creates a world, or more precisely "[paints] the world on oneself, not oneself on the world" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 200). In her becoming-imperceptible, "Clarissa" is now a haecceity with speed and slowness as opposed to form, a continual process of abstract lines that makes everything, everyone, the whole world a becoming. Deleuze and Guattari state that this is precisely what becoming-imperceptible, becoming-everybody, entails: "[f]or everybody/everything is the molar aggregate, but becoming everybody/everything is another affair, one that brings into play the cosmos with its molecular components. Becoming everybody/everything (toute le monde) is to world (faire monde), to make a world (faire un monde)" (280). Clarissa has painted a new world on herself, a world of blocks of sensation and interconnectivity, "with that extraordinary gift, that woman's gift, of making a world of her own wherever she happened to be."

In the ending of *Mrs Dalloway*, Clarissa has experienced a total deterritorialization. Over the course of a day in mid-June, Clarissa Dalloway passes from the molar lines of her daily life, to molecular lines of interconnection with the city of London and its inhabitants, to an alliance with Septimus Warren Smith that causes a rupture in her subjectivity, sparking an abstract line of flight that dissolves "Clarissa" into the highest form of "singularity": becoming-imperceptible. Considering Woolf's influence – through her own theories on writing, subjectivity, and moments of being – on Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of life lines and becomings opens up a new perspective on *Mrs Dalloway*, one that embraces Clarissa's ambiguity and fluidity rather than enforcing a final summation of her resolute being at the novel's end. Instead, Woolf creates a connection with the virtual and an inscription on the plane of consistency

through Clarissa's becoming-imperceptible. This interaction within the novel gives life to Clarissa's theory of "the unseen part" surviving after death:

> Clarissa had a theory in those days. . . . she felt herself everywhere; not "here, here, here"; and she tapped the back of the seat; but everywhere. She waved her hand, going up Shaftesbury Avenue. She was all that. So that to know her, or any one, one must seek out the people who completed them; even the places. Odd affinities she had with people she had never spoken to, some woman in the street, some man behind a counter−even trees, or barns. It ended in a transcendental theory which, with her horror of death, allowed her to believe, or say that she believed (for all her scepticism), that since our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary compared with the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places after death … perhaps−perhaps. (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 167)

In allowing Clarissa to experience the event of Septimus's death and form an alliance that gives vision to her youthful theories of interconnection, Woolf composes a moment of being and an anticipatory becoming-imperceptible on the plane of consistency: "an involution, *in which form is constantly being dissolved*, freeing times and speed" (emphasis mine, Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 267).

Woolf's natural affinity with molecularity — her awareness of the interconnection of the universe, as well as her composition of a becoming-world by the various becomings of her characters — is her rhythmic signature to "saturate every atom"

in the moment, a becoming in *Mrs Dalloway* that speaks to Deleuze and Guattari. They are keenly aware of Woolf's stylistic ability "to eliminate all that is resemblance and analogy, but also to 'put everything in it': eliminate everything that exceeds the moment, but put in everything that it includes−and the moment is not the instantaneous, it is the haecceity into which one slips" (280). Through multiplicities and becomings, and reaching the vital singularity of Clarissa's imperceptibility, Woolf "saturates" every moment, creating a "haecceity into which one slips," a moment of ineffable harmony on the plane of consistency through a "real" vision of Clarissa, dissolved beyond forms and subjectivity. Clarissa Dalloway is a composition of Virginia Woolf's ideal character, without succumbing to *this* or *that*.

Conclusion
A Deleuzian Vocabulary for Woolf's Writings

> Moments like this are buds on the tree of life, flowers of darkness they are, she thought (as if some lovely rose had blossomed for her eyes only).[24]
>
> — Virginia Woolf

"And so I go on to suppose," Virginia Woolf writes in "A Sketch of the Past," "that [my] shock receiving capacity is what makes me a writer. I hazard the explanation that a shock is at once in my case followed by the desire to explain it" (72). In this excerpt from her memoir, Woolf provides an interesting glimpse into the motivation behind her method of writing as "the desire to explain" moments of being and "life itself." Given that Woolf adamantly proposed in her essays "Modern Fiction" and "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown" that writing should be something more than simply an attempt to outline life or to describe it from the outside, it is intriguing to consider Woolf's "desire to explain" life alongside the ambiguous structures of her novels that continue to elude readers and cause contention amongst scholars nearly a century later. In her attempt to "come closer to life," Woolf formed her writing style to investigate the inner and outer working of her characters. However, as demonstrated in *Mrs Dalloway*, the effects of this method can lead to a breakdown in linear temporality, as well as a deconstruction of the characters' sense of self and being, which potentially leaves readers feeling disconnected from a sense of "reality" in the novels. This thesis engages Woolf's writing with the literary philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari as a way of reconciling this apparent disconnect, between Woolf's desire to explain and the elusive qualities of her writing that defy explanations, by giving a vocabulary for addressing the ambiguities

[24] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway,* 68.

inherently threaded through Woolf's novels. The idiosyncratic vocabulary of Deleuze and Guattari – life lines, becomings, plane of consistency, intermezzo, anomalous, imperceptibility – offers a new approach for discussing Woolf's expression of life and being in her novels, without pinning down her intentions to *this* or *that*.

In accordance with Derek Ryan and Laci Mattison in their essay "Deleuze, Virginia Woolf and Modernism" published in *Deleuze Studies*, I argue that the discourse of "Woolf, then, has emerged in recent years as someone who demands serious consideration in dialogue with Deleuzian philosophy" (423). With regard to *Mrs Dalloway*, the implementation of Deleuzian terminology allows for the consideration of Clarissa's external molar self and internal molecular self, as they relate to Woolf's theories on subjectivity and being, without further complicating the novel's intentions by addressing varying ideological approaches from sexuality to trauma studies. Rather, as Colebrook states in her essay "Woolf and Theory," "thinking about what Deleuze and Guattari write about Woolf might open up new ways of thinking beyond a certain textualist or linguistic reading of modernism that in turn yields a textualist or linguistic reading of 'theory'" (68). Thus, a Deleuzian approach to *Mrs Dalloway* supports Woolf's desire to create a modern novel that, despite its illustration of Woolf's awareness of sociological issues, remains a philosophical expression of her theories on life and being. The correlation between Deleuze's concept of becoming and Woolf's expression of moments of being in this thesis allows for an exploration of Clarissa's various forms of being throughout the text without reducing *Mrs. Dalloway* to fractured pieces that represent one-dimensional modes of her character.

In *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf anticipates Deleuze, who maintains, "[w]riting is very simple. Either it is a way of reterritorializing oneself, conforming to a code of dominate utterances, to a territory of established states . . . Or else, on the other hand, it is a becoming" (Deleuze and Parnet, Dialogues 74). As addressed in this thesis, Woolf composes her characters in *Mrs Dalloway* as either molar characters with non-being (Ellie Henderson and Sir William Bradshaw), characters with molecular potential who reterritorialize back into the molar (Elizabeth Dalloway and Peter Walsh), or characters like Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith who experience becomings. However, this idea from Deleuze that writing is either a reterritorialization or a deterritorialization into a becoming applies to Woolf's work on more levels than just a textual reading of the characters. Woolf redefines writing's potentiality as outlined in "Modern Fiction." Through her novels, including *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf creates moments of being and becomings that deterritorialize away from the "dominate utterances" and "established states" of literature's form and function. In her recent article in *The New Yorker*, "Woolf's Darkness: Embracing the Inexplicable," Rebecca Solnit traces the idea of Woolf's desire to create "mystery" in all forms of her writings:

> She is calling for circumstances that do not compel the unity of identity that is a limitation or even repression. It's often noted that she does this for her characters in her novels, less often that, in her essays, she exemplifies it in the investigative, critical voice that celebrates and expands, and demands it in her insistence on multiplicity, on irreducibility, and maybe on mystery, if mystery is the capacity of something to keep becoming, to go beyond, to be uncircumscribable, to contain more. (n.pag.)

This idea of the search for mystery – "of something to keep becoming, to go beyond, to be uncircumscribable" – as well as her interest in multiplicities and irreducibilities reinforces the need for a Deleuzian vocabulary for the discourse of the self and being in Woolfian scholarship.

In denying her readers access to the internal workings of her main character in the final moments of *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf composes the final image of Clarissa's self as a nondescript flux of being. She concludes the novel with the subtle composition of a theory she expresses in her essay "Street Haunting: A London Adventure," published by her husband posthumously one year after her death:

> Is the true self this which stands on the pavement in January, or that which bends over the balcony in June? Am I here, or am I there? *Or is the true self neither this nor that, neither here nor there, but something so varied and wandering that it is only when we give the rein to its wishes and let it take its way unimpeded that we are indeed ourselves?* Circumstances compel unity; for convenience sake a man must be a whole." (emphasis mine, 28-9)

Similar to this feeling of being "neither here nor there," Woolf's final image of Clarissa is neither here nor there; is neither this nor that. Woolf has given Clarissa a moment of being, an alliance with Septimus, which has allowed her to take off down the plane of consistency, unimpeded, towards her own "indeed" self. She is a unity, but not for the convenience sake of circumstance as Woolf describes; rather, she is a whole unified with the universe. Returning to "A Sketch of the Past," Woolf goes on to explain in her memoir that her expression of moments of being "become[s] a revelation of some order;

it is a token of some real thing behind appearances; and I make it real by putting it into words. It is only by putting into words that I make it whole" (72). In this respect, Woolf "explains" life not with the precision of well-defined and corresponding pieces, but rather with the ambiguity of a philosophical consideration of the uncircumscribed spirit.

This study illustrates the inherent connection between Virginia Woolf's philosophical approach to writing and Giles Deleuze's ambiguous vocabulary formulated for his literary exploration of modernist texts. To read *Mrs Dalloway* through the lens of Woolf's theories on writing and being, to engage with the process of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming, is to embrace the journey of Woolf's creative process of reaching out towards the uncircumscribed spirit. Woolf's capacity to express a vision of self and being through Clarissa Dalloway, to theorise through *Mrs Dalloway* the possibilities of characters "coming undone," establishes her life-long desire to push her method of writing always further in order to come closer to "life itself." As Woolf confesses in her diary, "[a]nd sometimes I suppose that even if I came to the end of my incessant search into what people are and feel I should know nothing still" (Moment's Liberty 128).

Bibliography

Primary

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari . *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987. Print.

Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs Dalloway*. ed. Jo-Ann Wallace. Toronto: Broadview Editions, 2013. Print.

Secondary

Bennett, Arnold. "Is the Novel Decaying?" *Things that have Interested me*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1926. Print.

Bloom, Harold. *Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988. Print.

Briggs, Julia. *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life*. New York: Harcourt, 2005. Print.

Butler, Judith. *Giving an Account of Oneself*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005. Print.

Colebrook, Claire. "Woolf and 'Theory.'" Virginia Woolf in Context. ed. Bryony Randall and Jane Goldman. London: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 65 - 78. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Trans. Michael Greco and Daniel Smith. Minneapolis; University of Minnesota Press, 1997. Print.

---. *Negotiations*. Trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995. Print.

--- and Claire Parnet. *Dialogues*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbra Habberjam. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987. Print.

---. *Dialogues II*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbra Habberjam. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. Print.

--- and Félix Guattari. *Anti Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1983. Print.

---. *What is Philosophy?* Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. Print.

Edmondson, Annalee. "Narrativizing Characters in *Mrs Dalloway*" *Journal of Modern Literature* 36.1 (2012): 17 - 36. Web. http://muse.jhu.edu.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/journals/journal_of_modern_literature/v036/36.1.edmondson.html

Gleason, Phillip. "Identifying Identity: A Sematic History." *The Journal of American History* 69.4 (1983): 910 - 31. Web. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1901196

Hawthorne, Jeremy. *Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway: A Study in Alienation*. London: Sussex University Press, 1975. Print.

Holtby, Winifred. *Virginia Woolf: A Critical Memoir*. ed. Marion Saw. London: Continuum, 2007. Print.

Hussey, Mark. *The Singing of the Real World: The Philosophy of Virginia Woolf's Fiction*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1986. Print.

Kennedy, P. C. "P. C. Kennedy, from a review, *New Statesman*." *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*. ed. Robin Majumdar. New York: Routledge, 1975. 165-7. Print.

Lee, Hermione. "Mrs. Dalloway." *Virginia Woolf: Bloom's Major Novelists*. ed. Harold Bloom. Broomall, Chelsea House Publishers, 2002.

---. *Virginia Woolf*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1996. Print.

Littleton, Jacob. "*Mrs Dalloway:* Portrait of the Artist as a Middle-Aged Woman." *Critical Insights: Mrs Dalloway*. ed. Dorothy Dodge Robbins. New Jersey: Salem Press, 2012. 291 - 312. Print.

Meisel, Perry. *The Absent Father: Virginia Woolf and Walter Pater*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980. Print.

Minow-Pinkney, Makiko. *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject: Feminine Writing in the Major Novels*. London: Edinburgh University Press, 2010. Print.

Richter, Havana. *Virginia Woolf: The Inner Voyage*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970. Print.

Ryan, Derek and Laci Mattison. "Introduction: Deleuze, Virginia Woolf and Modernism." *Deleuze Studies*7.4 (2013):421-426.Web. http://www.euppublishing.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/doi/abs/10.3366/dls.2013.0122

Solnit, Rebecca. "Woolf's Darkness: Embracing the Inexplicable." *The New Yorker*. 24 April, 2014. NewYorker.com. Web. 26 April, 2014. http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/books/2014/04/virginia-woolf-darkness-embracing-the-inexplicable.html

Woolf, Virginia. *A Moment's Liberty: The Shorter Diary of Virginia Woolf*. ed. Anne Oliver Bell. London: Hogarth Press, 1990. Print.

---. *A Writer's Diary*. ed. Leonard Woolf. London: Hogarth Press, 1969. Print.

---. *Jacob's Room*. ed. Mark Hussey. New York: Harcourt, Inc, 1998. Print.

---. *Night and Day*. ed. Julia Briggs. London: Penguin Books, 1992. Print.

---. *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann. 4 vols. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976. Print.

---. "Modern Fiction." *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, V. III – IV*. ed. Andrew McNeillie. London: Hogarth Press, 1994. Print.

---. *Moments of Being*. ed. Jeanne Schulkind. London: Harcout. Inc, 1985. Print.

---. *Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown*. London: Hogarth Press, 1924. Print.

---. *Mrs Dalloway*. New York: Modern Library, 1925. Print.

---. *Mrs Dalloway*. *The Longman Anthology of British Literature*. Ed. David Damrosch and Kevin J. H. Dettmar. 3rd ed. 3vols. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006. 2555-2654. Print.

---. "Street Haunting: A London Adventure." *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*. London: Harvest Books, 1942. 20-36. Print.

---. *The Voyage Out*. ed. Deborah Lutz. New York: The Modern Library, 2001. Print.

Wang, Ban. "'I' on the Run: Crisis of Identity in *Mrs Dalloway*." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 38.1 (1992): 177-191. Web. http://muse.jhu.edu.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/journals/modern_fiction_studies/v038/38.1.wang.html

Watkins Fulton, Lorie. "'A Direction of One's Own': Alienation in *Mrs Dalloway* and *Sula*." *Critical Insights: Mrs. Dalloway*. ed. Dorothy Dodge Robbins. New Jersey: Salem Press, 2012. 125 - 143. Print.

Zwerdling, Alex. "Mrs. Dalloway and the Social System." *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 92 (1977): 69-82. Web. http://www.jstor.org/stable/461415

Consulted

Bell, Quentin. *Virginia Woolf: A Biography. Volume 1-2*. London: The Hogarth Press, London, 1972. Print.

Bell, Vereen. "Misreading 'Mrs. Dalloway.'" The Sewanee Review 114.1 (2006): 93-111. Web. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27549779.

Berman, Jeffery. *Surviving Literary Suicide*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999. Print.

Braidotti, Rosi. "Intensive Genre and the Demise of Gender." *Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 13.2 (2008): 45-56. Web. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09697250802432112#.U7A5p_ldURc

Briggs, Julia. *Reading Virginia Woolf*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006. Print.

---. *Virginia Woolf: Introduction to the Major Works*. London: Virago Press, 1994. Print.

Colebrook, Claire. *Gilles Deleuze*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*. trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1986. Print.

Dowling, David. *Mrs. Dalloway*: *Mapping Streams of Consciousness*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991. Print.

Forbes, Shannon. "Equating Performance with Identity: The Failure of Clarissa Dalloway's Victorian 'Self' in Virginia Woolf's 'Mrs. Dalloway.'" MMLA 38.1 (2005): 38-50. Web. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30039298

Gelfant, Blanche H. "Love and Conversion in 'Mrs. Dalloway.'" Criticism 8.3. (1996): 229-245. Web. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23094188

Goldman, Jane. *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Print.

Guth, Deborah. "Rituals of Self-Deception: Clarissa Dalloway's Final Moment of Vision." Twentieth Century Literature 36.1 (1990): 35-42. Web. http://www.jstor.org/stable/441627

Guth, Deborah. "'What a Lark! What a Plunge!': Fiction as Self-Evasion in 'Mrs Dalloway.'" MHRA 84.1 (1989): 18-25. Web. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3731946

Hughes, John. *Lines of Flight: Reading Deleuze with Hardy, Gissing, Conrad, Woolf*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2007. Print.

Monaco, Beatrice. *Machinic Modernism: The Deleuzian Literary Machines of Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. Print.

Olson, Liesel M. "Virginia Woolf's 'the cotton wool of daily life.'" *Journal of Modern Literature* 26.2 (2003): 42-65. Web. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3831894

Richter, Harvena. "New Ways of Looking at Virginia Woolf." Studies in the Novel 20.4 (1988): 417-422. Web. http://www.jstor.org/stable/29532601

Ryan, Derek. *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory: Sex, Animal, Life*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013. Print.

Sellers, Susan. *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*. London: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Print.

Snaith, Anna. "Virginia Woolf's Narrative Strategies: Negotiating between Public and Private Voices." JML 20.2 (1996): 133-148. Web. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3831471

Woodward, Keith and John Paul Jones III. "One the Border with Deleuze and Guattari." *B/ordering Space*. ed. Henk van Houtum, Olivier Kramsch and Wolfgang Zierhofer. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2005. Print.

Woolf, Virginia. *The Moment and Other Essays*. London: Harcourt, 1974. Print.

Zunshine, Lisa. "Theory of Mind and Experimental Representations of Fictional Consiousness." Narrative 11. 3 (2003): 270-291. Web. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20107319