

The Radical Empirical Modernism of Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Doctorate in Philosophy degree in English

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Abstract

My dissertation argues that the writings of Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence are animated by a shared belief that the way human beings experience and understand their worlds needs to be radically transformed. Their works expose how human experience is canalized by habits reinforced through education and custom, and they explore the ways people might overcome these limitations to expand the receptive possibilities of their experience, illustrating more fruitful ways their readers might engage their worlds. Their novels offer a radical recasting of the human subject and its situation in the environment, one that valorizes a turn away from the fixity of conceptual certainty and an embrace of experiences that trouble clean distinctions between the human being and its world. Reading through the lens of radical empiricism, this project makes the case that Woolf and Lawrence are together engaging in a similar project: they are working from a shared interest in intensive explorations of the seemingly ineffable qualities in concrete human experience and in bringing those accounts into language to suggest the relational constitution of the human being with other people and the environment. They are working experimentally to discern the extent to which the human being can know first-hand its place in the extensive world. In doing so, the authors come to understand such a human being differently, as simultaneously discrete and non-discrete. By examining the methodological and philosophical intersections of these two authors, this project serves as a first step in suggesting a radical empirical British modernism.

Woolf's and Lawrence's approaches to experience have philosophical implications that become more apparent when read in conjunction with William James's philosophy of radical empiricism and the related philosophies of Henri Bergson and A. N. Whitehead. While "radical

empiricist” is not a common moniker for these philosophers, my project makes the case for the consideration of several of their works as reflective of a line of confluent thought that illuminates the concerns of some modernist literature with developing a new understanding of the human situation through an inclusive attention to lived experience.

The project is organized into four chapters. In the first chapter, I establish the radical empirical philosophical situation of Woolf’s and Lawrence’s writing, revealing in their novels how the dispositions of the characters facilitate different worlds, and elaborating the attentive approaches that they valorize through their novels. In the second chapter, I explore their critiques of abstraction, elaborating their concern with fixed abstract forms while countering readings of their work as anti-intellectual or apophatically mystical. In the third chapter, I examine how in and through their novels they engage the difficulty of articulating preconceptual experience, and I explore how they productively use ambiguity towards this end. In the fourth and final chapter, I examine the relational situation of the human individual that their novels disclose and the sort of self-understanding that they champion through their work.

Acknowledgments

It is a wonderful feeling to have reached the end of this long road and to be able to extend my thanks to those who have made what once seemed unimaginable real.

I owe an immense debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Bernhard Radloff, who selflessly offered his support and guidance in ensuring that this project came to fruition. His insight and advice were indispensable in bringing cogency and coherence to my work.

I am incredibly thankful to my readers, Dr. Patricia Rae, Dr. James Brooke-Smith, Dr. Dominic Manganiello, and Dr. David Rampton for their careful engagement with my work and for their thoughtful comments and advice.

I am grateful for the financial support I received during my studies through both a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Doctoral Fellowship and an Ontario Graduate Scholarship.

Finally, I could not have accomplished any of this without the unwavering, loving support of my wife, Jen. You have been—and are—incredible.

Introduction

The writings of Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence are animated by a shared belief that the way human beings experience and understand their worlds needs to be radically transformed. The works of these two authors expose how contemporary human experience is canalized by habits reinforced through education and custom, and the novels that this project examines are both experimental explorations of the ways people might overcome these limitations and expand the receptive possibilities of their experience, and simultaneously provocative illustrations of more fruitful ways their readers might engage their worlds. They offer a radical recasting of the human subject and its situation within the world, one that valorizes a turn away from the fixity of conceptual certainty and an embrace of experiences that trouble clean distinctions between the human being and its world.

The impetus for this project is the desire to understand the connection within these novels between careful examinations of human experience and seemingly transcendent, mystical moments of awareness and knowledge, ones exemplified in the strange connections between Bernard and his friends in Woolf's *The Waves* and between Ursula and Birkin in Lawrence's *Women in Love*. The novels of Woolf and Lawrence describe experiences that extend beyond the seemingly restricted confines of a human being trapped within his or her subjective existence. Characters feel things beyond themselves that are not received by their five senses, and these experiences have led some critics to mystical explanations.

The work of David Garrett Izzo (2009) is illustrative of this mystical reading in modernist studies. Garrett finds in modernism a collection of writers he identifies as "mystics," who are interested not in expanding human awareness or developing expressive capacities, but rather in "reclaim[ing] the wordless state" (97). The mystical author attempts to provoke the reader to

“identify with and come to ‘unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground of all experience’” (12).

Izzo suggests that the goal of this literature is ecstatic transcendence, a quest to “reclaim an undifferentiated connection to the whole” (61).¹ Philip Weinstein (2005) suggests that modernist writing, while pursuing a critique of logocentric discourse, finds its expression in the pursuit of aggressive defamiliarization that is part of a “poetics... of unknowing.” Weinstein argues that modernist authors opposed to intellectual certainty pursue merely an acknowledgment of the ineffable, from which they keep a respectful distance. For Weinstein, only postmodernism can move beyond the ineffable and offer new forms of expression (4-5).

Such mystical and anti-intellectual readings are unsatisfactory, for they suggest that modernist authors do not try to articulate what seems ineffable, instead surrendering to the idea that such experiences cannot be broached by language. Such a foreclosure of curiosity, inquiry, and linguistic innovation is antithetical to the works of Woolf and Lawrence. Both rejected mystical explanations in favor of an empirical approach. Their rigorous considerations of human experience lead them to their radical, seemingly mystical, conclusions, just as such an examination does in less concrete ways for several contemporary philosophers.

Philosophical Critical Framework

Lawrence and Woolf’s approach to experience has philosophical implications that become more apparent when read in conjunction with a contemporaneous set of philosophical

¹ Izzo’s characterization of mysticism has commonalities with the reading of radical empirical modernism here. He understands the writers to be engaging their intuitive faculties to surpass “societally learned dogmatic responses” (105), and he finds humanity and its environment thoroughly interrelated: “Earth and humanity are events in a contiguous and continuous perpetual continuum” (5-6). However, he understands the goal of mystical modernism to be purely ecstatic: “The mystics seek to reclaim the wordless state” (97), to be “seek[ing] transcendence from differentiated particularities to tell through parable how one can reclaim an undifferentiated connection to the whole” (61). Key contrasting elements in the radical empirical modernism I am positing are both the continuous desire to bring the awareness gained into language, and the recognition of the importance of experiences of separation and the constitution of the individual.

commitments; their literary works share an approach to experience and a number of resultant implications with William James's radical empiricism and the related philosophies of Henri Bergson and A. N. Whitehead. "Radical empiricist" is not a common shared moniker for these philosophers. While critics readily acknowledge commonalities between James, Bergson, and Whitehead, none but James—who coined the term—are referred to as a radical empiricist by literary or philosophical critics. Bergson and Whitehead, who have enjoyed recent critical popularity, are regularly situated within the philosophical context of posthumanism and new materialism. Even James is placed within this context in recent work by Brian Massumi, who, writing on these philosophers from a Deleuzian perspective, divorces radical empiricism from its roots in human experience to align it with posthumanism.

Keith Ansell Pearson's *Germinal Life: The Difference and Repetition of Deleuze* (1999) is representative of the way that critics have taken up philosophers like Bergson, whose work influenced Deleuze's philosophy. Bergson's current critical popularity has risen via the influence of Deleuzian criticism like Pearson's, which identifies the value of Bergson's thought through the lens of Deleuzian philosophy: "It is part of the brilliance of Deleuze's readings to show the vital importance and continuing relevance of [Bergson's] great texts on time, creative evolution, and memory, for the staging of philosophical problems" (1). Deleuze employs Bergsonism "to re-invent [philosophic] modernity and to articulate a radical project for philosophy" (1-2). Bergson's contemporary popularity is indebted to Deleuze, yet it is also altered by this inflection and read within the context of postmodern and posthuman theory.²

² In a similar fashion, the theory of Whitehead has been taken up as explicitly *postmodern*. David Ray Griffin's *Whitehead's Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy* (2007), borne out of John Cobb's depiction of Whitehead as a postmodern theological philosopher (4), serves as an extensive attempt to explicate "the contemporary relevance of Whitehead's philosophy, understood as a version of postmodern philosophy" (x). Griffin situates Whitehead's work as the foundation for a school of "Whiteheadian postmodernists" (6). This classification of the philosophy suggests that it is divorced from its own period—an outlier, rather than indicative of major trends of

Pearson's interest in Bergson and Deleuze revolves around the issues of posthumanism. He asks, "does thinking beyond the human condition serve to expand the horizons by which we think that condition and so deepen its possible experience, or is the 'change of concept,' in regard to the overhuman, so dramatic that it requires the dissolution of the human form and the end of 'the human condition'?" (2). While Pearson quickly arrives at the conclusion that Deleuze's philosophy does not seek to abandon the human condition—"going 'beyond' the human condition does not entail leaving the 'human' behind, but rather aims to broaden the horizon of its experience" (20)—the focus of his study is firmly upon the extension *beyond* the human, the human being's continuing to exist notwithstanding. What Deleuze's philosophy does, with its rich Bergsonian influence, is to conceive "a human nature beyond the human condition" (59). While Pearson's reading of Deleuze and Bergson is troubled by the posthuman shift, it indicates the Deleuzian trend of criticism around these philosophers, one initiated by Deleuze himself. In "Percept, Affect, and Concept," Deleuze and Guattari describe Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and her nonhuman becoming: she "passed into the town like 'a knife through everything' and becomes imperceptible herself." They find that characters like Clarissa Dalloway "do not perceive but have passed into the landscape and are themselves part of the compound of sensations" (169). The humanist interests of these philosophers, a term that James uses to identify the atmosphere of thought within which his work participates, is overlooked in favour of such new materialist and posthumanist implications of their writing.³ For radical

thought that constitute modernism. Much of Griffin's reading of the philosophy is consistent with my reading of radical empiricism, including Whitehead's focus on "immediate experience" (6), which Whitehead shares with James, and his interest in the extension of experience beyond the single human subject, which Griffin calls "panexperientialism" (12).

³ Both new materialism and posthumanism are critical movements arising within the new millennium that ground the interest of their studies beyond the human experiencer. New materialism responds to "a cultural turn that privileges language, discourse, culture, and values," and seeks to instead "give material factors their due in shaping society and circumscribing human prospects" (Coole and Frost 3). Posthumanism involves "the convergence of anti-humanism on the one hand and anti-anthropocentrism on the other, which may overlap, but refer to different

empiricism, the material implication of world and human beings does not lead one to discount the experience of their individuality.

Pearson suggests that modernist art is trapped within the subjective sphere. He notes the power of the modern artist to “break down the barrier that space creates between the intellect and life in duration,” but he insists that “the limitation of modern art is that it concerns only an individual.” To move beyond this vantage point, Pearson writes that the specialized work of philosophy is required (32-33). The modernist literature examined herein begins from the experiencing human’s vantage point, which necessarily involves the individual, but the interest of modern art does not stop at the individual. The novels of Woolf and Lawrence ultimately trouble the definition of the “individual” and move from the seemingly isolated subject’s experience to the broader vistas of the extensive world.

Brian Massumi’s work has helped to bolster recent critical attention in the philosophies of James, Bergson, and Whitehead. This current project is indebted to Massumi’s work for drawing attention to the early-20th Century constellation of philosophical thought,⁴ even as it eschews Massumi’s casting of these philosophers within a Deleuzian postmodern, post-human philosophical context. His work in *Semblance and Event* (2011) shares a number of interests with this project. Both are animated by an interest in the relationship between the one and many. Both find “experience” to be a central concern for the philosophers (15), and Massumi

genealogies and traditions. Anti-humanism focuses on the critique of the humanist ideal of ‘Man’ as the universal representative of the human, while anti-anthropocentrism criticizes species hierarchy and advances ecological justice” (Braidotti 13-14). While my study shares with these new schools an interest in understanding the human relationship with the world, the focus of examination is different. The philosophers and novelists of my study certainly offer something to these new schools of thought, but they are decidedly interested in human experience as foundational to their thinking.

⁴ And indeed, for the way he welcomes art into what some would characterize as the exclusive realm of science or philosophy, and the way that such artistic endeavors are taken seriously as projects seeking knowledge: “I would like simply to suggest that philosophy, art, and even cultural studies, are *empirical enterprises* in effective connection with the *same reality* science operates upon, generating results with their own claim to validity” (*Parables for the Virtual* 230).

acknowledges the importance of non-sensuous perception.⁵ He identifies the work of James and Whitehead as “activist philosophy,” which he explains is a critique of preceding philosophy that rejects “the traditional dichotomies haunting Western philosophy” (5); likewise, radical empiricism works against the philosophical and scientific segregation of the classifications of subject and object. Both Massumi and this project read in the philosophies in question a recognition of the presence and importance of indetermination within experience. Massumi writes, “in the arching of the event toward the production of its novel outcome, physical matter, life matter in general, and human life-matter are actively indistinguishable” (27).

While in many ways Massumi’s “activist philosophy” is confluent with this reading of “radical empiricism,” the differences help in developing an understanding of both radical empiricism’s methodology and the ontology that emerges from it. Part of the difference in these readings is that Massumi takes this expression of experience as the starting point for his characterization of the philosophy (i.e., that it begins with a set of commitments that situates its focus beyond the experiencing human being) whereas my project finds it to be a carefully qualified conclusion, one at which the philosophers of radical empiricism and the novelists in question arrive through careful exploration of and thought around the epistemological problem of how one experiences and knows one’s world. Furthermore, while this project agrees with Massumi that the philosophies James and Whitehead (and Bergson, for he is certainly part of the school of thought Massumi describes) work against the division of the world into categorically separate subject and objects, it does not move entirely beyond such categories, for they are a cognitive construction that is a part of human experience, and they affect that experience in important (and often destructive) ways. Massumi rightly situates “activist” philosophy against

⁵ Massumi notes the way one’s perception of an event exceeds the limits of any discrete sensory experience: “the effective perception of the shape of the event was not actually in any particular mode of sensory perception” (18).

“cognitivist” philosophy, characterizing the “cognitivist problem” as the assumption of an “abyss” between subject and object, and recognizing James’s insistence on not “presupposing a subject-object divide” (7). For Massumi, activist philosophy begins “with event-activity rather than the status of the subject.” It is specifically because of this starting point that he insists the philosophy is “*noncognitive*” (6). At the same time, Massumi insists that the philosophy is equally a “*nonobject philosophy*” (6). It *begins* with a state that is unresolved, “in the midst” of a “relational-qualitative duplicity” (5), “beginning with event activity rather than the status of the subject” (6). This project does not disagree that such philosophies seek to understand the human being as an “event” rather than an isolated subject, but it acknowledges, following James, that all experiences must be taken into account, and the powerful dichotomy of subject and object figures prominently in Western experience.

James’s work seeks to bring the experiencing subject into encounters with the flux, drawing philosophical understandings out of such direct experience. As such, it turns repeatedly to individual human experience and uses that experiential position to work towards the sort of realizations that Massumi begins from. James explains in *Some Problems of Philosophy* that empirical thinking (including the radical sort) must begin from the part and always account for it: “Empiricism proceeds from parts to wholes, treating the parts as fundamental both in the order of being and in the order of knowledge” (98). Radical empiricism originates out of an interest in the human as part of its environment. The concepts that empiricism produces “result from practical experience” (55). All the knowledge that this philosophy derives must come from “perceptual experience,” which James explains offers “the deeper features of reality”: “Here alone do we acquaint ourselves with continuity, or the immersion of one thing in another, here alone with self, with substance, with qualities, with activity in its various modes, with time, with cause, with

change, with novelty, with tendency, and with freedom” (97). The touchstone of human experience is integral to his philosophy, and while it offers the extensive world to philosophy, philosophy cannot forget that the human part is fundamental.

Likewise, to suggest that Whitehead utterly rejects the classifications of subject and object is to ignore his writing in *Adventures of Ideas*. While he acknowledges that he has “attenuated human personality into a genetic relation between occasions of human experience,”⁶ he also insists not only that “personal unity is an inescapable fact” (186), but accepts the “presupposition” that “the subject-object relation is the fundamental structural pattern of experience” (175), provided that one recognize that these terms are “relative” (176) and blur from objective to subjective within “the continuity of nature” (184). Like James, Whitehead derives his ontology from an empirical attention to “the immediate facts of our psychological experience” (*Science* 71). Acknowledging this, Murray Code (2007) situates Whitehead’s philosophy in opposition to a hegemonic, repressive, violent “modern science” and “modern rationality,” identifying Whitehead’s conviction “that experiencing has a central core that must be made pivotal when trying to make sense of ... everyday lives” (2-3, 7).

James’s philosophical approach is “radical” because it allows for the inclusion of all experience, including what baldly empirical explanations dismiss—elements that cannot be measured, like memory, feeling, and the experience of temporal continuity— “to be radical, an empiricism must neither admit into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is not directly experienced” (*Essays* 22). In explaining his understanding of radical empirical philosophy, James draws upon the primary experience of

⁶ He writes, “The doctrine of human experience which I have outlined ... preserves a doctrine of distinguishable individualities which are the separate occasions of experience, and a doctrine of continuity expressed by the identity of subjective form inherited conformally from one occasion to the other.” Thus, human personality in this explanation is “attenuated” into the continuity of inheritance between “the separate occasions of experience” (186).

human “*appreciations*” and then explains how they extend beyond the human subject and are shared with the extensive world (18).⁷ He directly states that his insights are founded upon his personal experience: “I, too, have my intuitions and I must obey them” (19). Radical empiricism starts with an examination of what is on offer in direct experience and uses those insights to develop an ontological vision.

In “A World of Pure Experience,” James explains that the continuity threading together the moments of one’s personal experience helps reveal to the experiencer conjunctive relations that circulate throughout the field of experience. The primary relation one can know is the continuous “conjunctive relation” of one’s “personal histor[y]”:

to be a radical empiricist means to hold fast to this conjunctive relation of all others, for this is the strategic point, the position through which, if a hole be made, all the corruptions of dialectics and all the metaphysical fictions pour into our philosophy. The holding fast to this relation means taking it at its face value, neither less nor more; and to take it at its face value means first of all to take it just as we feel it, and not to confuse ourselves with abstract talk *about* it, involving words that drive us to invent secondary conceptions in order to neutralize their suggestions and to make our actual experience again seem rationally possible.

What I do feel simply when a later moment of my experience succeeds an earlier one is that though they are two moments, the transition from the one to the other is *continuous*. [...] Practically to experience one’s personal continuum in

⁷ Eugene Taylor, in *William James on Consciousness Beyond the Margin* (1996), insists that William James’s is a “person-centred science” (7-8). He points out that James “cautioned against omitting the experiencing person at the centre of the equation” (129).

this living way is to know the originals of the idea of continuity and sameness....

(*Essays* 26)

Thus, one does not need to look to more sophisticated ontological explanations to know continuity. In moment-to-moment experiences, one can realize that the different configurations of the self that manifest in each moment are simultaneously part of one continuous being. Thus, one can realize the pluralistic constitution of a single thing. These realizations prevent what James describes as the erroneous “substitut[on]” of “a lot of static objects of conception for the direct perceptual experiences” such that “the plain conjunctive experience has been discredited by both schools, the empiricists leaving things permanently disjointed, and the rationalists remedying the looseness by their Absolutes or Substances, or whatever other fictitious agencies of union they may have employed” (27). By situating the foundation of his philosophy in the continuity of human experience, James seeks to avoid the shattering objectification of basic empiricism and also the unnecessary ontological constructions of the rationalists.

James’s interest in the primary experience of one’s continuity is to stave off treating “the subject and its object ... as absolutely discontinuous entities” (28), for he suggests that “the knower and the known” are, in perception, “the self-same piece of experience taken twice over in different contexts” (28). Thus, they are parts of the same relational matrix wherein subject and object are secondary assignments upon undifferentiated experience.⁸ The human is simultaneously individual *and* caught up in the relational concatenation and interconnection of the world. One’s approach to experience, how one attends to it and the ideas one brings to that act of attending, will determine which of those states one finds in any examination. Such is also

⁸ As James writes in *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, “what constitutes a subject and an object varies. An element that was a subject at one terminus may be taken up as an object in the next, or function as both at the same time” (31).

reflected in Whitehead's philosophical commitments. He writes in *Adventures of Ideas* regarding "continuity and atomicity" that "neither can be dispensed with" (185).⁹

James's attention to the continuity of human experience emerges from his desire to eschew calcified abstract frameworks. While perceivers cannot do without the abstracting faculty entirely, they can minimize and eschew the "ever more abounding conceptual distinctions" that thinkers like Bradley impose on the world: "Immediate experience has to be broken into subjects and qualities, terms and relations, to be understood as truth at all. Yet when so broken it is less consistent than ever" (*Essays* 50-51). James suggests that the experiencer needs to find a balance between "raw ... undistinguished" experience and "all distinction without oneness" that Bradley offers (51), who in his philosophical approach "turns his back on finite experience forever" (52). James argues for a pragmatic implementation of the intellect, one that returns to "finite" experience repeatedly: "Only in so far as they lead us, successfully or unsuccessfully, back into sensible experience again, are our abstracts and universals true or false at all" (52). For James, the more developed and intransigent a set of ideas becomes, the less one has recourse to experience, which is constantly changing and rife with experientiable relations; in it, "innumerable particular terms lapse and are superseded by others that follow upon them by transitions which, whether disjunctive or conjunctive in content, are themselves experiences, and must in general be accounted at least as real as the terms which they relate" (33). Thus, James's radical empiricism counters static concepts that become, over time, increasingly disconnected

⁹ Such contradictions in Whitehead's philosophy, between "perspectivity and cosmology," or individuality and cosmological unity, lead critic Stephen David Ross (1983) to conclude that Whitehead's work suffers from a "continual tension between ... two fundamental strains," a tension that he suggests is comprised of "incompatible" elements in the philosophy (viii). He writes that Whitehead's perspectival principle "is weakened and confused in his theory by the cosmological principle and the principle of experience. [...] The cosmological principle is, I believe, the source of the greatest errors in the history of thought" (276). Ross posits that Whitehead's "strains" of cosmological and experiential thought must be discarded to preserve his valuable perspectival ideas. Conversely, such apparent contradictions are, I suggest, a foundational element of radical empirical philosophy.

from the state of the concrete world, and it seeks to facilitate new experiences of the world's interrelated and changing qualities.

Bergson and Whitehead both likewise advocate for the reduction of such conceptual baggage brought to perception. Bergson insists that people must avoid filtering experience through preexistent intellectual preconceptions, taking facts “in their springing forth instead of taking them already sprung” (*Creative* 361). That is, one should derive knowledge from direct experience, not from indirect inheritance. Like James, Whitehead advocates for a careful attention to experience that minimizes the selective reduction of the intellect, encouraging “an unflinching determination to take the whole evidence into account” (*Science* 232). While the human being's experiences are in continuity with the extensive world, eschewing habitual abstractions requires not the relinquishing of one's cognitive capacity—some capitulation to transcendental at-oneness with pure experience—but rather the careful engagement with one's cognitive faculties to avoid falling into the same habitual patterns of thought. Bergson advocates for the development of new ideas from finite experience to facilitate novel knowledge to further facilitate new experiences: “we must look for hints to expand the intellectual form of our thought; from there shall we derive the impetus necessary to lift us above ourselves” (*Creative* 49). Whitehead's own work similarly suggests the important role of cognitive faculties in engagements with the world, which he suggests can be better employed to offer a more nuanced understanding: “It is the business of rational thought to describe the more concrete fact from which the abstraction is derivable” (*Adventures* 186).

Aside from a shared methodological interest, these philosophies each find in experience juxtapositions of individuality and collectivity. Rather than trying to reduce either to the other, philosophers of radical empiricism reach conclusions suggesting that the one and the many

paradoxically coexist in the world and, more importantly for this study, in the human being. The change in James's philosophical convictions between his *Principles of Psychology* (1890) and *A Pluralistic Universe* (1908) is illustrative of this point. James's work in *Principles of Psychology* is, by his own account, rigorously tied to particular rational constructions. These particular early intellectual allegiances have led critics to suggest that James's philosophy is individualistic, atomistic, or rooted in the physiological, but such readings do not adequately account for the development of James's thinking.¹⁰ In the earlier text, James overtly rejects the idea that the mental states are composite in nature; entities, he writes, cannot "sum *themselves* together. Each remains, in the sum, what it always was" (*Principles* Vol.1, 158-59). Each thought that might be considered a composite of various elements is, from this understanding, a discrete entity. This consideration is founded upon the rationalistic assertion that one thing cannot be two different things at the same time.

In *A Pluralistic Universe*, James explains that he previously could not see how individual bits of thought could be participating in a greater whole (some higher level of thought) while remaining individual bits. Formerly, he suggested it was not possible. But Bergson led him to

¹⁰ Many critics characterize James as privileging a sort of particularity. Christopher Knight (1995) describes James's work as rooted in physiology: "Thought and emotion are physiological processes" (67) and "human response is understood in physiological terms" (69). He focuses on an atomistic reading of James's work, wherein it "emphasizes the importance of seeing particulars in and of themselves outside the context of large schemes" (65). Judith Ryan (1980) too draws on this atomistic reading of James, derived largely from his *Principles of Psychology*. She characterizes James's empiricism as limited to "sensory perceptions," and suggests that the connections discovered in the world are illusions produced by the mind: "if things cohere at all, they must do so only because the mind cannot deal with them without positing relations, however fictitious" (864). While Ross Posnock's investigation of James (1991) examines "the pleasure and difficulty of negotiating the shifting and permeable boundaries of self and other" (viii), he describes James as atomistically individualistic, a man whose "individualism posits that each 'I' and each 'you' keeps its own thoughts to itself" (6). In Posnock's reading, James's self is "in absolute isolation" (20), and James is classed amongst the "philosophers of individualism" (108). Jonathan Cray (2001), acknowledging the importance of attentiveness in James's work and the way it offers "the possibility of a cognitive and perceptual immediacy in which the self ceases to be separated from a world of objects, even if stabilization of those objects can never occur" (61), also, while relying largely on James's writing in *Principles of Psychology*, writes that the shared perceived world is an illusion produced by cognitive constructions: "the fact that we all seem to inhabit a common perceptual world is due ... to the overlapping common choices made by a historically evolving human community of free individuals" (62-63).

reject his rigid rationality.¹¹ James writes that Bergson “emancipated” him, “made [him] bold” (214). In *A Pluralistic Universe*, James explains that accepting this conclusion necessitates the denial of “all other superhuman collections of experience of every grade, so far at least as these are held to be compounded of our simpler souls.” This denial is necessary to defend “the incorruptible logic of self-identity” (205). James explains how this leads to unsatisfying conclusions: it “makes the universe discontinuous,” makes the succession of fields of experience “an unintelligible miracle” (206). He writes, regarding the “self-compounding of states of consciousness,” that “our accusation that it was impossible for purely logical reasons, is unfounded in principle. Every smallest state of consciousness, concretely taken, overflows its own definition. Only concepts are self-identical” (286). The depiction of the mind’s constitution offered in *Principles of Psychology* is here discarded; for James, the concrete facts of experience contradict the rational explanation of the compounding of consciousness. Bergson’s ideas freed James from his dogmatic rationalism, allowing him to acknowledge that experience contradicted the claims of intellectualism. So James, in *A Pluralistic Universe*, writes that “Reality . . . exceeds our logic” (212), that a thing can be simultaneously both individual and a constitutive part of something larger.

Each of the philosophers of radical empiricism offers a different focus that helps situate the works of Lawrence and Woolf within this philosophical movement. From James come the clearest expressions of both the methodology and the tenets of radical empiricism. His writing gives expression to a stream of philosophical thought taken up on both sides of the Atlantic: He

¹¹ In a letter to Théodore Fluornoy on January 27, 1903, James writes “I have been re-reading Bergson's books, and nothing that I have read in years has so excited and stimulated my thought. Four years ago I couldn't understand him at all, though I felt his power. I am sure that that philosophy has a great future. It breaks through old cadres, and brings things into a solution from which new crystals can be got” (*Correspondence* 189). At this point, Bergson had published both *Time and Free Will* (1889) and *Matter and Memory* (1896). He would publish *Creative Evolution* in 1907, a year before James published *A Pluralistic Universe*. James engaged in correspondence with Bergson and certainly took an eager interest in his texts.

detects “the signs of a great unsettlement, as if the upheaval of more real conceptions and more fruitful methods were imminent. . .” (*Essays* 21). Of the work of the disparate thinkers of this philosophy and their “systematic way of handling question,” James writes that

there is only a dim identity among them; and the most that can be said at present is that some sort of gestation seems to be in the atmosphere, and that almost any day a man with a genius for finding the right word for things may hit upon some unifying and conciliating formula that will make so much vaguely similar aspiration crystallize into more definite form. (81-82)

Both Bergson and Whitehead contribute unique elucidations and alternate methods of articulating a problem that James himself felt unable to adequately communicate or resolve (81). From Bergson comes a careful critique of habit, an organicism that problematizes but does not overwrite individuality, and a vitalistic moral imperative that links the gains of his philosophical inquiry to liberate and facilitate the creative development of humanity. Whitehead’s work is of special importance here for its extensive commentary upon abstraction, from which he suggests the human subject can never wholly escape, and for his understanding of each part of the world, including the human being, as an event that implicates its spatial and temporal environs.

Radical empirical philosophy provides an illuminating discursive context for an examination of the works of Lawrence and Woolf, a context that brings into focus a shared methodology, philosophical interest, and compatible conclusions about the constitution of the human being as it exists within a pervasively interrelated world. The understanding of radical empirical philosophy offered herein not only accounts for the apparent contradictions and inconsistencies in the works of the implicated philosophers, but also provides a means of

bringing divergent and apparently contradictory aspects of the authors' works together within a single philosophical framework.

Literary Critical Framework

This project focuses on the writing of Lawrence and Woolf. Aside from the fact that both authors write works that are unabashedly ambitious, the works of these two authors appear to be quite disparate. Lawrence's fiction seems focused inordinately upon the carnal body, with his interest, on the one hand, in the dark spaces of "blood consciousness" and human sexuality, and on the other, in both familial relationships and the grand scale of human social development, tracking the generations of the Brangwens alongside the development of rampant industrialization and urbanization. Conversely, Woolf's work seems fixated both upon the ephemeral inner-workings of the human mind and upon the mundane domestic life of early 20th Century affluent Britain. Certainly, the two authors employ distinctly different literary techniques, which Woolf herself noted. In her journal, during a commentary on Lawrence's letters, she sets herself apart from him, who she criticizes for his use of repetition, his overt philosophical agenda, and his animalistic carnality:

To me Lawrence is airless, confined: I don't want this, I go on saying. And the repetition of one idea. I don't want that either. I don't want 'a philosophy' in the least: I don't believe in other people's reading of riddles. ... And then it's harrowing: this panting effort after something...the brutality of civilized society to this panting agonized man: and how futile it was. All this makes a sort of gasping in his letters. And none of it seems essential. So he pants and jerks. Then too I don't like strumming with two fingers— and the arrogance. After all, English has one million words: why confine yourself to 6? and praise yourself of

so doing. But it's the preaching that rasps me. Like a person delivering judgment when only half the facts are there: and clinging to the rails and beating the cushion. Come out and see what's up here—I want to say. ... The moral is, if you want to help, never systematise—not till you're 70: and have been supple and sympathetic and creative and tried out all your nerves and scopes. He died though at 45. And why does Aldous say he was an "artist"? Art is being rid of all preaching. (*Writers Diary* 182-83)

Woolf's extensive criticism here is based entirely on Lawrence's "Letters"; however, these criticisms certainly can (and have been) applied to his writing.¹² Woolf did not recognize in Lawrence a kindred spirit—he seems to her too taken with fixed ideas and social criticism. She offers this opinion despite her admission of a lack of familiarity with his fiction: "I haven't read him of course" (183).

This seeming antipathy between the authors (at least on Woolf's part), coupled with their aesthetic differences, makes their philosophical confluence all the more fascinating. Woolf and Lawrence are together engaging in a similar project: they are working from a shared interest in intensive explorations of the seemingly ineffable qualities in concrete human experience and in bringing those accounts into language to suggest the relational constitution of the human being with other people and the environment. They are working experimentally, essaying into human experience to discern the extent to which the human being can know first-hand its place in the extensive world. In doing so, the authors come to understand such a human being differently, as simultaneously discrete and non-discrete. By examining the methodological and philosophical

¹² For example, Catherine Carswell's 1915 review of *The Rainbow* describes Lawrence's use of repetition as a symptom of "the increasingly mannered idiom which Mr. Lawrence has acquired since the writing of *Sons and Lovers*" (101).

intersections of these two authors, this project serves as a first step in suggesting a radical empirical British modernism.

Many critics have taken Woolf's interest in her literary pursuits as primarily subjective. Writing on Woolf's interest in "subject, object and the nature of reality," Timothy Mackin (2010) explains that "[t]raditionally, Woolf is portrayed as leaning heavily toward the subjective side of these matters." He points to Erich Auerbach's influential essay on Woolf in *Mimesis* as representative of this reductive treatment of Woolf's work—"Insofar as the outside world does appear, according to Auerbach, it serves only as an 'occasion ... which releases the much more significant inner process'"—and he notes that this tendency continues in current criticism: "More recent accounts have produced increasingly varied accounts of the type of subjectivity Woolf describes; but more often than not Woolf still emerges in the critical literature as a writer of 'inner process,' someone concerned primarily with the ways subjectivity organizes and affects experience" (114). Referencing Frederic Jameson's characterization of "canonical modernism" as pursuing "strategies of inwardness," James Harker notes the tendency to read her as solipsistic, again identifying Auerbach as an influential figure perpetuating this characterization: "Virginia Woolf, the argument often goes, is the most inward of all. For Erich Auerbach, Woolf does not simply privilege the inner life over external reality, that external reality is arbitrary. In Woolf's fiction, moments of looking or noticing are not important for information about the real world but rather for the thoughts that they inspire, the world being a mere 'framing occurrence'" (1). Such readings of Woolf are understandable given her interest in the granular details of lived experience, including the complex interplay of memory and imagination in perception, but they are hardly reflective of the full scope of her work's interest, where the world within which characters live figures so prominently.

Related to the focus on interiority are critics who suggest that Woolf's work is primarily interested in an escape into a world of aesthetic production. L. J. Swingle (1980) writes of a desire to "escape into a higher, self-created realm of being, that underlies Woolf's affirmations of creativity" (90). If the real world appears in Woolf's work, Swingle asserts, it is due to an artistic failing: "Perhaps the 'menace of the real world' is simply too strong to be walled out by the artists's ability to build a 'house' out of words" (93). Swingle, rather than seeing the work as insistent upon the presence of the external world, suggests that Woolf's work turns against creativity in an act of personal and artistic despair. Alexandra Harris's writing in *Romantic Moderns* (2010) similarly situates Woolf within a modernism that sought, through aesthetic production, to "engineer a tidier world" (16). While Woolf and Lawrence both express interest in creative potential, it is only productive if it facilitates a further understanding of experience. Mark Hussey (1986) explains how Woolf's work engages in "creating its own world" by "ordering the chaos" of the "real world" (137). He suggests that Woolf's success is not one of empirical discovery, but one of aesthetic construction; she "assert[s] ... a 'reality' apart from actual life and yet rooted in it; not mysticism, but a coming to fruition of the potential of imagination to order the world of experience in the forms and modes of art" (141). This project's reading of Woolf's *Night and Day* suggests that, for Woolf, one's imagination becomes harmful when it ceases to grapple with the contradictions offered in the concrete world; thus, this project rejects the idea that Woolf seeks aesthetic escape or any tidying of the complexities of the concrete world.

Contrary to the critical focus on Woolf's interiority is a growing body of criticism focusing on her environmental interest, wherein her work engages issues with the nonhuman environment. Arguing against reading Woolf as merely an "aesthete," Carol Cantrell (1998)

examines Woolf's "efforts to find more satisfactory ways of representing human relationships with the real than were available to her in the conventional novel in the realist tradition" (32). She finds in Woolf's work an emphasis on "geological, biological, and human historical processes" wherein the natural functions "as participant capable of generating meaning rather than being relegated to mere setting" (35). Louise Westling (1999) reads Woolf's vision of humanity as an organic part of a greater whole, a constitutive part of "the world's body" (872). Westling emphasizes Woolf's interest in "portray[ing] the non-human" and describes the shifting, dynamic relationships between the human subject and its environment found in Woolf's work (856). Christina Alt (2010) builds upon Westling's work, shining a light on Woolf's interest in the natural sciences. She examines how Woolf uses such an interest to "articulat[e] wider ideas about the perception and description of life" (1). Alt characterizes Woolf's work as scientifically- and experimentally-oriented, and it emphasizes the importance of attentiveness, not only to the inner vistas of human consciousness, but "to the more-than-human world" (8).

Some recent criticism has brought Woolf's interest in the environment back into conversation with her examination of consciousness. In *The Phantom Table* (2000), Ann Banfield posits Bertrand Russell and Roger Frye as Woolf's primary philosophical influences. Through this philosophical contextualization, Banfield acknowledges both poles of Woolf's interest while retaining their separation, noting how Woolf's work is "poised between the world of subject and object" (357). She characterizes these poles dualistically; they are "dual realities and dual ways of knowing" (52). Between the subjective "islands of light" are discretely separate expanses of darkness: "division between light and darkness is absolute" (113). For Banfield, Woolf's engagement with the objective world involves "the abolition of the subject but not of its object" (53). Thus, her reading of *The Waves* finds the interludes to be "unoccupied

perspectives” bereft of character; for her, the novel vacillates between two dualistically-conceived poles (12).

Lorraine Sim’s *Virginia Woolf: The Patterns of Ordinary Experience* (2010) focuses on Woolf’s interest in the “quotidian.” Sim explains that Woolf’s attention to the details of everyday life reveals a continuity with a broader, cosmic pattern (163). Woolf’s engagement with the objects of quotidian life leads into her conception of “a trans-historical, collective consciousness or mind,” which, Sim explains, Woolf as an artist is able to indicate and foster. She notes in Woolf’s work a direct connection between “ideas” and “the physical world,” which she explains are “intimately related” (168). In this pursuit, Sim’s work comes close to the pluralistic monism that I am articulating here. She acknowledges a monistic whole simultaneously coexisting in Woolf’s work with a world of particulars: “For Woolf, ‘reality’ is paradoxically single in nature – the one, abstract pattern behind appearances – yet it is also complex and multifarious in terms of the numerous things in the material world through which she apprehends it and which partake of that unity.” Thus, in her fiction, Woolf is endeavoring “to represent the fragments of daily appearances in terms of their underlying unity” (169). Sim’s work indicates a burgeoning awareness of a fruitful, not accidental, paradox in Woolf’s fiction, but Sim draws short of working out a conceptualization of Woolf’s philosophy. Instead, she suggests that escapes from habitual perception in Woolf’s writing—replete with the realization of one’s continuity with a broader environment—are achieved not through careful attentiveness, but rather through a Romantic sublimity that suggests a mystical or aesthetic escape from direct experience.

Craig Gordon’s work (2007) centres around the relationship between the individual and society in examining modes of community as they are found in Woolf and Lawrence. Gordon articulates in Woolf’s work a struggle in constituting forms of community that move beyond

individualism without imposing a collectivist melding. In *The Waves*, he finds Woolf articulating “a communal mode” that resists both the broad civil community of “imperialist nationalism” and a self-effacing “organic affective community” (173). Gordon’s work is exemplary of recent critical interest in bringing together the interest in the individual and the environment, in this case, one figured in the political context of social organization. While he draws on James’s writing, he does so with reference to James’s pre-radical-empirical *The Principles of Psychology*, wherein James’s conception of the human constitution offers, as Gordon notes, “a physiological ground for the formation of moral character and the production of individual subjects.” James’s early work “functions to differentiate individuals from one another through the maintenance of a rigid social structure that extends from the narrowly communal to the global” (157). Such a perspective on the human being fails to allow for possibility for change or social transformation. However, James’s later work does not bear out such a deterministic and inflexible conception of the human subject. Rather, it offers a philosophical framework that facilitates an understanding of the paradoxical recasting of Woolf’s subjects and their decentered situation within their environment.

The framework of radical empiricism facilitates an examination of Woolf’s work that is both epistemological—figuring primary experience as the best source of knowledge and exploring the extent of those offerings—and ontological, using the gains of such an investigation to posit a philosophical vision of the situation of the human being within the world. In addition to selections from her essays, journals, and letters, this project focuses on two of Woolf’s novels: *Night and Day* (1919) and *The Waves* (1931). The former offers an early indication of Woolf’s consistent philosophical interests. It, and much of Woolf’s early work, is often treated as philosophically distinct from her later work. For example, Michael Lackey (2006) suggests that

Woolf was influenced by philosophy before 1920 but “had a radical change of heart ... which led to her direct and focused assault on philosophy in the mid to late 1920s” (94). Mary Ann Gillies (1996) writes that, “although her first two novels are fairly conventional, it was [Roger Fry’s] exhibition, as well Fry and his ideas, which opened possibilities previously submerged in her” (53). Richard Lehan (1992) writes that, after 1922, Woolf “radically changed her philosophy of time and consciousness,” purportedly due to some latent influence of Bergsonism (324). Against these claims, this project finds in Woolf’s work the development of a consistent philosophical interest. Despite its stylistic similarities with conventional realist novels, *Night and Day* is part of the same philosophical project as Woolf’s later work and is the first clear novelistic articulation of Woolf’s radically empirical philosophical interest. In addition, the novel itself has received scant critical attention when compared to most of Woolf’s middle or late works, particularly in terms of the philosophical ideas animating her writing,¹³ and I seek to amend that critical tendency by bringing attention to the philosophical import of the novel. *The Waves* (1931) offers Woolf at her most experimental, and it adopts a narrative form that foregrounds her interest in relational experience, which is central to radical empirical thought. It serves as a useful counterpoint to *Night & Day* while also suggesting a consistent interest in radical empiricist approaches to experience, in an expansive recognition of the reciprocal implication of individuals with their environments, and with the difficulty of bringing such realizations into language while eschewing the pitfalls of linguistic and cognitive habit.

Of Lawrence’s novels, this project focuses on *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1920), which together tell the story of the origins and maturation of Ursula Brangwen. Together, these novels explore the concrete problems that Lawrence’s philosophical ideals raise. In doing

¹³ For example, Banfield’s influential examination of Woolf’s philosophy, *The Phantom Table*, makes no mention of *Night & Day*.

so, they demonstrate the damage that inflexible abstractions can impose and suggest the continual difficulty of engaging one's pervasive relational implication in each moment of experience. For Lawrence, the right sort of literature can have a transformative effect on its readers, bringing them into contact with new ways of thinking and seeing. In one of his last critical works, *Apocalypse and the Writings on Revelation* (1930), D. H. Lawrence defines "dead" literature as that which can be "fathomed." If the work of art's meaning can be resolved and made static, it ceases to be alive. A living work, on the other hand, is "*different* every time we read it," and it fosters not merely mental edification but facilitates a richer experiential vista for the reader. A living book, writes Lawrence, is "valuable like a jewel, or a lovely picture, into which you can look deeper and deeper and get a more profound experience every time," each time a "deeper experience" that "will enrich the whole soul, emotional and mental" (60). It is in pursuit of opening valuable, unexplored ways of experiencing that Lawrence writes, and the two novels under examination here perform this unfolding of unacknowledged experience through their central character.

Lawrence's relationship with linguistic abstraction is one vector of criticism with which this project engages. Some critics understand Lawrence as committed to a direct apprehension of unmediated reality, and while they find sporadic articulations of this commitment in his writing, they also echo the critique Woolf offers above about his writing when they suggest that he fails to consistently live up to this commitment through his production of conceptual abstractions. Nancy Hayles (1982) writes that for Lawrence, "reality is best and most fully apprehended directly through the body's sensuous centers, without mediation from the mind at all." She detects in his work a "strong contradiction between what Lawrence says and how he says it," noting what she sees as his interest in "direct apprehension" arising from claims made "in the

extremely abstract and objectified mode of a ‘scientific’ discourse” (95). This is situated as a failing of Lawrence’s approach. Instead, I understand it as a self-conscious engagement with the inescapability of articulation and the impossibility of any unmediated apprehension of the world. Patrick Whiteley (1987) similarly finds Lawrence to be pursuing a naïve engagement with direct experience, “a model of direct knowledge”: “Lawrence, in embracing the darkness, tries to present it directly, without mediating terms as a presence rather than an absence. To embrace the darkness is to crumble the mediating terms as a presence rather than an absence.” The problem with this articulation of Lawrence’s pursuit of direct experience is that it goes too far in suggesting that Lawrence’s project offers easy certainty. Whiteley writes that this “direct knowledge” is “an unmediated and monistic relationship between the subject and object. This form of knowledge allows for no doubt . . . because to know directly is no longer to have the critical distance that would provide the leverage for doubt” (78). While I agree that Lawrence is interested in the sort of instinctive awareness situated in the body and that he would like such easy access, like Bergson, he recognizes that one cannot know the instinct without the necessary intercession of the intellect. Lawrence’s work actively explores the difficulties and doubts that are involved in any thoughtful engagement with awareness. The disposition Lawrence advocates is, rather than naïve, carefully developed and involves the engagement of the intellectual faculties.

David Parker (1994) recognizes Lawrence’s employment of abstract concepts to access awareness and knowledge that exceeds them. He notes in *Women in Love* Gudrun’s destructive adherence to a fixed conceptual framework, largely to keep her own identity “quite definite” (149). Such fixed self-conceptions and worldviews are “ways precisely of blocking and resisting insight” (151). However, Parker does not suggest that Lawrence is attempting (and failing) to

fully realize unmediated experience. He notes that Ursula's openness is not just perceptive or instinctive; her "ease with uncertainty . . . indicate[s] an openness, not least of *mind*" (149).

Parker attends to Lawrence's use of abstract binaries, which are employed not to assert their truth but to emphasize their "dynamic interrelatedness" (148) that can lead one beyond them into "the unknown" (149). Parker's work shows Lawrence *using* abstract concepts to expose blind spots in human awareness. It implies that such abstractions are necessary, and as such Parker's work is confluent with this project, which reads Lawrence's work alongside Whitehead's own theories about the inescapability and necessary constant revision of abstraction.

Critics examining Lawrence's interest in experience and attention, by which I mean the selective disposition one has towards their world, have often failed to recognize the radical empirical dimensions of his approach. David Ellis and Howard Mills (1988) explore the ways that Lawrence engages his contemporaneous scientific thinking. In their investigation, they recognize in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* "how acutely Lawrence had observed different kinds of seeing." They explain that Lawrence's understanding of the "biological psyche helps him retain the differences he had noted" regarding "vision," but they fail to explore the extent to which his interest in human experience far exceeds sensation (96). Lawrence's interest in experience is explored further in Hayles's work, but such occurs without any engagement with its contemporaneous philosophical context. Hayles notes Lawrence's "subjective science," which she defines as "his belief that it is possible to apprehend reality directly, without mediation from the conscious mind" (89). Perhaps because she understands him to be striving for direct apprehension, she writes that "the details of Lawrence's theory are obviously at odds with the general thought of his time" (89). Lawrence's interest in attention may seek to minimize some forms of mediation, but they do not seek to escape it, and his interests have a strong connection

to the thread of contemporaneous thought explored in this project. Lawrence was not working in a vacuum, and the ideas of the radical empirical philosophers help to illuminate the sophisticated, experimental, and philosophical work that Lawrence was doing. A number of other, more recent critics have likewise noted the importance of attention in Lawrence's work,¹⁴ which this project picks up and connects to the overarching interests of radical empirical projects.

The relationship between the self and the world (or the one and the many) extends beyond the confines of Woolfean criticism, and it has become a driving concern of modernist literary criticism. Several critics have noted Lawrence's interest in the situation of the human being. While criticism moves towards acknowledging and exploring the complex relationship between the human being and the world, there is a dearth of Lawrencian criticism that recognizes that his literature and his nonfictional theorizing synthesizes individuality and monistic collectivity, a position that radical empirical philosophy helps to explain as anything but mystically transcendental.

H. M. Daleski (1969) reads Lawrence's work as striving to communicate the breakdown of subjectivity in human interrelation. Daleski asserts that, in *The Rainbow*, Lawrence pursues his commitment to come to terms with the world, and in *Women in Love*, he abandons these commitments to attempt to express interpersonal communion. Daleski's critique of Lawrence is based on the assumption that Lawrence is working to convey his personal experience to a readership, and that such an experience is "mystical" in nature. He finds that Lawrence fails to

¹⁴ For example, Jeff Wallace (2005) notes Lawrence's "profound engagement with science" (18), provided that it is an open, alert science alive with wonder. Writing on Lawrence's utopian ideal, Youngjoo Son (2006) notes that his work seeks to awaken an awareness of a reality that has been repressed by inflexible social structures: "Rather than being a signifier that heralds the arrival of the blissful new world, the apocalypse itself surfaces as a radical experience of the present that Lawrence wishes to see take place both in actual human life and in literary experience" (163). Keith Sagar (2009) suggests that "the refusal to accept the given terms of life ... has alienated man from his creative energies"; he explains that Lawrence "wants to develop a more selfless awareness, a holistic and biocentric consciousness..." (218).

convey this: “the experience remains the author’s own, personal and not transmuted into the imaginative terms which alone could secure it a rightful place in a work of art.” Consequently, he finds that Lawrence’s attempt is an aesthetic failure, denoted by his writing’s “poor quality” due to the “vagueness and stridency of the style” (155-56). If one understands Lawrence’s work as seeking something other than a mystical experience, that is, an engagement with something available within perception but exceeding the expressive capacities of current linguistic abstractions, Lawrence’s work can be conceived differently, and his seemingly anti-aesthetic linguistic choices can be understood as necessary in his attempt to convey something new with old tools. The jarring transition Daleski finds between the former and latter novel is less a rejection of the world *writ large* than it is a rejection of a calcified, inflexible world created by a static set of socially-propagated abstract constructions. The whole field potentially available in experience (which can never be experienced at once) exceeds the worlds that cultural abstractions reveal, and it is precisely these expansive vistas that Lawrence seeks.

Hayles’s work marks a burgeoning awareness of the involvement of the subject and the world when she brings quantum physics to bear in her analysis; she notes Lawrence’s interest in breaking down the binary of self and other, drawing connections between his thinking and “the ‘both-and’ epistemology implied by the Uncertainty Relation” (89). However, Hayles finds Lawrence’s dualistic predilections to overpower the more synthesizing possibilities of his work; she suggests that he asserts dualistic principles with the naïve hope that they will break down in some mystical moment, rather than noting how his writing actively but subtly subverts them: “Growing out of Lawrence’s profound dualism, the dipolar movement represents his hope that through the ‘frictional’ interplay between contraries one might break through one envelope of ordinary existence into the ‘greater mystical reality’ beyond” (95). Lawrence’s work is not

pursuing a “mystical reality” with its utter transcendence of intelligibility. The tensions between these dualities are productive, but they are effective only through Lawrence’s active desire to articulate.

Identifying Lawrence’s instinctive blood-consciousness as leading to the recognition of the implication of the self within the other, Whiteley suggests that Lawrence is interested in reaching a metaphysical awareness “where knowing and being, self and other, subject and object are one” (13). For Lawrence, he explains, “the hidden core of the self and the hidden core of the external world are one. Self and other, then, at their furthest depths, are monistically related” (77). Whiteley’s criticism affirms the monistic quality of the world that Lawrence’s work suggests, but it does so at the expense of Lawrence’s equal engagement with individual experience. While he acknowledges Lawrence’s interest “in the whole universe of dualities,” he insists that “at the centre of his vision is a resolution, a metaphysical and epistemological monism that his essays and novels formulate, even if inconsistently.” Rather than noting the complex engagement with the experience of individuality, Whiteley characterizes Lawrence’s engagement with abstraction as a failing: “The principle reason for the inconsistency is that he is required to employ the very cogitation he disparages” (78). Lawrence’s work disparages certain *types* of cogitation—fixed, inflexible abstractions—but it does not disparage all forms of abstraction, for Lawrence finds such to be necessary and indeed useful in his project which is, at heart, about articulation. Because of this failing, Whiteley turns away from Lawrence’s philosophy to suggest that critics should evaluate him aesthetically: “His discourse is often undisciplined and self-contradictory, but there is no point in hailing or condemning Lawrence by any but artistic criteria” (79).

Recognizing the interrelation of the one and the many in Lawrence's work without privileging one over the other, Gordon offers the term "Multitude,"¹⁵ which he situates against other modes of community that seek the "fusion of individuals into a unified whole" (122), to suggest this complex arrangement. It is, he writes, "a totality that assembles singularities into a constellation," that "exists on the same plane as the singularities themselves as another local intensity of the self-differentiating movement of vitality" (124). While Gordon's work goes further than earlier criticism in recognizing the plurality-containing monism of Lawrence's ontological vision, he still finds Lawrence's engagement with the subjective experience of the individual to be an inconsistent failing. He calls Lawrence's capitulation to "the language of the subject—a subject, moreover, that constitutes itself primarily through the relationship between self and other"—to be "a fall that Lawrence's text is not always successful in avoiding," and he suggests that it "is symptomatic of a tension in his project between two relatively distinct and competing movements of thought" (91). Outside of the lens of radical empirical philosophy, such would seem the case, but radical empiricism offers a critical lens that facilitates the synthesis of these seemingly opposed tendencies. The fiction of both Woolf and Lawrence bring together the self, with its experience of the duality of subject and object, *and* the human situation as a constituent part of a pluralistic multitude.

¹⁵ A term he derives from Michael Hardt's reading of Deleuze. Gordon defines it as "a form of collectivity adequate to Life" (124). The term figures prominently in Hardt and Negri's *Empire* (2000) and *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (2004).

Chapter 1: The Radical Empirical Philosophical Situation of Woolf's and Lawrence's Literature

William James's radical empirical philosophy and the related philosophical projects of Henri Bergson and A. N. Whitehead share in their commitment to what James calls "humanism," an umbrella term he offers for the "sort of gestation [that] seems to be in the atmosphere" (*Essays* 81), for "a slow shifting in the philosophic perspective, making things appear as from a new center of interest or point of sight" (100). He defines this humanistic trend as the commitment to the idea that "experience as a whole is self-containing and leans on nothing" (102), and in so doing it clears the ground for new philosophical investigations focusing on primary experience, eschewing preexisting philosophical needs:

[It] refus[es] to entertain the hypothesis of trans-empirical reality at all. It gets rid of the need for an absolute of the Bradleyan type (avowedly sterile for intellectual purposes) by insisting that the conjunctive relations found within experience are faultlessly real. It gets rid of the need of an absolute of the Roycean type (similarly sterile) by its pragmatic treatment of the problem of knowledge. (103)

With the primacy of philosophical insight placed on the careful examination of all that can be experienced, and *only* what can be experienced, James's approach offers a philosophical context within which the projects of Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence can be situated, and through which the philosophical contributions of their novels and nonfictional writing can be understood as contributing to experimental and revolutionary philosophical artistic projects.

The chapter that follows opens with a discussion of James's philosophy of radical empiricism as representative of a philosophical, epistemic movement in early 20th Century thought defined by a commitment to the careful epistemological examination of human

experience and a vision of the world as a vastly interpenetrating protean flux. A discussion of the situation of abstraction follows this, for while some critics suggest modernism pursues a perception of purified sensation, abstraction is an important constitutive part of the modernist ontologies explored here. The chapter then moves to discuss the worlds depicted in Lawrence's and Woolf's novels as reflective of similar ontological positions, wherein the world, understood as a vastly interpenetrating flux, is also constituted in its relationship with characters and their abstractions. The chapter explains that these modernist works do not seek to expose the "real" world, but rather seek to reveal how the dispositions of the characters facilitate different valid realities. The chapter closes by contextualizing the approaches to attention of Woolf and Lawrence with the radical empirical philosophical context, discussing two important attentive faculties engaged by the authors: the daydream and wonder. This chapter reveals that the literary approaches to experience that these authors engage in are sophisticated, philosophically invested explorations that are participating in a vibrant, contemporaneous thread of epistemic philosophical thought, and it sets the stage for the later chapters that explore, respectively, the critique of deleterious forms of abstraction, the linguistic strategies of the authors in attempting to articulate new or nebulous experiences, and the radical and relational subjectivities at which the authors arrive through this kind of philosophical exploration.

Radical Empiricism

James's "radical empiricism" is his philosophical expression of and contribution to the "humanism" he defined, and it figures in this project as the nexus relating the works in question. In *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (1909), James explains that radical empiricism is empirical because it "starts with the parts and makes of the whole a being of the second order"; it is radical because it "must neither admit into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced,

nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced” (22). James continues by emphasizing the sort of excluded experiences with which he is most concerned: “For such a philosophy, *the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as ‘real’ as anything else in the system*” (22-23).

James’s philosophy extends experience and experienced relations beyond *human* experience, understanding the universe as a vast, concatenated plurality. In *A Pluralistic Universe* (1908), he writes that “reality, life, experience, concreteness, immediacy, use what word you will, exceeds our logic, overflows and surrounds it” (212). The plurality of terms that James offers suggests the insufficiency of identity labels to the world he describes. James rejects “any higher denomination than that distributed and strung-along and flowing sort of reality which we finite beings swim in” (213); human beings are constituted within the same pluralistic fabric of experience. At the outset of the *Essays*, James does away with the concept of “consciousness” and posits in its stead an “experience” that exceeds the human being. Of consciousness, James explains that while “‘thoughts’ do exist,” consciousness is not “an entity” but rather the “function” of “knowing” in experience (2). James explains his argument in this way:

My thesis is that if we start with the supposition that there is only one primal stuff or material in the world, a stuff of which everything is composed, and if we call that stuff “pure experience,” then knowing can easily be explained as a particular sort of relation towards one another into which portions of pure experience may enter. The relation itself is a part of pure experience; one of its “terms” becomes

the subject or bearer of the knowledge, the knower, the other becomes the object known. (2-3).

The labels subject and object are here secondarily assigned through the function of knowing, counteracting dualistic notions of the world, like those espoused by Descartes or, as Whitehead suggests, Hume: “The final issue of [Descartes’s] subjective train of thought after a century of philosophizing is given by Hume’s mental atomism” (Whitehead, *Adventures* 132), wherein “each impression is a distinct existence arising in soul from unknown causes” (125). James explains that the things one understands as objects, the numberless relations within the world, and indeed the mind and its products produce a profoundly complex field of “pure experience.” James defines this field of pure experience as “the immediate flux of life” (*Essays* 49). By “immediate,” James is not suggesting that it involves abstract instances of mechanically frozen time, for he also describes it as a “flowing process” (48), always undergoing continual reconfiguration and transformation. Rather, by immediate he is attempting to describe a preconceptual “feeling or sensation,” which in the very moment of its reception “tends to fill itself with emphases,” wherein its “salient parts become identified and fixed and abstracted; so that experience now flows as if shot through with adjectives and nouns and prepositions and conjunctions.” This purity is not itself attainable: “Its purity is only a relative term, meaning the proportional amount of un verbalized sensation which it still embodies” (49). However, his understanding of the immediacy of the field of pure experience does mean that subject and object are secondary assignations within the fabric of experience: “if there be any such thing at all as knowing, the knower and the object known must both be portions of experience” (103).

Within pure experience, subjectivity and objectivity are not characteristics that permanently define the nature of entities; they are only ever local indices of shifting relations

between entities. James suggests as much when he notes that pure experience is “of a *that* which is not yet any definite *what*, tho’ ready to be all sorts of whats; full both of oneness and of manyness, but in respects that don’t appear; changing throughout, yet so confusedly that its phases interpenetrate and no points, either of distinction or identity, can be caught” (*Essays* 49). For James, what is commonly conceived of as consciousness is a part of “pure experience” and as such is not discrete from the extensive world of matter: “Things and thoughts are not fundamentally heterogeneous, but are made of the same stuff, a stuff which we cannot define as such but can merely sense, and which can be named, if we wish, the stuff of experience in general” (122).¹⁶ James fundamentally undermines the classificatory separation of the subject from the extensive world. His work treats material objects, thoughts, feelings, and the relation between these things as expressions manifesting within the fluctuating field of “pure experience.” James’s work insists that a careful attention to one’s experiences, coupled with a careful critique of the abstractions affecting those experiences, can counteract the discontinuity traditionally imposed between subject and object: “in the very bosom of the finite experience, every conjunction required to make the relation [between knower and known] intelligible is given in full” (28).

James’s sense of a processual, flowing, concatenated world is confluent with Bergson’s ontology. Just as James’s approach requires a vigorous critique of conceptual frameworks not derived from experience, so too Bergson’s seeks an understanding beyond habituated knowledge. Keith Ansell Pearson (2005) explains that Bergson is “seeking to practice

¹⁶ These expressions from *Essays in Radical Empiricism* and the reading of his work that I offer here stand in stark contrast to dualistic readings of James borne out of a focus on his writing in *The Principles of Psychology*, which, as discussed in the introduction, represents a phase of James’s work wherein, he later confesses, he was too beholden to a rigid rationalism. The work of Stephen Meyer (2001), for example, asserts that “the form of [James’s] thought” is “the dualism of *consciousness* and *content*” (241). James’s radical empiricism sought to undo this dualistic conception of the mind as container by recasting it as of the same stuff as the world it was engaging.

philosophy beyond the human condition, that is, beyond our evolved habits of representation. It is these habits ... that block insight into the moving continuity of the whole” (1115). Such habits of representation are articulated in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903) through the metaphor of the crystallization of a flowing continuity into discrete objects:

There is, beneath these sharply cut crystals and this frozen surface, a continuous flux which is not comparable to any flux I have ever seen. There is a succession of states, each of which announces that which follows and contains that which precedes it.... In reality no one of them begins or ends, but all extend into each other. (11)

This metaphorical description has several implications. First, it suggests that the flowing relations connecting the things one experiences are lost in habitual representation, as the things are “sharply cut” into discrete crystals. Second, it suggests that the set of discrete objects forms a new, shallow whole—a “frozen surface”—that occludes the moving character of the flux. Third, it suggests that the temporal nature of that flux, the “succession of states” and the relationships of continuity between those states where each “extend[s] into each other,” is likewise occluded. In *Matter and Memory* (1896) Bergson explains that the human being is implicated within a protean, relational continuity wherein perception is not merely a human faculty but a property of the world in which the human being participates: it is “in the aggregate of bodies, then gradually limits itself and adopts my body as a centre” (64). Thus, perception is not separated from the experienced world, with percepts as weak copies of the actual, but human perception is implicated in the continuity of the world. Furthermore, this suggests that the human being itself is a nexus of its environment. As Bergson defines it, perception is a function taking place in the world: it “consists in detaching, from the totality of objects, the possible action of my body upon

them” (304); it “is not subjective, for it is in things rather than in me. It is not relative, because the relation between the ‘phenomenon’ and the ‘thing’ is not that of appearance to reality, but merely that of part to the whole” (306). Like James’s work, Bergson’s insists that the experience of perception offers insight into the world because it is continuous with it. The memory, which he identifies as different in “kind,” is itself not discrete but also implicated in the world: “The two acts, perception and recollection, always interpenetrate each other, are always exchanging something of their substance...” (72).

Bergson shares with James a repudiation of dualism in his insistence that the experiencer is not separate from the flux they experience. Hisashi Fujita and Roxanne Lapidus (2007) explain that while Bergson posits a number of different seemingly dualistic notions, he is fundamentally opposed to both dualism and idealistic monism, seeking to describe a world that is simultaneously multiple and unified. They describe the difficult middle-ground that Bergson’s philosophy takes as an assertion that “we must reject the dualist notion of cause/effect, matter/life, and turn to creative evolution as ongoing recomposition, perpetual agency by a new kind of monism that transcends the conflict between monism and dualism” (123). His philosophy “denounces both the One and the multiple” (127) in favor of concurrent coexistence. Thus, the simultaneous difference in kind between memory and perception, and their constant interpenetration, reflects not an inconsistency of thought but rather an insistence that discretely different elements of the world are mutually interfused in the flux. The term Bergson offers to straddle the apparent dichotomy between memory and perception is the image, “a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a *representation*, but less than that which the realist calls a *thing*,—an existence placed half-way between the ‘thing’ and the ‘representation’” (*Matter* vii-viii). Matter, including the human body, is implicated in the way

the image undermines dualistic notions like material and spirit: it is an “aggregate of ‘images’” (vii). The images in the world interconnect in a complex matrix; they are obliged “to act through every one of [their] points upon all points of all other images” (28). Thus, independently, Bergson arrives at a similar concatenated and pluralistic ontology to that of James.

Whitehead’s considerations of the composition of the world describe an extensive network that can only be known through its particular coalescences. In *Science and the Modern World* (1925), he describes the “general metaphysical character which underlies all occasions” as ineffable, even as something that cannot be described as an “entity”: “It is a general metaphysical character which underlies all occasions, in a particular mode for each occasion” (220). The flux is a general and protean condition of the world, finding expression differently in each discrete moment and being: “Its attributes are its character of individualisation into a multiplicity of modes.... Thus eternal possibility and modal differentiation into individual multiplicity are the attributes of the one substance” (220). Eric Alliez (2008) explains Whitehead’s idea of “prehension” as this mechanism of “differentiation” and “individual multiplicity”; he writes that “every prehension is by its physical-sensorial pole a concrete vector in engagement with others to include some as data (positive prehensions) or to exclude others (negative prehensions), whilst the world, a flux of vectors, will be vectorial connections actualized in variable configurations” (113). At any given moment, the world pluralistically coalesces into multiple vectors that connects to others. The human consciousness in Whitehead’s philosophy is one such prehensive vector. The flux is the vast continuously changing temporal fluidity of the universe cohering in multiple simultaneous matrixes, and the seemingly fixed nature of objects is part of the individuation of an event. Like James, Whitehead finds the labels of subject and object to be secondary assignations; in *Adventures of Ideas* (1933), he explains that “subject and object are

relative terms. An occasion is a subject in respect to its special activity concerning an object; and anything is an object in respect to its provocation of some special activity within a subject” (176). Whitehead explains that “[t]he subject-object relation can be conceived as Recipient and Provoker, where the fact provoked is an affective tone about the status of the provoker in the provoked experience” (176). Such provocation is reciprocal, as the “concern” of the “occasion as subject” returns to the occasion as object: “the ‘concern’ at once places the object as a component in the experience of the subject, with an affective tone drawn from this object and directed towards it” (176). Each thing is thus simultaneously object and subject from different perspectives, provoking and simultaneously provoked. Included in this tapestry of mutual provocation is the human being, which is situated with all other things within this continuously changing flux.

In addition to suggesting that James’s “humanism” articulates an epistemic philosophical tendency in the late 19th and early 20th century, these philosophies all situate human experience as an implicated part of the world, removing the separation that dualistic notions impose upon subjective experience. If the assignation of subject is a secondary operation, then one’s perceptions are not weak copies of the world but are a part of it. Thus, as James insists and Bergson’s and Whitehead’s philosophies support, one’s immediate experience is fertile ground for philosophical insight. However, one’s sensations are not unmitigated; the human being does not receive sensation free from the complex experiences of memory, preconception, and the biases produced by conceptual frameworks. The task of philosophers and thoughtful novelists who want to explore and expand upon the relational nature of the world is thus to recognize and critique these coexisting elements of perception to identify ones that unnecessarily steer it into static and disjointed experiences of the world.

Inherent Abstraction

The role of abstraction in these philosophies is of central importance to this project, for it facilitates a nuanced understanding of the commonalities of Woolf and Lawrence's ontologies and the social critiques enacted through their writings. Sanford Schwartz's (1985) work on modernist literature and philosophy serves as a useful introduction to a discussion of the role of conceptual abstraction in both modern philosophy and literature. Schwartz notes how philosophers like Bergson and James and writers like Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot participate in a rejection of comprehensive scientific explanations of reality: "All of them acknowledge the instrumental efficacy of scientific constructs while denying that any of them represents the essential order of reality" (18). As he explains, for these philosophers, "reality ... lies in the preconceptual flow of appearances, which is irreducible to rational formulation, and our concepts, far from representing a reality beyond the sensory stream, are merely instrumental devices for organizing it" (19). He suggests that the philosophers and modernist authors about whom he writes sought a purified engagement with immediate sensation to counteract the distortions produced by certain conceptual frameworks: "All of them employed the stream of sensations as a counterpoise to the abstract systems that organize reality, and they regarded it as a kind of repository for aspects of experience that we habitually ignore. The opposition between abstraction and sensation is one of the most prominent features of turn-of-the-century thought..." (20). While some abstract forms can lead to deleterious experiences, and thus are rightly critiqued, neither the modernist authors in this study nor its philosophers propose purifying sensation of abstraction. Whitehead's work emphatically insists that sensation cannot be divested of abstraction. The goal of radical empirical philosophical investigation is not to do away with abstraction to get at the "truth" of nature – such is impossible. These inclusive pluralistic

ontologies situate abstraction as part of nature. If the experienced world is as these philosophers suggest—a confounding interrelated flux—then one needs abstraction to engage in the fundamental activities of existence, like finding and consuming food, and certainly one needs abstraction to form memories, communicate about experiences, and produce art. Indeed, the very descriptions of the world as a protean, relational flux depend upon abstract concepts and language. Whitehead’s work, more emphatically and clearly than the other radical empirical philosophers, suggests the necessity, indeed the unavoidability, of abstraction. He explains that human beings fundamentally cannot experience the world without its abstraction:

sense-perception, as conceived in the isolation of its ideal purity, never enters into human experience. It is always accompanied by so-called “interpretation.” This “interpretation” does not seem to be necessarily the product of any elaborate train of intellectual cogitation. We find ourselves “accepting” a world of substantial objects, directly presented for our experience. Our habits, our states of mind, our modes of behavior, all presuppose this “interpretation.” In fact the concept of mere sense is the product of high-grade thinking. (*Adventures* 217)

The idea of “mere sensation” or “pure experience” is itself a sophisticated abstraction, one that discounts or excises the inherent interpretation occurring in perception. Furthermore, abstraction does not require a trained mind; indeed, it often occurs without one’s conscious awareness.

Whitehead’s work helps to explain that conceptual abstraction is reciprocally implicated with observation, and it suggests that observation cannot be purified of such abstraction. Human concepts are frequently affected by observation, but observation is reciprocally affected by conceptual knowledge. Writing on the importance of Whitehead’s metaphysics to scientific observation, Arran Gare (1999) identifies the reciprocal nature of conceptual knowledge and

observation in Whitehead's work: "Opposing this finality, Whitehead argued that there are no absolute starting points, nor any final end points in enquiry. Science is formed by the meeting of two orders of experience: the Observational Order, and the Conceptual Order. These are inseparable." Gare seeks to defend philosophy from its contemporary dismissal through a restored recognition of the importance of Whitehead's work, which offers an understanding of the healthy reciprocal relationship between philosophical conceptual novelty and scientific observational novelty (136-37). Whitehead's writing on these orders is relevant not only to contemporary science, but also to the common people of any historical period, for he reveals not just that scientific observation is influenced by metaphysical assumptions, but that all human observation involves conceptual predispositions. In her extensive interpretation of Whitehead's philosophy in *Thinking with Whitehead* (2011), Isabel Stengers emphasizes the complexity of Whitehead's understanding of observation: one's observations, rather than simple, direct reception of facts from the environment, are "an audacious and sophisticated montage, whose metaphysical generalities are to shed light on its selective and biased character" (Stengers, *Thinking* 399). One's conceptual predispositions, when unacknowledged and taken as concrete, condition and restrict observation to what they expect and are able to classify. In *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead defines these orders and explains their relationship: "the Conceptual Order" is "our general way of conceiving the Universe, [...] a rough system of ideas in terms of which we do in fact interpret," while "the Observational Order" is "constituted by the direct, immediate discriminations of particular observations, [...] namely types of things which we do in fact discriminate" (154-55). These two orders together produce "our coordinated knowledge" through their reciprocal relationship (154). Whitehead explains that "[t]he observational order is invariably interpreted in terms of the concepts supplied by the conceptual order" (154-55), but

that that relationship goes both ways. Novelty in either order produces changes in the other: “novel observations modify the conceptual order,” and “novel concepts suggest novel possibilities of observational discrimination” (155).

Abstraction is a fundamental part of Whitehead’s ontology, as Alberto Toscano (2008) explains: “abstraction must ... be reconceived as internal to the concept of nature”; abstractions are “necessary *achievements* ... whether in the domain of everyday experience and perception, or in that of experimental practice” (64). They are achievements of evolution, facilitating the developments of civilization along with the survival of the human species in an often-hostile environment. Stengers elaborates on this facilitation, explaining that abstractions offer knowledge important for the survival of the human organism. People inherit these ideas from their forebears, and taking them for granted in a moment of crisis, having a “‘cerebral’ trust in a community of enduring beings,” is advantageous (400). She supports Toscano’s assertion that abstractions are an achievement internal to nature and notes their implication in perception by asserting that one’s cognitive habits “are not the habits of an individual, but of experience”; they “constitute not what should be diagnosed, or even denounced, but the veritable ‘fortune’ of perceptive experience, what we all owe to a past of which we are not the author.” The basic “symbolic reference” occurring in perception “is what we have in common with all animals endowed with perceptive experience” (402). Thus, at its most basic level, abstraction is not even uniquely the product of human consciousness, but a primary aspect of perception.

Whitehead’s writing on abstraction moves away from concerns with ontological realism, wherein the philosopher is interested in the extent to which abstract concepts or statements correspond to an external world. The issue for Whitehead is not whether a concept corresponds more or less to the world, for the concept is a part of the world and can hardly be expected to

adequately equal or contain it. Instead, the question is pragmatic: what sort of experience does the concept facilitate? Stengers (2008) explains that, when Whitehead describes the disclosure abstraction offers,

he does not mean gaining access to some concrete truth hidden by our specialized abstractions. If no experience is devoid of interpretation, then what is prohibited from the start is that we should retain some nostalgic memory of what we previously believed we genuinely knew about nature, and entertain the possibility of a more authentic experience. Whitehead's speculative philosophy is not about trying to recover concrete experience against its falsification by abstract interpretation. (95)

Abstractions cannot bring one into contact with a lost "more authentic experience," for there is no unabstracted experience, so such is not possible. However, in Whitehead's philosophy, the inability to get at some unabstracted "truth" is hardly cause for despair. Stengers goes on to explain that since abstractions are truly internal to nature, they do not separate us from nature:

For Whitehead, we cannot think without abstractions, but this does not mean that we are irretrievably separated from that which we try to address. Abstractions, for Whitehead, are not "abstract forms" that determine what we feel, perceive and think, nor are they "abstracted from" something more concrete, and, finally, they are not generalizations. (95-96)

They are instead a means of directing attention and experience within the wide possibilities the flux offers: "abstractions act as 'lures,' luring attention towards 'something that matters,' vectorizing concrete experience" (96). Such abstractions are valuable to Whitehead when, as Stengers explains, they "lure new feelings" and disclose "new ways for experience to come to

matter” (100). Taken out of their specialized contexts, abstractions can make people “prisoners of the false problems they are bound to create” (97); they can bolster the “bifurcation of nature” which Whitehead critiqued in modernity, wherein perceived qualities like “sounds, odours, enjoyments and values” are taken as discretely separate from “a causal, objective nature” (98). Such a bifurcation stands in contrast to the ontological view of James’s “humanism,” which takes all elements of human experience on equal footing in its account, elevating apparently “subjective” and non-sensory experiences like emotion and memory to an equal position alongside the purportedly “objective” world.

Literary Worlds

Before discussing the worlds that Lawrence and Woolf describe or imply in their nonfiction and create in their novels, the very term “world” needs further definition. Whitehead offers some insight into such a definition. He situates the human within a field that exceeds it, one wherein “the actual elements perceived by our senses are *in themselves* the elements of a common world; ... this world is a complex of things, including our acts of cognition, but transcending them” (*Science* 110). Thus, the “world” as it is understood by a person partakes of a greater field, a “common world,” but involves “a complex of things” including one’s “cognition,” which shapes one’s observational order. The “world” as one understands it is continuous with a “common world” that ultimately can only be known as a distant *more*; the perceiving body “exhibits for your cognizance an aspect of the distant environment, fading away into the general knowledge that there are things beyond” (114). Thus, the more concrete world that one knows would be different from another’s understanding, particularly where the other understanding involves considerably different experiences and a dramatically different cognitive order.

In *Ways of Worldmaking* (1978), Nelson Goodman offers this study a more nuanced way of thinking about and understanding this plurality of worlds. Goodman's argument builds upon James's vision of a pluralistic universe, wherein the world can be understood as "one" common world or as "multiple actual worlds" (2). Whatever the common objective world might be, that is never the "world" in which people operate. Instead, people are tied to frames of reference: "We are confined to ways of describing whatever is described. Our universe, so to speak, consists of these ways rather than a world of worlds" (3). Goodman ties these perspectives together thusly: "[A]ll we learn about the world is contained in ... versions of it; and while the underlying world, bereft of these, need not be denied to those who love it, it is perhaps on the whole a world well lost" (4). There is no description of an underlying world that is not itself attached to a particular perspective, to a scope limited in the way that Whitehead describes above. If people share a perspective or a similar framework, Goodman suggests "we may want to define a relation that will so sort versions into clusters that each cluster constitutes a world, and the members of the cluster are versions of that world..." (4). Such is the case with the shared convictions of the authors in this study.

Goodman's thesis does away with the possibility of objective understanding, instead calling for an examination of the effects of different "worlds." He explains that worlds are developed not only in the minds of people, but in works of art: "Worlds are made by making such versions with words, numerals, pictures, sounds, or other symbols of any kind in any medium..." (94). The novels of Lawrence and Woolf are such constructed worlds. A novel implies a common world, and it performs competing right versions of that world in the words and actions of its characters. If readers understand the implied common world of the novel to be like or analogous to their own, then the competing versions of that world held by characters are

analogous to the readers' own limited worlds. A novel can thus work to expose the ways that its reader's world is circumscribed, and it can suggest the potential experiences and consequences of different worlds through its characters words and actions.

This potentially transformative analogical power of the novel is identified by Paul Ricoeur, whose work in *Time and Narrative* (1984) emphasizes the importance of temporality in the world of the novel. Ricoeur describes the "hidden complicity between the 'secrecy' engendered by the narrative itself" and "the as yet untold stories of our lives that constitute the prehistory, the background, the living imbrication from which the told story emerges" (vol.1, 75-76). The novel can offer to its readers the implied potentiality of their lives, the unexplored possibilities that different worlds offer. The novel achieves such power by unfolding its story in time: "The world unfolded by every narrative work is always a temporal world" (3). When Ricoeur speaks of temporality, he counters the idea of mechanical, chronological time. His vision of temporality describes not an instantaneous present, but a present that is always situated in varying tensions with the past and the future, indeed a present that is constituted in those relationships (10). The past and the future do not exist *as such*, but instead only exist in the present as "memory" and "expectation," respectively (11). The present is comprised of these and the element of one's attention, and narrative describes both the relationship a character has with these elements and the varying degrees of tension with which one engages them; it describes "the activity of a mind stretched in opposite directions, between expectation, memory, and attention" (18). One can understand each character's world as relating to memory, expectation, and attention differently. For example, a character can have a world dominated by memory and proceed habitually through the present as he or she anticipates a future that reflects such a memory. The novel's power is that it can bring the temporality of its characters to readers and

have transfiguring effects on the temporal configuration of their own worlds: “temporality is brought to language to the extent that language configures and refigures temporal experience” (54). Thus, the novel is a powerful, potentially transformative medium, at least at the level of the careful individual reader.

Ricoeur’s vision of temporality is confluent with the thinking of James and Bergson. Both are opposed to understanding human life as mechanical time. James explains that time is not instantaneous or mechanically chronological: “[O]ur sensible experiences ... come to us in drops. Time itself comes in drops.... The times directly *felt* in the experiences of living subjects have originally no common measure.... All *felt* times coexist and overlap or compenetrates each other thus vaguely...” (*Pluralistic* 231-32). For James, one’s experience is always situated in conjunction between one’s past and the potential novelty of the future: “In the same act by which I feel that this passing minute is a new pulse of my life, I feel that the old life continues into it, and the feeling of continuance in no wise jars upon the simultaneous feeling of a novelty. They, too, compenetrates harmoniously” (*Essays* 49-50). Bergson brings to this understanding of conjunction a modulation of tension confluent with the different configurations of world Ricoeur describes. Bergson describes “imaginary homogenous time” as “an idol of language,” and he offers in its stead “duration,” which he describes as a temporal continuity that can be modulated: “In reality there is no one rhythm of duration; it is possible to imagine many different rhythms which, slower or faster, measure the degree of tension or relaxation of different kinds of consciousness, and thereby fix their respective places in the scale of being” (*Matter* 274-75). What Bergson offers here is a temporal explanation for different configurations of worlds, which find expression through the actions and words of different characters in narrative. For Bergson,

some are more desirable than others, higher on the “scale of being” for being better able to engage novelty.

Like these radically empirical “humanist” philosophers, Virginia Woolf and D.H. Lawrence are committed to exploring the widest range of experiences available to different worlds. While Woolf and Lawrence as human beings have for themselves their own “worlds,” their novels test and explore those worlds through the experimental explorations of different perspectives, allowing them to creatively seek beyond their own singular perspective. Their writing about novels suggests that they do not enter into these projects with a formulaic plan; rather, their works unfold as they are written. Woolf and Lawrence work through characters’ concrete perspectives and experiences to explore the unforeseen scope and limitations of different ways of being.

Each of Woolf’s novels is an experimental attempt to explore and understand the variety of human experience just as they occur, taking each part of experience as an equal constituent in the account. She articulates this project in “Modern Fiction” (1919) with her famous call for literature to engage in careful examinations of perceptual moments:

Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness. Let us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small. (107)

Just as James and Whitehead call for the inclusion of everything in the account of experience, Woolf calls for an attentiveness to human experience that is not restricted to what is already logically understood; it must include every experience, “however disconnected and incoherent in

appearance.” Woolf’s work delves into the apparently incoherent experiences of characters both to explore the nuances of their different worlds, and to draw attention to what is often ignored: the myriad complex affective exchanges between characters and their environments.

Lawrence’s work is dedicated to a similar experiential investigation, and he suggests that writing can bring the author and readers into an awareness of unforeseen experiences. In “Art and the Individual: A Paper for Socialists” (1908), he writes of the “artist’s duty to seek” experience that has, up to that point, defied expression in language: “recognitions which move unknown, having no revealing cloak of words and word ideas” (138). Art, he writes, “opens to us the silences, the primordial silences which hold the secret of things...” (140). At the same time, Lawrence expresses his concern with the calcifying effect of language and ideas upon human experience. While “[t]he deepest secrets of all are hidden in human experience, in human feeling,” Lawrence remarks at the natural urge to conceptually pin those experiences down: “the human heart is never satisfied till it can command the secret, dress the unutterable experience in the livery of an idea, and prison it with fetters of words” (141). While the novel seeks to discover new ways of being, the literary artist must take care that the language does not calcify and thus distort the complex and protean experiences discovered.

Such an imposition of a static concept upon protean experience is for Lawrence dangerous and damaging. In “The Crown” (1915), he finds slow change within elements commonly taken as static, the presence of a vital “creative flux” that ideas too often violate with arrest. Even in the apparently objective material world, he finds this quality: “Matter is a very slow flux, the waves ebbing slowly apart.” Abstractions imposed upon this world extend some desired fixity upon this world: “we engrave the beloved image on the slow, slow wave” (93). He expands upon his sense of the world as a relationally-complex flux in *Psychoanalysis and the*

Unconscious (1921), and he furthermore develops his critique of a common worldview in modern society, with its tendency to ignore experiences that do not conform with static and readily-articulable concepts: “The amazingly difficult and vital business of human relationships has been almost laughably underestimated in our epoch” (45). Such an underestimation is for Lawrence a catastrophe, for he understands “[t]he whole of life” to be “one long, blind effort at an establishing polarity with the outer universe, human and non-human”; given this, he finds “the whole of modern life [to be] a shrieking failure” (46). His works seek to explore and draw attention to these under-appreciated or entirely-dismissed vital experiences, to draw attention to the lives of people whose worlds offer encounters with such, for he insists that “[i]t is the circuit of vital flux between itself and another being or beings which brings about the development and evolution of every individual psyche and physique” (46). For Lawrence, human development is stymied by society’s particular uses of abstraction, which tend towards stasis and separation.

However, Lawrence is not opposed to abstraction. In his critical work countering anti-materialist readings of Lawrence, Jeff Wallace (2005) explains that Lawrence’s writing is more nuanced than many critics suggest. Lawrence’s opposition to habit and abstraction is not absolute; he is opposed to imbalanced, destructive deployments of those natural tendencies. Wallace situates Lawrence’s project as a quest to articulate the complexity of human experience, “the search for a language of nature which might embody the complex position of the human within it” (81), and he points out that rather than pursuing an anti-intellectual agenda, Lawrence’s work recognizes that the abstracting faculties of the mind cannot be done away with: “reason cannot be relinquished, even when it discloses its own limits and impotence” (234). Abstractions have use in their particular application, and the problem for Lawrence is the same as it is for Whitehead: abstract notions extended beyond the relevant scope of their application.

The brain “transmutes what is a creative flux into a certain fixed cipher. It prints off, like a telegraph instrument, the glyphs and graphic representations which we call percepts, concepts, ideas. It produces a new reality—the ideal” (*Psychoanalysis* 46). The idea is a real, useful, and necessary tool for operating in the world, but when it is taken as an absolute ideal and extended beyond its immediate application, Lawrence finds it producing a damaging world. He continues:

The idea is another static entity, another unit of the mechanical-active and materio-static universe. It is thrown off from life, as leaves are shed from a tree, or as feathers fall from a bird. Ideas are the dry, unliving, insentient plumage which intervenes between us and the circumambient universe, forming at once an insulator and an instrument for the subduing of the universe. The mind is an instrument of instruments; it is not a creative reality. (46-47)

Ideas are a part of the world; indeed, Lawrence acknowledges that they can make “a new reality.” However, they can lure one towards a foreclosure of novel experiences. Ideas facilitate human action in the world, just as the feather facilitates flight, but separated from that activity they can immure the experiencer within limited static experience.

The different sort of worldview towards which Lawrence wishes to lure his reader involves the relational implication of the human being in the environment, which is indicated in his essay “The Novel” (1925). Lawrence emphasizes the role of a good novelist to pursue “*Life as it is!*”: “a novelist may not put up a fence. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and auras will be red when they want to” (188). The author must “choose between the quick and the dead” (182). He explains that the quick “seems to consist in an odd sort of fluid, changing, grotesque or beautiful relatedness” (183). The novel Lawrence champions reveals a world wherein seemingly individual people are a constitutive part of a vastly complicated pattern: “the relatedness and

interrelatedness of all things flows and changes and trembles like a stream, and like a fish in the stream the characters in the novel swim and drift and float..." (185). For Lawrence, the novel must expose the vital relatedness of the human being that absolute idealism occludes: "how *immoral* the absolute is! Invariably keeping some vital fact dark! Dishonorable!" (186).

Characters in Lawrence's *The Rainbow* repeatedly confront a vitally-changing, relationally-impinging flux. Tom notes of the world that "There was no end, no finish, only this roaring vast space" (126). Lydia wants reprieve from the constant provocations of the flux, but she cannot have it; she laments, "Always the storm! Could she not lie in peace, these years, in the quiet, apart from life? No, always the swell must heave upon her and break her against the barriers. Always she must be embroiled in the seethe and rage and passion, endless, endless, going on forever" (235). If the characters come to find the flux disturbing, it might be because of the challenge it presents to their comfortable world, demarcated by the abstract discursive frameworks they have adopted.

Indeed, through its succession of characters, *The Rainbow* dramatizes a series of understandings and relationships with the world, figured as attempts to rectify an intimation of immediate connection with a developed intellect. The novel establishes this conflict metaphorically, its opening metaphorically modelling the fall from the garden of Eden and dramatizing the development of the human species away from a mythical immediate reception of the world as pure experience. As Lawrence describes them in the first pages of the novel, the progenitors of the Brangwen family seem to enjoy an immediate interconnection with the world: "heaven and earth was teeming around them.... They knew the intercourse between heaven and earth, sunshine drawn into the breast and bowels, the rain sucked up in the daytime.... The [corn's] lustre slid along the limbs of the men who saw it.... The pulse of the teats of the cows

beat into the pulse of the hands of the men” (9-10). Characters are lured away from this by the promise of more formal knowledge, represented by a church tower “in the empty sky,” beckoning the characters towards “something standing above ... and beyond [them] in the distance” (9). Both *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* dramatize the desire to return to this mythical prelapsarian immediacy while implying that such cannot be achieved. As the philosophers engaged in this study suggest, one’s relational implication can only be known through engagements with one’s abstracting logical faculties, through the development of a mature, complex worldview.

The next two chapters of this dissertation focus respectively on the damaging and ameliorative potentialities of abstraction. In the context of discussing the implied shared world of Lawrence’s novels, it is worthwhile to introduce these as the crux of *Women in Love*. Gerald Doherty (1992) reads the novel as dramatizing two different and “antagonistic” relationships with “metaphor.” On one side are Gerald and Gudrun, who ascribe to “the idea of metaphor as a closed semantic system where, as in the classical manner, the incongruity between the two terms is never too ‘far-fetched’” (51); they are “attract[ed] to the conditioned—in their need to enclose, complete, and possess their object-relations” (52). On the other side are Birkin and Ursula, who take “the conception of metaphor as an open or ongoing process” (51); their “taste for the unconditioned and for the mode of radical dispossession that this taste entails compels them to espouse and achieve it” (52). Doherty explains that between these two couples, the text explores “the opposition between open/closed, flexible/bound, incomplete/complete” (52). Gerald and Gudrun are “firmly anchored ... closed figures whose resistance to undertaking the leap [beyond certainty] is conditioned by their adaptation to the contexts that delimit them,” whereas Ursula and Birkin “are constituted through ... dissolving contextual boundaries” (53). Thus, between

these two pairs of characters, Lawrence dramatizes the way abstraction functions as a lure towards two disparate sets of experiences, that is, towards two different configurations of the world. The question for Lawrence, as for Whitehead, is not whether the abstract frameworks of understanding correspond accurately to the implied shared world of the novel, for such could never be adequately grasped by any one character. The question is this: what sort of experiences do these configurations facilitate, and how do such experiences, such worlds, affect the characters?

In her novels, Woolf consistently describes characters implicated within and constituted by a profoundly provoking shared world. She treats experiences of imagination, memory, and feelings as equal in importance to activities in the purportedly objective world – indeed, her work pays special attention to these experiences to counterbalance the contemporary privileging of objective fact, and as such, her work has historically been read as the apotheosis of a modernist focus on interiority,¹⁷ although a number of critics have acknowledged and explored the ontological and ecological interests in Woolf's writing. For example, Jaakko Hintikka (1979) is one of the early critics to recognize that Woolf's focus on consciousness involves the search for "a way of representing reality through the thoughts, impressions, and other immediate experiences of several persons" (7). He situates her characters as "but means of their author's search for reality" (8). He likewise acknowledges Woolf's situation of the products of consciousness as a constitutive part of the world: "For her, too, the emphasis on the inner world of sense-experience, feeling, and thought, is not designed to disparage the normal everyday

¹⁷ Erich Auerbach's writing on Woolf in "The Brown Stocking" (1957) is presented by critics like Timothy Mackin and James Harker as representative of the critical trend to read Woolf's work as focused on inner experience (Mackin 114; Harker 1). Another, more recent, example of this strain of criticism is Ray Monk's "The Fictitious Life: Virginia Woolf on Biography and Reality" (2007), wherein he writes that "life, *real life* (as she often puts it), is essentially *internal* and therefore (as facts are essentially external) beyond the reach of nonfiction" (6).

reality but to enhance it. The realm of consciousness does not replace the reality we naively believe in, it is shown to constitute this reality” (12). How one defines that constituting “consciousness” determines the extent to which the human being is understood as existing in continuity with a nonhuman environment. James’s redefinition of consciousness as a subset of experience is confluent with the implied ontology of Woolf’s novels, wherein subject and object are secondary assignments extended upon the flux.

In Woolf’s novel *Night and Day*, characters are figured as capable of being taken as discrete and separate and simultaneously as constituted through their relational implication in their environment. The novel explores the ways that young characters respond to and reject dominant and fixed abstract frameworks for understanding and functioning as they recognize, as Katharine does, that there is more to experience than those fixed understandings offer: “life went on and on—life was different altogether from what people said” (356). Woolf’s recognition of a disorienting flux that implicates characters, their words, others, and the environment is expressed most forcefully in a later scene in the novel with Ralph. As Ralph sits on the Embankment in London, he is confronted by an old drunk man who sits down and speaks to him, and to whom Ralph futilely attempts to speak. Ralph reflects on the disconnection between them through the metaphor of the man as a large, closed, static object standing in the storm of the provocations of his influence: “And when the elderly man refused to listen and mumbled on, an odd image came to his mind of a lighthouse besieged by the flying bodies of lost birds, who were dashed senseless, by the gale, against the glass” (414). Ralph’s metaphor situates the old man as a lighthouse closed off from the barrage of a distributed Ralph, with his words represented by birds in a storm. Ralph then realizes that he is capable of simultaneously being both fixed and distributed: “He had a strange sensation that he was both lighthouse and bird; he was steadfast

and brilliant; and at the same time he was whirled, with all other things, senseless against the glass” (414). Characters can understand themselves and the parts of their environment as fixed and separate, which leads to one sort of experience and world, or to understand these things as constitutive elements of a changing and fluid environment, which in Woolf’s work is often more threatening—here indicated by the violence of the storm—but allows for a less fixed world that offers important experiences of interconnection (which the final chapter of this study deals with extensively).

In *The Waves*, Woolf develops her vision of an interconnected world rife with affective provocations, not only through the perspective of several of her characters, whose separate worlds collectively imply a shared world, but also through the poetic interludes. The interludes of the novel repeatedly draw attention to vacillations between forms of separation and unity. For example, in an early interlude, Woolf describes droplets of dew as emphasizing the myriad separate points that constitute a garden: “the dew ... made the garden like a mosaic of single sparks not yet formed into one whole” (21). The chief metaphor of the novel, waves approaching the shore, are individual expressions within a totality, capable of being taken as separate entities while simultaneously constituted by the body of water. The characters of the novel are figured in this way, taken separately while simultaneously constituted by their environment. Neville recognizes the flux upon which society builds its tenuous understandings of discrete things and selves, but he idealistically chooses to see the latter as inherently false rather than as a constitutive part of that fluid world: “these roaring waters, ... upon which we build our crazy platforms are more stable than the wild, the weak and inconsequent cries that we utter when, trying to speak, we rise; when we reason and jerk out these false sayings, ‘I am this; I am that!’ Speech is false” (113). The characters move in an environment thick with provocations, and they

contribute to these provocations. Stricken with grief, Bernard cannot maintain his focus on his emotions due to these incitements: “Yet always signals begin, beckonings, attempts to lure me back” (127). Part of those provocations are the abstractions that Neville dismisses, which Woolf suggests circulate in the world and can lead characters towards different experiences, like the fixity and certainty pursued by Louis, which the next chapter of this study discusses, or the provisionality of identity that Bernard comes to embrace at the end of the novel, which this study’s final chapter explores.

On the Pursuit of Truth

This study situates Woolf and Lawrence alongside philosophers like Whitehead who recognize efforts at abstraction not as increasingly refined approaches towards a graspable reality, but as functional parts of the world that direct and shape experience. That is, the task of the authors is not to find increasingly better language with which to grasp an elusive objective truth, but to use language to explore and present the potentialities of experience within an ungraspable shared world. As this study has begun to suggest, the novels thus function analogically not to reveal the grasped truth about an objective world, but to reveal possible worlds.

The work of Peter Lamarque and Stein Olsen (1994) defines and rejects the “Theory of Novelistic Truth.” Within such a theoretical approach, “Literature is ... construed and assessed as a species of fact-stating discourse” (293). They explain that critics who adopt such a perspective assert that “in choosing to write a literary work, the author intends to refer and to make truth-claims about ... referents” (295). Such an approach might insist that the elements within a novel refer to specific real-world objects and figures, but it might similarly insist that the work of fiction seeks to make truth-claims about the “real” world within which the author

and reader live. Such a perspective is already troubled by Goodman's theory of worlds, for there is no reveal-able total world. Lamarque and Olsen explain that the descriptions in fiction, while they "are comparable to entities in the real world," exist to make fiction "intelligible"; while they "also have a recognizable non-fictive use," "[i]t is not a precondition for the intelligibility of fictional descriptions that they should refer or make truth-claims" (296). If the novel seeks to "express ideas about human nature," to offer "a humanly interesting content," such does not require truth-claims (296).

This study does suggest that Woolf and Lawrence are expressing and exploring ideas about human nature, ideas that can have value for readers in their own worlds, but it does not suggest that the novels pursue any finished vision of the world. While many critics recognize and explore the epistemological and ontological interests of these authors in their works, there is a tendency to implicitly or explicitly suggest that Woolf and Lawrence seek to correct the distortions imposed by erroneous conceptual formulations and approach with increasing accuracy a "Real," objective world. Such a view of modernist literature is reflected in the writing of Jonathan Crary (2001), who in his critique of modern attention aligns modernist fiction with "'objectivist' aesthetics in which the 'presence' of pure visible form is accessible only to an attentive 'seeing' cut off from any of the subjective psychological conditions of vision" (48). He explains that the idea of unmediated sensation is "a mirage of modernism," a sort of "purified perception that would be suspended from time and the body's economy" (57). The common idea that one of the driving forces in modernism is the pursuit of "purified perception" finds reflection in works of criticism of both modernist authors and philosophers.

The work of Laci Mattison (2011) is exemplary of this tendency in Woolf criticism. Her work on *The Waves*, like this project, brings Woolf's writing into conversation with Bergson's

thought to develop a more nuanced understanding of the sort of connection to the world that Woolf's characters experience. In doing so, however, Mattison suggests that Woolf is pursuing immediate, unmediated access to the objective world: "while we have been told by Kant and others that we will never be able to approach the 'thing' fully, Woolf's writing suggests otherwise" (71). Mattison reads the "dynamic and unified multiplicity" of Woolf's characters as facilitating access to the "thing-in-itself" through the shared continuity they enjoy with the objective world (74). Such a reading suggests that the author's work is an effort to approach some absolute truth, unmolested by distorting abstract notions, and such is not reflective of the approaches to attention pursued by either the modernist philosophers or novelists upon whom this study focuses (which will be discussed shortly, below).

In his chapter exploring the relations with the world enjoyed by characters in Lawrence's novels, Gregory F. Tague (2005) similarly finds a transcendental "real" separate from abstraction. He writes of Lawrence's characters pursuing "a heightened state" wherein they can realize "a communion with earth and universe" (171). While such language suggesting the recognition of relationships with the environment is confluent with this study, Tague suggests that Lawrence's characters are engaged in "a search for meaning" through their relationship with the other and the environment that approaches "wholeness" (173). Tague continues by suggesting that the awareness of one's position "in a larger, metaphysical context" facilitates an "understanding of one's *essential*, basic character" (175, my italics). While Lawrence is certainly invested in characters developing their understanding of self, he is vehemently opposed to such essential, absolute understandings.¹⁸ Tague's reading of Lawrence goes on to suggest that this

¹⁸ Take, for example, his diatribe against the absolute in "The Novel": "Damn all absolutes. Oh damn, damn, damn all absolutes! ... [F]or man, there is neither absolute nor absolution. Such things should be left to monsters like the right-angled triangle, which does only exist in the ideal consciousness. Man can't have a square on his hypotenuse, let him try as he may" (184).

search for the “essential” in characters is tied to a desire to transcend the corrupting influence of abstraction to access reality. He argues that the misguided preoccupations of the characters that Lawrence critiques are reflective of “really nothing more than a disconnection from the touch of life since it validates the abstract over the real” (181). That is, Tague situates abstraction as a misleading alternative to reality rather than a mutually-constitutive part of reality. Rather than suggesting that abstraction leads one away from an essential reality, this study suggests that certain deleterious forms of abstract knowledge lead one into a world that is ethically undesirable or potentially destructive, which for Lawrence involves the foreclosure of novelty and creativity.

The Situation of Characters

In both *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, Lawrence’s repeated use of the word “real” suggests a relativistic understanding of reality. The characters in his novels are situated without any single definitive reality but many possible worlds. What is real to them is defined by their disposition towards those experiences, but more specifically by which experiences those characters affectively engage.

The “real” as Lawrence uses it in his novels can be a fantastic abstraction. For example, in *The Rainbow*, Lawrence describes Anna’s imagined fantasy of the world in which Baron Skrebensky moves as real to her: “He at any rate represented to the child the *real* world, where kings and lords and princes moved and fulfilled their shining lives, whilst queens and ladies and princesses upheld the noble order.” She sees him “as a *real* person” despite the fact that he exists mostly in her mind: “as a memory he was always alive to her” (93, my emphasis). Similarly, her “reality” in the early stages of her relationship with Will is founded upon the numinous mystical sense he offers through the church: “It was a very *real* experience. She was carried away. And the land seemed to be covered with a vast, mystic church, reserved in gloom,

thrilled with an unknown Presence” (106, my emphasis). Thus, Anna’s reality at this point in the novel is largely the product of her own mystical imagination, but Lawrence does not call into question the truth of this reality, instead defining other realities differently.

Birkin’s reality in *Women in Love*, unlike Anna’s, situates the abstract frameworks of civilization as unreal. While Gerald finds the “strangely illuminated faces” affectively fulfilling, as they make a “little spark leap ... in [his] eyes,” Birkin no longer relates to a world that he finds to be too much “one note,” and thus it is no longer real to him: he “looked muted, unreal, his presence left out” (62). Birkin’s reality is opposed to the products of civilization, which “could go, and there would be no *absolute* loss, if every human being perished tomorrow. The reality would be untouched. Nay, it would be better. The real tree of life would then be rid of the most ghastly heavy crop of Dead Sea Fruit, the intolerable burden of myriad simulacra of people, an infinite weight of mortal lies” (127). For Birkin, humanity misleads through its presentation of life, for it is inflexible and dead, and he resents the way civilization is imposed upon him. His reality involves the almost ineffable world of wonder and feeling, which stands in opposition to the clear, bright articulations of civilization with its teleology of perfect knowledge: “The other river, the black river. We always consider the silver river of life, rolling on and quickening all the world to a brightness, on and on to heaven, flowing into a bright eternal sea, a heaven of angels thronging.—But the other is our real reality—“ (172).

As Lawrence makes clear in *The Rainbow*, a person’s reality can change throughout the course of their life. For example, as Anna turns away from religion, she disturbs Will’s faith in the fixed truths it offers, symbolically dislodging his “Tablets of Stone,” sending “his qualms, his maxims, his riles, his smaller beliefs” “scatter[ing]” (139). With his framework for understanding the world broken, Will’s sense of the outside world becomes unreal, a hollow

“rind,” and his definition of the real shifts to his relationship with Anna: the world “peeled away into unreality, leaving here exposed the inside, the reality: one’s own being, strange feelings and passions and yearnings and beliefs and aspirations, suddenly become present, revealed, the permanent bedrock, knitted one rock with the woman one loved. It was confounding. Things are not what they seem!” (139). Will’s shift in the reality to which he relates brings to the fore the sorts of experiences his previous disposition did not engage, but he takes such to be representative not of a different truth, but of the revelation of ultimate truth: “lo, the whole world could be divested of its garment, the garment could lie there shed away intact, and one could stand in a new world...” (140). The sense that reality is no longer occluded by some abstract garment is to ignore the relative nature of reality, the fact that each reality is true within its own context and facilitates different sorts of experiences.

Ursula seems to recognize this relative nature of reality, and Lawrence situates her disposition against her sister’s, who rejects the worlds of others in favour of her own fancies. Gudrun has a “sleepy body and her endless chain of fancies,” she is “perfect within the medium of her own difference and being. Other existences did not trouble her” (243). Conversely, Ursula “was the one for *realities*” (243, my emphasis). While Lawrence describes the “real” or “reality” for many characters, he suggests here that Ursula is interested in the plurality of the real, that she recognizes the relativistic contexts of reality and is interested in understanding the real as such a relative context. This helps to explain why, as this study discusses below and in later chapters, Ursula is able to continuously change her world, modulating the relationships into which she enters and adopting a provisional sense of the truth.

Woolf’s novels share in Lawrence’s sense of an environment rife with provocations that pervasively affect characters. In *Night and Day*, Woolf’s focus is on the ways that a younger

generation seeks to transform or overhaul the abstract frameworks that govern their relationships with the world, and she explores how the dispositions at which they arrive—the worlds that they develop or adopt—can be more or less damaging to people and more or less vulnerable to conceptual fixity. The characters in her novel are situated and constituted by their relationships with ideas, with each other, and with the environment, and as such their conceptual frameworks are quite vulnerable to change, particularly to assertions of certainty, and particularly when they seek to avoid certainty themselves.

One of these transformative influences that Woolf explores is the overwhelming, pervasive power that thought has on characters, particularly on the character of Ralph Denham. The thoughts that characters have and the way their imaginations take effect are often beyond their immediate control. For example, Ralph attempts to focus on legal documents to not think about the Hilberys, but it does not work: “the whole thickness of some learned counsel’s treatise upon Torts did not screen him satisfactorily.” Quite quickly, his memory takes over his conscious activity: “Through the pages he saw a drawing-room, very empty and spacious; he heard low voices, he saw women’s figures, he could even smell the scent of the cedar log which flamed in the grate. His mind relaxed its tension, and seemed to be giving out now what it had taken in unconsciously at the time” (23). Through Ralph’s memory, the earlier scene is able to affect him, and in short order he imaginatively “wander[s] about the house,” where he sees Katharine “had changed her dress.” He remarks that this house containing the young woman in whom he is becoming romantically interested, which he has largely only imagined, is “peaceful and spacious,” so much so that “the peace possessed him so completely that his muscles slackened, his books dropped from his hand, and he forgot that the hour of work was wasting minute by minute” (23-24). Ralph’s imagined ideas of the house profoundly affect him, and his

ideas of Katharine throughout the novel, which are an important part of the analysis in the next chapter, affect not only Ralph but also her. Woolf takes seriously the extent and importance of the transformative effects of experiences of memory and imagination.

Part of the power of other people in the novel is certainly in the ideas they transmit, both directly and indirectly; however, Woolf suggests in *Night and Day* that characters have a reciprocal immediate affective influence upon each other. Such influences are strongest in the presence of the other, and they fade slowly when not in their presence. For example, Ralph's sister Joan changes his disposition when he is in her presence, and the effect lasts briefly after he leaves: "A feeling of great intimacy united the brother and sister.... For some minutes after she had gone Ralph lay quiescent, resting his head on his hand, but gradually his eyes filled with thought, and the line reappeared on his brow, as the pleasant impression of companionship and ancient sympathy waned, and he was left to think alone" (30). Similarly, Mary remarks that Katharine has a "curious power of drawing near and receding, which sent alternate emotions through her far more quickly than was usual, and kept her in a condition of curious alertness" (57). Characters throughout Woolf's novels have these sorts of effects on one another, which contributes to the sense of the world Woolf builds wherein her characters are awash in and contributing to a field of complex provocations.

The extensive environment is the other major influence that Woolf explores in *Night and Day*. As characters exert their affective influences into their environments, the environment takes up these affective associations. Woolf describes the effect of the Hilbery house upon Katharine:

Rooms, of course, accumulate their suggestions, and any room in which one had been used to carry on any particular occupation gives off memories of moods, of

ideas, of postures that have been seen in it; so that to attempt any different kind of work there is almost impossible.

Katharine was unconsciously affected, each time she entered her mother's room, by all these influences, which had had their birth years ago, when she was a child, and had something sweet and solemn about them, and connected themselves with early memories of the cavernous glooms and sonorous echoes of the Abbey where her grandfather lay buried. (114)

For Woolf, the domestic environment of the Hilbery house echoes the influences that usually circulate within it, and in this way, the environment reinforces the status quo. This is one of the reasons that it is so hard for the characters in the novel to change the way they understand and relate to the world. Such an insight is expanded to the entirety of London when Woolf describes Mary walking in the city; while Mary “fully intended to use her loneliness to think out her position with regard to Ralph..., she found her mind uncomfortably full of different trains of thought” which “seemed even to take their colour from the street she happened to be in.” Mary has to leave the busy streets and find darkness to get beyond these influences: “The dark removed the stimulus of human companionship” (175-76). Mary's strategy begins to indicate one of the ways that Woolf's characters can gain some control over the influences they experience, by escaping from the immediate demands of the environment.

In *The Waves*, the myriad ways characters affect their environment becomes the narrative structure of the novel, with characters taking turns “saying” both what they actually vocalize and what they express but about which they may be entirely unaware. Each character in this novel thus functions simultaneously as an effect affecting the environment and as the recipient of the environment's provocations. Woolf suggests in this later novel that different people have

different inherent dispositions, finding diverse aspects of the world to be valuable, stimulating, odious, or threatening. Whereas Lawrence suggests that characters can radically alter the parts of experience to which they relate, entirely transforming themselves in the process, Woolf suggests through the characters of *The Waves* that individual difference of worlds is largely fixed early in life and rooted in the way one relates to experience. While characters can engage the parts of experience towards which others are naturally oriented, such is difficult, for they tend to find those experiences unpleasant at best. Woolf also valorizes certain positions over others, like Bernard's approach to language over Louis's. Since the characters are each closely associated with different parts of experience, it seems reasonable that they are representative of the different sorts of dispositions that one can adopt. Indeed, collectively they offer a more nuanced, complex vision of the available scope of human experience than any one perspective could offer. Such is indicated when Bernard notes that Louis and Rhoda "gave the other side of what seemed to me so evident ... for which I loved them" (216); he suggests that they are each a part of "the complete human being whom we have failed to be" (231), although such a complete human being seemed to be an impossible ideal, as it would require a God-like breadth of simultaneous experience.

Each of the characters is primarily oriented towards a different part of experience, which is dominant in their world. Louis's experience is structured around tradition and a search for the absolute, with his metaphorical roots stretching downwards and back through time towards "a stone figure in a desert by the Nile" (7). Susan is oriented towards domestic life and biological reproduction, and this focus on having offspring facilitates her view of "life in blocks, substantial, huge" (179). Rhoda is oriented towards the imagination, sailing "into icy caverns where the sea-bear barks and stalactites swing green chains" (13), and she so aligned with this

faculty that she finds individual identity disturbing (“I hate all details of the individual life” [85]), social life harrowing (her mixture with others incites “terror” in her [85]), and the world of sensations deeply alienating and upsetting (“To me they are all violent, all separate” [106]). Jinny’s experience is structured around immediate sensation and the sexual drives of the body; she anticipates being “singled out” in “attract[ion]” by suitors (35), she finds mixing with others in busy social environments a stimulating “adventure” (84), but she “can imagine nothing beyond the circle cast by [her] body” (105). Neville is oriented towards literary and classical education, and he develops a dualistic notion of language as failing to meet the flux of experience, which he describes as “the mill-race that foams beneath” the edifices of culture (113). Lastly, Bernard is oriented towards stories, bringing together Neville’s focus on language and Rhoda’s focus on imagination within the structure of narrative form. Throughout the novel, he attempts to develop ways of articulating experience, finally arriving at a provisional understanding of the role of language. Through Bernard, Woolf suggests that language has a life of its own in the world, where words “move through the air in flocks, now this way, now that way...” (14). For him, “a good phrase seems to ... have an independent existence” (54). Taken together, these characters suggest the breadth of experiences and realities that Woolf takes seriously in her work. Each fosters openness to certain experiences and closure or vulnerability to others; each offers different relative truths, different worlds, that experience can offer.

Attention

In *Thinking with Whitehead*, Stengers argues that Whitehead’s *Science and the Modern World* attempts to bring “rigid consistency” to William James’s radical empirical thought, particularly in respect to his position on “consciousness.” She explains that in his book, Whitehead “had turned William James into the inaugurator of a new philosophical epoch...,”

that he was inspired by James's recasting of consciousness as a function of experience. She explains that "For Whitehead, consciousness in James's sense obliges us to think of the 'total bodily event'..." (150). As Stengers explains it, Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* is fundamentally invested in understanding the situation of the human consciousness. In it, Whitehead engages in a sophisticated description of each part of the flux, including the human being, implicated in and constituted by relationships with the rest of the universe. Whitehead uses the term "event" to describe individuation and coherence within the flux. The event is "the ultimate unit of natural occurrence" (129). His philosophy helps to elucidate the relations upon which James's radical empiricism focuses, explaining that relations exist not only within an event, but between different events: the event includes "the pattern of aspects of other events which it grasps into its own unity, and the pattern of its aspects which other events severally grasp into their unities" (129). The event is both individuated and simultaneously implicated in the entirety of the flux; it involves a "limitation which excludes neutralizing cross-lights" while "requir[ing] the whole universe in order to be itself" (241). Representing any coherent individuation from the flux of experience, each event is constituted in relation to other events, both through what it takes from them and what they take from it: "Aspects of itself ... go to form the prehended unities of other events" while "internal[ly]" the event involves "a multiplicity of relationships" (149, 155). The event is a relational matrix in the world, involving countless interconnections. While it does not manifest *every* aspect of the world, each event, like the event of the human being in a particular moment, depends upon the universe with which it is continuous.

The coherence Whitehead brings to the recasting of consciousness requires a similar development in the understanding of perception and attention. In *Adventures of Ideas*, he defines

the term “prehension” as “the general way in which the occasion of experience can include, as part of its own essence, any other entity, whether another occasion of experience or an entity of another type” (251). Eric Alliez explains that Whitehead’s concept of “prehension” functions to eschew dualistic notions of perception, situating conscious experience within a continuity:

In order to depart from any form of re-presentative perception and to locate oneself squarely in the mode of a casual efficacy liberated from the dualistic model of consciousness, Whitehead uses the concept of “prehension” to qualify the constituting activity of an existing entity in terms of *grasping*, or “*constructivist*” *appropriation* of other entities *as they become* the components of its “conrescence.” [...] It is not the case that sense data are “shown up or synthesized by the one who sees...”; on the contrary, they are “instructed,” by including as part of the datum their own interconnections in the process of becoming. (112-13)

This understanding of “prehension” suggests that each entity, including the human being, is constituted in each moment of its “conrescence” through the way it grasps its environment and through the parts of the environment that it grasps. Furthermore, it suggests that acts of human perception are not separated from the environment, but that what they receive is always affected by the very act of their own prehensive unification. Thus, it suggests that the other prehensive events can be likewise constituted in part by the events of other human consciousnesses.

How one attends to this sort of radically interdependent and mutually-constituted flux is a complex issue explored by the philosophers of this study, particularly since the project of radical empiricism involves a call to rely more fully on attention to experience as the foundation of philosophical thought. While James and Bergson discuss pure sensation and could thus be

misunderstood as advocating a purified perception, such functions in their philosophy as a kind of heuristic device designed to explore the processes of perception, not as a goal. Crary's work on attention situates James and Bergson against the "mirage of modernism" that he criticizes, noting that they "explicitly challenged the notion of a pure or simple sensation." Instead, they insist "that any sensation, no matter how seemingly elemental, is always a compounding of memory, desire, will, anticipation, and immediate experience" (27). Indeed, the experience to which James attends is anything but simple. His radical empiricism is a call to attend to the compounding complexity that Crary describes.

The projects of both Woolf and Lawrence seek to explore and reveal new modes of awareness to a readership that they frequently figure as alienated from a wide swath of possible experience. In "Modern Fiction," Woolf suggests that simple daily experience contains extensive complexity that commonly goes unremarked; she calls for her reader to carefully "examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day" to discover it is anything but conventional and simple, to discover the ways it is barraged with impinging provocations (106). What is revealed is never exhaustive; a finished vision of the world is never achieved. Instead, she suggests in "Phases of Fiction" (1929) that literature engages in a "process of discovery" that "goes on perpetually. Always more of life is being reclaimed and recognized" (101).

Woolf and Lawrence cannot, and do not, merely advocate that people focus more carefully on their feelings or their senses to foster some more inclusive experience. Such would not work, and, as Jonathan Crary points out, it would likely feed into dominant modes of instrumentalized attention that were being fostered in the early 20th century. Crary explains that attention as it is commonly understood is a modern invention, "a specific model of behavior" involving "socially determined norms" (29). He marries the development of attention to "the

cultural logic of capitalism,” which needed “perceptual adaptability” in workers and consumers; this desired attention was fostered through “disciplinary and administrative apparatuses for the management and control of human subjects” (45). Crary explains that the fostering of attention is tied to the production of good capitalist subjects, that the insistence on the right sort of attentiveness is part of “an institutional construction of subjectivity” (43). As with the students in Ursula’s classroom in *The Rainbow*, being able to pay attention and stay focused becomes the quality of a moral individual. Crary draws upon Foucault’s definition of “‘disciplinary’ institutions” to explain how sustaining this mode of attentiveness became the responsibility of the individual: “By the early twentieth century, the attentive subject is part of an internalization of disciplinary imperatives in which individuals are made more directly responsible for their own efficient or profitable utilization within various social arrangements” (73). Individuals within capitalist society discipline themselves to have “good” attentive qualities, to foster a socially-acceptable world for themselves that will facilitate a narrow-defined productive life.

If capitalist society is a hegemonic entity propagating attentive subjects, alternative figurations of attention are revolutionary in their subversion of the requirements of the social order and the possibility that they could foster alternative modes of subjectivity with alternative worlds. While hegemonic capitalist forces strive to enforce productive attentive qualities upon the populace, Crary notes that this instrumental attention is implicated in a mode of its own undoing. He explains that “the border that separated a socially useful attentiveness and a dangerously absorbed or diverted attention was profoundly nebulous” (47). Within attention lies the seed of its “disintegration”; it “inevitably reaches a threshold at which it breaks down” (47). Attention is directly implicated in “distraction.” They are not separate faculties, but rather, they coexist “on a single continuum.” If one focuses intently on a single thing, it “deteriorate[s] ...

and in some cases disappear[s] altogether” (47). This inbuilt part of attention is “uncontrollable” (65). Crary describes it as “the daydream,” “a domain of resistance internal to any system of routinization or coercion” (77). Such a mode of experience is what Ralph accidentally engages as he attempts to focus on his law books, and as discussed below, it can be fostered to facilitate different forms of experience.

Before moving onto more specific attentive strategies like the fostering of the daydream, it will be useful to expand on the way that the philosophers understand perception. In *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, James defines a “class of experiences” with the term “apperception” as “an ambiguous sphere of being, belonging with emotion on the one hand, and having objective ‘value’ on the other, yet seeming not quite inner nor quite outer” (18). With his discussion of apperceptions, James indicates that the human being can know their implication in the environment. Apperceptions are a middle ground between “psychical” and “physical, in which the esthetic, moral and otherwise emotional experiences ... represent a halfway stage” (19). James suggests that one can identify apperceptions when “the adjective wanders”: “Shall we speak of seductive visions or of visions of seductive things? Of wicked desires or of desires for wickedness? Of healthy thoughts or of thoughts of healthy objects?” (18). In *A Pluralistic Universe*, James insists that “in life distinct things can and do commune together every moment” (259), and that such can be known to the experiencer: “The immediate experience of life solves the problems which so baffle our conceptual intelligence” (260). When attended to carefully enough, each aspect of experience reveals the continuity of its relations: “No one elementary bit of reality is eclipsed from the next bit’s point of view, if only we take reality sensibly and in small enough pulses” (285). In these small pulses, there is a “sensible continuity” wherein “every individual morsel of the sensational stream takes up the adjacent morsels by coalescing with

them” (271); “whatever is real is telescoped and diffused into other reals; ... every minutest thing is already its hegelian ‘own other,’ in the fullest sense of the term” (272). Taking reality in minute “pulses” then must be understood not as isolating one sense or one object and carving it out of the experience, for doing so would offer nothing of continuity. It involves a minimization of the baggage of concepts, “to think of [them] as the merely practical things which Bergson calls them,” to “put[...] off our proud maturity of mind and becom[e] again as foolish little children in the eyes of reason” (273). However, James is not advocating an anti-intellectualist agenda; rather, he advocates for ceasing to dismiss experiences simply because of their apparent irrationality, for from his perspective, *all* experience, both rational and irrational, is real if experienced.

While James wants to minimize the extent to which experience is canalized through intellectual preconceptions, he also recognizes the inextricability of the intellect within perception. In *The Principles of Psychology*, James makes clear that “[p]art of what we perceive comes through our senses from the object before us, another part ... always comes ... out of our own head” (II, 103). While James alters his philosophical stance in *Essays in Radical Empiricism* on certain key issues, the inclusion of the intellect in perception remains. There, he reasserts the involvement of the “reflective intellect” (48), which asserts a selective emphasis on sensation, which “no sooner comes than it tends to fill itself with emphasis, and these salient parts become identified and fixed and abstracted” (49). For Bergson too, the mind’s faculties are an inextricable part of perception. In *Matter and Memory*, he explains that each “present situation” calls up relevant parts of habitual memory, which enter into the perceptive event for the purposes of action (89). Memories that “are more useful in practical life” can “supplant” the sensations of “immediate consciousness,” and in this way, blot out from conscious attention aspects of the

experiential world that are not of immediate use (62). For Bergson as for James, adjusting the extent to which the mind is involved in perception will facilitate different experiences.

As discussed above, Whitehead situates abstraction as an inextricable element of the world. He notes that in perception, it “provides the extreme of selective emphasis,” such that “what leaps into conscious attention is a mass of presuppositions about Reality rather than the intuitions of Reality itself” (*Science* 270). The imposition of selection and presupposition cannot be entirely avoided; experiences are “always accompanied by so-called ‘interpretation’” (*Adventures* 217). The experiences people receive always undergo processes of “simplification, valuation, transmutation, and anticipation” (293). However, Whitehead insists in *Science and the Modern World* that one must make the effort to “rescue the facts as they are from the facts as they appear.” This is a difficult and intellectual task: “We have to rescue the facts from the discard, and we have to discard the subjective order of prominence which is itself a fact of observation” (155). One’s “ordinary, average experience” offers insights when it is “properly interpreted” (294). Whitehead calls upon his reader to “observe their immediate occasion, and *use reason* to elicit a general description of its nature” (55). Through the active application of reason to observation, through the conscious engagement of the reciprocity of the cognitive and observational orders, one can develop ideas “purified from their gross associations with savage fancies” (*Adventures* 24). One cannot grasp any definitive Reality, but one can discover experiences that certain deleterious preconceptions exclude, and thereby transform one’s world.

Woolf and Lawrence also advocate for engaging with the intellectual faculties. Such engagements may look quite different from other contemporary rational projects, but they are no less intellectual. Maria Sanchez-Vizcaino (2007) notes that while Woolf rejects “an abrupt, logical and dominant male mode of thinking,” and while she seems to “reject intellectualism in

favour of intuition,” Woolf is engaged in a sophisticated, “integrating, intuitive and flowing mode of thinking” (par. 21). Such a mode is on display in Woolf’s essay “On Being Ill,” where she calls not only for “courage” in facing experiences that exceed contemporary understanding, but also for “a robust philosophy” and “a reason rooted in the bowels of the earth.” Without a robust philosophical framework, she would not be able to convey anything that she experiences, for she would be apt to end up in the ineffable realm of ecstatic experience: “Short of these, this monster, the body, this miracle, its pain, will soon make us taper into mysticism, or rise, with rapid beats of the wings, into the raptures of transcendentalism” (33). Mysticism and transcendentalism are for Woolf undesirable, for her work is rooted in an empirical investigation, and she seeks a means of articulating the new, complex experiences her literature investigates.

Lawrence even more explicitly than Woolf suggests the importance of the intellect in the kind of attention he wants to foster, an attention that is a necessary element in the creative novelty he values. He writes in *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* that “[w]hat we must needs do is to try to trace still further the habits of the true unconscious, and by mental recognition of these habits break the limits which we have imposed on the movement of the unconscious.” It is precisely through efforts of “mental recognition” directed towards the high-ineffable habits of the unconscious that one can “prompt new movement and new being—the creative process” (16). That is, once one becomes mentally aware of the limitations that intellectual forms have imposed upon the unconscious, one can free it to move onto new forms, for which new abstractions in mental recognition must be brought to bear. Indeed, while Lawrence often seems anti-intellectual in his writing, he only takes issue with the intellect being engaged to the exclusion of the faculties and experiences of the body. In “Introduction to These Paintings” (1929), he lauds the “activity of the whole imagination,” one where “mind” and “body” come

together: “So many modern scientists,” he complains, “work with the mind alone, and *force* the intuitions and instincts into a prostituted acquiescence” (574). Lawrence values the productions of the mind, for they are a constitutive part of the process of creativity. In “On Being a Man” (1924), he lauds the “experience” of “real thought”: “It begins as a change in the blood, a slow convulsion and revolution in the body itself. It ends as a new piece of awareness, a new reality in mental consciousness.... [Man] must go forth and meet life in the body. Then he must face the result in his mind” (616). That is, the novelty that is produced in the intuitive experience is abstracted as it is recorded, and this is not only natural and unavoidable but desirable. Part of the creativity he values is the articulation that occurs.

The Daydream

Crary’s “daydream” has philosophical analogues within radical empirical thought. In his *Essays*, James notes that classification in experience arises out of “urgent need,” and before such arises, experiences are not classified as “rigorously mental or as rigorously physical facts” (76). That is, not only does he insist that “there is no original spirituality or materiality of being... but only a translocation of experience from one world to another” (77), but also he suggests that one can experience this *if* there is no need present to force the categorization of those experiences. Thus, the daydream can function to burgeon not only a mode of attention that opposes capitalist needs, but one that potentially facilitates an alternative awareness, one that can grant access to apperceptive experiences, bringing perceptive awareness to affective relations.

Bergson’s work also contributes to an understanding of the constitution of the daydream, one that helps to explain the other supplanted experiences available in the attentive moment. In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson describes event memory as memory that “bear[s] a date, and consequently [is] unable to occur again” (90). Memories of any previously occurring unique

event are of this sort, and the body of event memory comes to bear in future perceptive experiences: “When we receive sensations, our memory expands to find resemblances” (224). If the conjured event memories do not call the body to action, the consciousness further expands as more of the memory is brought to bear. Extending the process and delaying its termination in action allows for more of event memory to enter one’s perceptive experience. Bergson explains that memory can “grasp into a single intuition multiple moments of duration,” and in so doing, free one “from the movement of the flow of things ... from the rhythm of necessity” (303).¹⁹ Allowing more memories to be provoked by present perception causes “certain confused recollections” to “overflow the usefully associated images, making around these a less illuminated fringe which fades away into an immense zone of obscurity” (97). Having this sort of experience requires the pursuit of uselessness, for useful action ends the recollection. The attentive mechanism for pursuing this is the modulation of “tension” between perception and action. Bergson explains that “according to the degree of tension which our mind adopts and the height at which it takes its stand, the perception develops a greater or smaller number of images” (129). A loosening of this tension broadens the possibilities of response and undermines the very specialized and action-oriented selection that occurs in perception, for more and more of the perceptive field becomes relevant as the breadth of memory in the hesitation of the moment expands: “the operation may go on indefinitely; —memory strengthening and enriching perception, which, in its turn becoming wider, draws into itself a growing number of complementary recollections” (123). Thus, it is the memory of former events that expands within

¹⁹ For Bryony Randall (2007), this breaking of the connection with action means that Bergson’s attention must occur in moments of complete arrest; if his attention “involv[es] initially the inhibition of movement,” she suggests, “one must exclude all extraneous activities” (47), one must, that is, stop doing everything to attend, and thus, such attention cannot occur in the midst of activity. But such is not the case. One must momentarily hesitate in relation to a specific new percept and delay the impetus that it produces, but one is affected by *many* percepts, engaged in many actions, and these things do not happen sequentially. One can allow an attentive duration to build around one stimulus while acting on another.

the daydream, but this can facilitate novelty when it finally terminates back in the sensational world, for previously unremarked aspects of that experience can find admittance and relevance in the increasingly delocalized mode of attention.

Crary notes this interest in Bergson's philosophy. He writes of Bergson's "valoriz[ation of] specific types of attention as types of perception with the highest ethical and aesthetic possibilities" (316). Bergson's desire is, he explains, to unlock "the richer functioning of memory" (322), a function that allows for novel action and intuitive reflection. Crary acknowledges Bergson's interest in delaying action to increase our conscious experience, but he criticizes Bergson overmuch for a sense of slackened attention as indicating "a pathological debilitation of the will" (323). For Bergson, the productive engagement with experience requires a modulation of tension, precisely an engagement with "fluctuation" that Crary suggests Bergson castigates. Perhaps Bergson rejects the value of radically alternative states like "insanity" and "trance" (324-25), but his programme of "attention" is hardly one of rigid control; rather, it is one wherein gains are borne out of modulation. Indeed, one unachievable pole of tension, pure memory, is defined as a state of dreaming. One can thus be productively engaged in "dreaming," which Crary includes with the other aberrant mental states that Bergson dismisses. Dreaming is for Bergson part of the productive hesitation occurring in attentive tension, an element of the delay the event memory facilitates that is necessary to foster new experiences and new formulations of world.

The daydream is one of the modes of attention that Woolf explores and valorizes in her writing. In "The Moment," the "profound depths" that Woolf wishes to reach are accessed through her "prerogative not always to act." By withdrawing from her need to respond to sensation, Woolf is able to expand her experience of the world, "to explore; to hear vague,

ancestral sounds of boughs creaking, or mammoths...” (93). As Bryony Randall (2007) explains, Woolf’s “state of daydream enables us to perceive that which we conventionally take for granted.... It can render opaque, ‘visible,’ the conventionally transparent” (39). This state facilitates a recognition of the experience typically occluded within everyday life, a recognition of connection to the world. When Woolf engages such experience, she is careful to withhold the impetus to arrest it in abstraction, instead allowing it to remain unclassified. As James suggests, in this way she can retain experience’s apperceptive, relational nature as both inner and outer without collapsing it to one or the other. In “A Sketch of the Past,” she writes that instead of capturing the gains of her awareness in a “snapshot,” she “note[s] only this influence, suspect[s] it to be of great importance, cannot find how to check its power on other people; and so erect a finger here, by way of signaling that here is a vein to work out later” (134). Woolf marks the experience in her mind while refusing to compact it into any final, finished abstract form. This allows it to be recalled repeatedly, without abstractive foreclosure, until its complexities can be further discovered.

Woolf’s sense of the value of memory reflects Bergson’s own descriptions of the heightening of attentive possibilities that memory can facilitate. In “A Sketch of the Past,” she writes of the way memories of her past enrich her present experience: when she is “thinking of the past,” “it is then that I am living most fully in the present. For the present when backed by the past is a thousand times deeper than the present when it presses so close that you can feel nothing else, when the film on the camera reaches only the eye” (114). For her, memory plays an important role in experience; without it, one is left with only immediacy and the automatism that it produces. Woolf goes on to suggest that the influence is reciprocal, that the present experience also likewise enriches memory. In remembering her earliest memory, of “the nursery and the

road and the beach,” she notes how it takes up her present sensations, taking part in them: “I was seeing them through the sight I saw here” (77). For Woolf as for Bergson, memory is an inextricable part of experience, one that enriches the present by developing some distance from it, while also taking up the present in itself and being thus enriched and transformed.

Perhaps the most extensive and famous engagement with the daydream that Woolf offers occurs in “The Mark on the Wall” (1917), where she explores the cognitive adventure of a woman’s experiences as she contemplates a mark on the wall that she refuses to identify. Harker’s reading of the story argues that Woolf is exploring “the mechanical operations of a sensation and their limitations and failures” (7), emphasizing “the potentially erroneous impressions of the wandering mind” (17). The bulk of the focus of Woolf’s story is not on the fact that the woman is *wrong*, but on the fact that in delaying the action of getting up to determine what exactly the mark is, the woman has a series of rich experiences. She muses that she “might get up” (77), but she opts not to, for she “want[s] to think quietly, calmly, spaciouly, never to be interrupted ... to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts” (78-79). The sustained uselessness of her present perception allows her to consider variously “the things lost in our lifetime” (78), the experience of a flower (78), the composition and subject of future writing (79-80), and, amongst other things, an extensive critique of the destructive classificatory tendencies embodied by “Whitaker’s Table of Precedency” (82). Woolf’s story not only reveals the extent of experience such daydreaming provides, but also situates such as opposed to more dominant modes of robust action through the speaker’s “contempt for men of action – men, we assume, who don’t think” (82). At the end of the story, Woolf suggests that the daydream is a fragile mode of experience, one that can be easily shattered by the imposition of someone else’s perspective. The husband in the story enters

the room and identifies the mark as a snail, and the speaker's adventure, and the story with it, ends abruptly: "Ah, the mark on the wall! It was a snail" (83).

Intuition, Wisdom, and Wonder

The final mode of attention that this chapter will explore is articulated by Bergson and Whitehead and most strongly finds confluent commitments in the writing of Lawrence. In *Creative Evolution* (1907), Bergson's concepts of "instinct" and "intuition" offer a way of understanding how one can attend to and recognize experience that exceeds the scope of available abstract frameworks. His concept of instinct is itself not a mode of awareness, but rather a mode of life-driven habitual being in the world. The instinct is the living entity's connection with "the organizing work of living matter." It is the way that the living being uses the "instrument(s)" of their organism "for a specific object" (140), which proceeds in a "whole series of automatic movements" (145). While the instinct is itself automatic and habitual, it is also the site of connection to the vital principle that pervades the world, and when one can become aware of it, it offers a sense of involvement in that world. One has some access to instinctive life: "though instinct is not within the domain of intelligence, it is not situated beyond the limits of the mind" (175). Its relationship with intellect allows for some conscious awareness of its gains. It is "opposite and complementary" with the intellect; "neither is ever found in a pure state" (135). This impurity of the instinct, and its polarized involvement with the intellect, allows one to become aware of it through intuition. Intuition is instinct that has, through its involvement with intelligence,²⁰ "become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and enlarging it indefinitely" (176). The "instinct is sympathy," Bergson insists; it

²⁰ Bergson explains the impetus intelligence provides to instinct in this way: "Though it thereby transcends intelligence, it is from intelligence that has come the push that has made it rise to the point it has reached. Without intelligence, it would have remained in the form of instinct" (*Creative* 178).

is connection to the living world (and all of the world is, to varying degrees, involved with life). The artist, he insists, can “plac[e] himself back within the object by a kind of sympathy, in breaking down, by an effort of intuition, the barrier that space puts up between him and his model” (177). Bergson suggests that part of human experience is a sense of connection to the world, wherein human beings can know their involvement with the things that are so often figured as the discrete and separate objects of their experience.

Whitehead’s analogous term for this kind of attentive faculty is “wisdom.” Rather than being intuition become self-aware through the intellect’s work, Whitehead’s “wisdom” is the union of instinct and intellect. In *Adventures of Ideas*, he explains that wisdom is “a decision which determines the mode of coalescence of instinct and intelligence” (46). It is the human capacity to adequately intervene in perception, the agency that modulates between “the primary facts of instinctive experience” and “intellectual operations.” Wisdom has a moral dimension, too. It is constantly pursuing the revision of ever-insufficient abstractions: “Wisdom is persistent pursuit of the deeper understanding, ever confronting intellectual system with the importance of its omissions” (47). Thus, it is a faculty that drives the human being to amend its ever calcifying and insufficient abstractions in perception, to thus amend the reciprocally involved perceptive and conceptual orders. Such work for Whitehead is never finished, just as abstractions will never be finished, for there will always be new experience in the ever-changing world for new abstract forms to facilitate.

Lawrence articulates something analogous to intuition and wisdom in his concepts of “wonder” and “dynamic consciousness.” For Lawrence, part of what is available in human experience is an awareness of the matrix of connections to the universe. In his writing on Lawrence, Tague describes the way that Lawrence’s characters enjoy “an awareness that is

beyond the bodily”; they “understand their immanent connection to others through a preternatural sense” (174-75). Lawrence’s “wonder” is one way to understand what Tagore identifies as “preternatural sense.” Wonder fosters a sympathy with other things through a shared connection to life. This faculty is a mode of relating to experience without the “assumption” of complete knowledge of it. Speaking of knowledge in a specifically cognitive, abstracting manner, Lawrence notes in “Hymns in a Man’s Life” (1928) that “as knowledge increases wonder decreases” (598). It is a feeling one has when one relates to the world without the foreclosure that dominant forms of abstraction produce, and it is not merely some form of awe, but it is also an immediate sympathy: “Plant consciousness, insect consciousness, fish consciousness, all are related by one permanent element, which we may call the religious element inherent in all life, even in a flea: the sense of wonder” (598-99). This sense is integral not only for the sort of experience Lawrence values, but also for the reception of any experience at all. Were a person to have no wonder, their experience would be empty: “They experience nothing because the wonder has gone out of them” (598).

Lawrence’s definition of “dynamic consciousness,” which he explores in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922), helps to develop an understanding of this faculty of “wonder,” for it seems to be a precursor to it. It is a “primary consciousness” that diminishes as it sublimates into “the definite reality of the idea” (106). That is, definite, cognitive knowledge is derived from dynamic consciousness and simultaneously forecloses it. Dynamic consciousness is something all people inherently have, but education weakens it. Lawrence defines it as opposed to abstraction: it is “utterly non-ideal, non-mental, purely dynamic, a matter of dynamic polarized intercourse with vital vibrations, as an exchange of wireless messages which are never translated from the pulse-rhythm into speech, because they have no need to be” (107). With references to a “pulse-

rhythm,” Lawrence indicates that this is a consciousness within the body, a figuration of his famous blood-consciousness, and that it involves knowledge of one’s mutual connection with the environment through an “intercourse” of “vital vibrations.” While Lawrence focuses on this mode of consciousness in infancy, where it has yet to be undermined by education, he notes that this mode of consciousness “continues all life long” (107). However, for many, it is so diminished as to seem to not exist at all.

These forms of conscious attention help to explain the sorts of engagements with experience that Ursula fruitfully pursues in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. In the former novel, she receives from her lover Skrebensky not his words, but a more immediate sense of her contact and continuity with him: “She quivered, taut and vibrating, almost pained.... Her limbs were rich and tense, she felt they must be vibrating with a low, profound vibration. She could scarcely walk. The deep vibration of the darkness could only be felt, not heard” (413).

Lawrence’s use of repetition, discussed in the third chapter of this study, allows him to sustain a description of this sort of “non-mental, purely dynamic” experience without pinning in down and reducing it to a finished, abstracted form. Such exchanges between characters in Lawrence’s novels suggest that the human being can become receptive to their immediate, vital connections with others, described here as a vibration that bridges two bodies. Such experiences are extensively explored by Lawrence in *Women in Love*, particularly as they occur between Ursula and Birkin. The final chapter of this study explores these exchanges extensively, for they suggest not only that pervasive, transformative connections occur between characters in non-linguistic ways, but that the characters’ identities and worlds are constituted through these exchanges.

Chapter 2: The Critique of Abstraction

This chapter focuses on the problematic nature of fixed abstract concepts as they are understood by Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence, and the radical empirical philosophers. This problem relates to one of the commonplaces of literary modernist critique: a growing sense of existential fragmentation in early twentieth-century western society. Discussions of early twentieth-century fragmentation tend to focus on an increase in social disintegration and alienation. For example, Susan Friedman (1981) characterizes the beginnings of modernism as involving a “crisis of belief” marked by a “loss of faith, experience of fragmentation and disintegration, and shattering of cultural symbols and norms” (97); Sarah Cole (2001) writes that the “dominant thematic and formal structures” that have informed literary modernism are “figures like the alienated wanderer; problems such as the impermeability of the individual psyche; images of fragmentation and loss (at both personal and cultural levels); an apparent rejection of tradition; formal features such as narrative discontinuity” (471). These accounts identify a number of different forms of fragmentation (cultural, social, and psychological) with disparate causes. For example, Cole identifies the First World War as a pivotal factor in bringing about social disintegration and personal alienation, focusing specifically on its deleterious effects on male experiences of friendship and intimacy, noting how the “war break[s] apart the bonds of its participants” (477). Other critical perspectives influenced by Marxist thought situate this fragmentation earlier, linking it to the growing dominance of industrial capitalism. For example, Steven Vogel writes of “Naturwuchsigkeit, the power uncomprehended social acts have over humans,” noting how the Marxist lens suggests that “our technology has become a power outside our control,” functionally reducing one’s conscious relationship with the natural world (384). Marx describes this experiential alienation in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of*

1844, where he writes of “empirical business men” imposing an ascetic work ethic to make “productive slave[s]” who reduce their activity to a productivity from which they are alienated:

The less you eat, drink and read books; the less you go to the theatre, the dance hall, the public-house; the less you think, love, theorize, sing, paint, fence, etc., the more you *save*—the *greater* your treasure which neither moths nor dust will devour—your *capital*. The less you *are*, the more you *have*; the less you express your own life, the greater is your *alienated* life—the greater is the store of your estranged being. Everything which the political economist takes from you in life and in humanity, he replaces for you in *money* and in *wealth*.... (95-96)

Marx’s critique identifies the ascetic and acquisitional ideals emerging from industrialism and consumerism that reduce one’s being (“the less you *are*”) and alienate one from their own creativity. One becomes, thus, increasingly cut off from not only a social world that is extraneous to the industrial process, but also from a developed and expressive self. This is one explanation for the rise in individualist fragmentation.

Marx’s perspective on the workers’ reduction of their own being draws attention to the effects of deleterious rhetorical frameworks on people’s conduct and experiences. Just as the Marxist lens reveals individuals alienated and separated from involvement in their labor and its products, so too do other conceptual frameworks divide individuals from not only their environment, but also their own bodies, bolstering an increasingly dualistic self-conception. People come to know themselves through the lens of scientific discourses not as organically interconnected beings, but as separate parts, each accorded its own discipline. Modern psychology breaks the whole human being down into parts, dividing it “into dead bodies and abstractly symbolic (not to mention unreal) minds” (Reed, 1996, 6). Reflecting upon what he

sees as a damaging function of much psychological inquiry, William James identifies psychology as founded upon “the old duality of matter and thought” (*Essays* 111), for it treats the human mind and body as discrete. Those who internalize this separation between mind and body come to see themselves as a consciousness within the container of a body from which they feel alienated. Of course, as James indicates, dualism is not itself new, but philosophers like him express concern at its growing power in the public consciousness, in part because science was increasingly bringing itself to bear upon the human being and cognitively chopping it up into its constitutive parts to be studied separately. This divisive understanding of the human being deeply disturbs D. H. Lawrence, who in “Why the Novel Matters” (1925) complains of the limited and fragmenting focus of contemporary scientists: “To the scientist, I am dead. He puts under the microscope a bit of me, and calls it me. He takes me to pieces, and says first one piece, and then another piece, is me” (50). These narrowly empirical psychological and scientific frameworks abstract from an organically whole human being, and they produce new functional wholes out of conceptually-demarcated elements. Such functional wholes are detrimental to Lawrence, for they fail to account for important parts of the human being. While carefully cataloguing its physical and chemical elements and the relationships between them, reductionist scientific perspectives overlook the existence of less tangible aspects of the human being, and thus, they fail to bring awareness or understanding to the sorts of interpersonal and extra-human relations that Lawrence believes are an important constitutive aspect of the human being.

A number of different highly-developed frameworks (e.g. psychological, physiological, capitalistic, commercial, industrial, etc.) isolate and divide elements of the organic flux, imposing categories upon them that produce new functional wholes. For example, from the industrial perspective, the physical environment’s beauty and the intangible feelings such

produces are ignored, while the prevalence and accessibility of its natural resources become its most important feature. Such specialized functional frameworks do not remain only in the minds of those who produce them; rather, they operate in the populace in a way that is largely unacknowledged and naturalized. The functional wholes are taken to be the organic totality. Jonathan Crary explains that the attention of late-19th and early-20th Century citizens in industrialized Europe was transformed through the needs of the market and the imposition of a moral dimension to the way one attended:

It was a problem whose centrality was directly related to the emergence of a social, urban, psychic, and industrial field increasingly saturated with sensory input. Inattention, especially with the context of new forms of large-scale industrialized production, began to be treated as a danger and a serious problem, even though it was often the very modernized arrangements of labor that produced inattention. (13)

Crary explains that the word “attention” came to define “the relative capacity of a subject to selectively isolate certain contents of a sensory field at the expense of others in the interests of maintaining an orderly and productive world” (17). The sort of attention valorized was thus rooted in the sensory present, minimizing the inattentive intercession of both recollection and anticipation. Underlying this valorization is the confluent idea of the “empty” time of the mechanical interval (272), within which each object can be cut out not only in extensive space, but whose present moment is reduced to the instant within spatialized “imaginary homogenous time” (274). For Bergson, such does violence to the complexity of the lived moment, “[t]he duration lived by our consciousness,” which “is a duration with its own determined rhythm, a duration very different from the time of the physicist, which can store up, in a given interval, as

great a number of phenomena as we please” (272). In *Creative Evolution*, he further explains that the idea of an isolated instant is not reflective of reality but a high abstraction: “There is no instant immediately before another instant; there could not be, any more than there could be one mathematical point touching another. The instant ‘immediately before’ is, in reality, that which is connected with the present instant...” (21). The mind that is trained to attentively isolate objects under its scrutiny is likewise trained to reify abstractions of objects out of their temporal processes. As Bergson explains, “Just as we separate in space, we fix in time. The intellect is not made to think *evolution*, in the proper sense of the word—that is to say, the continuity of a change that is pure mobility.... The intellect represents *becoming* as a series of *states*, each of which is homogeneous with itself and consequently does not change” (163). The violence enacted by the emphasis placed upon and valorization of empty, homogenous time are for Bergson opposed to the unforeseeable creativity that emerges from engaging the rhythms of one’s durational existence. Such an emphasis threatens to alienate human beings from their participation in the creativity of life, and to indeed undermine their capacity to engage in creativity as their own lives are chopped up into a series of static instantaneous nows. This series of instantaneous nows is an abstraction that fragments the extended meaningful moment of one’s world-involvement.

The dominant frameworks for understanding oneself and one’s relations to the environment are, from the perspective of a writer like Lawrence, dangerous both for the limitations they place upon one’s experience and the deleterious effects they have on one’s creative development. The most deleterious frameworks foster static and discrete conceptions of the self, wherein the human being is identified in separation from their immediate environmental contexts and understood as largely unchanging through time. Such a conception of self is

projected into the future, foreclosing opportunities to recognize implication in the environment and imposing an increasingly ill-fitting idea of self that leads to excessive self-alienation. While the environment and the self are continuously undergoing change, and while the objects of the environment (including people) are constituted in part through relationships that call into question their apparent separateness, human beings come to see themselves and the environment as discrete and definitionally fixed. Such people would consider themselves “relational” only in the most superficial ways: they would feel related to things like their country, their home, their family, their job, and so on, while ignoring the pervasive, mutually-constitutive relationships with the objects that exist within their immediate experience. Such objects are themselves figured as stable objects persisting through time. As Bergson would acknowledge, such fixity, imposed and bolstered through functional ideational constructs, is necessary for action, but when extended beyond its immediate use, it becomes harmful. At the heart of the problem for the writers that animate this study is a society increasingly invested in a baldly materialistic model of relatedness that undermines the capacity of those adopting it to recognize and indeed explore the mutual constitution of all objects. The recognition of such a constitution is of paramount importance for a writer like Lawrence because it is, in his view, a necessary part of the human implication in evolving creativity and novelty; for Woolf, it is both the necessary foundation for an ameliorative model of self and community, and a vitally important means of undermining the isolation and separation predominant in commonplace thought so influenced by functionalizing discourses.

The critique of epistemic thought offered by A.N. Whitehead suggests that the foundations for modern fragmentation lie in a history of thought with deep roots. In *Science and the Modern World*, he points to the power of mathematical thought while simultaneously

indicating the damage it has caused to other schools of thought, an effect that has worked its way into the contemporary, commonplace, unquestioned way of operating in the world:

The seventeenth century had finally produced a scheme of scientific thought framed by mathematicians, for the use of mathematicians. The great characteristic of the mathematical mind is its capacity for dealing with abstractions; and for eliciting from them clear-cut demonstrative trains of reasoning, entirely satisfactory so long as it is those abstractions which you want to think about. The enormous success of the scientific abstractions, yielding on the one hand matter with its simple location in space and time, on the other hand mind, perceiving, suffering, reasoning, but not interfering, has foisted onto philosophy the task of accepting them as the most concrete rendering of fact.

Thereby, modern philosophy has been ruined. It has oscillated in a complex manner between three extremes. There are the dualists, who accept matter and mind as on equal basis, and the two varieties of monists, those who put mind inside matter, and those who put matter inside mind. (70)

For Whitehead, the division of matter and mind is an extraordinary abstraction that modern philosophy has taken as representative of concrete facts. In *Adventures of Ideas*, he elaborates on the nature of this damaging, divisive, atomistic way of thinking, and he places the blame, much earlier than the seventeenth century, upon Aristotle's division of the qualities of objects abstracted from the thing itself: "The modern outlook arises from the slow influence of Aristotle's Logic, during a period of two thousand years." For Whitehead, the philosophical inheritors of Aristotle produce work that

entirely leaves out of account the interconnections between real things. Each substantial thing is thus conceived as complete in itself, without any reference to any other substantial thing. Such an account of the ultimate atoms, or of the ultimate monads, or of the ultimate subjects enjoying experience, renders an interconnected world of real individuals unintelligible. The universe is shivered into a multitude of disconnected substantial things, each thing in its own way exemplifying its private bundle of abstract characters which have found a common home in its own substantial individuality. (132-33)

Whitehead explains that modern thinkers like Leibniz are exemplary of this tradition of thought, still wrestling with a problem of their own making, one that ignores the “interconnected world of real individuals,” instead fragmenting the world and having to impose some abstract God to restore a connection.

The fragmenting, abstracting tendency of the intellect as it is employed undermines a complex understanding of the human being’s relational involvement with the world. People come to see themselves as discrete individual subjects in a world of discrete and separate objects that retain a consistent identity through time. The philosophers of this study each express grave concerns about the epistemic changes brought about by an increasingly imbalanced application of the intellect. In *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (1909), James is troubled by the rising “rationalistic tendency to treat experience as chopped up into discontinuous static objects” (124). Bergson also finds that the intellect is reaching a dangerous apotheosis in the modern period, leading to a harmful understanding of the human situation in the world. “Existence,” as Bergson understands it, “always implies conscious apprehension and regular connexion” (*Matter* 190). Conversely, the intellectual faculty’s “function ... to establish clear-cut distinctions” (190) not

only imposes fixed spatial separation between objects, carving them out to minimize their environmental implication and involvement, but also arrests objects within instantaneous time to perpetuate an easily-anticipated stable definition. Such a function of the intellect is useful for action, but it fails to acknowledge the less discrete relations that circulate between the experiencing human and his or her environment through the processual duration of their existence. Instead of recognizing the intermingling of “external objects” and “internal states,” the intellect classifies them as “two radically different modes of existence.” This separates not only the mind from the body, but also the mind from the rest of the world:

the existence of psychical states is assumed to consist entirely in their apprehension by consciousness, and that of external phenomena, entirely also, in the strict order of their concomitance and their succession. Whence the impossibility of leaving to material objects, existing, but unperceived, the smallest share in consciousness, and to internal unconscious states the smallest share in existence. (190-91)

Bergson’s explanation suggests that one’s “existence” exceeds “consciousness,” that there are unconscious “psychical states” available that could be intimated within conscious awareness, experiences that exceed the demarcations of one’s world. Additionally, Bergson situates the environment’s “external phenomena” as taking part in and influencing one’s conscious existence. Bergson laments that, in his time, people cannot conceive of the continuity between consciousness and such “external phenomena.” The dualistic conceptions with which he takes issue have existed throughout the history of philosophy, but they seemed to be growing in power through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Reflecting upon this divide in *Science and the Modern World*, Whitehead notes that the study of matter is restricted to science and the study

of mind to philosophy, and later psychology (180). What ceases to be considered with this division is extensive and important: “In between there lie the concepts of life, organism, function, instantaneous reality, interaction, order of nature, which collectively form the Achilles heel of the whole system” (71). According to Whitehead, the “bad effects” of these erroneously fractured ontological views, as industrialization accelerates throughout the nineteenth century, is a fragmented society:

The doctrine of minds, as independent substances, leads directly not merely to private worlds of experience, but also to private worlds of morals. The moral intuitions can be held only to apply to the strictly private world of psychological experience. Accordingly, self-respect, and the making the most of your own individual opportunities, together constituted the efficient morality of the leaders among the industrialists of that period. The western world is now suffering from the limited moral outlook of the previous three generations. (243)

This “doctrine of minds” that Whitehead critiques here separates the “psychological experience” from the extensive world, severing continuity and making it private. Such a perspective bolsters an individualism that runs contrary to social cohesion and cooperation. As Whitehead explains it, the problem has been growing for generations, and it has reached its apogee in the time and place with which this study is concerned: early twentieth-century British society.

The various forms of fragmentation introduced above are underwritten by the concern of this chapter: a mode of world-understanding that severs human beings from recognizing their implication in the world, that bolsters their individualism while reinforcing and perpetuating objectifying definitions of not only objects of the world (including other people), but also the self, and that removes their ability to recognize provocations that might facilitate change in their

understanding. Rather than understanding the self as holistically implicated in a co-constitutive relationship with its world, such a perspective situates existence as founded upon the clear divide between subject and objects. People who adopt or have imposed upon them such a way of thinking are increasingly unlikely to acknowledge or note the way their selves are not strictly bounded by their bodies, the way they are both a constitutive part of their environment (including others) and the way the environment takes part in their own continuously shifting constitution.²¹ Such a socially-dominant dualistic worldview and the fixed abstractions that accompany it (e.g. the self-objectifying fixed, stable ego that people produce through such a perspective) are among the fundamental problems addressed by not only radical empiricist philosophy but also modernist novelists like Woolf and Lawrence. While often borne out of specific expressions of this [e.g. the dehumanizing power of industrial processes], the visions of social division, isolation, and alienation that modernist writing frequently offers are reflective of such a worldview. The unexamined assumptions of a discrete and separate human being constituted as a mind within an objectified body bolster this sense of isolation and dislocation: they heighten one's sense of alienation from other people, from the products of one's work, from previously unifying social narratives, and from the world. Posited causes of fragmentation like the First World War do not initiate this worldview, but the War helps to explain its increased ubiquity in the period of literary high modernism. In the philosophy of radical empiricism and in the writing of Woolf and Lawrence, it is morally imperative to resist isolating, demarcating, and fixed ontological views and their reinforcing conceptual frameworks. The authors in question oppose conceptual lenses that categorically delineate the objects of the world, conceptually cordoning them off. Such a perspective undermines the recognition of the immediate, pervasive connections between people

²¹ The extent to which Woolf and Lawrence offer alternative modes of selfhood in their novels is the focus of the final chapter of this study.

and the world they inhabit. Jonathan Crary (1999) describes this as the “nonveridical status of vision and perception”; that is, “the powerful position that there is no necessary or direct correspondence between sense experience and objects in the world” (319). In *Matter and Memory* (1896), Bergson argues against cognitive systems that lead people to “with impunity ... congeal into distinct and independent things the fluidity of a continuous undivided process,” noting that the sum of these isolated parts will never restore the fragmented organic whole: “all these stations laid side by side will never be able to reconstitute the movement itself” (156). Whitehead explains that traditionally, philosophers have understood “the meaning of evil” as “the experience of destruction,” a definition that he retains while suggesting it is “much too simple-minded” (*Adventures* 259). Whitehead’s definition of “Evil” is “the brute motive force of fragmentary purpose” (*Science* 239). As it takes root in experiencers who cease to recognize their implication in the environment, they cease to recognize “the true relation of each organism to its environment” (244). Likewise, in “The Crown” (1915), an essay written contemporaneously with *The Rainbow* that explores the threat of atomism, Lawrence laments that modern thought fails to adequately address the relational world: human beings have become “circumscribed” by the work of an ego that seeks to contain and curtail “mystery,” and have surrendered “to the flux of death, to analysis, to introspection, to mechanical war and destruction.” His writing is animated by an intense moral concern with this “flux of death” and a desire to stop “the continued activity of disintegration—disintegration, separating, setting apart...” (53-54).

Woolf, too, is concerned with the cognitive circumscription that breaks apart and occludes aspects of the experienced world. In her diary (1926), she is troubled by her “instinctive” recourse to “screens” that cover over her relation to the world:

My instinct at once throws up a screen, which condemns them: I think them in every way angular, awkward & self assertive. But all this is a great mistake. These screens shut me out. Have no screens, for screens are made out of our own integument; & get at the thing itself, which has nothing whatever in common with a screen. The screen making habit, though, is so universal, that probably it preserves our sanity. If we had not this device for shutting people off from our sympathies, we might, perhaps, dissolve utterly. Separateness would be impossible. But the screens are in the excess; not the sympathy. (*Writer's* 97)

The “instinct” that Woolf identifies has little in common with the instinct defined by philosophers like Bergson. Instead, instinct here refers to the automatic imposition of her socialized class consciousness, which enters into her perceptions so seamlessly that it seems natural, a growth out of living human society that has calcified into the “integument” of a conceptual shell. Writing on Woolf’s interest in “the society of women as an alternative to patriarchal structures and the seeds of authoritarianism” (57), Ellen Hawkes (1981) reads the screens Woolf describes as “the screens of egotism.” She notes that while Woolf recognizes the “dangerous consequences” of eschewing such screens, “she also realised that the prisoner behind these ramparts never developed an authentic identity,” that they suffered from a “form of alienation so prevalent in modern society” (56). Hawkes reads Woolf’s “sympathy” as the sort of communication Woolf found in the community of women, “that special form of communication between the self and the other which required no screens or outer pretences” (56). In this diary entry, Woolf’s use of “sympathy” suggests a mode of reception that minimizes self-preserving socialized egotism that closes her off to such people. She brings into conscious attention the preexisting judgments that typically cause her to dismiss the sort of commonplace people she

describes. Woolf thus advocates for a mode of attentiveness that is less rooted in an unquestioned, empty present, one that instead engages in reflective critiques of one's judgements as they occur. Having no screens is of course dangerous. One needs to be able to distinguish to act. To perceive unmitigated the pure flux, if such were even possible, would not "preserve [one's] sanity." But for Woolf, one must vigilantly critique the distinctions one's mind imposes to seek out a sympathy that is increasingly threatened by the increasing prevalence of divisive, socially and ontologically fragmenting screens.

"Abstraction" in this chapter needs further definition. The term as it is used here refers to the broad range of cognitive engagements with the flux of primordial experience. As preconceptual ontic experience is reflected upon and encoded as concepts, a conceptual, usually linguistic abstraction of that primordial experience is produced. While these abstractions can have damaging effects, such is not amplified by the extent to which one carefully develops them, for a carefully examined concept is usually subject to more considered limitation and provisionality than a poorly articulated one. The deleterious forms of abstraction cut out the object under consideration from its implication in the flow of time, and they likewise sever it from its environmental implication. Writing on classical philosophy's interest in concept formation, Christoph Helmig (2012) describes the Neoplatonist perspective that humans are born with innate knowledge; from such a perspective, concepts should be perfectable: one can "correct and perfect erroneous or misleading sense impressions" (337). Those who ascribe to such a belief would suggest that, given enough time and care, eventually concepts would become adequate to the world they describe. Such is not the perspective of the writers central to this study. While a concept divorced from much of its context may be transferrable and useful, it can never be adequate to the world, for the world does not stop changing, and the new expressions of

that novelty can never be adequately anticipated. People inherit these concepts and make them a part of their world, often failing to recognize their specialized use and the context for which they fail to adequately account. This issue is also not merely the purview of highly-trained developers of concepts (e.g. philosophers, scientists, psychologists, etc.); it affects all people, for, as Helmig points out, everyone participates in the development of concepts, even if they are not formally articulated: “it seems reasonable to assume that a naïve, unreflective, and implicit application of ‘sameness’ and ‘difference,’ ‘being,’ etc. takes place in all formations of belief” (337). People are constantly involved in conceptualizing mental processes, whether they realize it or not (and the latter is perhaps more dangerous for its potential to produce negative effects), and the call to mindfulness about this process is thus not merely directed at those steeped in specialized discourses.

Ambivalence Towards Abstraction

The critique of the abstracting intellect has led to the accusation that the radical empirical philosophers are anti-intellectual. For example, Ross Posnock (1991) characterizes James’s (and Bergson’s) work as “capitulating to irrationalism” (106) in their interest in what Richard Rorty calls “the rich, wooshy, sensuous flux we bathed in before conceptual thought started to dry us out” (qtd. in Posnock 106), and he finds James’s work inconsistent when it engages in the very “vicious intellectualism” he condemns: “James appears to reify reality into a graspable essence,” failing to live up to his pluralistic insistence that one “can never grasp reality but only ‘some substitute for it which previous thinking had peptonized and cooked for our consumption’” (108). To prove this “reification,” Posnock cites James’s description of a “revolution” against “the philosophic tradition which treats *logos* or discursive thought generally as the sole avenue to truth” (*Pluralistic* 272), noting James’s insistence that such a “revolution” is the only way “to the

possession of reality” (273). But how James discusses that possession and that reality is anything but reifying. His “revolution” calls for thinkers “to fall back on raw unverbilized life as more of a revealer, and to think of concepts as the merely practical things which Bergson calls them” (272-73). The “real” that he discusses is not singular; rather, “whatever is real is telescoped and diffused into other reals” (272). And indeed, what he takes issue with is how “the conceptual or discursive form [is] substituted for the real form” (272). Thus, “possession” is hardly for James grasping the concrete with reifying concepts, and his reality is never a stable entity. He writes that “Reality, life, experience, concreteness, immediacy, use what word you will, exceeds our logic, overflows and surrounds it” (212). Reality is “where things *happen*” (213). It is a processual state, not an entity:

What really *exists* is not things made but things in the making. Once made, they are dead, and an infinite number of alternative conceptual decompositions coming at once into your possession, you are no longer troubled with the question which of them is the more absolutely true. Reality *falls* in passing into conceptual analysis; it *mounts* in living its own undivided life—it buds and bourgeons, changes and creates.... Philosophy should seek this kind of living understanding of the movement of reality, not follow science in vainly patching together fragments of its dead results. (264)

James is not suggesting that his radical empirical philosophy seeks to grasp reality in the same way as the logocentric discourse he criticizes. In talking about the “possession of reality,” James describes a shift to an “‘immediate’ point of view” defined not as a fixed instant of time, but “the point of view in which we follow our sensational life’s continuity...” (270), a sensational life that involves “both past and present in one field of feeling,” with the anticipation of something

unforeseen within the pregnant moment: “something that shoots out of a darkness through a dawn into a brightness that we feel to be the dawn fulfilled” (283). As for Posnock’s critique of James’s “irrationalism,” while James’s work is critical of the reification of concepts, it recognizes the need for the use of some form of conceptualization in engaging the experience of the world. Bergson’s classification as anti-intellectual was predicated upon his critique of certain impositions of intellectual abstraction upon the world, such that Whitehead comes to his defense by noting that his “so-called anti-intellectualism” was based upon his fight “against taking the Newtonian conception of nature as being anything except a high abstraction” (*Science* 183). Despite these writers’ strong critiques of the intellect’s abstracting function, they are not anti-intellectual; they critique a particular use of the intellectual function that they have come to see as a problem inhibiting the growth of the creative human individual, human society, and the human relationship with the world.

Woolf, Lawrence, and the radical empirical philosophers are likewise critical of abstraction; their works reveal an imbalanced excess of the sort of abstraction that fosters a atomistically compartmentalized world. The bold criticisms of this sort of abstracting function have led some to read their works as anti-rational or anti-intellectual, which is an understandable mischaracterization given that their critiques of a certain mode of abstraction may seem like an absolute condemnation of the intellectual faculty to abstract. For example, Lawrence’s critique of the education system and his hatred of idealism can make him seem like a thoroughgoing anti-intellectual. L. C. B. Seaman (1966) expresses this early, commonplace characterization of Lawrence: “The most celebrated anti-intellectual in England was D.H. Lawrence, whose novels and poems often derive such coherence as they possess from a passionate faith, vividly expressed, in the validity of direct intuitive awareness of the physical world. Lawrence had

considerable influence over the most brilliant of the intellectual nihilists of the period, Aldous Huxley” (119). John Colmer (1985) likewise describes “the extremes of anti-intellectualism, unenlightened naturalism and total mysticism sometimes found in Lawrence” (18). Such a characterization, particularly given Lawrence’s strong opposition to “the absolute” and his seeming mysticism, is understandable, but it does not recognize how Lawrence’s work is deeply invested in employing the intellect to bring awareness of living, immediate experience into knowledge. Critics of Woolf are less critical of any anti-intellectualism in her writing, but a vein of Woolfean criticism situates her work as escaping into irrational mysticism. For instance, Patricia Laurence (1991) explains that Woolf, in suggesting the ineffable through connotations of silence, “incorporates mystical elements of Oriental metaphysics, suggesting to the twentieth century the necessity of transcending language in Buddhism or Taoism, for example, and moving toward silence...” (53). More recently, Lorraine Sim (2010), while taking Woolf’s engagement with the external world seriously, finds in Woolf’s moments of shared experience an “aesthetic unit[y]” that is “mystical in quality, rather than confirming the beliefs of common-sense fact” (31). While Woolf’s writing counters commonplace understandings of the world, the resolutions she offers are not an escape from findings available in direct experience. She does not make some aesthetic or mystical leap to the conclusions she derives. Savina Stevanato (2012) likewise suggests that the unity Woolf depicts in her fiction involves a mystical leap beyond direct experience: “On the one hand, Woolf followed the general tendency to compensate for fragmentation through formal means; on the other, she still seemed to entertain the idea of a founding and transcendent absolute beyond the fragmentation that those formal means were meant to restore to unity. In this sense, her attitude can be interpreted as religious” (260). Such critiques are borne out of a desire to understand the strange relational qualities Woolf explores in

her works, but Woolf's attitude and approach to experience is far more philosophically empirical than mystical or religious.

The works of the authors reflect an appreciation of intellectual abstraction. While the authors take issue with the way specific applications of abstraction oppose change, they also note the positive and necessary uses of abstraction's tendency to arrest the flux of experience: such tendencies facilitate the smooth functioning of society, and they produce a necessary stability in the midst of the dizzying whirl of primordial experience. As introduced in the last chapter, one of the necessary uses of the intellect's abstracting power is to facilitate action. Bergson posits that the intellect necessarily abstracts from the flux of flowing experience so that a person can arrest certain objects of interest and act upon the world. In *Creative Evolution* (1907), he situates the intellect as a product of evolution that facilitates the human ability to manipulate objects: it is a "faculty of acting ... intended to secure the perfect fitting of our body to its environment." It does this by producing "concepts," abstractions from the chaos that calcify it; they are "formed on the model of solids; ... our logic is, pre-eminently, the logic of solids" (ix). Thus, rather than suggesting that the intellect imposes something unnatural and secondary upon a primary reality, Bergson acknowledges that the intellect fulfills a "natural function" (155): it produces the "symbolic presentment" required for instrumental action, which, for instrumental purposes, imposes stability, selection, and differentiation upon undifferentiated "continuity" (*Matter* 154-55). Sanford Schwartz (1985) explains how the instrumental, arresting function of the intellect in Bergson's work reduces one's engagement with sensation: "The intellect is an instrumental rather than a speculative faculty, and its purpose is to replace the stream of sensations with a network of stable and useful concepts. Contrary to traditional beliefs, the intellect is designed not to find a preexisting reality behind the sensory flux but to project a useful grid upon it" (28).

Thus, it replaces much of the details of sensation to foster accurate prediction and swift action. The consequence of this, however, is that one will usually find what one expects, and little else.

In his introduction to the poetry of Harry Crosby, “Chaos in Poetry” (1928), Lawrence reflects on the useful, protective function of this abstracting intellectual faculty. He explains that humans naturally and necessarily produce cognitive enclosures to protect themselves from the harrowing experience of chaos. “Man cannot live in chaos,” he writes; “Man must wrap himself in a vision, make a house of apparent form and stability, fixity” (109). For Lawrence, this is a necessary and understandable response to intimations of an unmooring, chaotic, protean flux. This only becomes problematic for Lawrence when the response is never mitigated, and instead is reified: “In his terror of chaos, he begins by putting up an umbrella between himself and the everlasting whirl. Then he paints the under-side of his umbrella like a firmament. Then he parades around, lives and dies under his umbrella” (109). Humanity is naturally driven to protect itself from the chaos of the flux; while this fosters ease of conduct with the things identified, the troubling consequence of this is that society proceeds to convince itself that its set of supplanting abstractions are a complete account of the world. While the vision of society Lawrence offers is bleak, the power of the dominant understanding he describes as this umbrella is not absolute: experience beyond the dome is accessible, albeit with great difficulty (given the power of the umbrella of abstractions) and with great trepidation (given the terrifying unmoored nature of the flux). The poet’s key role is to undermine the apparent totality of society’s systems of understanding—penetrating the enclosure to produce openings—even if society will, with great anxiety, work to accommodate those openings to maintain the illusion of complete understanding. Like Whitehead, he expresses that abstractions are a necessary, constitutive part of humanity: “umbrellas ... are a necessity of our consciousness” (113). People cannot act in the

world without them, but they must change the way they engage the abstracting faculty, doing so more critically and actively, while being less blindly accepting of abstractions that are passed onto them, which shape their own acts of abstraction and contribute to the background of metaphysical assumptions that underlies their world. In the novels examined in this study, discussed below, Lawrence both dramatizes characters who suffer from a failure to do this work, and those whose lives are positively transformed through this sort of work.

The necessary, instrumental function of abstraction that Lawrence and Bergson indicate is also of interest to James. When James broaches the subject of mental habits in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), he is quick to note that habits undermine “the conscious attention with which our acts are performed” (I, 114), and later, he explains that perceptual experience is reduced to “stepping-stones to pass over to the recognition of the realities whose presences they reveal” (231). The more people habitually engage their world, the less they are “conscious” of the selections they are not making: “habit soon brings it about that each event calls up its own appropriate successor without any alternative offering itself, and without any reference to the conscious will...” (231). Certainly, habit is part of what produces a stable self, and it is not inherently bad. However, James’s explanation points out that habits can be taken to extremes, leaving a human being with little conscious engagement with their world and few opportunities for choice or creativity. And indeed, James’s relationship with habit is ambivalent. The conceptual systems that are encoded in mental habit can condemn people largely to a narrowly-defined lot in life, but James suggests that the predictable stability this produces keeps society running: “On the whole, it is best [a person] should not escape. It is well for the world that in most of us, by the age of thirty, the character has set like plaster, and will never soften again,” for

it is in this time that people produce their “intellectual and professional habits” that allow people to participate in a functioning society (121).

James’s view of the power of habit is not as absolute as it may seem, and the works of Renee Tursi (1999) and Joseph Thomas (1993) help explain James’s ambivalent position. Tursi’s work focuses largely on James’s more sanguine disposition towards habit. While habit produces “a ‘settling in’ or hardening of our experience like the rings of a tree,” it also is a necessary part of the retention of human cognitive gains; it encodes productive novel ideas so that they can be repeated: “An original thought would perish if left on its own; only habit, according to James, enables the environment to preserve an idea’s ongoing potential” (68). Tursi suggests that it facilitates development on the level of the human species, as humanity’s development is “a habit-facilitated conceptual journey” (82). Thomas’s argument serves as an illuminating counterpoint, noting that, while the habitual encoding of cognitive gains is necessary for their retention, James is uncomfortable with completely automatist conceptions of the human being, and his work reflects a struggle against such conceptions. Thomas acknowledges that cognitive habits are necessary “lest we be without concepts and overwhelmed,” and moreover that they provide a sense of security and comfort: they are how “humankind come[s] to feel ‘at home’ in the world” (7) through the security of “predictive ... familiarity” (15-16); however, while habit “preserves,” it also “impoverishes” (11) by turning the mind into “the world’s passive and plastic object” (19). Thomas argues that James’s work subtly struggles against a totalizing conception of cerebrally-encoded habit, for James’s writing betrays an interest in counteracting a habituated perceptual order, and the human being in his work is engaged in a difficult struggle against powerful conceptual inertia: “James seems to revel in the sublime rush of experience, which is beautiful yet threatens to shatter the self.... Ultimately for James, selfhood is a secretly

anguished activism, a moral heroism whose foundations are incessantly washing away even as one shores them up” (26). One might add, in this context, that after James’s turn to radical empiricism, he situated the subject not as free from the clutches of cerebrally-encoded habits, but as struggling to assert “Free Will” by allowing “the character of novelty in fresh activity-situations” (*Essays* 97, n17).

The philosophical texts and the critical nonfiction of the novelists in this study both offer propositional ontological concepts and insights into the nature of human existence. While the novels this study examines are animated by such ideas, their function is not to convey propositions of truth, but to dramatize both the possibilities and consequences of different ways of being within the shared world of the novel. In Woolf’s *Night and Day* (1919), the repetitious conduct of a number of characters reflects James’s automatism of habit not just in mechanical operations, but in social conduct. In Mary’s office, the same joke is “repeated with scarcely any variation of words” (79), and Ralph is able to maintain his “habits of work” through “a constant repetition of a phrase to the effect that he shared a common fate, found it best of all, and wished for no other” (129). While James emphasizes the unconsciousness of mental habits, wherein actors proceed almost entirely unwilling, Woolf’s novel suggests through the interiority of its principal characters that people desire and actively pursue their routinization. Woolf explores the lived experience of it through Mary as she moves with the workforce through London, noting the pleasure it offers: “Out in the street she *liked* to think herself one of the workers who, at this hour, take their way in rapid single file along all the broad pavements of the city, with their heads slightly lowered, as if all their effort were to follow each other as closely as might be...” (76, my emphasis). Mary enjoys joining the people in the street and feeling a part of that society, which implies that each member of the crowd might find the experience not entirely numbing, but

similarly pleasurable, perhaps for the sense of belonging it provides, or perhaps for the pleasure of contributing to the city's continued functioning. What the workers contribute to is "the serious business of winding-up the world to tick for another four-and-twenty hours" (76). The implication is that their pleasure in such a shared endeavor contributes to the perpetuation of mechanized clock-time, which undermines a recognition of the temporal complexity of each moment. These people are perhaps less automatized than they seem, but they are willfully contributing to their limitation, to both literally and figuratively move through life with "their heads slightly lowered."

While the abstract order's primary social function is instrumental in the way it facilitates the conduct of masses of people, through fictional examinations of anxiety about the chaos of the flux, Lawrence and Woolf both dramatize its individual, psychological function as defensive. While it facilitates conduct, Lawrence's umbrella is maintained and reified because people are terrified of exposure to that which their conceptual systems cannot grasp. Likewise, the "screens" Woolf describes in her diary serve a self-protective function, shielding one from the threat of dissolution in an interrelated world. She writes that "the screen-making habit ... preserves our sanity. If we had not this device for shutting people off from our sympathies we might perhaps dissolve utterly; separateness would be impossible" (*Writer's* 96). For Woolf, some separateness is necessary for mental wellbeing, and the mind's ability to create discrete separation fosters such. For both Woolf and Lawrence, systems of abstract conceptual notions are not only produced to facilitate one's action in the world, but also out of psychological need.

Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (1915) explores multiple generations of the Brangwen family who, having lost a mythical instinctive oneness with the environment, struggle to reestablish that sense of connection. The novel's opening is mythical in the way it mirrors the Bible's Genesis,

with a paradisaal perfection lost and the yearning for that perfection retained. Through the progenitors of the Brangwen family, Lawrence dramatizes the lure towards conceptual stability that introduces fixity and differentiation. While biblically the loss of Edenic bliss is an unmitigated tragedy, Lawrence's novel also examines the possibilities that the lure beyond such a state offers, suggesting that characters are drawn beyond the narrow horizons of their worlds towards new creative possibilities.

The novel opens with a description of a world on the brink of a fall from a mythical, Edenic oneness with the environment, a world that is indeed suggestive of a life prior to the birth of consciousness. While the men do not engage their intellect at all – their “brains were inert” – their wives are drawn towards linguistic abstraction: “But the women looked out from the heated, blind intercourse of farm-life, to the spoken world beyond. They were aware of the lips and the mind of the world speaking and giving utterance, they heard the sound in the distance, and they strained to listen” (10). This sound lures the women towards civilization, towards abstractions that have both the power to offer new experiences and the power to produce fixity. Indeed, the world this unnamed female progenitor of the Brangwens is drawn towards offers new vistas and the promise of creativity:

She stood to see the far-off world of cities and governments and the active scope of man, the magic land to her, where secrets were made known and desires fulfilled. She faced outwards to where men moved dominant and creative, having turned their back on the pulsing heat of creation, and with this behind them, were set out to discover what was beyond, to enlarge their own scope and range and freedom; whereas the Brangwen men faced inwards to the teeming life of creation, which poured unresolved into their veins. (11)

If the Brangwen men enjoy a oneness with the environment, it is one they are unable to reflect upon and bring into intellectual knowledge – it remains “unresolved.” Lured towards the world of articulation and civilization, the Brangwen women in turn lure the men into mindfulness. Deprived of their instinctual, animal immediacy with the world, the men come to idealize and reify the woman as offering the solace and security of meaning: “The woman was the symbol for that further life which comprised religion and love and morality.... They depended on her for their stability. Without her, they would have felt like straws in the wind, to be blown hither and thither at random” (20). Later in the novel, this dependency is expressed between the specific characters of Will and Anna. After Anna mocks Will’s mystical, religious feeling, forcing him to reflect upon it and see it as logically ridiculous, he turns to her for the safety his unexamined religious convictions once provided: “She was as the rock on which he stood, with deep, heaving water all round, and he unable to swim” (173). Having his simple means of understanding the world disturbed, Will needs the solace of Anna to protect him from what has become an incomprehensible, unmooring ocean of fluctuating experience—the temporal and sensory flux: “The rest was a great, heaving flood. The terror of the night of heaving, overwhelming flood, which was his vision of life without her, was too much for him. He clung to her fiercely and abjectly” (173). The idealization of Anna is necessary for Will, as he must find some way of protecting himself from the madness with which the unconceptualized flux threatens the conscious human being.

While Anna becomes for Will a reified ideal, a fixed island in the overwhelming fluidity of the flux, her own experience of the world is not that different from his; her longing for new experiences is conflicted with a desire for closure. When Anna is aware of her wanderlust, she tries to suppress it out of a desire for the safety of conformity: “What was *she* doing with

unsatisfied desires? She was ashamed. She ignored them and left them out of count as much as possible, her underneath yearnings. They angered her. She wanted to be like other people, decently satisfied” (147). The consequence of this yearning for the stability represented by home is that it ultimately arrests her creative development: “There was something beyond her. But why must she start on the journey? She stood so safely on this Pisgah mountain” (181). As the mountain from which Moses viewed the promised land, Pisgah represents a midpoint between slavery and Zion. While she knows that each day in her closed world is one “in which she had not played her fullest part” (181), the lure of her home is too strong, and desire for adventure is left unfulfilled: “she could not go ... because she must stay at home now. With satisfaction she relinquished the adventure to the unknown” (182), allowing the biological productivity of her body to stand in for artistic creativity: “If her soul found no utterance, her womb had” (192).

Lawrence’s work reflects the dangers of automatism produced through the habituation of one’s engagement with the world as it is facilitated by a largely static conceptual framework. For Lawrence, one’s vitality is stifled by the static idea, which forecloses awareness of the novel fluctuations of the immediate world, but as with James, things are not as damningly absolute as they may seem. The work of Jeff Wallace (2005) explores Lawrence’s own more positive hopes for the human being not by suggesting overt resistance to habit, but by acknowledging that habit itself is not inherently negative. He tempers accusations of Lawrence’s work as specifically “anti-materialist” by exploring in his work “the alignment of life with mechanism through the concept of matter.” Wallace notes that “Lawrence’s writing drew from a tradition of materialist and evolutionary thought which emphasised human kinship with ‘nature.’ It is less well established that this same tradition could emphasise kinship with inorganic matter, and therefore by possible extension with mechanism and technology” (6). Wallace’s analysis discovers that

Lawrence positively engages mechanism and materialism while being vehemently critical of its misapplication. The typical reading of Lawrence, “the conventional humanistic reading that the state of mechanism is one of debasement and therefore the object of critique,” overstates and ignores the complexity of Lawrence’s position, which includes “the parallel sense that to live might in large part be mechanical, that life and mechanism are not mutually exclusive” (140). Indeed, “life,” which Lawrence clearly valorizes through his work, is thoroughly implicated in mechanism: “For Lawrence, ‘life’ too develops habits over deep time, the mind being one of these late habits” (105). The function of instinct is mechanical in the automatic behavior it fosters. Wallace’s description of Lawrence’s position is exceedingly Bergsonian: “memory attains the status of an instinct which is then ... passed on in heredity” (105). Wallace does not go so far as to suggest that Lawrence is thrilled with modern industry, nor that he is uncritical of expressions of materialist automatization. He helps to explain, however, that the sort of automatism Lawrence critiques is not of a competing order with the sort of instinct that he lauds as a guiding principle, but rather a different, imbalanced deployment of the same order. Gordon (2007) describes Lawrence’s work as exploring “a fundamental tension” between the “creative flux of vital reality in which consciousness participates and the ‘mechanical-active, materio-static universe,” and he notes that the mind is engaged in the “mortifying ossification of that vital reality as it is submitted to the linguistic and ideational constructs of mental consciousness” (116-17). The problem for Lawrence is not that ossification occurs, but rather that its influence has become excessive, and that the cognitive order has therefore become too static, too calcified. Wallace explains that Lawrence does not adopt “a fear of the machine as constituting a threat to human being,” but rather takes issue with “the deployment of technology” (203). Exemplary of this distinction is Lawrence’s commentary on mechanism and industrialism in “Study of Thomas

Hardy” (1914). There, Lawrence admires the advantages industry can offer to human needs: “I do honour to the machine and its inventor. It will produce what we want, and save us the necessity of much labour. Which is what it was invented for” (36). Where Lawrence takes issue is not in humanity extending its productivity with mechanization, but in the particular way mechanism gets employed: “But to what pitiable misuse it is put! Do we use the machine to produce goods for our need, or is it used as a muck-rake for raking together heaps of money? Why, when man, in his godly effort has produced a means to freedom, do we make it a means to more slavery?” (36-37). For Lawrence, mechanism and industry are not inherently bad – their narrowminded pursuit of profit, and not any higher end, is the problem.

The Critique of Abstraction

Whitehead’s critique of abstraction helps explain what constitutes the pernicious application of the natural faculty. The fundamental problem for Whitehead is that people confuse their conceptual tools for understanding the world for the world itself, and they subsequently pass this confusion on to other people. Whitehead defines the “Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness” as “the accidental error of mistaking the abstract for the concrete” (*Science* 64). When this occurs, the thinker supplants perceptual experience with the falsely concrete abstracted idea, thus no longer needing to carefully engage the experience further. The perception is reduced to a reference for the abstraction, conjuring it up to mask the present experience’s richness in something fixed, closed, and seemingly concrete. That it seems to be concrete experience is especially important, for Whitehead notes that this supplanting is “accidental,” and the person committing the fallacy does not know they have done so; they believe they are still engaging the concrete thing, not an abstraction of it. Whitehead indicates the violence of this displacement not only to the experience but to the experiencer when he notes

that “the utmost abstractions are the true weapons with which to control our thought of concrete fact” (41). In *The Concept of Nature* (1920), he identifies the important relational embeddedness of the concrete experience that this fallacy occludes. Language tends to employ “a two-termed relation between the mind and the factor” (in his example, a leaf) that

suppresses all reference to any factors other than the percipient mind and the green leaf and the relation of sense-awareness. It discards the obvious inevitable factors which are essential elements in the perception. I am here, the leaf is there; and the event here and the event which is the life of the leaf there are both embedded in a totality of nature which is now, and within this totality there are other discriminated factors which it is irrelevant to mention. Thus language habitually sets before the mind a misleading abstract of the indefinite complexity of the fact of sense-awareness. (273)

Whitehead defines “sense-awareness” as “a factor [of sense-perception] which is not thought” (2-3), and he explains that “the immediate fact for awareness is the whole occurrence of nature. It is nature as an event present for sense-awareness, and essentially passing. There is no holding nature still and looking at it.” To understand and act upon nature, “[t]his whole event is discriminated by us into partial events” (10). Such is obviously necessary, but the problem occurs when the abstraction from the concrete fact within sense-awareness comes to be taken *as* the whole account within sense-awareness, when the “indefinite complexity” vanishes in awareness as the experiencer fails to recognize that what they are engaging is “a misleading abstract.” Andrew Goffrey (2008) further discusses what Whitehead’s critique of abstraction seeks, explaining that Whitehead is invested in understanding, as well as possible, the whole event available to sense awareness, “prior to the distinction between mind and matter, the

doctrine of primary and secondary qualities and so on” (19). Goffrey cautions against reading Whitehead’s critique of the abstracting faculty as the desire to part ways with it entirely. He explains that Whitehead’s critique is not a rejection of abstraction, but rather a call to recognize its insufficiency and incompleteness and engage in the ceaseless work of improving upon both (20). While the nature of sense-awareness is the purview of philosophical claims and certainly not something the novels in this study explore, Whitehead’s “fallacy of misplaced concreteness” offers a means of understanding how characters come to get mired within a limited conceptual framework, how they fail to recognize the “irrelevant” extraneous elements that are so important to novelty and change.

Whitehead’s fallacy describes the source of an inflexible and alienating worldview that troubles Woolf and Lawrence. Alberto Toscano (2008) explains how the fallacy of misplaced concreteness serves as the foundation of a broader social critique for Whitehead, who finds this error to be widespread in his society. Whitehead’s “diagnosis of the 20th century ... rest[s] on the pained perception of a kind of barbarism of abstractions,” involving “a concomitant proliferation of separations” that are “driven by the intellectual hegemony of certain (scientific) modes of abstraction” (59). For Whitehead, this leads to a deathly social nihilism. In *Adventures of Ideas*, he explains that “[a] feeling of dislocation of Appearance from Reality is the final destructive force, robbing life of its zest for adventure. It spells the decadence of civilization, by stripping from it the very reason for its existence” (293). The other philosophers and novelists central to this study share in Whitehead’s sense that dominant modes of abstraction destructively mire people in a relatively static, dualistically-conceived world.

For Whitehead, the means of overcoming this disconnection from the offerings of sense-awareness are not simple. He notes that when one interrogates the abstract frameworks through

either observational or cognitive scrutiny—through “more subtle employment of our senses, or by the request for meanings and for coherence of thoughts,” their insufficiency is revealed: “the scheme breaks down at once” (*Science* 22). While attention to sensory experience can help, such cannot occur without the involvement of the abstracting faculty: “This vice is not wholly corrected by the recurrence to concrete experience. For after all, you need only attend to those aspects of your concrete experience which lie within some limited scheme.” Thus, “dispassionate observation by means of the bodily senses” cannot escape the fact that “observation is selection. Accordingly, it is difficult to transcend a scheme of abstraction whose success is sufficiently wide.” One must thus marry the perceptual event with the intellectual process of “comparing the various schemes of abstraction which are well founded in our various types of experience” (23). The intellect cannot be excised from the process; it must be engaged to recognize the abstract frameworks at play in perception and to draw the attention beyond their limiting, selecting function.

James and Bergson echo Whitehead’s concern with the fallacy of misplaced concreteness while calling attention to the ways forms of abstraction produce stultified and dualistic ontological perspectives. In *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, James explains how, through interpolation and extrapolation, the abstract ideas of philosophers become unmoored from the immediate perceptual experience that involves them in a reciprocal relationship with their environment and the other: “The original sense-termini of the two men ... are thus held by philosophers to be separated by invisible realities with which, at most, they are conterminous” (105). The abstraction is taken to be commensurate with the concrete world. Bergson’s *Creative Evolution* echoes James’s sense of a rationalistic fragmentation of continuity, which emerges from specialized scientific applications and takes root in social life. There is a “fluidity of a

continuous undivided process” between sensation and the material world (156), but when philosophers “import into the domain of speculation a method of thinking which is made for action” (155), they produce abstractions that lead them away from realizing that continuity: “all division of matter into independent bodies with absolutely determined outlines is an artificial division” (259). The world is taken to be fundamentally made of discrete, identifiable objects, and the relations are taken to be secondary and superficial.

The novelists also express deep concern about this kind of worldview. For Lawrence, this produces a worldview that shuts people off from engagement with the creative potential of life, for it forecloses the opportunity to have novel experiences that could foster and inspire such creativity, and for Woolf, it precludes experiences that would foster adventurous growth and offer a sort of provisional knowledge of the self and the world, one that is fundamentally necessary for the production of a more empathetic community. This fallacy of misplaced concreteness lies at the heart of the critique of abstraction Lawrence offers in his nonfiction. When Lawrence writes in *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1921) of ideas as solidified leaves and feathers falling away from life, undergoing a transmutation into something fixed, he identifies the way static conceptions are divorced from the concrete fact of lived experience; they cease to change, no longer connected to the source from which they emerged. Lawrence writes that the brain “transmutes what is creative flux into a certain fixed cipher.... It produces a new reality—the ideal” (46). While instrumental “ideas” facilitate action, they simultaneously have the power to canalize the experience of those who adopt them as they contribute to “a new reality,” a world immured from the continuously transforming flux. Lawrence describes the consequence of this in “The Crown” as he describes the “*absolute* prison” enclosing “a man’s soul,” one whose walls, “unless they be a temporary shelter[,] are deadly things.” Lawrence does

not take issue with provisionally-employed ideas, but he condemns such ideas as are elevated to the level of fixed concepts, indefinitely employed in an immuring fashion:

So, if we are imprisoned within walls of accomplished fact, experience, or knowledge, we are prisoned indeed. The living sun is shut out finally. A false sun, like a lamp, shines.

All absolutes are prison-walls. These “laws” which science has invented, like conservation of energy, indestructibility of matter, gravitation, the will-to-live, survival of the fittest: and even those absolute facts, like — the earth goes round the sun, or the doubtful atoms, electrons, or ether — they are all prison-walls, unless we realise that we don’t know what they mean. We don’t know what we mean, ultimately, by *conservation*, or *indestructibility*. Our atoms, electrons, ether, are caps that fit exceeding badly. (55)

These ideas are problematic precisely because most people who hold them do not recognize their difference from the continuously changing flux, instead supplanting aspects of their own immediate experience with some fragment of another’s understanding. Against this Lawrence advocates vehement resistance, to “kick hard and kick in time,” lest one be trapped forever in another’s ideas: “Once you are in prison, you have no experience left, save the experience of reduction, destruction going on inwardly” (55). The petrification of the idea undermines one’s relations to “life,” understood by Lawrence as perpetual novelty that fosters creativity.

While Whitehead calls for the engagement of the intellect in the perpetual revision of abstract frameworks, Lawrence suggests that one must continually develop new ideas from the living, protean world, ideas that can serve as “temporary shelter,” as useful facilitators of experience, just as feathers facilitate flight, but ideas that nevertheless should not be reified. For

Lawrence, the great struggle of his age is a conflict between the arresting and disconnecting forms of abstraction and life as protean novelty, which he identifies in his “Note to The Crown” (1915): “The whole great form of our era will have to go. And nothing will really send it down but the new shoots of life springing up and slowly bursting the foundations. And one can do nothing, but fight tooth and nail to defend the new shoots of life from being crushed out, and let them grow” (364). Taken as perfected and concrete, abstractions shut out our awareness of and engagement with “the living sun” of life, canalizing one’s attention away from that which exceeds or grows to exceed the abstraction. Lawrence’s vision is, however, more sanguine than Whitehead’s, for he situates life as vigorously struggling to impinge upon and break the massive conceptual order, “the whole great form” of the modern world.

In her nonfictional writing, Woolf too offers a critique of fixed understanding, and she also suggests her desire to break down definitional boundaries. Reflecting on this, Elizabeth Lamont (2001) challenges the conception of Woolf as resistant to adventure, as someone who had “never embraced the wandering, expatriate ... existence” (161). With reference to Woolf’s admiration for Montaigne’s adventurousness and Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*, Lamont addresses the idea of “home” as a place offering the shelter of familiarity. Lamont explains that, for Woolf, “home” is “not always necessarily a place of understanding and safety” (172). She explains that Woolf’s work strikes out against rigid demarcation, employing “the metaphor of the traveler” who undermines borders and divisions, exposing the “consistent interpenetration” of “gender, race, class, history, and power” (177).

The social boundaries that Lamont finds Woolf’s writing to be working against are reified social constructions, and one can read Woolf’s “travel” as a desire to more fundamentally critique and escape the cognitive limitations that all fixed abstractions impose upon the thinker.

In “Montaigne” (1925), Woolf describes the calcifying transformation into abstraction that language too often effects. Rather than retaining the provisional, imperfect nature of articulation, the writer succumbs to the “habits and ceremonies” of the “rigid instrument” that is the pen, “making ordinary men into prophets, and changing the natural stumbling trip of human speech into the solemn and stately march of pens” (19). As articulation unfolds, the formalistic habits of language drive people towards the closure of finished, perfected abstractions. This is misplaced concreteness; finished language suggests itself as a suitable replacement for its referent, and it leads to disconnection from the vagaries of the immediate experience of the thing. Michael Lackey’s (2006) writing on Woolf’s philosophical interests helps to shed light on her critique of such finished uses of language. He explains that Woolf’s work depicts the atomistic philosopher as possessing the superb intellectual ability to cognitively cut objects out from their context and “make razor-sharp distinctions”; this ability “has made him capable of demarcating the exact form of objects in the world ... but incapable of seeing or experiencing the wave-like fluidity of an undemarcatable world” (83). Lackey suggests that the sort of philosopher that Woolf critiques is the master of producing abstractions and then reifying them: “if the philosopher’s metaphysical reality turns out to be an epistemic *construction* of the will rather than an objective *discovery* of the intellect, then the philosopher would be guilty of asserting and imposing a rhetorical will to power on others instead of providing a neutral and objective system of knowledge” (89). Such a thinker imposes abstractions not only upon the world, but also upon other people. The resultant conceptual framework is not flexible, adaptive, or provisional, but rather blinds people to aspects of their immediate experience while distorting the prominence of other aspects: “According to Woolf, ... those who have internalized the philosopher’s orientation toward knowledge will not only dismiss manifestations of the unconscious as insignificant and,

in a certain sense, non-existent; they will fail to see such manifestations altogether” (93).

Lackey’s focus (and Woolf’s too, oftentimes) is primarily upon self-knowledge, the “dark places of psychology,” but this critique of abstraction can be extended to one’s engagement with the entire world. For the masses who fail to resist the abstracting tendency of language, those who Woolf describes as “slaves of ceremony” who “let life slip past them in a kind of dream,” it abstracts and closes off exploration of a soul that is “so complex, so indefinite ... that a man might spend his life merely in trying to run her to earth” (“Montaigne” 20). For Woolf, travel is cognitive openness similar to Whitehead’s adventure of ideas, an “adventure beyond the safeties of the past,” one of the utmost importance for a society of people living within restrictive conceptual systems: “Without adventure civilization is in full decay” (*Adventures* 279). Woolf writes sadly of those “who, when they travel, wrap themselves up ... in silence and suspicion” (“Montaigne” 24). The world is threatening, and they enclose themselves in what they already think they know: “Every sight and custom is bad unless it resembles those of their own village. They travel only to return” (24). The finished abstract framework becomes for them the destination. Continuing with the metaphor of travel, Woolf insists that this “is entirely the wrong way to set about it. We should start without any fixed idea where we are going to spend the night, or when we propose to come back; the journey is everything” (24).

The fallacy of misplaced concreteness is pernicious not only because it undermines a person’s ability to think the complexity of their experience and realize the pervasive matrix of immediate relations constituting that experience, but also because it conditions the immediate observation of the world in a way that undermines one’s ability to find new information within observation that might alter that conceptual framework. Coupling the fallacy of misplaced concreteness with the reciprocal nature of conception and observation sheds light on how

pernicious abstract frameworks can be easily perpetuated and strengthened. While such frameworks are powerful and actively reinforced by a number of social mechanisms, it is worth noting that the reciprocal nature of observational and conceptual orders offers two modes of ingression of counter-frameworks: through alternative ways of observing and alternative abstract frameworks.

Through the worlds of their novels, Woolf and Lawrence explore the lived concrete experiences of their characters as they navigate their world and deal, productively or otherwise, with abstract frameworks that can so easily canalize their experiences. While the later chapters of this study will examine the possible alternatives for being that these authors offer in their novels, the remainder of this chapter will focus on their explorations of more negative possibilities. In *The Rainbow*, Lawrence explores the lives of characters in and around the Brangwen family who reify and idealize elements of their experience, particularly other people, and the novel examines the personal, lived consequences of that sort of reification. Woolf's *Night and Day* explores how characters' lives are not only affected by the conceptual frameworks they adopt, but also vulnerable to the conceptual frameworks others develop and impose.

Lawrence's The Rainbow

Lawrence's *The Rainbow* traces several generations of the Brangwen family developing in tandem with an increasingly modernizing world. Over the course of this multigenerational novel, Lawrence explores the effects of the broad-scale imposition of a homogenized conceptual framework that does violence to the creative and experiential freedom of characters. While moving through the series of difficult relationships that produces Ursula, and laying out her familial inheritance, *The Rainbow* explores the damage inflicted upon characters by a matrix of social forces directed at producing civic homogeneity – these forces act through a network of

educational means, seeking to foster in subjects a stable (and thus unchanging) conceptual framework, one borne out of inheritance and not one's own lived experience. An example of this comes early in the novel when young Alfred Brangwen finds himself ill-suited to the demands of school: "in spite of his dogged, yearning effort, he could not get beyond the rudiments of anything, save of drawing" (15). This inclination to draw arises out of Alfred's own experience, and his natural style is quite liberal: "at drawing, his hand swung naturally in big, bold lines, rather lax..." (15). However, this artistic style does not serve the demands of British commercial culture, and he is pressured to work against his own predilections to make a living as a lace designer: "it was cruel for him to pedgill away at the lace designing, working from the tiny squares of his paper, counting and plotting and niggling" (15). The end result for Lawrence goes beyond a merely unhappy employment for Alfred; he ends up thoroughly and disastrously transformed, a tragically calcified version of his formerly free self: "he came back into life set and rigid, a rare-spoken, almost surly man" (15).

The most forceful and violent way that society's ideals gets spread in *The Rainbow* is through formal education in the English school system. Such first appears in the life of young Tom Brangwen, who was sent "forcibly away to a Grammar School in Derby when he was twelve years old" (16). Tom's mother insists on the value of education, and she sends him despite his opposition and, importantly, his natural inclinations: "she would not acknowledge his constitution" (16). Under the pressure of this education to be different, Tom turns against himself, "as if he were guilty of his own nature, as if his being were wrong, and his mother's conception right" (17). Once a boy who "was developed, sensitive to the atmosphere around him," Tom ends up struggling to discipline his attention to adopt the focus required by formal education, engaging in "a violent struggle against his physical inability to study." Such produces

a deathly pallor in his appearance, “making himself pale and ghastly” (17), which is suggestive of the death of his sensitive being. Ultimately, Tom interiorizes ideas that contradict his lived experience: “He was forced to admit things he did not in the least believe. And having admitted them, he did not know whether he believed them or not; he rather thought he did” (17).

Lawrence’s problem is not with all forms of education. As he writes in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922), education can be existentially edifying: “education means leading out the individual nature in each man and woman to its true fullness” (112). Such an education pursues knowledge produced from a much different source than the sort Tom receives in *The Rainbow*. Jack Stewart (1991) explains that for Lawrence, there are two forms of knowledge: vital knowledge and vacuous knowledge. The difference between these is in their substance and source; one is “the verbal shell of an idea” and the other is “its existential core” (61). Stewart points out that Lawrence’s “vital knowledge is potentiality,” whereas the shell of knowledge is “secondhand knowledge-of-knowledge,” which misses both opportunities for novelty and the subtleties of lived experience (61). As Lawrence explains in *Fantasia*, education is not achieved by supplying the student with pre-given ideas, disconnected from their experience: “You can’t do that by stimulating the mind. To pump education into the mind is fatal” (112). For knowledge to be good in Lawrence’s estimation, it must be borne out of one’s own experience, developed through the engagement of the abstracting mental faculties with one’s lived experience: “That which sublimates from the dynamic consciousness into the mental consciousness has alone any value” (112-13). This “dynamic consciousness” is “non-cerebral” and vital, “the sap of our life, of all life” (*Psychoanalysis* 18); it is also the source of one’s sense of connection with the circumambient world, “like a dark electric current connecting you to the rest of life ... the marvelous wireless communication between the great centre and the surrounding contiguous

world” (*Fantasia* 69). Lawrence’s poem “Thought” (published posthumously) offers a sense of this positive type of abstraction paired with the careful attentiveness that he champions, and it simultaneously reflects his critique of the inherited, preexistent, abstracted concept:

Thought, I love thought.

But not the jiggling and twisting of already existent ideas

I despise that self-important game.

Thought is the welling up of unknown life into consciousness,

Thought is the testing of statements on the touchstone of the conscience,

Thought is gazing on to the face of life, and reading what can be read,

Thought is pondering over experience, and coming to a conclusion.

Thought is not a trick, or an exercise, or a set of dodges,

Thought is a man in his wholeness wholly attending. (ll. 1-9)

This poem expresses Lawrence’s appreciation for the abstracting power of thought, provided that the “conclusion” it arrives at emerges from a lived “experience,” and not taken for granted once arrived at. The poem respectively advocates and castigates the bifurcating forms of knowledge Lawrence describes.

James’s work agrees with Lawrence in suggesting a distinction between knowledge informed by experience and knowledge separated from it, and he elaborates on the usefulness of this sort of abstraction. James suggests that abstractions are useful when they lead people back to more lived experience. In *A Pluralistic Universe* (1908), James delineates two sorts of knowledge, one wherein the mind has a “primarily theoretical function” that “touches only the

outer surface of reality,”²² and the other a “living or sympathetic acquaintance with [things]” (249-50). He explains that the former too often dismisses experiences that contradict it: “If a novel experience, conceptual or sensible, contradict too emphatically our preexistent system of beliefs, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it is treated as false” (*Essays* 107). James’s privileging of “living acquaintance” is a valuation of the extent to which “conceptions ... can be made to lead to a sensation” and not merely to other conceptions (107). This opens the door for discovery and conceptual novelty, which both James and Lawrence laud. For both Lawrence and James, the abstracting faculty is good when it brings people into encounters with a flux that exceeds the expressive capacities of the abstraction, involving both the world of sensation and the world of unconsciousness. Abstractions become problematic when they cease to offer any disclosure of what exceeds them, and this is precisely the sort of abstraction Lawrence hates and that he finds his contemporary education propagating.

Lawrence articulates his hatred of the contemporary education system extensively in *Fantasia of the Unconscious*. There he explains that it induces the privileging of abstractions that colonize self-identity and instantiate a narrow and inflexible idea of self incapable of creative evolution: “we are going to inculcate more and more self-consciousness, teach every little Mary to be more and more a nice little Mary out of her own head, and every little Joseph to theorize himself up to the point” (121-22). Lawrence insists that education must be entirely overhauled, that people must disconnect from the sick social mechanism to allow a restoration of firsthand knowledge: “We can retreat upon the proud, isolate self, and remain there alone, like lepers, till we are cured of this ghastly white disease of self-conscious idealism” (112). This is akin to the

²² Conceptions can, and often do, lead away from direct experience or occlude it, as James explains when he writes of the sort of “vicious intellectualism” that is “[t]he treating of a name as excluding from the fact named what the name’s definition fails positively to include” (60).

radical empirical call to divorce the new philosophy from the rigid ground of preexisting philosophical conceptions. Such a desire is both an understandable expression of a philosophy tied so intimately to the critique of abstraction and impossible to completely fulfill. For Lawrence, the cost of one's education as it stands is one's ability to live. The human being is transformed into "[p]oor, nerve-worn creatures, fretting our lives away and hating to die because we have never lived." Eschewing self-conscious education will lead to "[t]he evolving once more of the great spontaneous gestures of life" (123). Life for Lawrence is a cosmic creative force found in the chaotic flux of the universe. He writes in "Chaos in Poetry" of poetry's ability to engage "the chaos *alive*.... A glimpse of the living, untamed chaos. For the grand chaos is all alive, and everlasting. From it we draw our breath of life. If we shut ourselves off from it, we stifle" (112). Whatever is living in the human being thus partakes of this, and Lawrence frequently refers to human beings as "dead" who cease to engage this primordially creative force. In *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, he aligns "death" with inanimate matter, suggesting that all the material of the "cosmos"—"all sorts of matter and forces and energies, sun, moons, stars, and worlds"—are derived from the "death of living creatures" (63). For Lawrence, life precedes, generates, and sheds matter, but unlike dead matter, which falls behind life and cannot itself be creative, life is always burgeoning forward into what does not yet exist. It is, as he writes in "The Crown," "a travelling to the edge of knowledge, then a leap taken. We cannot know beforehand" (19). The human being's conceptual knowledge, beyond the moment of its production, is part of this "death," and a life fostered on such inherited conceptual knowledge—a life that never returns to the Jamesian "living acquaintance"—is what Lawrence laments as that of one who "ha[s] never lived." For Lawrence, a new educational form that does not condemn its students to

a “deathly” existence can emerge only once the perpetuation of the old cognitive order is stopped.

Lawrence extensively explores the consequences of the education system in *The Rainbow* through Ursula’s experience as a teacher in an English primary school. After Ursula leaves her family home and moves to the school to start her career, she finds herself both subject to the powerfully imposed cognitive and behavioral discipline of the environment and the perpetuator of that discipline upon the children in her classroom. As the thoughtful hero of this and Lawrence’s subsequent novel, Ursula is more capable of resisting these dominant discourses than those around her, but the environment is so powerful that she can only barely resist it. When she arrives at the school, she recognizes immediately its homogenizing function:

She saw Mr Brunt, Miss Harby, Miss Schofield, all the school-teachers, drudging unwillingly at the graceless task of compelling many children into one disciplined, mechanical set, reducing the whole set to an automatic state of obedience and attention, and then of commanding their acceptance of various pieces of knowledge. The first great task was to reduce sixty children to one state of mind, or being. This state must be produced automatically, through the will of the teachers and the will of the whole school authority, imposed upon the will of the children. The point was that the head-master and the teachers should have one will in authority, which should bring the will of the children into accord. (355-56)

None of the teachers at the school seem to enjoy doing this. They are “drudging unwillingly” because they are not fulfilling their own wills, but instead are compelled to enact the “will of the teachers,” a duty that comes through a narrowly-defined understanding of the function of a teacher. Ursula immediately understands that a teacher can fulfill this task only through the

violation of his own sensitive self, “through an abnegation of his personal self, and an application of a system of laws, for the purpose of achieving a certain calculable result, the imparting of certain knowledge” (356).

Ursula attempts to resist this institutional will that violates the teachers, making them conduits for the homogenizing discipline of English education, but it proves too powerful. Of the teachers, she realizes that “She must become the same—put away her personal self, become an instrument, an abstraction, working upon a certain material, the class, to achieve a set purpose of making them know so much each day. And she could not submit. Yet gradually she felt the invincible iron closing upon her. The sky was being blocked out” (356). Ursula attempts to compartmentalize and protect her personal identity, but operating within the cognitive and functional confines of her instrumental role as teacher—“She must have nothing more of herself in school. She was to be Standard Five Teacher only” (365)—her entire observational order is quickly transformed. The children that she so sensitively observed upon arriving are transformed in her perception, “So that, pale, shut, at last distant and impersonal, she saw no longer the child, how his eyes danced, or how he had a queer little soul...” (365). Her perception is changed such that not only does she see less of the children, but also the natural environment ceases to affect her: “Often, when she went out at playtime and saw a luminous blue sky with changing clouds, it seemed just a fantasy...” (356). It is no longer real to her, no longer an experience that affectively stimulates her; instead, the rigid school interior has become her reality: “Only the inside of the school was real—hard, concrete, real and vicious” (357). These alterations to her perceptions reflect the pervasive effect of the instrumental order of the school, and they are necessary for Ursula to fulfill her function within that order. Her disconnection from the children is necessary for her to become “impersonal enough to punish where she could otherwise only

have sympathised, understood, and condoned, to approve where she would have been merely uninterested before” (365).

The environment of the school molds Ursula into someone who thinks and does vile things; she becomes a mechanical conduit for the perpetuation of institutional codes of thought and conduct. Ursula’s capitulation to these “civilizing” forces, her acting on their behalf to the detriment of the children she teaches, demonstrates the hegemonic power of the officially sanctioned and propagated way of thinking. The description of her transformation is furthermore suggestive of the way such frameworks are continuously and automatically perpetuated. When Ursula’s resistance finally breaks, it happens in mechanical terms: “Something went click in Ursula’s soul. Her face and eyes set...” (370). She proceeds to beat a child so that he too will become machine-like and habitual. When his will is broken, he responds to her commands “[a]s if mechanically” (371), and the other children bearing witness to the violence also adopt this machinic response: “There was a click of many books opened. The children found the page, and bent their heads obediently to read. And they read, mechanically” (371). The children are colonized by the ideals of the institution, taught to embrace discipline and to condition their attention to the task at hand, made into beings that operate with a set of ideas that likely have little relation to the experiences they had before embarking on such an education.

While what she does for a short while at the school is horrible, Ursula is exceptional for her ability to survive such an experience without being permanently fixed by it. Her efforts to protect “her flayed, exposed soul of a young girl who had gone open and warm to give herself to the children” are at least marginally successful (367). While she does perpetuate the violence of the institution, she simultaneously has thoughts that are critical of the institution, and she slowly fosters a determination to combat the forces it represents: “The agony, the galling, the ignominy

of her breaking in. This wore into her soul. But she would never submit. To shafts like these, she would never submit for long. But she would know them. She would serve them, that she might destroy them” (378).

After she leaves the school, Ursula more clearly recognizes the limitations of the dominant worldview fostered in English society. Her ability to identify and critique its effects within her own cognitive order allows her to begin the difficult process of admitting experience beyond the scope of its illumination:

The world in which she lived was like a circle lighted by a lamp. This lighted area, lit up by man’s completest consciousness, she thought was all the world; that here all was disclosed for ever. Yet all the time, within the darkness she had been aware of points of light, like the eyes of wild beasts, gleaming, penetrating, vanishing. And her soul had acknowledged in a great heave of terror, only the outer darkness. (405)

Ursula comes to recognize that “[t]he world in which she lived” is only a small part of the whole universe. Roger Sale (1973) remarks on this scene that “[i]f Lawrence knew anything it was that the light cast by the completest consciousness described only a circle.... Miss Inger had tried to tell Ursula ‘Beyond our light and our order there is nothing’...; the school principal had tried to say the same when insisting the pupils had to be brought to heel. But no, the darkness is still there...” (72). While the dominant observational order would suggest that the whole world is revealed in the “light” of the conceptual order of her society, Ursula becomes aware, with great existential terror, of the potential for experience beyond that light, of life in the darkness that, before this realization, seemed a void. While many would be driven by the shock of realization to dismiss the burgeoning awareness, Ursula does not. Instead, she reconceives her society as

foolishly contained by its ignorance of the existence of the teeming darkness. Through this critique of her own inherited conceptual order, “[t]he light of science and knowledge” becomes small and constraining; it “seemed like the area under an arc-lamp, wherein the moths and children played in the security of blinding light, not even knowing there was any darkness, because they stayed in the light” (405). Ursula realizes that people are tragically blinded by the certainty of conceptual knowledge that is so confidently spread in society; they become ignorant of much because of it:

She felt the strange, foolish vanity of the camp, which said “Beyond our light and our order there is nothing,” turning their faces always inward towards the sinking fire of illuminating consciousness, ... ignoring always the vast darkness that wheeled round about, with half-revealed shapes lurking on the edge.

Yea, and no man dared even throw a firebrand into the darkness. For if he did, he was jeered to death by others, who cried, “Fool, anti-social knave, why would you disturb us with bogeys? There *is* no darkness. We move and live and have our being within light, and unto us is given the eternal light of knowledge, we comprise and comprehend the innermost core and issue of knowledge.” (405-06)

The “arc-lamp” represents the conceptual framework of modern society, replete with technical achievements and the trappings of mechanized civilization like “trains” and “factories.” The people within this light are ignorant of any broader world existing – their abstractions, the bright light of the lamp, make it difficult for them to see anything beyond their narrow confines. With this metaphor, Lawrence emphasizes how entrapment within these abstract orders is illusory—the fecund world beyond their knowledge remains accessible to those in the light, only they are

unable to realize it. In his discussion of the “umbrella” of the conceptual order in “Chaos in Poetry,” Lawrence notes that one way the enclosure of the order is maintained is by quickly incorporating each realization into the totalizing vision, preventing the realization that beyond lies a vast new field of experience: “If it were slit, the rent would no more be a vision, it would only be an outrage. We should dab it over at once, to match the rest” (111). Ursula comments upon the other mode of maintenance, the “outrage” Lawrence mentions. Those who seek to challenge the conceptual enclosure that society enjoys and propagates are castigated as “fool[s].” Indeed, the denizens of this meager camp in the wilderness vigorously defend the limited claims to the truth of their light. As Ursula recognizes the darkness beyond, there is hope in Lawrence’s work, as there is in Whitehead’s, that people will be able to intuit the limitations of their conceptual and observational orders so that they can begin to transform them. However, Lawrence suggests that only very few are able to recognize the darkness that exceeds their cognition and overcome the terror it provokes.

Not only does Lawrence’s novel explore the violent imposition of conceptual enclosure through social institutions like education, but it also examines the way individual people turn to a similar idealizing enclosure to protect themselves. This is reflected in the relationships that Lawrence explores in the novel, which fluctuate between encounters with the unknown that exceed readymade abstractions and retreats into the closure of idealism. The palmary instance of the latter is the marriage of Anna and Will Brangwen. At the start of their relationship, Will feels painfully exposed to previously unrealized experience: “The veils had ripped and issued him naked into endless space, and he shuddered” (112). Rather than confronting the insufficiency of his conceptual framework to come to grips with this experience, Will tries to defend himself from it; he transposes his relationship into the idealizing closure of a framework with which he is

comfortable: religion. He begins to carve his “Creation of Eve” during this early period of his relationship, and as he proceeds, he conflates the idealized, graven female form of Eve with Anna. Lawrence describes his carving of Eve as the idealization of one part of creation:

She was thin, a keen, unripe thing. With trembling passion, fine as a breath of air, he sent the chisel over her belly, her hard, unripe, small belly. She was a stiff little figure, with sharp lines, in the throes and torture and ecstasy of her creation. But he trembled as he touched her. He had not finished any of his figures. There was a bird on a bough overhead, lifting its wings for flight, and a serpent wreathing up to it. It was not finished yet. He trembled with passion, at last able to create the new, sharp body of his Eve.

At the sides, at the far sides, at either end, were two angels covering their faces with their wings. (112-13).

Will struggles to transpose his “trembling” feeling into the “chisel[ed],” “hard” form of prelapsarian woman, an expression that he completes while he leaves the rest of the scene unfinished. The connection between the carving and his experience with Anna becomes clear as he returns home: “She waited for him like the glow of light, and as if his face were covered. And he dared not lift his face to look at her” (113). This description of Will mirrors the angels on the periphery of his carving, a description that aligns Anna with the carved Eve. Will idealizes this carving, returning to consider its perfection repeatedly: “He loved to go over his carving in his mind, dwelling on every stroke, every line. How he loved it now!” (138). He transposes his passion into a fixed expression and allows his attention to become rooted there. Will idealizes Anna just as he does this carving: “for him, she was the essence of life: she existed as much when he was at his carving in his lodging in himself, he knew her. But his outward faculties

seemed suspended. He did not see her with his eyes, nor hear her with his voice” (121). She is an absolute ideal for him, and he relates to his mental conception of her to the extent that it supplants any sensory experience of her.

Will’s experience of religion is the only thing that stirs him to creativity; it rouses the “soul from her nest” into “the gloom of fecundity, like seed of procreation in ecstasy” (186-87). The description of the church that is Will’s only solace suggests that it is not as liberating as it seems, for the peace it offers is that of stasis: “There his soul remained, at the apex of the arch, clinched in the timeless ecstasy, consummated. And there was no time nor life nor death, but only this, this timeless consummation” (188). Throughout the early part of Anna and Will’s relationship, they struggle for dominance. Anna comes to resent Will’s religious ecstasy, for she recognizes that it offers a very limiting world, represented by the beautiful but enclosing ceiling: “There was the sky outside, and in here, in this mysterious half-night, when his soul leapt with the pillars upwards, it was not to the stars and the crystalline dark space, but to meet and clasp with the answering impulse of leaping stone, there in the dusk and secrecy of the roof” (188). It is precisely the timeless closure of the space that she resents: “here, here is all, complete, eternal: motion, meeting, ecstasy, and no illusion of time, of night and day passing by, but only perfectly proportioned space and movement clinching and renewing, and passion surging its way in great waves to the altar, recurrence of ecstasy” (188). It is because of this that she attacks Will’s love of the church, “spoiling his passionate intercourse with the cathedral” (190). She makes him see that the interior offers nothing absolute, that the contingent world of one of the carver’s wives is the inspiration for a face within: “That which had been his absolute, containing all heaven and earth, was become to him as to her, a shapely heap of dead matter—but dead, dead. His mouth was full of ash, his soul was furious” (190). Because of this recognition, Will is no longer able to

produce art. He realizes that the alter-piece fails to provide access to “the great Unknown,” for it “was too narrow, it was false” (191), and he destroys it.

Through Will, Lawrence emphasizes that freedom from an absolute ideal does not necessarily liberate someone into a more vital, experientially liberated life. While Will recognizes that the church fails to account for enough of experience—“Outside the cathedral were many flying spirits that could never be sifted through the jeweled gloom”—he also laments what he has lost: “He had lost his absolute” (191). It is too late for Will to thrive without the absolute ideal upon which he has become dependent, and he cannot explore the darkness of the world or the darkness within himself:

He was aware of some limit to himself, of something unformed in his very being, of some buds which were not ripe in him, some folded centres of darkness which would never develop and unfold whilst he was alive in the body. He was unready for fulfilment. Something undeveloped in him limited him, there was a darkness in him which he *could* not unfold, which would never unfold in him (195).

Having lost the church, the only thing Will can do is seek a surrogate source of meaning. Will thus turns to his wife and daughter, using them to scaffold his existential bankruptcy: “If it were not for Anna, and for this little Ursula, who had his brows, there would be no more left of him than of a broken vessel thrown away, and just remembered” (240). Of Anna, he recognizes that “[h]e had never known her. He had lain with her, but he had never known her. He had never received what she could give him. He had gone away from her empty. So, he had never lived” (239-40). While Will recognizes that his relationship could have been more fulfilling, that Anna could offer him something that would help him live in the Lawrencian sense, he also is incapable of receiving it, in part because he cannot help but meet her on unequal terms, having made her

the fixed ideal of a wife and not a living, changing being. Because of this, Will's creative output is reduced to merely copying, for he no longer has any "vision" (330).

The unfolding of Will and Anna's relationship tragically dramatizes the damage of conceptual closure on the development of people who have the potential to be wonderfully creative. Will's creativity is, at its best, canalized into creating fixed, idealized images, and he becomes dependent on an absolute to have any expressive capacity. Having never developed a relationship with his creative unconscious, Will finds himself a broken, hollow man married to a woman he does not know. Lawrence suggests through this relationship the damage that aggressively perpetuated closed conceptual frameworks cause in the lives of most English subjects.

Woolf's Night and Day

Night and Day tells the story of a group of young adults struggling to develop fulfilling lives under the onerous weight of familial, cultural, and professional expectations. Through this novel's depiction of people in early 20th century London, Woolf offers a vision confluent with Lawrence's of people whose lives have become destructively routinized by not only codes of conduct but ways of thinking. Whereas Lawrence suggests through *The Rainbow* the extent to which institutions exist to propagate these conceptual orders, Woolf emphasizes in *Night and Day* the extent to which these ways of thinking, seeing, and acting become routinized in and maintained through habits that reduce one's conscious engagement with one's daily activities. Alongside this, she explores through the relationship of Ralph and Katharine the difficulty of resisting such orders and the ease with which one's own provisional abstractions can be reified into a closed, idealized mode that does violence to the other.

The habitual conduct that Woolf explores in the novel relates to her metaphor of “cotton wool” used to represent habituated experience in her autobiographical essay, “A Sketch of the Past” (1939). In that essay, Woolf indicates her continued sense of a pattern beneath the “cotton wool” of habitual experience: “behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we – I mean all human beings – are connected with this” (84). Critics disagree about the nature of this “cotton wool” experience. Some read it as merely reflecting the experience of bored domesticity. James Gordin’s essay on the release of *Moments of Being* (1977) suggests that Woolf’s “cotton wool” is merely “ordinary experience” (315), “the texture of social life” (316); it is, on his reading, the banal makeup of daily existence, “the verbal persiflage, the snobberies, the trivialities, the material of her experience” that “she attempted to distill ... into significant art” (324). Liesl Olson’s (2003) work also connects the “cotton wool” to the banalities of daily life, to the “sheer magnitude” of “minute and detailed information about how [Woolf’s] days were constituted” in her diaries (65). While Olson’s discussion of the “cotton wool” focuses on Woolf’s commitment “to the presentation of the ordinary,” she also suggests something more in the nature of “cotton wool” experience by noting that an important part of it is the “repetition of everyday actions [that] we use to orient and control our lives, relying on the sameness of what has gone before” (49). Sim offers a more developed reading of the “cotton wool,” one that situates it with habit and a lack of awareness:

life becomes a ‘nondescript cotton wool’ when it is lived habitually and inattentively. Epistemological states of ‘non-being,’ the source of the ‘cotton wool’ that surrounds much of our daily lives, are shown to be antithetical to an apprehension of things in the ordinary world and entail a lack of attention to our thoughts and actions.... The lack of distinction that she attributes to states of

‘non-being’ is indicated by the metaphor of ‘cotton wool,’ which suggests softness and security, but also amorphousness and indistinctness. (42)

“Cotton wool” life is not merely a conscious state of domestic boredom, not merely one’s attention being taken up by the banalities of ordinary experience. It is a state of experience that is blotted out the moment one has completed it, like driving somewhere but not being able to recollect any particular part of the drive. In “A Sketch of the Past,” Woolf suggests that this state of “cotton-wool” non-being is to some extent unavoidable, that every life necessarily involves some proportion of non-being: “These separate moments of being were however embedded in many more moments of non-being.... Although it was a good day the goodness was embedded in a kind of nondescript cotton wool. This is always so. A great part of every day is not lived consciously” (81). Whatever habits of conduct one has developed are carried out in these moments; it is the unmindful perpetuation of the self through time. It is a state of indifference, numbness, and inattention, and it speaks to moments where one’s will lets up its tension. One can have more or less non-being in a given day, and for Woolf, its reduction is a good thing: “Yesterday ... was a good day; above the average in ‘being’” (81). For Woolf, it is “good” to be more active and attentive in one’s life, for then one is capable of directing and changing one’s conduct. Thus, this inattentive state is something that Woolf seeks to reduce, but it is strengthened through the bolstering of dominant conceptual frameworks which facilitate automatism, reducing the extent to which the individual needs to consciously intercede in their own conduct.

Woolf and Whitehead seem to be of one mind when they critique the regimented thoughts and actions of the common man. At the end of *Science and the Modern World*,

Whitehead discusses the problems of “professionalised knowledge,” with its “restricted acquaintance with useful subjects subservient to it”:

This situation has its dangers. It produces minds in a groove. Each profession makes progress, but it is a progress in its own groove. Now to be mentally in a groove is to live in contemplating a given set of abstractions. The groove prevents straying across country, and the abstraction abstracts from something to which no further attention is paid. But there is no groove of abstraction which is adequate for the comprehension of human life.... Of course, no one is merely a mathematician, or merely a lawyer. People have lives outside their professions or their businesses. But the point is the restraint of serious thought within a groove. The remainder of life is treated superficially, with the imperfect categories of thought derived from one profession. (245)

The “groove” of “a given set of abstractions” makes it difficult for one to recognize the relationships between various circumstances: “They see this set of circumstances, or that set; but not both sets together” (245). These conceptual frameworks restrict the mind’s ability to adventure. It can only “superficially” engage that which exceeds its closed understanding. The various forms of professionalized thought produce the illusion of a complete understanding of the totality of the world, one that fallaciously claims concreteness, effectively forming a networked umbrella of abstraction beyond which the thinker cannot stray.

In *Night and Day*, Woolf examines the lives of people living similar habitual patterns, and she explores the consequences of such cognitive inflexibility. The problem is of course not merely a cognitive shortcoming, for as discussed above, the desire to be a part of the order of the city is a strong affective lure to conformity. But that lure draws one into a “groove” that

forecloses opportunities for novel experiences. This problem is dramatized in scenes with Mary, who struggles between her desire to be a contributing member and her own individualistic resistance to conformity. Woolf describes Mary following the other workers in the street as “figur[ing] herself in a straight rabbit-run worn by their unswerving feet upon the pavement” (76). This participation in a limiting pattern that inhibits adventure is criticized by Ralph as producing limiting patterns of thought and action, even as he acknowledges the affecting reason so many people embrace such a life: “You live with your inferiors ... And you get into a groove because, on the whole, it’s rather a pleasant groove.” The solution he proposes is one too frightening for many to consider, escape and adventure: “Why don’t you throw it all up for a year, and travel? — see something of the world. Don’t be content to live with half a dozen people in a backwater all your life” (135-36). While Mary does ultimately move in the direction of adventure and a recognition of Whitehead’s “remainder of life,” other characters in *Night and Day* seem more fully given over to inattentive abstraction. Mary’s father is the palmary example of this routinized, and thus limited, life. He walks in his garden on a “straight path” next to a “uniform green” lawn “at the same hour every morning,” reading a book that he has memorized and with which he has no fresh engagement; the language becomes another part of his habit. His life proceeds within a repeating groove: “On wet days, such was the power of habit over him, he rose from his chair at the same hour, and paced his study for the same length of time...” (184). Mary’s father dramatizes both the allure and the threat of the “groove” one can adopt or that one’s ideas can be habituated into: while it offers a predictable, often pleasant life, it also fosters a disengagement with novelty, a lack of new experiences, and a life reduced to increasingly long periods of “cotton wool” inattentiveness.

As the novel explores the world of office professionals, it suggests that the repetition of the workers' activities in the office and through the city, facilitated by their vocational cognitive framework and fixed civic identities, makes them less engaged in the present moment. The suffragette office within which Mary works has a powerful effect on those within it, an effect not reducible to any one person, but to which each contributes. Its pervasive and insidious vocational atmosphere impinges upon those within it to regiment their actions and thoughts. The workplace seems to circulate a discourse, a voice, that affects its workers. Mary arrives to the sound of offices each with "a typewriter which clicked busily all day long" (77). The receipt of this wordless message causes Mary to hasten to her desk: "The noise of different typewriters already at work ... quickened Mary's steps, and she always ran up the last flight of steps which led to her own landing, at whatever hour she came, so as to get her typewriter to take its place in competition with the rest" (78). Mary's conduct is habitual, as she "always" hastens in the same way, and the description subordinates her to the machine she operates, as it, and not she, asserts itself. Engaging in her work curtails Mary's thoughts to the business at hand; the office makes thinking beyond its purposes impossible:

She sat herself down to her letters, and very soon all these speculations were forgotten, and the two lines drew themselves between her eyebrows, as the contents of the letters, the office furniture, and the sounds of activity in the next room gradually asserted their sway upon her. By eleven o'clock the atmosphere of concentration was running so strongly in one direction that any thought of a different order could hardly have survived its birth more than a moment or so.

(78)

While a character like Mary retains some awareness and agency, she is not immune to the impinging force of the professional atmosphere, which involves a narrow focus on the business at hand. It is powerfully affecting, capable of restricting the breadth of thought and awareness, channeling the interests of those within towards very specific aims. Even when the people of the office are interacting with one another, and not strictly focused on their work, their conduct is heavily regimented, indeed habitual. Furthermore, one day to the next within the office is indistinguishable; they blur together due to the lack of any novelty or variation. Woolf communicates this succinctly by shifting her description of the office from the simple past tense (“She sat”) to the modal verb “would,” which suggests that the conduct described in the present routinely happens the same way: “The door would open, and Mr Clacton would come in to search for a certain leaflet.... When he had found his leaflet, and offered a few jocular hints upon keeping papers in order, the typewriting would stop abruptly, and Mrs Seal would burst into the room with a letter...” (78-79). When the office workers go for lunch, the powerful, habituating effects of the office extends beyond its walls:

the old joke about luncheon, which came out regularly at this hour, was repeated with scarcely any variation of words. Mr Clacton patronized a vegetarian restaurant; Mrs Seal brought sandwiches, which she ate beneath the plane-trees in Russell Square; while Mary generally went to a gaudy establishment, upholstered in red plush, near by.... (79-80)

The joke inaugurating the lunch hour is always the same, and while the ensuing description seems to indicate what the workers are on doing on the *particular* day the novel is describing, the last clause clarifies that it represents what they *always* do. If the “generality” with which Mary

frequents her gaudy establishment hints at the slight possibility of variation in her routine, no such variety is afforded her colleagues.

Night and Day offers a sustained exploration of how people's conceptions become inflexible and shape their experiences in deleterious ways. The primary example of this is the failing efforts of Ralph Denham to keep his mental version of his beloved, Katharine Hilbery, provisional. Throughout the novel, Woolf sustains a critical interest in the way people's observations of the world are often shaped by their cognitive assumptions or desires. For example, Katharine describes her father as incapable of adequately observing those who contradict his worldview: "What a distance he was from it all! How superficially he smoothed these events into a semblance of decency which harmonized with his own life! [...] He seemed to be looking through a telescope at little figures hundreds of miles in the distance" (111). The metaphor of the telescope suggests an instrumental cognition of the world. Ralph does not have quite such an instrumental approach to his experience, but he is marked by the need to project his desires onto the future: "Although he was still under thirty, this forecasting habit had marked two semicircular lines above his eyebrows, which threatened, at this moment, to crease into their wonted shapes" (22). It is this forecasting habit that Ralph ultimately extends onto his understanding of Katharine, developing a finally closed, unchanging idea of her and reifying it as concrete. Throughout the novel, Ralph builds up an image of Katharine in his mind and compares it to his immediate experience. Early on, he is able to curtail the force of his idea of Katharine to allow new information from his experiences of her to enter and alter his account:

All down the street and on the doorstep, and while he mounted the stairs, his dream of Katharine possessed him; on the threshold of the room he had dismissed it, in order to prevent too painful a collision between what he dreamt of her and what

she was. And in five minutes she had filled the shell of the old dream with the flesh of life; looked with fire out of phantom eyes. (149)

Here, Ralph amends of his abstraction such that it seems to perfectly encapsulate the real Katharine, which he quickly realizes is still insufficient to her: “she overflowed the edges of the dream” (150). Through these early encounters, Ralph imposes his conceptualization on his perception (something that, at least to some extent, is impossible not to do) while allowing novel information from observation to amend his concept by revealing its insufficiency. Shortly after this moment, Ralph is still beholden to a concept that he thinks has come from his experience of Katharine, for when he learns that she is engaged to Rodney, he blames her for his shock, thinking that she has “deceived him throughout the visit ... while all the time she was a stranger entirely” (158-59). Ralph recognizes the continuity between his experience of Katherine and his thought, but he fails to recognize the reciprocal nature of it, for rather than noting that he imposed an erroneous concept upon his observations of her, receiving back what he imposed, he suggests that she invaded his thoughts with a deception: “Katharine had deceived him; she had mixed herself with every thought of his, and reft of her they seemed false thoughts which he would blush to think again” (161). Ralph claims to disavow “dreams” of others because of this betrayal, but he fails both to do so and to recognize his culpability.

Despite his disavowal of dreams, Ralph returns to them and eventually reifies his imagined version of Katharine. For a time, Ralph is cautious of how easily his experience of Katharine becomes trapped in abstraction; he notes that when she is silent she “become[s] to him not so much a real person, as the very woman he dreamt of; but his solitary dreams had never produced any such keenness of sensation as that which he felt in her presence” (316). Yet, it is only through the imagined concept of her that he develops a connection with Katharine, and he

allows his imagined version of her to ultimately stultify and to become the thing with which he engages. When he first experiences the intimate connection of entering her mind, he does so purely with the imagined woman, one who is described as captured and contained:

His pulse became quieter, and his brain increased in clarity. This time she could not escape him. The illusion of her presence became more and more complete. They *seemed* to pass in and out of each other's minds, questioning and answering. The utmost fullness of communion *seemed* to be theirs. Thus united, he felt himself raised to an eminence, exalted, and filled with a power of achievement such as he had never known in singleness.... They merged themselves in the flawless union that was born of their association. They surveyed life to its uttermost limits. How deep it was when looked at from this height! How sublime! How the commonest things moved him almost to tears! Thus, he forgot the inevitable limitations; he forgot her absence.... (406, my italics)

Ralph experiences a pervasive connection with a woman who is not there. He experiences this seemingly transcendent moment in isolation, a communion with an illusion that has radically affected what he perceives. While what Ralph experiences is, it seems, close enough to the real thing to facilitate a stronger bond with Katharine (their relationship strengthens after this point), the description couches all of this in the language of semblance, which leads Ralph away from realizing the fuller complexities of the actual Katherine and his relationship with her. Like a modern Pygmalion, Ralph loves the conceptual double of his beloved that he has built-up in his mind, which brings him far more satisfaction than his experiences of the real woman: "It was true that he had been happier out in the street, thinking of her, than now that he was in the same room with her" (445). Ultimately, Ralph engages his experience of Katharine connected to the

idea and divorced from the actual being. Katharine notes that when Ralph speaks to her, she is “overhearing what was meant for another” (311), for the idea and not the woman. He fails in the Whiteheadian sense by ceasing to keep his conceptual and observational orders open to novelty, and he consequently imposes this idea upon Katharine, which is harmful to her own fragile ideas.

Resistance to Conceptual Enclosure

Given Woolf’s and Lawrence’s nonfictional critiques of abstraction and the explorations of lives affected by harmful abstract frameworks in their novels, escape from the umbrella of purportedly absolute cognitive orders seems daunting. Conceptualization runs rampant, the observational order is ever-interwoven with the conceptual order, and the matrix of habituation, social pressure, and desire for shelter all contribute to its entrenchment. Yet for the philosophers and especially the novelists, there is hope. Whitehead’s work perpetually strives to bring into focus the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. As Isabel Stengers (2008) writes, Whitehead attempts to “elicit into sheer disclosure the exaggerated trust we have in our own abstractions” (108), that people might be aware of them and able to then amend them. She situates his work as vehemently insisting that “[a]ny strategy of explaining away, of reducing some aspect of our experience to others, has to be resisted. Everything that we experience must matter” (100). The dominant frameworks dismiss some experiences as nonexistent, like the darkness beyond the circle of light that Ursula intimates in *The Rainbow*, and Whitehead’s work is a call to recognize and examine the importance of experiences that have been ignored or overlooked. The work of the novelists, rather than despairing over the abstract orders, bring them into relief that they might be better resisted. Furthermore, they suggest that the fixed orders are not as totalized as they seem. People can move beyond them, even if only a few, and even if the escape they find is

marginal. Ruptures in the totalized orders may be limited, but they indicate the possibility of finding a way beyond them into expansive and provisional orders of thinking and observing.

Breaks with the matrix of dominant conceptual orders are limited by the scale of those orders and the extent to which they are propagated and reinforced. Throughout *Adventures of Ideas*, while Whitehead admits the possibility of individual genius that can think beyond the current orders, he insists that rapid change in the epistemic order of society is impossible. The only change of this sort he can admit is that which takes place over generations: “In the end nothing is effective except massively coordinated inheritance. Sporadic spontaneity is composed of flashes mutually thwarting each other. Ideas have to be sustained, disentangled, diffused, and coordinated with the background. Finally they pass into exemplification in action” (64). For Whitehead, the broadly shared conceptual frameworks of society counteract the small flashes of genius that offer alternate messages. Fortunately, literature remains beyond its moment, continuing to broadcast the alternative possibilities it explores. The works of Woolf and Lawrence suggest that some people living within British society experience desire for something contrary to the dominant system, and that while their escapes may be momentary, particularly when one considers them from the scale of civilization, they reveal vulnerabilities in the seemingly absolute order. Their novels express an often-frustrated desire to overcome fixed cognitive orders, to develop new worlds out of the adventure and extend those offerings to others.

Amidst the various acknowledgements of the existence and power of absolute orders, Woolf’s and Lawrence’s novels suggest possibilities for resisting them. For example, in *Night and Day*, Mary has an opportunity to hold to conventional codes of social conduct in a difficult

situation, a possibilities that is appealing to her, but she considers the consequences and realizes that they are too severe:

But if she did keep something of her own? Immediately she figured an immured life, continuing for an immense period, the same feelings living for ever, neither dwindling nor changing within the ring of a thick stone wall. The imagination of this loneliness frightened her, and yet to speak—to lose her loneliness, for it had already become dear to her, was beyond her power. (287)

Mary ultimately does overcome the dictates of propriety, rejecting the conventional mode that threatens to enclose her in a life of inertia. Indeed, while Mary thinks that resistance is “beyond her power,” the scenes that explore her seeming automatism suggest the less than absolute habituation of her thoughts and actions.

The people that Mary sees in the streets of London appear to be automatized, but Mary notes her own participation in this crowd, lock-step with them, while she is “conscious” of acting as a “hollow machine” (270). Mary is not *quite* a machine, for her mind is aware of her conduct, and thus it is not quite entirely habitual. Mary’s description of others in the crowd suggests that the same possibility exists for them: “In the eyes of every single person she detected a flame; as if a spark in the brain ignited spontaneously at contact with the things they met and drove them on” (270). This “flame” can be taken to represent the engine-like automatism of the people she meets or a “spark of life” within them that defies their apparent automatism. While Mary sometimes feels and acts on her defiance, she also conforms to social propriety without being entirely convinced of its value. Having to deal with her co-worker Mrs. Seal, Mary seems entirely genial, but her guise is affected: she “adopt[s] an expression which might hide her state of mind from Mrs. Seal” (269). In the streets, she likewise performs her homogenization without

being entirely so: “she liked to *pretend* that she was indistinguishable” (76). The idea that characters may be consciously performing their seeming automatism implies that this might be the case with anyone in the streets. Woolf implies that the apparent domination of society under a view of the world that undermines awareness of lived experience, and the apparent apotheosis of a matrix of inflexible, categorizing cognitive orders (which include, in *Night and Day*, codes of professional conduct, the dictates of civic belonging, and the tradition of social propriety) may in fact not be so well-rooted in English society. If many people are actively performing their roles, and are only imperfectly automatized like Mary, then change is more achievable than it seems.

However, there are still barriers to resistance. While Mary may be aware of her performance of social belonging, the gains she makes in trying to escape her own professional and social routinization are short-lived and tend towards their own habituation. This is exemplified when Mary is walking in the street and chastises herself for her habits of thought: she “denounce[s] herself rather sharply for being already in a groove, capable, that is, of thinking the same thoughts every morning at the same hour” (77). She is upset by the way these “bad habits nibbl[e] away unheeded at [her life]” (77). It seems that this awareness will spur Mary to break out of the groove of her repetitive thinking, but wanting to be free is not enough to prevent routinization. She thinks of the importance of “cram[ming] one’s life with all sorts of views and experiments” before the narrator points out that her very thoughts about breaking habits have become habitual: “Then she *always* gave herself a little shake, as she turned the corner, and, often as not, reached her own door whistling a snatch of a Somersetshire ballad” (77, my italics). The lure of routinization is strong, and preventing such from occurring requires extraordinary and persistent awareness and will.

Not only does Lawrence emphasize the mounting powers of functional cognitive frameworks that mutually contribute to an “umbrella” of reified abstractions, but also he explores the desire and the means to transgress them. For example, Anna in *The Rainbow* is one of Ursula’s forbearers who struggles against conceptual immurement. For her, the church that she enters with Will represents the physical embodiment of a massive conceptual framework controlling the lives of millions of people, and rather than being awestruck by it, she recoils, realizing that the dome of the building not only shuts out the limitless, moving night sky, but it replaces it with the mundane, static, cloistered roof. Faced with this realization, Anna “claimed the right to freedom above her, higher than the roof” (188-89). Such an assertion, given the symbolic weight of the church, is a rejection of the imposing framework of absolutist understanding that the church building represents. Just as the church’s ceiling replaces the moving sky of the natural world with its ornamented interior, the church’s idealized rhetoric replaces the complexity of the universe with an unattainable idealized absolute God. This Anna resoundingly rejects.

These desires for escape speak to the actual limitations of the power of what Lawrence describes in “Chaos in Poetry” as a perfected enclosure. Throughout his extensive depictions of people freighted with stultifying conceptual baggage, Lawrence suggests, as does Woolf, that people are less completely colonized by such ideational order than they seem. The ever-present possibility of resistance due to these static orders’ imperfect hegemony is suggested in the vision Ursula has at the end of *The Rainbow*, a vision of even the most dehumanized people still connected to a living, relational, protean world, and still capable of realizing that connection. Ursula sees these degraded people “living still,” and she realizes “that the rainbow was arched in

their blood and would quiver to life in their spirit, that they would cast off their horny covering of disintegration” (459).

Lawrence understands the function of art as working to provoke transformations in how people see and understand the world in ways that will reveal the insufficiency of atomizing frameworks. In “Chaos in Poetry,” he suggests that artists, particularly poets, can break through the umbrella of fixed abstraction: “Then comes a poet, enemy of convention, and makes a slit in the umbrella; and lo! the glimpse of chaos is a vision, a window to the sun” (109). However, such gains are incredibly short-lived, for “commonplace man daubs a simulacrum of the window that opens on to chaos, and patches the umbrella with the painted patch of the simulacrum. That is, he has got used to the vision, it is part of his house-decoration” (110). Any gain that might threaten the umbrella, the matrix of perfected ideas, simply becomes another of its perfected ideas. This has accelerated, suggests Lawrence, to the extent that now, any violation to the umbrella is incorporated almost instantly, such that the umbrella “can be slit no more.” But for Lawrence, this is not cause for despair, but rather for revolutionary, almost apocalyptic hope: “This will go on till some terrific wind blows the umbrella to ribbons, and much of mankind to oblivion” (111).

Lawrence’s calls to action are at times overtly revolutionary. Far from Whitehead’s insistence that things will only change slowly over time, Lawrence insists that people must break from their cognitive shackles. The absolute abstract frameworks of idealism and materialism work to impose deathly stasis upon the human being, and for Lawrence, this is an outright tragedy; they “destroy the soul in its first nature of spontaneous, integral being, and ... substitute the second nature, the automatic nature of the mechanical universe” (*Fantasia* 201). He wants to save his readers from this death, to provoke in them “the great spontaneous gestures of life”

(123). How does Lawrence seek to foster life and bring about this transformation? By fostering an awareness that there *are* other ways of living, other configurations of the world, that there is something beyond the confines of their current world (the darkness beyond the circle of light defining their world), and revealing a different disposition towards the darkness of the unknown, the source of the living creative principle. One might approach the often-terrifying darkness as an opportunity. In *The Rainbow*, a character like Will sees the darkness as a terrifying and alienating barrier: “It seemed as though there were before him a solid wall of darkness that impeded him and suffocated him and made him mad. He wanted [his wife Anna] to come to him, to complete him, to stand before him so that his eyes did not, should not meet the naked darkness” (166). Conversely, his daughter Ursula receives the darkness as a very different spur. She recognizes that both she and her suitor, Anthony, are part of the darkness of the unknown, but her awareness and embrace of it distinguishes her from him, and enables her to go on the adventure of her life that continues in the subsequent novel: “All this so beautiful, all this so lovely! He did not see it. He was one with it. But she saw it, and was one with it. Her seeing separated them infinitely” (386). For Lawrence, the “unconscious” is part of this darkness from whence the shoots of life can emerge to break up a fixed conceptual order. Gordon (2007) explains that Lawrence’s unconscious is “the embodiment of vital force” (85), the living, protean, creative quality that Lawrence so valorizes. The “true unconscious,” writes Lawrence, is “all the time moving forward, beyond the range of its own fixed laws and habits.” One must recognize these habits and “break the limits which we have imposed on the movement of the unconscious” (*Fantasia* 16) to let the novelty that it offers emerge unmolested. One cannot make the “unconscious” conscious, but one can draw new ways of being out of the creative potentiality of the unconscious, and seek to remain open to perpetually doing so. This unconscious is part of

the “grand chaos” Lawrence discusses in “Chaos in Poetry.” He insists that life emerges from the chaos, and people must open themselves and their society to it; to “shut ourselves off from it” is to be “stifle[d]” (112).

Just as Lawrence suggests of the darkness, Woolf insists that the imposition of the unknown chaos, which is so often received as harrowing, can be taken not as an affront but as a spur. In “A Sketch of the Past,” she writes of moments that impinged upon her “cotton wool” state of “non-being” (82). These moments came to her as a “violent shock” married to a pervasive but undefined realization of “something terrible” (82). She finally has a similar experience (relating to a realization of a flower’s connection with the earth) but is able to abate her aversion: “I felt that I had put away in my mind something that I should go back [to], to turn over and explore.... In the case of the flower I found a reason; and was able to deal with the sensation.... I was conscious—if only at a distance—that I should in time explain it” (83). One might understand the difference that Woolf posits as the able imposition of her readily-abstracting mind, but she does not pin these experiences down in indexical language; she merely flags them for future consideration as containing *something* important, a novel realization that she is careful not to molest. This disposition towards novelty allows her to experience these “blows” of realization as welcome: “I feel that I have had a blow; but it is not, as I thought as a child, simply a blow from an enemy hidden behind the cotton wool of daily life; it is or will become a revelation of some order; it is a token of some real thing” (83-84).

Woolf values the apparently useless in these scenes. She recognizes that *something* has been revealed to her, but she has no practical use for the information, and she endeavors to make no immediate practical use of it. Still, she notes it and remembers it. For Bergson, this is an important strategy for escaping from the automatism of the feedback loop of action. He explains

that valuing the useless allows more of the memory to interject between the experience and the reaction: humanity must “be able to withdraw ourselves from the action of the moment, we must have the power to value the useless, we must have the will to dream” (94). Woolf develops her awareness because she values that which exceeds her cognition. The protagonist of “A Mark on the Wall” values and delves into the useless memories that comprise the vibrant texture of the story rather than pursuing certainty through action. And with *Night and Day*’s Mary, when she can think of no way to overcome the constraints of social propriety, she does so by attending to the irrelevant garment that Katharine wears: “Her hand went down to the hem of Katharine’s skirt, and, fingering a line of fur, she bent her head as if to examine it” (287). This act allows her to confess to Katharine that Ralph loves her. Woolf’s oeuvre, so seemingly fixated on the mundane, values the useless to allow the ingression of novelty, to allow the human awareness to move beyond the immediate demands of action and the constraints of stultified orders.

The writings of both Lawrence and Woolf seek to expose the network of restrictive, dominant cognitive frameworks that circulate through society and threaten automatism. Furthermore, their works are animated by a shared desire to overcome the limitations of rigid abstraction, both in their own writing and in society as a whole. Lawrence and Woolf share the radical empirical critique of fixed conceptual orders, but they move beyond that critique into activism, pursuing the dissolution of absolute abstract orders through their writing. Their work is thus spurred by a revolutionary desire for change, a desire to liberate the modern subject from the yoke of ideational fixity.

Chapter 3: Open Abstractions

In *Women in Love*, harrowed by a growing stasis in her life figured as a great “nullity,” Ursula confronts the limitations of her knowledge and experience and pursues adventure not merely beyond spatial bounds, but into a world beyond a barrier metaphorically figured as “death”:

She realized how all her life she had been drawing nearer and nearer to this brink, where there was no beyond, from which one had to leap like Sappho into the unknown.... She knew all she had to know, she had experienced all she had to experience, she was fulfilled in a kind of bitter ripeness, there remained only to fall from the tree into death. And one must fulfil one’s development to the end, must carry the adventure to its conclusion. And the next step was over the border into death.... One can never see beyond the consummation. It is enough that death is a great and conclusive experience. Why should we ask what comes after the experience, when the experience is still unknown to us? (191)

Lawrence’s description of this call to adventure figures the transformation Ursula faces as “death” from the perspective of her life before it occurs, for she cannot know the experience to come until she has realized that reconfiguration. As Ursula begins to move into her shifting perspective, the experience’s figuration as “death” comes into question: “It was a question of *knowing* the next step. And the next step led into the space of death. Did it?—or was there———?” (192). Lawrence’s use of this long series of em-dashes suggests not death but a positive presence, a *something* that Ursula cannot find the language to describe.

One of the problems in the novels of Woolf and Lawrence central to this study is the difficulty of communicating such nascent experience. Both of the authors deal extensively with

characters who struggle to find the means of articulating experiences for which preexisting definitions and phrases are ill-fitting, and each explores the challenges of enacting linguistic strategies that might circumvent the dangerous ease with which language tends towards denotation. In seeking to explore and bring to the reader's attention reconfigured understandings of the self and its relationship with the world (the focus of the final chapter of this study), the authors venture upon analogous struggles with language in crafting the novels under examination. Thus, part of what these novels explore *within* their plots is the linguistic difficulties the authors face in producing the novels, in engaging complex durational experience of world and bringing it into language. Thus, the novels bring the reader into contact with the very struggle with language which arises out of the philosophical commitments that animate the approach to the production of the texts.

The Difficulties Posed by Language

This struggle to find an effective linguistic approach, one capable of disclosing complex, vertiginous experiences, is a central concern for the authors and one that they take pains to bring their readers into contact with. This is because, as authors who are committed in each new novel to find ways to bring complicated experiences to light in language, they are extensively aware of the ways language can do violence to the previously unarticulated experience they seek to reveal. Language has the capacity to conceptually select and extricate from the flux individual objects to make them usable. The more that words refer to discrete, unchanging things, the more easily they facilitate ease of conduct as language users speak about and navigate a shared world. Language offers people a way of grasping a world that must be acted upon and a means of cooperating in that world. James celebrates that the intellect has pulled humanity out of instinctual immediacy such that it can reflect upon experience, for the gains it facilitates are numerous. It is the intellect

that is “the faculty which gives us our chief superiority to the brutes, our power, namely, of translating the crude flux of our merely feeling-experience into a conceptual order” (*Pluralistic* 217). James explains the benefits of the classifying power of the intellect:

When we name and class [a thing], we say for the first time what it is, and all these whats are abstract names or concepts. Each concept means a particular kind of thing, and as things seem once for all to have been created in kinds, a far more efficient handling of a given bit of experience begins as soon as we have classed the various parts of it. Once classed, a thing can be treated by the law of its class, and the advantages are endless. Both theoretically and practically this power of framing abstract concepts is one of the sublimest of our human prerogatives.

(217)

Abstract names and concepts function as a shorthand for efficiency, and thus they are useful. One need not understand the vagaries and complexities present in a concept like “traffic” to recognize what a speeding automobile is and that one best not step in front of it. But such shorthand for experience also becomes problematic with its unmitigated use; one’s world is fractured into arrested and classified objects, and the human being in the midst of this world is subject to the same force.

One of the major problems that writers like Woolf and Lawrence must wrestle with is the limited expressive capacity of the language with which they have to work. In his desire to offer a transformational experience to his reader, Lawrence considers the importance of the novel in “Why the Novel Matters”: “The novel is the one bright book of life. Books are not life. They are only tremulations on the ether. But the novel as a tremulation can make the whole man alive tremble. Which is more than poetry, philosophy, science, or any other book-tremulation can do”

(195). Here Lawrence reveals the difficult tension with which authors like himself must wrestle: the novel itself is part of the finished, dead world of completed ideas. The words, once printed, cannot be amended. Yet it is for him the best means by which to convey the “life” that he values, to elicit in the reader a powerful, affective experience through its disclosures. While the novel offers a liberal range of expressive possibilities, an author with Lawrence’s concerns for conveying the flowing nature of life must take pains not to fall prey to the pitfalls of what Whitehead calls “ordinary language.” In *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead explains that “ordinary language” is rife with unexamined limitations derived from “particular sciences.” Philosophy is a special form of thought and communication because of the specificity and care with which its terms are used. Conversely, common language takes its stock of terms and phrases from various specialized sciences, which provide a somewhat discordant background, each offering limited conceptualizations that are derived from the finished achievements of philosophical thought:

Each such science in tracing its ideas backwards to their basic notions stops at a half-way house. It finds a resting place amid notions which for its immediate purposes and for its immediate methods it need not analyse any further. These basic notions are a specialization from the philosophic intuitions which form the background of the civilized thought of the epoch in question. They are intuitions which, apart from their use in science, ordinary language rarely expresses in any defined accuracy, but habitually presupposes in its current words and expressions.

(144)

Common language, and implicitly the expressions in common novels, are predisposed not to driving forward into the unknown, really moving down the metaphorical road Lawrence describes, but instead to operating with a fixed set of conceptions that are already secondary

derivations from finished thought. Common, habitual language is at multiple, largely unexamined removes from grappling with the ever-changing nature of life. While the job of the novel is different from that of philosophy, in seeking to disclose possibilities and eliciting affecting realization rather than in pursuing conceptual clarity, Whitehead's concern is relevant: novelists who seek to delve into unexplored experiences must take pains to avoid the assumptions that language in its everyday use leads one to make.

Woolf and Lawrence must work to divest the language they use of the conceptual baggage haunting it while safeguarding against its conceptual arrest. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson discusses the difficulties facing art that seeks to capture life. He explains that the artistic product from the vital impulse, which the novel can be, runs the risk of being "absorbed by the form it is engaged in taking, hypnotized by it as by a mirror. Even in the most perfect works, though it seems to have triumphed over external resistances and also over its own, it is at the mercy of the materiality which it has had to assume" (127). The materiality in question with regards to the novel is precisely the language with which the authors must work, which is predisposed towards fixity. Even the most innovative turns of phrase often become stale and lose the breadth of their indicative potential as they are picked up in ordinary language. For Bergson, the material arrest of the *elan vital* is most immediately ascertainable in the experience of articulation: "Our freedom ... is dogged by automatism. The most living thought becomes frigid in the formula that expresses it. The word turns against the idea. The letter kills the spirit" (127). It does this so easily because of the tendency for people to underestimate the power of language to amend their thoughts: "If we look at it closely, we shall see that our habitual manner of speaking, which is fashioned after our habitual manner of thinking, leads us to actual logical deadlocks—deadlocks to which we allow ourselves to be led without anxiety, because we feel

confusedly that we can always get out of them if we like” (312). Bergson explains that the conventional ways of speaking or writing are also the most comfortable; to use language in ways that allows for the protean quality of the flux means that writers must venture into uncomfortable ways of communicating, both for themselves and their readers. Saying “the child becomes the man” feels more natural than the statement that “there is becoming from the child to the man,” despite the fact that the former arrests the stages of life and ignores the continuity of the process of maturation: “The first manner of expression is alone comfortable to our habits of language” (313).

Woolf’s and Lawrence’s work struggles against the contemporaneous conventional forms available to them, and they each offer extensive critiques of contemporary novelists against which they situate their projects. In “Modern Fiction” (1919), Woolf critiques several of her contemporary novelists as “materialists” too beholden to restrictive, stultified forms. For Woolf, English literature has not been making significant progress for a very long time, and contemporary writers like Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy are only indicative of the continuation of that failure: “We do not come to write better; all that we can be said to do is keep moving, now a little in this direction, now in that, but with a circular tendency should the whole course of the track be viewed from a sufficiently lofty pinnacle” (103). While Woolf situates herself beneath any privileged vantage point, she does suggest that there are two possible paths that literature can take: one directed towards “fertile land,” and the other towards “dust and the desert” (103). Woolf claims that the problem with the contemporary “materialists” is that they are “concerned not with the spirit but with the body” (104). She complains “that they write of unimportant things; that they spend immense skill and immense industry making the trivial and the transitory appear the true and enduring” (105). Given her application of the language of

scientific materialism in describing perception as “an incessant shower of innumerable atoms” (106), Woolf’s problem is not broadly with materialism, so the problem must be with “the body” taken in separation from “the spirit,” a deathly hollowing out of the material world aligned with the concerns of Lawrence.

The problem of material separated from life is developed in relation to Woolf’s formal concerns about the novel. While the authors she critiques are fantastic “workmen,” developing books “so well constructed and solid in its craftsmanship that it is difficult for the most exacting of critics to see through what chink of crevice decay can creep in,” such solidity stifles something important: “There is not so much as a draught between the frames of the windows, or a crack in the boards. And yet—if life should refuse to live there?” (104). The texts are sanitized of “the crudity and coarseness of ... human beings” (105). This problem is not entirely the fault of the authors themselves, for Woolf identifies part of the problem of this kind of materialism with the commonplace structural elements of the novel. The writers Woolf critiques are too beholden to the formal characteristics deemed necessary to establish “the solidity, the likeness of life,” a pursuit that “blot[s] out the light of the conception” (106). The form of 19th-Century realism thrusts upon the writer so many demands that it limits the novel’s expressive potential—it is a whole baggage of static limitations imposed upon the endeavor of articulation:

The writer seems constrained, not by his own free will but by some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant who has him in thrall, to provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy, love interest, and an air of probability embalming the whole so impeccable that if all his figures were to come to life they would find themselves dressed down to the last button of their coats in the fashion of the hour. The tyrant is obeyed; the novel is done to a turn. But sometimes, more and more often as

time goes by, we suspect a momentary doubt, a spasm of rebellion, as the pages fill themselves in the customary way. Is life like this? Must novels be like this?

(106)

The definitional qualities of the novel, “plot,” “comedy,” “tragedy,” “love interest,” and “probability,” here all work to fix and arrest the thing the author is trying to convey, “embalming the whole” as a lifeless dead body. For Woolf, the problem of stasis in articulation occurs not only at the level of individual concepts, words, and sentences, but at the deeper level of the formal structuring of those words and concepts, for they curtail the author’s ability to convey the temporal complexity of character, to convey “what life is really like” in the complex interplay of anticipation, sensation, and expectation. The best efforts at the smallest level can still fall prey to stasis if the formal arrangement is beholden to stultifying custom.

Lawrence too takes issue with one of the targets of Woolf’s critique in “John Galsworthy.” Through his critique of Galsworthy, Lawrence suggests that conventional novels relegate dissent from conventional thought and experience to mere temporary excursions. He refers specifically to Galsworthy’s *The Island Pharisees*, wherein the author describes life as a road hedged in on both sides; Galsworthy suggests that finding openings in the hedge is “where the fun begins,” where the rare adventurer can open new roads for human progress (218).

Lawrence insists that such is never the case in Galsworthy and rarely the case in other forms of literary expression: “that rare figure sidetracking into the unknown we do not see” (218). For Lawrence, literature must stop pretending that brief diversionary excursions are the extent of human liberty: “the whole figure is faulty at that point. If life is a great high-way, then it must forge on ahead into the unknown. Sidetracking gets nowhere.... The tip of the road is always unfinished, in the wilderness” (218). Indeed, such diversionary escapes actually immobilize the

progress of humanity, arresting it within a particular moment of the journey from which it does not progress: “The hedges nowadays are ragged with gaps, anybody who likes strays out on the little trips of ‘unconvention.’ But the ... road has not moved on at all. It has only become disheveled and sordid with excursions doing the anti tricks²³ and being ‘unconventional,’ and leaving tin cans behind” (218-19). For Lawrence, it is not enough that the novel be unconventional for the sake of an exciting diversion into “naughtiness.” What he finds in the lost potential of Galsworthy’s writing is the reinforcement of affective and conceptual immobility in humanity: “nothing can happen to the degraded social being” (220). The whole expressive endeavor of the novel needs to be transformed; it needs to be directed towards substantive changes in the way that humanity understands its experience. A great clearing away of the expected, socially-reinforced formal features of literary art is necessary for it to break with this immobility. Lawrence wants to reveal the “sentimentalists ... stifling us”: “it is time an effort was made to turn a hose-pipe on the sentimentalism they ooze over everything. The world is one sticky mess, in which ... an honest feeling can’t breathe” (220).

²³ By “anti tricks,” Lawrence is referring to Galsworthy’s alternative to the Forsyte family in his novels. Of the Forsytes, Lawrence notes that “not one of them seems to be a really vivid human being. They are social beings” (210). Regarding such social beings, Lawrence explains,

if [man] gives *too* much importance to the external objective reality, and so collapses in his natural innocent pride[,] then he becomes obsessed with the idea of objective or material assurance; he wants to *insure* himself, and perhaps everybody else: universal insurance. The impulse rests on fear. Once the individual loses his naïve at-oneness with the living universe, he falls into a state of fear, and tries to insure himself with wealth. (211-12)

In Lawrence’s reading, Galsworthy *only* offers this sort of character: “When one reads Mr Galsworthy’s books, it seems as if there were not on earth one single human individual. They are all these social beings...” (212). For Lawrence, such is not the case: “Not that the majority [of actual humanity] are necessarily social beings. But the majority is only *conscious* socially” (213). For Galsworthy, Lawrence speculates that

perhaps it was his utter failure to see what you were when you *weren’t* a Forsyte. What was there *besides* Forsytes in all the wide human world? Mr Galsworthy looked, and found nothing. Strictly and truly, after his frightened search, he had found nothing. But he came back with Irene and Bosinney, and offered us that. Here! he seems to say. Here is the anti-Forsyte! Here! Here you have it! Love! Passion! PASSION.

We look at this love, this PASSION, and we see nothing but a doggish amorousness and a sort of anti-Forsytism. They are the *anti* half of the show. Runaway dogs of these Forsytes, running in the back garden and furtively and ignominiously copulating.... (214)

Thus, the “anti-trick” to which Lawrence refers is the false alternative to the social, fearful, acquisitive human being.

In his discussion of the way humans conceive of history, Whitehead offers more insight into the problem facing modern writers. In *Adventures of Ideas* (1933), he suggests that the tendencies of English literature work to reinforce a set of damaging understandings that undermine philosophical progress. He writes that “the habits of a literary training with its long-range forecast and back-cast of critical thought exercise an unfortunate effect upon philosophy” (191). By falling into conventional literary habits, writers exercise a “purely abstract imagination,” one “devoid of direct observation of particular fact” (191). The literary habits of the Western tradition lead one away from attending carefully to the details of their immediate experience, reinforcing through repetition a set of unchanging abstract notions. The problem of stasis for Whitehead thus involves not only inflexible, entrenched abstractions, but also separation from lived experience. Whitehead explains that the traditions of the written word are almost universally directed towards a conceptual stasis that undermines immediately intuited experience: “Literature preserves the wisdom of the human race; but in this way it enfeebles the emphasis of first-hand intuition” (192). Taking Whitehead’s sentiments about literature in tandem with Woolf’s own reveals a shared concern regarding the damaging power of literary habits. From Woolf’s perspective, the structural requirements of the novel corrupt and deaden the life it might otherwise convey. Whitehead’s writing emphasizes what Woolf’s implies: that the structural requirements of the novel alter what the writer attends to. If a writer is concerned with the conventional requirements of plot, they will not have the luxury of slowing down to carefully attend to the complicated temporality of a moment of immediate experience, and will instead rely upon commonplace abstractions to indicate relationships to the past and future. Whitehead complains that conventional novels

think of the future in time-spans of centuries, or of decades, or of years, or of days. As a result we conceive of ourselves as related to past or to future by a mere effort of purely abstract imagination, devoid of direct observation of particular fact. If we admit this conclusion, there is no real evidence that there was a past, or that there will be a future. Our ignorance on this point is complete. All that we can observe consists of conceptual persuasions in the present. Such is the outcome of the literary habit of dwelling upon the long future or upon the long past. Literature preserves the wisdom of the human race; but in this way it enfeebles the emphasis of first-hand intuition. (191-92)

His solution to this is to suggest that “[i]n considering our direct observation of past, or of future, we should confine ourselves to time-spawns on the order of magnitude of a second, or even of fractions of a second” (192). The preserving function of language, which holds a dominant atomizing and static logic, lures one away from an awareness of temporal complexity within such short timeframes, wherein “[e]ach moment of experience confesses itself to be a transition between two worlds, the immediate past and the immediate future” (192). Circumventing the atomizing tendency of conventional uses of language allows a writer to explore the temporal continuity and unfolding of character, and to grasp novelty as it arises within that relational continuity, for, as Whitehead notes, “[i]f we keep ourselves to this short-range intuition, assuredly the future is not nothing. Each moment of experience confesses itself to be a transition between two worlds, the immediate past and the immediate future... [T]his immediate future is immanent in the present...” (192). In this transitory present, the human being can engage novelty: “the acquisition of novel content ... is the individual contribution of the immediate subject” in shaping its anticipation (192). Attending to the complex temporality of the moment

reveals not an empty static instant, but a sense that each moment is always implicated in a temporal transition wherein novelty takes place.

Literature's relationship to this temporal complexity is the focus of Paul Ricoeur's (1984) work, *Time and Narrative*, which was introduced in the first chapter of this study. Ricoeur examines literary engagements with time to suggest that the idea of an objective past and future must be reconceived as elements of the present: "[w]e are in fact prepared to consider as existing, not the past and the future as such, but the temporal qualities that can exist in the present, without the things of which we speak, when we recount them or predict them, still existing or already existing" (10). Both memory and expectation are implicated "in an extended and dialectical present which itself is none of the terms rejected previously: neither the past, nor the future, nor the pointlike present, nor even the passing of the present" (11). Ricoeur's analysis offers a "break ... with the linear representation of time, understood as a simple succession of nows" (63). Instead, it centres on the concept of "Care" as "more fundamental than any relation of a subject to an object" (61). This is a way of understanding world-construction as involving the extent to which the human being builds their world in relation to the three compounded aspects of temporality—characters might privilege the future, or exist primarily in a state of recollection, or seek to discipline their attention to the sensory present. Care suggests the unique configuration of world borne out of a character's relationship to temporality. Writers like Woolf and Lawrence, who are interested in overcoming the conventional expectations of plot, seek to reveal the complicated world-constructions of characters, which are rooted in their very temporal existence.

D.H. Lawrence and Strategies of Articulation

The philosophers central to this study each describe the potential for language to indicate nebulous experience, and their thoughts on this help to situate Lawrence's literary rather than philosophical approach to language. In his extensive critical writing, Lawrence elaborates quite extensively on what he understands to be the successful uses of literary language. His writing on this subject helps to situate the projects that both he and Woolf undertake. The focus on Lawrence's criticism here is not meant to indicate that Woolf's project is substantially different in its linguistic approach—indeed it is not, as the final section of this chapter will make clear. Rather, Lawrence's extensive writing on the subject facilitates a well-developed position to establish the uses of language necessary for the radical empirical modernist projects of both authors.

In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson advocates for the development of new uses of language after he critiques the cataloguing power of the intellect, calling for a means of mitigating or circumventing it. This is situated in response to his critique of the Platonic idea “that to know the real consists in finding its Idea, ... in forcing it into a pre-existing frame already at our disposal...” (48). He explains that this “is natural to the human intellect, always engaged as it is in determining under what former heading it shall catalogue any new object.” As humans evolved, he explained, “life has had to abandon by the way many elements incompatible with this particular mode of organization and consign them ... to other lines of development.” He insists that these “many elements” can and should be recovered: “it is the totality of these elements that we must find again and rejoin to the intellect proper, in order to grasp the true nature of vital activity.” Such experience is intuited as a “fringe of vague intuition that surrounds our distinct—that is, intellectual—representation” (49). Such is “vague” because it exceeds the

clarity of finished concepts, and can only be intuited on the periphery of such conceptual clarity. To understand such intuited experience, which come as “new object[s],” one must “create a new concept” or “perhaps a new method of thinking” to bring it into conscious awareness (48). Bergson’s goal is not to keep such experience outside of conceptual knowledge, for expanding such knowledge is a necessary element in the evolution of humanity. Instead, “we must look for hints to expand the intellectual form of our thought; from there we shall derive the impetus necessary to lift us above ourselves” (49).

Whitehead develops a similar line of thinking in *Science and the Modern World* (1925). He explains that ideas are derived from action and organized by action, and the evidence from perception is limited by the ideas within which one operates: “apart from the necessities of action, we cannot even keep before our minds the whole evidence except under the guise of doctrines which are incompletely harmonized. We cannot think in terms of an indefinite multiplicity of detail; our evidence can acquire its proper importance only if it comes before us marshalled by general ideas” (232). One can only be conscious of part of the field of available experience at any one time, and the conceptual framework of “general ideas” that one adopts determines which parts are accounted. Thus, changing the “general ideas” and what one receives in perception is a difficult task, for it requires the disruption of this reciprocal relationship between “evidence” and “ideas,” but this is exactly what Whitehead deems necessary: “No generation can merely reproduce its ancestors.... You cannot permanently enclose the same life in the same mould” (233). Such a disruption is possible, though. For Whitehead as for Bergson, one receives intimations in experience of that which exceeds the scope of their ideas. Whitehead explains in *Adventures of Ideas* that “Appearance ... in consciousness is clear and distinct,” while a broader field of “Reality lies dimly in the background with its details hardly to be

distinguished in consciousness. What leaps into conscious attention is a mass of presuppositions about Reality rather than the intuitions of Reality itself” (270). These experiences that fall beyond the demarcations of the “general ideas” are not *entirely* absent, for they exist “dimly” as intimations, which Whitehead suggests must be used to critique the idea-facilitated Appearances, and they are of central importance to the successful functioning of art:

The deliverances of clear and distinct consciousness require criticism by reference to elements in experience which are neither clear nor distinct. On the contrary, they are dim, massing, and important. These dim elements provide for art that final background of tone apart from which its effects fade. The type of Truth which human art seeks lies in the eliciting of this background to haunt the object presented for clear consciousness. (270).

These “dim” intimations within experience are of the highest importance in the production of social novelty, and Whitehead situates art as highly important in this regard: “It requires Art to evoke into consciousness the finite perfections which lie ready for human achievement.... It is the essence of art to be artificial. But it is its perfection to return to nature, remaining art. In short art is the education of nature. Thus, in its broadest sense, art is civilization” (271). For Whitehead, then, philosophy and art share in the goal of understanding fleeting experience.

For its part, philosophy seeks to develop conceptual understanding of the universe. As Whitehead suggests in *Modes of Thought* (1938), deriving “understanding” from “limited” and “flicker[ing]” intuition requires the philosopher to employ “inference ... as a means for the attainment of such understanding as we can achieve” (69). For Whitehead, art offers an exploration of related concrete, ontic experience, and its success depends on its capacity to bring its emplotted characters into contact with the intimated field of experience that exceeds

definitional clarity, revealing the presence and influence of those intimations. Using the only material available, language, the novelist must seek to articulate these experiences, and thus, she contributes to the philosophical endeavor, for part of the project of developing philosophical understanding is bringing this experience to language. As Whitehead acknowledges, “Language halts behind intuition. The difficulty of philosophy is the expression of what is self-evident. Our understanding outruns the ordinary usages of words” (69). Implicit in this statement is the means by which a novelist can proceed: they must eschew “ordinary usages” to divest language of its narrow conceptual baggage.

Whitehead’s description of “dim” intimations is rooted in the logic of Cartesian metaphysics; he describes such as contrary to the “clear and distinct” language of the philosopher. A more positive definition of ambiguity is offered in the literary criticism of William Empson (1930), who defines the use of ambiguous language to produce meaning. While Empson admits that ambiguous language can be to the detriment of meaning, he also acknowledges that its proper use facilitates new indicative possibilities:

In so far as an ambiguity sustained intricacy, delicacy, or compression of thought, ... it is to be respected.... It is not to be respected in so far as it is due to weakness or thinness of thought, obscures the matter in hand unnecessarily ... or, when the interest of the passage is not focused upon it, so that it is merely an opportunism in the handling of material.... (160)

For Empson, ambiguous language can be the mark of a lazy writer or poor thinker, but it can also be skillfully used in response to subject matter that clearer language would violate:

An ambiguity, then, is not satisfying in itself, nor is it, considered as a device on its own, a thing to be attempted; it must in each case arise from, and be justified

by, the peculiar requirements of the situation. On the other hand, it is a thing which the more interesting and valuable situations are more likely to justify. (235)

The latter types of ambiguity Empson defines are relevant to the writing this chapter explores. Ambiguous language can bring together “two or more meanings of a statement” that “do not agree among themselves, but combine to make clear a more complicated state of mind...” (133). This allows the author to convey a complex “composition of feeling” (138) that exceeds commonplace definitions of emotion. Writers can use ambiguity even when they themselves have not conceptually resolved what they are exploring: this “occurs when the author is discovering his idea in the act of writing, or not holding it all in his mind at once, so that, for instance, there is a simile which applies to nothing exactly, but lies half-way between two things when the author is moving from one to the other” (155). Furthermore, a writer can use ambiguous language to intentionally say “nothing, by tautology, by contradiction, or by irrelevant statements; so that the reader is forced to invent statements of his own and they are liable to conflict with one another” (176). Such conflicts can reveal to a reader the problem of conceptualization, bringing the reader into a conceptually unmooring experience.

These more complex functions of ambiguous language can elicit experiences that Roland Barthes (1975) describes as bliss. Whereas Empson focuses on poetry, Barthes suggests that such elicitations can be readily produced in the novel. A text can be written with a “*will to bliss ...* whereby it attempts to overflow, to break through the constraint of adjectives—which are those doors of language through which the ideological and the imaginary come flowing in” (13-14). Barthes considers how a text can get at experiences that transcend the definitional power of available language: “How can a text, which consists of language, be outside languages? How *exteriorize* the world’s jargons without taking refuge in the ultimate jargon wherein the others

would simply be reported, recited? ... by a gradual labor of extenuation” (30). The text must work to oppose the “metalanguage[s]” that lie “*behind*” much common language. It must also disrupt and oppose “its own discursive category ... its genre” (30). Barthes explains that “[i]t is a matter of effecting, by transmutation ..., a new philosophic state of the language-substance...” (31). The uses of language that Empson describes can foster texts that not only profoundly disturbing, but also profoundly revelatory to the reader. Together, they offer a far more positive and exciting understanding of ambiguity and what it can achieve.

In his nonfictional writing, Lawrence offers extensive commentary on the novel and on his approach to uses of language. He addresses the problem of commonplace ideas and the ordinary use of language in *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1921), where he suggests that most people should “be most carefully protected from all vicious attempts to inject extraneous ideas into them.” Such would include most philosophical writing, for aside from a “higher, responsible, conscious class,” who can develop and tend to knowledge in a responsible way, most people are harmed by the tendency towards fixity that conceptual knowledge carries: “Every extraneous idea, which has no inherent root in the dynamic consciousness, is as dangerous as a nail driven into a young tree. For the mass of people, knowledge must be symbolical, mythical, dynamic.... To those who cannot divest themselves again of mental consciousness and definite ideas, mentality and ideas are death, nails through their hands and feet” (113). The immobility of fixed ideas leads to the fixity of thinkers, who project those fixed ideas into an unchanging future, realizing a metaphorical crucifixion that leaves them immobilized until their eventual death. In his novels, Lawrence pursues uses of language that emphasize the intimations of a “symbolical, mythical, dynamic” type of knowledge.

In *Study of Thomas Hardy*, Lawrence discusses the aims of his own art and his views about language. This discussion opens by emphasizing language's role in human development, and he suggests that people expect language to deliver them into their own being, but when they relate only to narrowly defined concepts and the functional uses of language, such an expectation will be frustrated: "we, who imagine we live by knowledge, imagine that the impetus for our second birth must come from knowledge, that the germ, the sperm impulse, can come out of some utterance only" (44). While the "utterance only" is insufficient in disconnection from the dynamism of life, language has an important role to play in the development of one's world. Writing on Lawrence's response to logocentric discourse, Daniel Schneider (1986) situates Lawrence's discursive strategy against a logocentric idealism that "freezes the self into an unchanging ego and freezes the fluent world into fixed, limited categories that substitute for reality" (38). But while language as it is functionally employed tends towards immobility, such is not inherent to all language. Schneider makes clear that while for Lawrence reality exceeds the language one brings to bear upon it, Lawrence is committed to different uses of language and to expanding its expressive capacities, for "'true knowledge' may depend to some extent on conscious and verbal elements; it is not merely unconscious and pre-verbal" (43). In his *Study*, Lawrence suggests the difficult work for an author with his aims, noting that innovative uses of language will need to be developed: "it may be the word, the idea exists which shall bring me forth, give me birth. But it may also be that the word, the idea, has never yet been uttered" (44). Lawrence postulates that existent language may be inadequate to the needs and experiences of a person, but, he insists, whatever language might articulate already exists in life, and the writer will need to work with language to give such intimations expression: the "unsatisfied soul ... searches out the Spoken Word, and finds it, or finds it not. Possibly it is not yet uttered. But all

that will be uttered lies potent in life” (44). Ambiguity allows writers like Lawrence to probe towards meanings that exceed their grasp, to use the novel in an experimental, exploratory way.

Lawrence makes it clear in his “Foreword to *Women in Love*” (1919) that the novel is for him the textual form best-suited to giving utterance to the most important aspects of the human life, and indeed the form most capable of offering a new understanding to readers of the import of their lives. In the “Foreword,” Lawrence acknowledges the “struggle for verbal consciousness” natural to mankind, the desire “to understand what is happening, even in himself, as he goes along,” and he insists that this “should not be left out in art. It is a very great part of life. It is not superimposition of a theory. *It is the passionate struggle into conscious being*” (486). If language is a central part of human becoming, the novel is, at its best, part of this struggle into consciousness. Of his novel, he writes that it “pretends only to be a record of the writer’s own desire, aspirations, struggles: in a word, a record of the profoundest experiences in the self” (485). George Donaldson (1999) explains that such should not be taken to suggest that Lawrence’s novel is “autobiographical,” but rather indicates a shift towards “something more ‘objectified’ than ‘autobiographical’” (60). Lawrence’s note hints at the function of the novel, drawing upon the concrete individual struggle to indicate something generalizable and profound about the human situation.

Lawrence’s thoughts about the function of the novel are further developed in “The Novel and the Feelings” (1925), written five years after *Women in Love*. In the essay, Lawrence suggests that the right sort of novel can bring the reader into contact with a terrain of experience that too often goes unexplored, indeed one that exceeds the perceptive capabilities of most people. He writes that “If we can’t hear the cries far down in our own forests of dark veins, we can look in the real novels, and there listen in. Not listen to the didactic statements of the author,

but to the low, calling cries of the characters, as they wander in the dark woods of their destiny” (205). The “didactic” language of the author, offering clean, fixed, articulate commentaries, is of relatively little value compared to the “low calling cries” of characters relating to a background of “dark woods.” By exploring concrete situations implicated in this background of intuited experience, a novel becomes in Lawrence’s estimation a “real novel.” Lawrence elaborates metaphorically on the instinctive experience of the “dark woods,” describing it as “the voices of the honorable beasts that call in the dark paths of the veins of our body ... the lowing of the innermost beasts, the feelings, that roam in the forest of the blood...” (205). This is an instinctive pre-linguistic experience, one that the general ideas facilitating the perception of many ignore. He describes the origin of such feelings as “utterly previous to words”: the “primeval, honorable beasts of our being, whose voice echoes wordless and forever wordless down the darkest avenues of the soul, but full of potent speech. Our own inner meaning” (205). Lawrence asserts that this is what the novel can convey. While the feelings remain “previous” to language (for affecting experience will always exceed the confines of any clear definition) that relationship suggests that they lead to language, that they can inform an ambiguous use of language that can disclose such experiences. Lawrence believes that feelings can be indicated and emphasized in literature to bring readers into a way of understanding their world and self that does not “deny and blank out our feelings” (204). The author must minimize his “didactic” intercession and find ways of indicating through the language of the novel such originally pre-linguistic experience.

The linguistic approaches employed by Lawrence to indicate these sorts of intuited experiences centre around ambiguity and its amplification. In support of its use towards this end, Whitehead suggests that ambiguous language might disclose the experienced world better than more precise language. Conventional language seeks “the removal of perplexity,” a clarity that

excises vagueness, but Whitehead insists that “[w]e have to search whether nature does not in its very being show itself as self-explanatory.” Nature offers experiences that “refer to depths beyond anything we can grasp with clear apprehension” (*Science* 115). These experiences can only be vague, so language that refers to them should involve such ambiguity: “the ultimate arbitrariness of matter of fact from which our formulation starts should disclose the same general principles of reality, which we dimly discern as stretching away into regions beyond our explicit powers of discernment” (115).

Alberto Toscano’s (2008) work on abstraction and philosophy helps to distinguish the abstractions used by writers like Lawrence. He describes two different systems of abstraction as “cold abstractions” and “warm abstractions.” The former are characterized by “rigidity and separateness”; they are “lifeless and detached.” The latter are “open to a constant and contextual modulation” (58). Warm abstractions work against discrete specificity; as long as abstractions can remain “warm” and retain the protean quality of “modulation,” they are resistant to fixed meanings and habituation. The abstractions one employs to get to ideas, if they are “cold,” lead to what Lawrence identifies in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922) as the dead tree “of our idea of life and living” (119). Conversely, warm abstractions can foster an engagement with the sorts of instinctive, relational, and novel experiences that Lawrence seeks:

The idea, the actual idea, must rise ever fresh, ever displaced, like the leaves of a tree, from out of the quickness of the sap, and according to the forever incalculable effluence of the great dynamic centres of life. The tree of life is a gay kind of tree that is forever dropping its leaves and budding out afresh quite different ones. If the last lot were thistle leaves, the next lot may be vine. You can never tell with the tree of life. (119)

If the author wishes his language to remain relevant beyond its own historical moment, he must not seek fixed, closed references. Instead, the author must work against the tendency of his medium, language's ease of conveyance and specificity. This is especially true as it relates to the intimations that are so important to Lawrence's valuation of the novel, for it is not primarily the *product* of instinct and novelty that Lawrence values, but rather the living and protean *experience* of that instinct and novelty. Lawrence's language must indicate the character's intimations without being given over to the fixed ideas of life that are so easily arrested in the repetitions of cognitive and linguistic habit. For the goal of Lawrence's literature is to reveal life, to recognize the novelty that manifests within and beyond the human being.

Considerable critical attention has been paid to the way Lawrence's language works to reveal under-realized aspects of experience, but some critics have overstated the end of such work. While Schneider acknowledges Lawrence's "attempt to invent a new language and a new kind of narrative structure that would lay bare the realities which conventional language obscures or falsifies" (40), and while he also acknowledges the importance of language in Lawrence's work, he also situates language as opposed to a reality or a truth that Lawrence seeks to uncover. Schneider asserts that "uniqueness and individuality are always falsified by language" (39). Situating language in this way undermines the creative capacity of Lawrence's writing, and it problematizes the novel as itself a falsification at odds with the world in which it is produced. In a similar vein, while identifying the way that Lawrence struggles against "the inherent linearity of language," Nancy Hayles (1982) suggests that Lawrence's style seeks to "make language somehow engage in a 'frictional to-and-fro' that can break through the envelope of ordinary perception to a direct apprehension of reality" (97). Certainly, the language works to counter "ordinary perception," if such is understood as perception habituated by unexamined concepts,

but there is no perfect transcendence beyond language into a “direct apprehension of the idea” completely freed from language. Language can bring readers into different forms of awareness, but it cannot offer perception freed from the intercession of all language. Indeed, as Lawrence acknowledges, there can be no gain in understanding without the involvement of the intellect; thus, the way one engages language must be careful and provisional lest one alter through conceptualization a dimly perceived experience. While Hayles suggests that Lawrence “fears that whatever calls attention to a particular verbal formulation can be dangerous, tempting the reader to stay on the verbal surface...” (97), Lawrence’s engagement with language brings its very provisionality to his readership’s attention so that they can recognize such and probe the connotative, gesturing expansion that Lawrence’s work pursues.

The difficulty of indicating these experiences, in both the abstract language of philosophy or the concrete narrative of the novel, is that such experiences are at odds with the typical functioning of language, and they tend to exceed its denotative capacities. James’s discussion of his problems with articulation advocate for a literary approach that directs its readers to acknowledge experiences that the words themselves fail to adequately grasp. In *A Pluralistic Universe*, James discusses the way each person’s being involves “a fringe that shades insensibly into a subconscious more” (288), and he attempts to explain the way typical dispensations of language miss this: “what we conceptually identify ourselves with and say we are thinking of at any time is the centre; but our full self is the whole field, with all those indefinitely radiating subconscious possibilities of increase that we can only feel without conceiving, and can hardly begin to analyze” (289). James’s description of the “whole field” of the self, replete with its complex temporality, suggests that the experience of it cannot be grasped in a clear

conceptualization. In attempting to explain this, James finds himself forced to address the linguistic difficulty:

I am tiring myself and you, I know, by vainly seeking to describe by concepts and words what I say at the same time exceeds either conceptualization or verbalization. As long as one continues talking, intellectualism remains in undisturbed possession of the field. The return to life can't come about by talking. It is an act; to make you return to life, I must set an example for your imitation. I must deafen you to talk, or to the importance of talk, by showing you, as Bergson does, that the concepts we talk with are made for the purposes of practice and not for purposes of insight. Or I must point, point to the mere that of life, and you by inner sympathy must fill out the what for yourself. The minds of some of you, I know, will absolutely refuse to do so, refuse to think in non-conceptualized terms.

(290)

James specifically takes issue with a dispensation of language he calls “talking,” which in this critique allows concepts to forestall action and sustain a disconnection from “life.” James first says he wants to “deafen” his reader to “talk,” then amends his statement to suggest he wants to deafen them to “the importance of talk.” James suggests that concepts should have a pragmatic function, leading one to “practice” and not mere “insight,” but he also suggests that the use of language that will do this is itself active, one that will “make” its recipient “return to life,” one that will “set an example,” one that will “point.” Such insistence, applied to the novel, suggests that the goal is not to stop as disclosure, but for such disclosures to provoke transformations in the reader’s world and thus in their praxis within it. Nelson Goodman (1978) explains that the

work involved in indicating the truth of the world of the novel involves something akin to the “pointing” James advocates:

worlds are made not only by what is said literally but also by what is said metaphorically, and not only by what is said either literally or metaphorically but also by what is exemplified and expressed—by what is shown as well as by what is said. In a scientific treatise, literal truth counts most; but in a poem or novel, metaphorical or allegorical truth may matter more, for even a literally false statement may be metaphorically true and may mark or make new associations and discriminations, change emphases, effect exclusions and additions. And statements whether literally or metaphorically true or false may show what they do not say, may work as trenchant literal or metaphorical examples of unmentioned features and feelings. (18)

Goodman goes on to delineate two forms of language that help to clarify the divide between philosophy and the novel:

for nonverbal versions and even for verbal versions without statements, truth is irrelevant. We risk confusion when we speak of pictures or predicates as ‘true of’ what they depict or apply to; they have no truth-value and may represent or denote some things and not others, while a statement does have truth-value and is true of everything if of anything. A nonrepresentational picture ... says nothing, denotes nothing, pictures nothing, and is neither true nor false, but shows much. Nevertheless, showing or exemplifying, like denoting, is a referential function; and much the same considerations count for pictures as for the concepts or predicates of a theory: their relevance and their revelations, their force and their

fit—in sum their *rightness*. Rather than speak of pictures as true or false we might better speak of theories as right or wrong. (19)

The novels examined here are analogous to such “pictures,” seeking not to produce “statement[s]” with “truth-value,” but to offer disclosures “of unmentioned features and feelings” that can have affective, transformative effects upon the reader. The sort of language that James advocates, but that he has difficulty enacting in the form of a philosophical text, is literary and performative, suggesting experiences through its shortcomings, through showing rather than saying, drawing the reader’s attention to experiential possibilities that more directly indicative declarations would violate.

In *Matter and Memory* (1896), Bergson lauds simple language for the way it obviously leaves things unsaid:

the more primitive the language you speak with me and the poorer in words which express relations, the more you are bound to allow for my mind’s activity, since you compel me to find out the relations which you leave unexpressed: which amounts to saying that you abandon more and more the hypothesis that each verbal image goes up and fetches down its corresponding idea. (158-59)

This use of ambiguity is in keeping with one of the strategies Empson describes in his typology of ambiguity, wherein the author produces an unresolved ambiguity, which entreats the reader to engage and explore what has gone unsaid. Such is perhaps more valuable for conveying the complexities of experience because, while language cannot hope to adequately contain its object, it can indicate to its recipient something that exceeds it: “every language, whether elaborated or crude, leaves many more things to be understood than it is able to express” (159). Through this

opening, language can direct people towards different perspectives of experience, including a greater knowledge of the experience of others:

Essentially discontinuous, since it proceeds by juxtaposing words, speech can only indicate by a few guide-posts placed here and there the chief stages in the movement of thought. That is why I can indeed understand your speech if I start from a thought analogous to your own, and follow its windings by the aid of verbal images²⁴ which are so many sign-posts that show me the way from time to time. (159)

This is something that common dispensations of language cannot accomplish, for they fail to facilitate the necessary affective tone to convey the “analogous” starting point: “I shall never be able to understand it if I start from the verbal images themselves, because between two consecutive verbal images there is a gulf which no amount of concrete representations can ever fill” (159). By drawing attention to the provisionality of their language, authors can wrest the words of their fixed denotations to foster lacunae that provoke the reader into both an affective tone and into an active engagement with the unresolved state the author explores.

Such provisional dispensations of language are an important element of Lawrence’s style. Gerald Doherty (1992) understands Lawrence’s work as privileging one form of metaphor over another. The first is “metaphor as a closed semantic system,” and the second, which Lawrence valorizes, “is the conception of metaphor as an open or ongoing process, where the terms of

²⁴ Bergson’s use of “verbal image” here is not a reference to imagist theory. Rather, his use of “image” is similar to Whitehead’s “event,” but it is situated within perception. In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson defines an image as “a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a representation, but less than that which the realist calls a thing,—an existence placed half-way between the ‘thing’ and the ‘representation’” (vii-viii). The image straddles the apparent dichotomy, uniting the two sides in the actual substance of the world. Matter, including our body, is an “aggregate of ‘images’” (vii). The images in the world interconnect in a complex matrix; they are obliged “to act through every one of [their] points upon all points of all other images” (28).

comparison may be markedly incongruous, where facilitating bridge terms are missing, and where an undetermined discursive context makes any final retrieval of sense problematic” (51). One can understand this distinction as the difference between Toscano’s cold and warm abstractions. Lawrence’s “warm” abstractions involve this obvious provisionality. The emphasized lacunae and disjunctions in Lawrence’s use of metaphor problematize the ease of reading, forcing his readers to acknowledge vitally important gaps. In *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, Lawrence directly points out to his reader that all of his attempts to describe the complex constitution of the human psyche are provisional, are indicating something that the language is not meant to perfectly identify: “All this is a mere incoherent stammering, broken first-words” (37).

This amplified provisionality finds expression in Lawrence’s novels through strategies like the use of repetition, which draws attention to an individual word and forces the careful reader to recognize both its incommensurability to what is described and to consider connections between the things to which it is applied. Such uses of language led a number of early (and some later) critics to misread Lawrence’s novelistic use of language as bad writing. Early criticism found his writing to be reckless, accusing it of being written “at the white heat of inspiration and with the usual faults of redundancy and the like that come of over-facile writing” (Draper 48). A 1915 review of *The Rainbow* notes Lawrence’s “distressing tendency to the repetition of certain words and a curiously vicious rhythm into which he constantly falls in the more emotional passages” (101). H.M. Daleski (1965) castigates *Women in Love* for “the combined vagueness and stridency of the style” (155). Even later, Schneider dismisses Lawrence’s linguistic prowess by suggesting that, “[b]ecause he was so keenly aware of the gulf between language and being, Lawrence was often indifferent to vocabulary in his own ‘philosophy’” (37). While especially

prevalent early in Lawrentian criticism, this sort of condemnation of Lawrence's writing style is borne out of a misrecognition of what his language is trying to do. For a reader expecting conventionally "artful" writing, Lawrence's work would seem a disappointment. He frequently fosters ambiguity in scenes, to the extent that it becomes difficult to discern precisely what is occurring, and he makes considerable use of repetition, often repeating words to the extent of semantic satiation. Rather than a shortcoming resulting from sloppy writing, this is the carefully crafted result of Lawrence's process. His language's apparent simplicity, when paired with the complex experiences that it is exploring, forces the reader to move beyond the completed understanding simple language typically offers and to recognize the gesturing function the language is fulfilling. Michael Bell (1992) identifies the strength in Lawrence's seemingly reckless writing thusly:

It has the feel of something still waiting to be tidied up and knocked into shape. But perhaps this is part of the point. There is an almost ostentatious avoidance of 'style' here which is only the outward manifestation of a more fundamental disposition towards the language itself. For in a more subliminal way the apparent, moment by moment simplicity of statement conveys a more fluid and indeterminate meaning which the language does not attempt directly to encapsulate. (63)

Bell recognizes the concerted intention behind Lawrence's seemingly careless writing, his "fundamental disposition" that strives to use simple language to offer "a more fluid and indeterminate meaning" than such language typically provides.

In trying to linguistically delve into these ambiguous experiences, Lawrence's work seeks to divest language of its conventional uses so that its suggestive possibilities are open. This sort

of work happens throughout *Women in Love* as Lawrence slowly divests the word “love” of its conceptual baggage. This movement from the word, with its apparently clear denotation, back to its existential context of unfolding, occurs both at the level of plot as the characters explore the experience to which the world is applied, and between the novel and reader as the meaning of the word is revived. Lawrence does not use myriad synonyms for the word “love” because doing so would cease to bring that word’s very symbolic baggage into question. Violeta Sotirova (2011) explores Lawrence’s revision process and finds that as he revised his writing, he consciously and carefully amplified the repetition present (144). It was a technique that Lawrence valued and used extensively in his writing. Lawrence explains part of the value of repetition in “Chaos in Poetry.” Through repetition, words are divested of their original referential power. Harry Crosby’s “repetition of sun, sun, sun” divorces the word from its use “as a glowing symbol,” making it “a bewilderment and a narcotic” (113). This fracturing is not the only function of repetition, for it can simultaneously invest words with new referential possibility. Sotirova notes that as Lawrence repeatedly uses the same word, its capacity is expanded until it functions in a radically different way: “With each new repetition, something new is added to the utterance” (154). This is displayed in “Chaos in Poetry” as Lawrence attempts to define “poetry”: “Poetry is a matter of words. Poetry is a stringing together of words into a ripple and jingle and a run of colours. Poetry is an interplay of images. Poetry is the iridescent suggestion of an idea. Poetry is all these things, and still something else” (109). Lawrence uses anaphora to rhythmically hammer the word as he posits numerous definitions that each illuminate a different element of what the word might indicate. He amplifies the weight of signification upon the word until its old signifying power bursts, thus divesting it of the limitations of its conventional sense while opening it up to a new, unfixed meaning. His series of

redefinitions ends with the suggestion that each offering is only partial, leaving the word open to a “something else” that exists beyond it.

Women in Love is rife with such fruitful repetitions. For example, Lawrence problematizes the terms “life” and “death” in his description of Ursula’s considerations of the routine of her teaching, cancelling out conventional valuations of the terms and loading them with new significance relevant to the specific situation described. Lawrence’s narrator identifies with Ursula’s perspective, but as the description is not dialogue, the abstractions used are not necessarily her own; rather, the words stand in as representative of the complexity of her feelings, which she may not have chosen words to express. The novel is written in a style of free indirect discourse. Dorrit Cohn defines many of the qualities of this style as “narrated monologue,” wherein the text enacts “[a] transformation of figural thought-language into the narrative language of third-person fiction” (100). Through the ambiguity it fosters, such a narrative style offers a way of exploring the pre-conceptual unfolding of a character’s experience: “By leaving the relationship between words and thoughts latent, the narrated monologue casts a peculiarly penumbral light on the figural consciousness, suspending it on the threshold of verbalization in a manner that cannot be achieved by direct quotation” (103). Exploring Ursula’s experience, Lawrence’s narrator states that it is “better to die than live mechanically a life that is a repetition of repetitions,” which upon first mention suggests a sort of suicidal fatalism, a real, physical death as preferable to her monotony. The next sentence seems to suggest belief in an afterlife like heaven: “To die is to move on with the invisible”; however, Ursula’s idea of that afterlife is uncertain but pleasurable: “To die is also a joy, a joy of submitting to that which is greater than the known, the purely unknown” (192). Death here no longer seems an unpleasant necessity, but something joyful, and it is figured as the continuation

of life, with the offering of new experiences. It is an “illimitable space,” “infinitely more lovely and noble than such a life,” and “dignified,” a place where the human being can further develop: “One might come to fruit in death” (193). Death is a “window” through which one can look and simultaneously the realm one sees: “One could look out on the great dark sky of death with elation...” (193). Death becomes the continuation of a journey that is no longer offered in what Ursula considers “life”: “There one would wash off all the lies and ignominy and dirt that had been put upon one here, a perfect bath of cleanness and glad refreshment, and go unknown, unquestioned, unabased” (194). Lawrence uses a word that conjures a relatively simple conventional meaning and turns it on its head. The reader is brought into a space where she can identify with Ursula’s unresolved sense of “death” and “life,” to acknowledge that what Ursula is considering is not mundane death, as it is commonly understood, but something related to that mundane understanding. What seems an abrupt and tragic end, a window through which one might look, becomes a realm of adventure, novelty, and development. Lawrence relies on the productive, ambiguous tension between the conventional and his recasting of the word to produce this effect. This inversion is likewise effected on the word “life,” which takes on the death-like quality of stasis: “There is complete ignominy in an unreplenished, mechanised life. Life indeed may be ignominious, shameful to the soul.” It is “[a] life of barren routine, without inner meaning, without any real significance.” Ursula’s “life” is simultaneously the absence of “life”:

For where was life to be found? No flowers grow upon busy machinery.... And all life was a rotary motion, mechanised, cut off from reality. There was nothing to look for from life—it was the same in all countries and all people.... [T]he soul

was a prisoner within this sordid vast edifice of life, and there was no escape, save in death. (193)

“Life” here takes on multiple, contradictory meanings, and this again forces the reader to attend to the word’s conventional definition and the tension between it and the feelings described. Life becomes more explicitly a “sordid vast edifice” that holds Ursula “prisoner,” and simultaneously and conversely something for which she longs that is now missing. Lawrence’s use of the term hollows it out, suggesting that its conventional use occludes the extent to which something important has been violated, bringing all of this to the fore of the reader’s attention.

Women in Love’s “Excuse” chapter demonstrates another strategy to indicate nebulous experience: the continuous revision of metaphors to suggest the provisionality of each. The scene in question features a passionate exchange between Ursula and Birkin. Some critics have read the language of this chapter as fixated upon lascivious sexual details, but such readings ignore the fruitful ambiguity of the scene, finding only a thin veiling of mere sexual physicality. Unlike critics who have taken the scene as offering a crassly realist depiction of sex, clothed in innuendo, Joyce Wexler (1999) posits that Lawrence’s language is invested in a “symbolic multivalence” that allows him to explore the complex relations of feeling and affect that animate the scene, including the possibility of “a desire for connection that is not physical...” (67). While the overt physical action of the scene involves the characters arguing and making amends, the narrative description suggests a simultaneous field of complex and ambiguous action that animates the seemingly commonplace romantic exchange. The description begins, “He had taken her as he had never been taken himself. He had taken her at the roots of her darkness and shame...” (304). This metaphor of Ursula’s “roots” is suggestive of something living, natural, foundational, and hidden. The word “of” that follows it and qualifies the term, suggesting that

the roots are *comprised of* “darkness and shame,” or alternately that they are the *origin* of “darkness and shame.” Both are on offer to the reader; Birkin either engages a foundational element of Ursula, or he merely grasps the foundation of some of her qualities, and the ambiguity suggests his own lack of assurance about what he finds in the moment. Throughout both *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, “darkness” connotes the experience of the unknown, both as it exists in the extensive world of the novel and as it exists within its intensive descriptions of the human psyche. The word “shame” is, particularly from a Lawrentian perspective, the product of stultified social convention, an internalized judgment of self, based upon social mores. The description of her “roots” as “darkness” is suggestive of the unknown depths of the human being, while the description of it as also “shame” is suggestive of an internalized foreclosure imposed by society. The description of what Birkin embraces brings these two, seemingly opposed, things together; they emerge from the same source, which may or may not be foundational of Ursula’s being.

Such a description, as fruitfully ambiguous as it is, is then replaced with a new metaphor, suggesting the first description’s provisionality and alerting the reader that it does not offer a complete encapsulation of the experience. Lawrence describes what Birkin grasps as “the fountain of mystic corruption which was one of the sources of her being...” (304). Instead of roots, with its connotation of solidity, Lawrence employs the metaphor of fluids. He denies any definitive understanding of her foundational being by noting that it is merely “one” of her “sources” rather than *the* source. This revised description of Ursula suggests constant creation, but *what* she (or the source within her) produces is “mystic corruption.” If the word “mystic” relates to the “darkness” just mentioned, with its associations with a mysterious unknown and perhaps the unconscious life force, the “corruption” relates to “shame.” These two incongruous

metaphors together suggest what Birkin experiences of Ursula, the strange way vital novelty is intertwined with arrested abstraction, something by turns solid root and fluid fountains.

As the scene develops, Lawrence carefully amplifies the ambiguity of the event. As the narrator describes Ursula's self-awareness, he aligns the reader's uncertainty with Ursula's own, bringing the reader into the vertiginous moment of encounter with Ursula's unconscious life. The moment occurs in the midst of a discussion Ursula and Birkin are having about "people and their motives" (305). Lawrence brings the readers away from the content of their speech by providing no direct dialogue during the exchange, only descriptions in the narrative style of free indirect discourse that make ambiguous the distinction between what is said, what is felt, and what occurs beyond the characters' conscious awareness. Thus, as Birkin "answered vaguely," Lawrence offers a description that makes it difficult to discern where speech is occurring:

He was not very much interested any more in personalities and in people—people were all different, but they were all enclosed nowadays in a definite limitation he said; there were only about two great ideas, two great streams of activity remaining, with various forms of reaction therefrom.... They were all essentially alike, the differences were only variations on a theme. None of them transcended the given terms. (305)

Lawrence opens the passage by suggesting the "vague[ness]" of Birkin's response, and after beginning to describe his thoughts on the subject, he adds the words "he said" awkwardly to the end of the first long clause, bringing to the reader's attention that *some* of what was offered was spoken. The reader's certainty about the details of the scene's action is thus undermined before the narrator turns to Ursula and her response:

Ursula did not agree—people were still an adventure to her—but—perhaps not as much as she tried to persuade herself. Perhaps there was something mechanical now, in her interest. Perhaps also her interest was destructive, her analyzing was a real tearing to pieces. There was an under-space in her where she did not care for people and their idiosyncrasies, even to destroy them. She seemed to touch for a moment this undersilence in herself, she became still, and she turned for a moment purely to Birkin. (305)

With this description, Lawrence again subverts the reader's ability to distinguish between speech and thought while at the same time breaking down the distinction between Ursula's consciousness and unconsciousness. Whereas dialogue would suggest only what Ursula had formed into clearly articulated language, what the narrator offers is able to suggest her emergent pre-linguistic experience. When the narrator says that "Ursula did not agree," readers have no way of knowing if Ursula is vocally expressing her disagreement to Birkin or quietly reflecting on her disagreement. This denial of clarity is extended and expanded in what follows, as the repetition of "perhaps" three times in the passage calls into question whether what is offered is the narrator's speculation about Ursula or her own unsure introspection. Is Ursula questioning her interest in others and wondering if it is "destructive," or is the narrator identifying a possibility in her that she has not consciously considered? The unresolved ambiguity between these possibilities most fruitfully suggests both; the passage explores the unfolding into consciousness of this concern in Ursula. The narrator describes a misanthropic "under-space" in Ursula, but her awareness of it is vague, and her connection to the "undersilence in herself" is made uncertain with the word "seemed." By changing the word "space" for "silence" in describing Ursula's depths, Lawrence replaces the suggestion of a locatable thing with the

connotation of something that defies communication. In this exchange, the reader's inability to pin down Ursula's awareness of these depths mirrors the tenuous quality of Ursula's own engagement with this unspeakable unconsciousness. Ursula does engage it to some extent, for even in "seem[ing] to touch" it, she is affectively transformed: "she became still" and her disposition becomes "pure." All of this occurs in the midst of a conversation occurring as Ursula and Birkin drive through the country. Lawrence's employment of such productive ambiguity allows him to elicit in readers a destabilization that mirrors the experience of Ursula; his language reaches towards an experience that defies any clearer articulation.

The Structural Innovation of Woolf's *The Waves*

While Woolf's novel *Night and Day* offers a similar level of formal innovation to the novels of Lawrence's that this study examines, her later novel *The Waves* merits examination for its formal features, which facilitate a radically different perspective on human life than that offered in more conventional forms of the novel. Woolf's earlier novel, *Night and Day*, is written in free indirect discourse, through which it offers a "unifying referential characteristic" that facilitates the representation of "*acts of discourse* (external and internal) and *preverbal or nonverbal acts of mentation*" (Oltean, 712). Wayne Booth (1961) suggests that this style of writing implicates the reader more actively in engaging the text, for it denies the safe clarity of reliable, conventional narrative delineation: "Leave the reader to choose for himself, force him to face each decision as the hero faces it, and he will feel much more deeply the value of the truth when it is attained, or its loss if the hero fails" (293). Despite the gains the form offers, it failed to meet Woolf's needs in crafting *The Waves*. Even as it problematizes the divide between interiority and exteriority, free indirect discourse fails to get as far beyond the dualistic constitution of the world as the new form she produces does. In radically re-situating the

narrator, she does away with the dualistic divide between subject and object in the novel's shared world.

The plot of *The Waves* unfolds through the monologues of six characters, who constitute the world of the novel through their speech. The narrative innovations of this, Woolf's most experimental novel, have led some critics to suggest a controlling and amalgamating conscious perspective expressed through these six speeches. Makiki Minow-Pinkey (1987) notes, regarding "the overall effect of *The Waves*," that "it is not the characters' but the *narrator's* consciousness that is elaborated, the former being only a 'poetic correlative' for some wider consciousness that envelops and exceeds them" (154). Patrick Whiteley (1987) elaborates a similar reading of the narrator, suggesting that it is reflective of an idealistic, aestheticist tendency that develops throughout Woolf's career. He notes that her interest in innovating the representation of character is borne out of a desire to get at what "eludes the grasp of conventional novelistic tools," but he insists that this is "a reality that exists independently of anyone's observation of it" (153). In admitting that "[l]ife outruns art" (153), he situates Woolf's work as reflecting Roger Fry's aesthetic interests: "Like Fry, she struggled to make art produce a harmony in life that she could hear only in art..." (154). Thus, he reads *The Waves* as embodying the culmination and the failure of this idealistic desire:

In entertaining an ideal solution to the limitations that philosophical and literary realism impose on the relationships between minds, *The Waves* finally fashions an ideal relationship between the novel and its reader. At the end that ideal is deflated, however, and the novel separates author from reader, holding each within realistic epistemological limits, and implying ... the distance between art and life. (195)

Whiteley reads the communication between characters in the novel as suggesting an “ideal relationship between its characters’ minds”:

Its narrative technique establishes this ideal but curious relationship between the characters’ minds: on its surface *The Waves* is simply a series of utterances by six distinct characters. Since there is no narrator to speak of, the plot is inferred exclusively from their speeches, which are separated from each other by quotation marks and are identified uniformly by the narrator through simple remarks such as ‘Bernard said’ or ‘Susan said.’ There is rarely an indication that any of the characters can actually hear what the others are saying, and when there is, it is so indirect that we are never certain how the characters hear each other, whether directly or by means of the narrator’s simply passing the words of one mind into another mind. (196)

This study agrees with Whiteley’s description of the delivery through monologue of the novel’s plot and also with the situation of the narrator as the indicator of “speech.” However, the indeterminacy of reception that this form offers facilitates a similar function to free indirect discourse: the indeterminacy occurs not only between what is felt, thought, and stated, but also between what is available to perception, what it only vaguely intuited, and what is consciously registered. The stylistic innovation in no way necessitates an idealist conclusion, for Woolf suggest neither that these characters are directly accessing each other’s minds, nor that the narrator is interceding to thrust information they could not receive into another character’s consciousness.

The similarity in diction and tone between the monologues of the different characters leads critics to suggest that the narrator has moved within the dialogue. Whiteley notes that

[t]he narrator's absorption into the characters ... makes the narrator seem to have disappeared altogether. The narrator's absence, however, is merely a disguised presence. Although her ostensible voice has been reduced to the minimal task of telling us who said what, she is so wholly absorbed in the characters that she is, through them, more present than ever.... The narrator lights up each character, allowing us to see the character from inside as she moves from one to the next. (196)

Certainly, there is a consistency between these voices that suggests that what the reader is receiving is not their direct speech. As Cohn notes, "they are all cast in a uniform idiom, which varies neither laterally (from one character to another), nor temporally (from childhood to maturity), thereby dispelling all sense of psychological verisimilitude" (264). For Cohn as for Whiteley, this leads to the conclusion that the perspectives of the novel must be subordinated to one controlling perspective: "the 'dramatic soliloquies' of *The Waves* cannot be understood as realistic reproductions of figural thought or speech, but must be understood as poetry fashioned by a single creative mind" (265). While the soliloquies of the novels do not offer "realistic reproductions of figural thought or speech," such not because they reflect "a single creative mind," but instead because they reflect something that exceeds subjectivity.

The similarity of tone and diction between the speeches of the different characters of the novel exists because in each case what is "spoken" are the potential relations that they offer into their environment through every perceptible aspect of their character as it unfolds. The very factuality of what the character exudes is what is communicated, and the narrative tone is thus at a remove from their idioms. Woolf situates her reader in the environment in *The Waves*, putting them in the position of recipient of all that the characters offer that world. She produces a

narrative form that can effectively convey the relational environment without subordinating it to one or several subjective perspectives. The narrative is decentred; the reader is denied the perceptive reception that a conventional narrator offers, which Woolf suggests in her diary when she calls *The Waves* “an abstract mystical eyeless book” (D3:203). It is both “I”-less in the lack of a subjective perspective, but it is “eyeless” in the sense that it does not perform the reception of the environment, instead offering the multivalent expressions into the world of the novel from its six characters. Woolf’s narrative innovation is an attempt to avoid standing between the reader and the characters as some filtering narrative voice, instead absenting herself like the “*woman couched beneath the horizon*” who “*raised her lamp*” in the opening interlude (3). The novel effects an inversion, wherein the *potential* relations on offer extending from the six characters are its primary focus, and the concrete world—with its conventional spoken words and visible actions—must be derived from that account by the reader. Woolf offers a “saying” of an array of relations—both completed (i.e., which the text suggest are received by another person) and potentially unreceived—emitted from each of the six named characters.

Ann Banfield (2000) situates the novel’s structure as offering an unoccupied, nonhuman world in the interludes and “occupied perspectives” in the rest of the novel, wherein “[e]ach dialogue presents a turn in the wheel, a kaleidoscopic shift,” and “each turn presents a private world” with a “self-enclosed quality” (309). However, the interludes are not quite freed from the characters, who are at least indirectly present there, and the narrative innovation described above suggests only what is accessible of another. In the interludes, Louis’s recurring image of the stamping beast finds expression in the purportedly unoccupied spaces: “*The waves fell; withdrew and fell again, like the thud of a great beast stamping*” (123). The interludes do not offer the characters’ expressions directly, but they do suggest that the seemingly unoccupied world picks

up and incorporates what they send into it. The rest of the novel, with its series of characters “saying,” is not “occupied” in the sense that Banfield suggests, for it does not reflect “a private world.” It suggests instead the vastness of what is conveyed into the public environment, myriad relations with the potential for provoking experience. While what the characters “say” can involve actual speech, it also often involves what goes unspoken but offered to the environment as an array of communicative possibility. For example, part of what Neville offers to his world is the very failure of his self-understanding: “I see everything—except one thing—with complete clarity. That is my saving. That is what gives my suffering an unceasing excitement. That is what makes me dictate, even when I am silent. And since I am, in one respect, deluded ... I am never stagnant” (106). When Woolf writes that Neville “said” these things, she suggests that he conveys something both within and beyond his conscious awareness. Potential relations abound, and while they may not all be received, the novel’s structure, bereft of a narrative interlocutor and offering only the character’s direct conveyances, makes these relations primary, freeing the world offered in the novel from the dualistic constructions of subjectivity and objectivity. The novel’s structure frees Woolf from having to enter into a more limited perspectival aspect of the experience and select only a fraction of the relations within the matrix. While characters themselves may be stuck in dualistic ways of thinking, the narrative is not. This form allows Woolf to depict the world very differently from the way it is offered in *Night and Day*. In *The Waves*, the world is rife with these arrows of “saying,” full of potential connections and communications that characters can variously miss or find ways of knowing and articulating.

Another formal feature of *The Waves* is the unique narrative closure it effects. D.A. Miller (1981) explains that the traditional view of narrative closure is that “[e]verything in a narrative exists in view of the hidden necessity determined by its final configuration of event and

meaning” (xiii). That is to say that all questions and problems the novel raises find a satisfying resolution in the conclusion of the novel. Upon completing the second draft of *The Waves*, Woolf notes in her diary her own sense of satisfaction: “I certainly felt at the end, not merely finished, but rounded off, completed, the thing stated” (*Writer’s* 165). This might suggest that one should read *The Waves’s* ending as having grasped and pinned down its object. However, Woolf continues, suggesting otherwise: “how hastily, how fragmentarily I know; but I mean I have netted that fin in the waste of water which appeared to me over the marshes at Rodmell when I was coming an end of *To the Lighthouse*” (165). The closure that Woolf arrives at in *The Waves* is not the arrival at a clear articulation, but the arrival at the conveyance of an intimation symbolized by her “fin in the waste of water,” a sense of something on her experiential horizon that she had finally indicated, but by no means definitively. She explains a little later in her diary that through the process of creating *The Waves*, she had to let go of her diagrammatic, systematic plans, noting “the freedom and boldness with which my imagination picked up, used and tossed aside all the images, symbols which I had prepared. I am sure that this is the right way of using them—not in set pieces, as I had tried at first, coherently, but simply as images, never making them work out; only suggest” (179). The satisfaction Woolf finds in her novel is the result not of a system working itself out to perfect completion, but the ending of an organic process that indicates something that Woolf herself could only encapsulate in the ambiguous symbol of the “fin.” Marianna Torgovnick (1981) offers a reading of the closure in *The Waves* that suggests that the ending’s success is precisely because of Woolf’s refusal to resolve a key tension: “Her meaning must be ‘netted’ at the end of the novel, but gently, unobtrusively. She does this by having the meaning emerge not solely from the omniscient epilogue, but from the epilogue as played against Bernard’s soliloquy. The meaning of the ending depends on the blend of overview

and close-up perspective.” That is, there is a “fruitful tension at its end that allows Woolf to net her meaning without ‘forgetting her cat’” (183). “Cat” here is a reference to Woolf’s insistence that there is always something that is excluded from purported articulations of the “truth.”

Torgovnick explains that Bernard is the character in the novel uniquely disposed to include both “the cosmic, undifferentiated waste of waters that is one half of Woolf’s vision” and “the fin suggestive of selfhood, of temporal, transient markers against the eternal waters.” At the end of the novel, Bernard is only able to “*begin* to articulate the balance Woolf envisions between the individual and the universe” (185). That is, the novel itself functions to point the reader towards a new understanding of the relationship between selfhood and the undifferentiated flux where all potential relations circulate. This relationship is the focus of the final chapter of this study.

Narrativized Encounters with Language

The Desire to Withhold Articulation

In “A Sketch of the Past,” Woolf describes the care she takes to avoid doing violence to nascent, ephemeral experiences that she feels are important. As she remembers the “pure delight” that her summer home at St Ives brought her, she remarks at the way her current moment, writing the memoir, intercedes:

While I am writing this, the light changes; an apple becomes a vivid green. I respond – how? And then the little owl [makes] a chattering noise. Another response. St Ives, to cut short an obscure train of thought, about the other voice or voices and their connection with art, with religion: figuratively, I could snapshot what I mean by fancying myself afloat, [in an element] which is all the time responding to things we have no words for – exposed to some invisible ray: but instead of laboring here to express this, to analyse the third voice, to discover

whether ‘pure delights’ are connected with art, or religion: whether I am telling the truth when I see myself perpetually taking the breath of these voices in my sails, and tacking this way and that, in daily life as I yield to them – instead of that, I note only this influence, suspect it to be of great importance, cannot find how to check its power on other people; and so erect a finger here, by way of signaling that here is a vein to work out later. (134)

Woolf expresses her concern with the fact that her articulation of this experience might not be “telling the truth,” and she simultaneously attempts to explain it in couched metaphors, noting that she “could snapshot” it by describing herself as “afloat,” or subject to an “invisible ray,” or “taking the breath of these voices” like a ship, but that she will not. Woolf’s rejects the desire to “snapshot” her experience, to freeze it in time and fix its image in words, instead offering only these provisional explanations that she subsequently crosses out. The descriptions stand only as a marker for an experience that she wishes to return to later, instead of doing violence to it in resolving it.

The novels of Woolf’s that this study examines explore the struggle to withhold articulation, to preserve experience from the violence that language can so easily produce. In *The Waves*, Neville’s sensitivity to the flowing, protean nature of reality leads to his desire to stop articulation. While appreciating a lovely day, he questions the need to put it into words: “In a world which contains the present moment... why discriminate? Nothing should be named lest by so doing we change it. Let it exist, this bank, this beauty, and I, for one instant, steeped in pleasure” (65). Neville enjoys the simple sense of being “steeped” in his environment, of simply existing, but there is a tension haunting this moment: the discrimination of language must be held back. Neville’s awareness that language will transform his preconceptual experience and his

desire that it can be stopped from doing this are not enough to prevent it: “Now begins to rise in me the familiar rhythm; words that have lain dormant now lift, now toss their crests, and fall and rise, and fall and rise again” (66). Seemingly from within Neville, language asserts its own agency; he cannot stop it, and even more than that, he cannot help himself from finding pleasure in it: “I am inspired. My eyes fill with tears” (66). Neville’s experience conveys the extraordinary difficulty of withholding articulation as Woolf does in her memoir, of “erect[ing] a finger” to return to the unmolested moment later, and this is because of the extent to which his own desires are coopted by the language that gains ascendancy. Moved by the “words that have lain dormant,” he pursues further articulation, which further and further transforms his experience. Where the words were waves in the pattern of his experience, they become an even greater disturbance: “Yet even as I feel this, I lash my frenzy higher and higher. It foams. It becomes artificial, insincere. Words and words and words, how they gallop—how they lash their long manes and tails, but for some fault in me I cannot give myself to their backs; I cannot fly with them...” (66). Neville cannot prevent the language from arising with him, from transforming his moment, even as it fails to offer him any sort of catharsis.

The lived experience of this tension between prelinguistic experience and the drive to articulate is more extensively explored in Woolf’s earlier novel, *Night and Day*, through the character of Katharine Hilbery. Throughout the novel, Katharine tries to avoid the easy resolutions that tradition and language offer her, struggling to shake off convention: “Far from making any rules for herself or others, she would let difficulties accumulate unsolved, situations widen their jaws unsatiated...” (330). Katharine’s desire to stave off easy satisfaction through linguistic resolution is akin to Neville’s expressed desire. As with that later character, Woolf uses the image of water to reflect Katharine’s appreciation for the unresolved flux, describing her

more than once staring into the river during moments of social conflict (64, 125). In the middle of dealing with the question of marrying William Rodney, Katharine lapses into a daydream, having a vague experience that is demonstrative of her relationship with articulation:

she ... fell into a dream state, in which she became another person, and the whole world seemed changed. Being a frequent visitor to that world, she could find her way there unhesitatingly. If she had tried to analyse her impressions, she would have said that there dwelt the realities of the appearances which figure in our world; so direct, powerful, and unimpeded were her sensations there, compared with those called forth in actual life. There dwelt the things one might have felt, had there been cause; the perfect happiness of which here we taste the fragment; the beauty seen here in flying glimpses only.... However the embellishment of this imaginary world might change, two qualities were constant in it. It was a place where feelings were liberated from the constraints which the real world puts upon them; and the process of awakening was always marked by resignation and a kind of stoical acceptance of facts. (144-45)

There is great value in these experiences for Katharine, for it is in these moments where she is able to engage her own liberated and unresolved feelings, and the description of this scene suggests that it is a preconceptual experience by couching the explanation behind the clause, “*If she had tried to analyse her impressions....*” What follows that subordinate clause is thus an imperfect description, what Katharine might have said if she worked to explain her experience. This world seems more real to Katharine than her factual, social world—at least while she is experiencing it—because it offers her a more extensive experience of the things vaguely intimated while moving through daily life, only normally provoked by the needs of action

implied by their description as “things one might have felt, had there been cause”: “happiness,” “beauty,” and the breadth of her feelings. As with Neville’s experience, this cannot be sustained indefinitely. “Facts” reinstate themselves as language and concepts come to the fore.

Night and Day problematizes this desire to withhold articulation in order to sustain such meaningfully ambiguous experiences further, for just as facts inevitably reinstate themselves, so too can other, more crystallized abstract forms intercede and gain ascendancy. The novel can be understood as an exploration of two different semantic strategies to resist an inherited conceptual and observational order: Katharine’s, which attempts to delay articulation, and Ralph’s, which fosters self-consciously inaccurate abstractions but ultimately reifies them. Randy Malamud (1989) identifies Woolf’s pronounced interest in modes of articulation in the novel. He understands it as engaging “the problems of language that surround her in a post-Victorian mire,” situating it as “a failed novel ... to the extent that it does not completely overcome the Victorian repression Woolf describes” (34-35). The novel dramatizes youthful characters shaking off the imposition of Victorian codes of conduct, but they fail not because they could not innovate and “shak[e] off” those “codes,” but because such “modern” approaches as Katharine’s cannot stave off other new, more clearly articulated ones. That is, the absence of any clearly-established conceptual order is a vacuum that will inevitably be filled. Malamud reads Katharine and Ralph as pursuing the same modern semantic innovation, favoring the fragmentary over the unified, “transcend[ing] the incomprehensible world of order by virtue of the liberating and cathartic power of the fragmentary” (44). He situates the end of the novel as a minor triumph of modern language, wherein even Katharine’s mother is invited into “the new language” with her daughter and Ralph, wherein “the inadequacies and constrictions of the language of the past have

been overcome; the new tongue promises a transcendent and unsullied medium of communication for the future” (44-45).

Ann-Marie Priest’s writing on the novel (2003) serves as a corrective to Malamud’s redemptive reading, situating Katharine’s approach to language against Ralph’s, and noting that the end of the novel dramatizes the tragic dominance of Ralph’s fixed semantic order over Katharine’s attempts to stave off articulation. Katharine’s semantic strategy is borne out of a resistance to the prevailing Victorian order that Malamud identifies. From Katharine’s perspective, this order is “the broad illumination shed by the eyes of all the people who are in agreement to see together.” Rejecting this unified means of seeing and understanding the world, Katharine counters it with a fragile illumination of her own, “a frail beam” that serves as “her guide through the dark masses which confronted her” (328). What Katharine seeks through this mode of knowing is “a true feeling among the chaos and the unfeeling or half-feelings of life, to recognize it when found, and to accept the consequences of the discovery” (328-29). Her vulnerable daydreams are the means to discovering her feelings, to overcoming the “unfeeling” cotton wool of habitual existence; however, the novel suggests that while delaying putting her experiences into language is a noble desire, it is a strategy that cannot succeed on its own.

What Katharine wants to foster in her experience is a new, intimate community borne out of her “frail” illumination:

the more she looked into the confusion of lives which, instead of running parallel, had suddenly intersected each other, the more distinctly she seemed to convince herself that there was no other light on them than was shed by this strange illumination, and no other path save the one upon which it threw its beams. (329)

She figures the members of her burgeoning community as guides for others: “the lantern-bearers, whose lights, scattered among the crowd, wove a pattern, dissolving, joining, meeting again in combination” (330). Priest helps to define the sort of “illumination” Katharine produces; she writes of Katharine’s recognition that her desires “cannot be described, represented in words, without being appropriated by the conventional models of identity which language itself underwrites.” To deal with this, Katharine uses ambiguous terms to resist the fixity that more seemingly precise terms would effect: “tak[ing] refuge in words that are merely placeholders for something entirely other—words like nothingness and emptiness” (66). She uses mathematical symbols as stand-ins for things for which she cannot find words: her desire to “escape from representation in language . . . is perhaps most overtly signaled by her interest in mathematics” (69). Priest explains that this mathematical language allows Katharine to mark an experience without subjecting it to the misrepresentation of language, and indeed to indicate herself without doing the same: “Katharine’s algebraic squiggles represent her precisely by not representing her. They convey nothing whatever about her – and thus they do not constrain, construct, or delimit her in any way. Thus, she can accept them – as symbols which simply create a textual space for her, without giving that space any content” (71). The “squiggles” of course represent Katharine, and they do so not “precisely,” but by pointing to her existence and perhaps representing her will not to be represented. They do indeed work to stave off the “constrain[ts]” that more precise language would impose. They are, in the context of their use, relatively empty signifiers whose content is a mere pointing towards an unspecified that. But such empty signifiers are not enough, for Woolf’s novels suggests that language not only has connotative and denotative functions, but that articulation offers a sort of satisfaction that must be fulfilled. If one does not employ

language that provisionally fulfills that satisfying function, one will be vulnerable to systems whose more absolute claims will.

Katharine's curtailment of articulation facilitates her daydream experiences while simultaneously fostering vulnerability in her, weakening her to other semantic systems. Katharine's strategy is simultaneously fulfilling and straining; her quest for "true feeling" "draws lines upon the smoothest brow, while it quickens the light of the eyes; it is a pursuit which is alternately bewildering, debasing, and exalting, and, as Katharine speedily found, her discoveries gave her equal cause for surprise, shame, and intense anxiety" (329). Katharine feels a sort of homeostatic pressure from without, and her unwillingness to "reduce her vision to words" (444), coupled with her own anxiety, leads her to embrace the semantic order offered by Ralph. As Priest explains, "[b]y means of her silence, she presents a blank surface, which perhaps helps explain her vulnerability to the projected fantasies of Ralph and William Rodney" (71). By the end of the novel, her "own space of otherness is subsumed into [Ralph's] shared vision.... Her own symbols—the stars, mathematics—[are] absorbed into Ralph's figure of the burning world..." (76). Katharine's story dramatizes the risk of withholding more concrete articulation and sustaining and fostering vagueness: while it leads to valuable experiences, the strategy is a perilous one that leaves a thoughtful person like Katharine exposed and vulnerable to the lures of other more thoroughly-articulated systems. It suggests that some further articulation is a necessary evil if one wants to sustain the experiential gains Katharine is able to briefly realize.

This problem is further developed in *The Waves* through the separate responses of Rhoda and Bernard to the death of their beloved friend Percival. The effect of Percival's death on these two characters is something that they cannot adequately grasp in language, but something that they simultaneously *feel* is deeply important and meaningful. Their engagements with this

experience dramatize two different responses to such an affectively powerful pre-conceptualized experience.

In response to the death of Percival, Rhoda enters a music hall and listens with the crowd to the wordless singing of the performer. She does this to withhold her own articulation and to avoid the language that might be imposed upon her in the street. Such an evasion of interrupting voices is a predisposition of Rhoda's. Like Katharine in *Night and Day*, Rhoda seeks to sustain her lapses into imaginative daydream. Unlike Katharine, she does not fare well outside of those experiences. Earlier in the novel, Rhoda expresses how harrowing the words of others are, and how the imposition of those other voices forces her to articulate defensive lies: "Tongues with their whips are upon me. Mobile, incessant, they flicker over me. I must prevaricate and fence them off with lies. What amulet is there against this disaster? What face can I summon to lay cool upon this heat?" (85). These other voices interrupt Rhoda, and any articulation she might produce is cut short and contradicted by the strength and certainty of their imposition: "I am not composed enough, standing on tiptoe on the verge of fire, still scorched by the hot breath, afraid of the door opening and the leap of the tiger, to make even one sentence. What I say is perpetually contradicted. Each time the door opens I am interrupted" (86). Rhoda's sense of the menacing nature of the public is indicated again as she walks in the streets following Percival's death, where she notes that "Here are hate, jealousy, hurry, and indifference frothed into the wild semblance of life" (132). Her reference to the "froth" of the street's environment recalls Neville's sense of the violent transfiguration that articulation causes. Her understanding of the street as a space of imposed articulation is bolstered by what follows this description: a consideration of Louis and his imperialistic language. She "think[s] of Louis..., looking at the people passing, he will reduce us to order. Thus he will smooth out the death of Percival to his

satisfaction...” (132). She briefly considers the allure of that order by entertaining the idea of going to Hampton Court to “recover beauty, and impose order upon [her] disheveled soul” (133), but she decides instead to withhold articulation by entering the music hall.

The music hall offers an environment that helps Rhoda to sustain the moment by offering up the affective, nonlinguistic art of music, which does not endanger Rhoda’s experience of loss by violating it with arresting language. She describes the audience she joins as a disparate crowd in need of the succor that the singer’s performance will bring:

Decorous, portly—we have white hair waved under our hats; slim shoes; little bags; clean-shaven cheeks; here and there a military moustache.... Swaying and opening programmes, with a few words of greeting to friends, we settle down, like walruses stranded on rocks, like heavy bodies incapable of waddling to the sea, hoping for a wave to lift us, but we are too heavy, and too much dry shingle lies between us and the sea. (133)

If the street outside the hall offers the “foam” of misrepresenting semblance, the music hall offers, in the form of the singer, the water from which such a semblance is derived and that the audience so desperately needs: “the sea-green woman comes to our rescue” (133). The singer delivers to the audience a wordless cry, a signifier without specific content, that has a transformative effect upon them. It allows Rhoda to realize the immediacy of her own experience without imposing upon it any fixed conceptual form, fostering a space for her to explore her affective experience, which has been too often disrupted by competing discourses.

Rhoda’s response to the singer’s cry involves her desire to understand it, and the cry’s defiance of interpretation provokes her into a richer understanding of her affective experience. Patricia Laurence (1991) explores Woolf’s interest in a rich nothingness, in the “[p]hilosophical

silences” that animate her work, noting that they express Woolf’s interest in “what [critics] in the twentieth century would term the ‘ineffable’ and what she, at the turn of the century, marked as ‘dumb’ or ‘inarticulate’” (51). She makes a strong case for Woolf’s care in approaching the limits of what can be articulated, but she also suggests that Woolf’s work advocates for the withholding of articulation, that it “incorporates mystical elements of Oriental metaphysics, suggesting to the twentieth century the necessity of transcending language in Buddhism or Taoism, for example, and moving toward silence...” (53). However, *Night and Day* speaks to the dangers of attempting to withhold articulation indefinitely, and Rhoda’s response to the singer’s cry in *The Waves*, and indeed Bernard’s linguistic development throughout the novel, suggest the need for the development of a different, provisional mode of articulation in the face of the seemingly ineffable.

Rhoda’s description of the singer’s cry and her response to it involve a complex series of rapidly revised articulations: “She sucks in her lips, assumes an air of intensity, inflates herself and hurls herself precisely at the right moment as if she saw an apple and her voice was the arrow into the note, ‘Ah!’” (133). This description suggests the singer’s simultaneous individuality and interpenetration with the audience; Rhoda describes the singer as “hurl[ing] herself” into the audience with her song before immediately offering the simile of the singer as an archer shooting her voice like an arrow into an apple. In the first metaphor, the singer herself is the penetrative force, entering the listeners; in the second, her individuality on stage is preserved as she sends out something beyond herself. As if finding such imagery unsatisfyingly incommensurate, Rhoda tries on other metaphors that figure the penetrated audience in different ways: “an axe has split a tree to the core; the core is warm; sound quivers within the bark” (133). The singing in this formulation is violently penetrative on an individual level, having a

potentially-unpleasant but certainly transformative effect. The effect upon the audience is then re-described as “ripple and laughter like the dance of olive trees and their myriad-tongued grey leaves when a seafarer, biting a twig between his lips where the many-backed steep hills come down, leaps on shore” (134). This description of an adventurer’s arrival on some virgin shore suggests the invasive penetration of the musical performance, but one whose effect is upon the crowd taken as a collective (the virgin shore), not upon the individuals, who are, as trees and leaves, dancing and unviolated. Each metaphor suggests a different figuration of singer and audience, and none can be offered as encapsulating the entire effect of the scene. Here, Rhoda engages one of the strategies of articulating something nebulous and new, one that Whitehead advocates when he writes that writers must employ “an apparent redundancy of terms” so that “the words correct each other” (AI 246). She identifies multiple aspects of the scene in her different metaphors without settling on any one encapsulation as sufficient, as each offers a different perspective on the relational complexities of the event. Thus, in this music hall scene, Rhoda begins to explore the strange simultaneity of individuality and interrelation *without* reducing herself to either a completely separate entity, or a specific constitutive part in a specific arrangement. She is able to recognize her separateness without necessarily reducing her world to the logic of subject-object dualism. Instead, what is offered here is a series of provisional attempts at understanding how the self can be simultaneously one and many.

This wordless performance provokes in Rhoda not a quiet acceptance of the transcendental value of silence, but a desire to understand her experience of Percival’s death, a desire that is frustrated by the linguistic strategies available to her: “‘Like’ and ‘like’ and ‘like’—but what is the thing that lies beneath the semblance of the thing?” (134) She takes the strategy

she applied to describe the wordless singing and brings it to bear upon the experience of the loss of her friend:

Now that lightning has gashed the tree and the flowering branch has fallen and Percival, by his death, has made me this gift, let me see the thing. There is a square; there is an oblong. The players take the square and place it on the oblong. They place it very accurately; they make a perfect dwelling-place. Very little is left outside. The structure is now visible; what is inchoate is here stated; we are not so various or so mean; we have made oblongs and stood them upon squares. This is our triumph; this is our consolation. (134)

Rhoda tries to describe the penetrative, affective force of the performance as it figures in tandem with her loss, and in her attempt, she brings to bear mathematical, geometric language, which Whitehead suggests “is thought moving in the sphere of complete abstraction from any particular instance of what it is talking about”; it is “refuge from the goading urgency of contingent happenings” (*Science* 27). Rhoda suggests that Percival’s death, coupled with the experience of the music hall, has allowed her to see “the thing,” but what she sees cannot be pinned down in fixed language any more than Woolf’s intimation of a “fin” can. While being the height of abstraction, the geometric figure offers no clarifying resolution to the experience for which it stands; it becomes thus a placeholder for that experience. Rhoda uses it as way of holding open, preventing the logical collapse of, a complex and important moment. This exceedingly abstract image offers a sense of bifurcating aesthetic production: after noting a realization of the audience’s collective character, she restates the image of geometric production—laying an oblong on a square—occurring not on stage but in the audience, specifying a “we” that conducts the action. Woolf’s scenes, with these repetitions with difference, suggest that the production is,

while experienced separately, distributed. This distributive production is suggested when she writes that the “inchoate” —a nascent novelty— “is here stated,” wherein “here” can refer both to the performance Rhoda observes, with a structure made visible, and her articulation, which brings the performance, however indirectly, into language. She artfully and abstractly suggests, without reducing it to some particular theme or adequately mimetic image, that the work of art on stage is produced both by the artists and in the audience; it is a relational experience that cannot be collapsed to one or the other but can by turns be seen in either way. Rhoda’s descriptions of the performance might just as well apply to her experience of Percival’s loss, which transforms not only her own world but the configuration of relations between the voices in the novel. For Rhoda, the experience of the concert hall allows her to simultaneously recognize her individuality and her relationship to community.

The end of this experience is not private, contemplative, transcendental wisdom. When Rhoda is finally able to explore it without the imposition of competing discourses, she wishes to share those gains by communicating what she has articulated. Upon leaving the theatre, she is overwhelmed with what the event has offered her: “The sweetness of this content overflowing runs down the walls of my mind, and liberates understanding. Wander no more, I say; this is the end. The oblong has been set upon the square; the spiral is on top.” The audience’s inability to alleviate their “dry” condition, as “walruses stranded on rocks ... incapable of waddling to the sea” has been alleviated: “We have been hauled over the shingle, down to the sea” (134). Her reaction to this experience is to enter the city—a place often traumatic to her because of its extraordinary impositions—and be “flung upon this woman, upon this man.” She is temporarily guarded from harm because she is the one doing the imposing: she finds herself “not injured ... not outraged by the collision. A square stands upon an oblong” (134). The abstract realization

within the theatre is then transposed to the city: “A square stands upon an oblong. Here are mean streets where chaffering goes on in street markets, and every sort of iron rod, bolt and screw is laid out, and people swarm off the pavement, pinching raw meat with thick fingers. The structure is visible. We have made a dwelling-place” (135). The city, like the audience awaiting the performance, is described in disparate terms, but these terms are bookended by the realization of structure and home-building that Rhoda has received and developed.

In a new paragraph immediately following this recognition, Rhoda says, “These, then, are the flowers that grow among the rough grasses of the field.... These are what I bring, torn up by the roots from the pavement of Oxford Street, my penny bunch, my penny bunch of violets” (135). The image of the flowers represents the whole event for Rhoda: the pluralistic society sharing in the production of some kind of civic belonging, married to the complex realization offered by the experience of the music hall, which in turn is married to her experience of mourning for Percival. It is all of this and more, and the penury of the image of frail flowers indicates Rhoda’s self-consciousness of the language’s shortcomings, its incommensurability with the immense complexity of her moment. Yet to not offer the image is to have nothing to offer. The poverty of Rhoda’s articulation provokes its recipient (and the reader) to recognize what it has left unexpressed. The image she offers—flowers sprouting through pavement—suggests how hard-won such realizations are. Having gained them, she offers them to the world and perhaps to language itself, where they might circulate: “Into the wave that dashes upon the shore, into the wave that flings its white foam to the uttermost corners of the earth, I throw my violets, my offering to Percival” (135). The mention again of “foam” above the waves recalls Neville’s concern with falsification. Rhoda’s linguistic gains are given over to the waters, offered to the pool of human understanding, whatever might become of them. This abstraction

she arrives at is confluent with the high mathematical abstractions pursued by Katharine in *Night and Day*, and unsurprisingly, Rhoda does not go on to have a more successful public life. Her suicide can be understood as reflecting her inability to continue under the constant social pressure to be conceptually composed.

Bernard's response to Percival's death is similar, but his interest in engagements with language continues to evolve throughout the novel, and he arrives at a more flexible and provisional strategy of linguistic engagement than Rhoda. Bernard's development in *The Waves* moves from an idealistic desire to achieve a perfect articulation to an embrace of self-consciously insufficient, provisional language. Early in the novel, Bernard uses language defensively and imposes it upon others: "I must make phrases and phrases and so interpose something hard between myself and the stare of faces, or I shall cry" (22). He finds his own language intoxicating, seemingly believing his own misrepresentations to be true: "How lovely the smoke of my phrase is, rising and falling, flaunting and falling, upon red lobsters and yellow fruit, wreathing them into one beauty" (109). Bernard thinks at the midpoint of the novel that his life's work is to produce a complete account of his world: "I conceive myself called upon to provide, some winter's night, a meaning for all my observations—a line that runs from one to another, a summing up that completes" (95). This need to offer a complete account, and the related cataloging use of language, is one that the experience of Percival's death begins to shake, and one that by the end of the novel Bernard has abandoned.

Rhoda imagines that facing the loss of Percival, Bernard will respond by attempting to catalogue his experiences methodically: "Bernard, meanwhile, flops red-eyed into some armchair. He will have out his notebook; under D, he will enter, 'Phrases to be used on the deaths of friends'" (132). Such is not how Bernard responds. Like Rhoda, he finds that the

environment of the street undermines his ability to prolong the experience: “already signals begin, beckonings, attempts to lure me back. Curiosity is knocked out for only a short time. One cannot live outside the machine for more perhaps than half an hour” (127). Faced with the lures of the street and wanting to dwell upon his undefined experience, Bernard escapes into the National Gallery. In the gallery, he observes art that does not share in the street’s discursive orders, for its products are “outside the sequence” and they “lay to rest the incessant activity of the mind’s eye” in the way they “make no reference”: “they do not nudge; they do not point” (128). They facilitate for Bernard an escape from the way he has tended to order his experience, offering him “signs that make [him] weep. For they cannot be imparted” (128-29). In the gallery, brooding over the loss of Percival, Bernard is forced to confront the limitations of his language. He realizes that literary tradition is insufficient to his experience— “nothing that has been said meets our case” —but he does not attempt to rectify that shortcoming by allowing such language to stand in for his experience. He contends that there are “only private dirges and no conclusions,” resigning himself to the shared sadness that only the friends of Percival can know: “Hence our loneliness; hence our desolation” (129). The gallery’s art does for Bernard what the musical performance does for Rhoda; something in their wordless provocation mixes with his experience of loss and fosters a nascent realization: “Arrows of sensation strike from my spine, but without order. Yet something is added to my interpretation” (129). Bernard’s response to this experience is to break with his indexical habits and allow the experience to go undefined rather than prematurely violated: “Something lies deeply buried. For one moment I thought to grasp it. But bury it, bury it; let it breed...” (129). This is a turning-point for Bernard, one that initiates his movement towards more provisional language.

Bernard's linguistic commitments by the end of *The Waves* serve as a response to the concerns raised years before in *Night and Day*. Late in that novel, Ralph Denham articulates in a letter to Katharine his sense both of the inadequacy of conceptual language and of the need to articulate: "In an infinite number of half-obliterated scratches he tried to convey to her the possibility that although human beings are woefully ill-adapted for communication, still, such communication is the best we know" (512). Denham's project of articulation ceases to remain open, becoming stymied in a fixed way of understanding both his beloved and his world. Even before his experience of the loss of Percival, Bernard situates his engagement with language such that his own linguistic creativity leads him into encounters with the unknown:

Images breed instantly. I am embarrassed by my own fertility.... My mind hums hither and thither with its veil of words for everything. Up goes the rocket. Its golden grain falls, fertilizing, upon the rich soil of my imagination. The entirely unexpected nature of this explosion—that is the joy of intercourse.... There is no stability in this world. Who is to say what meaning there is in anything? Who is to foretell the flight of a word? ... All is experiment and adventure. (96)

This description of his engagement with language suggests that, even before he recognizes the value of withholding articulation or engaging language more self-consciously, Bernard recognizes the way his articulation is engaging something that is both beyond his control and that exceeds his understanding. The agency of his intellect in the act of articulation is called into question by positioning it as "fertility" rather than creativity, and the image of the rocket's fertilizing "grains" connotes the proliferation of sperm cells. Bernard's forays into language are aimed even at this point less towards classificatory identification and more towards an unstable world revealed only through "experiment and adventure." A comparison between this description

of the function of language and Henri Bergson's thoughts about evolution, which exceeds biological evolution, helps to explain this language's value. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson explains that "evolution ... proceeds rather like a shell, which suddenly bursts into fragments, which fragments, being themselves shells, burst in their turn into fragments destined to burst again, and so on for time incommensurably long" (98). The process neither has a foreseeable result nor a foreseeable end. Bergson specifically describes the evolution of life, wherein life overcomes "[t]he resistance of inert matter" in explosive and unpredictable ways, and Bernard's language works in a similar way. Indeed, in Bergson's work, consciousness is a part of life's evolution, and language is an important part of the development of humanity and the evolution of the consciousness. Language is responsible for lifting humans above automatism: "Without language, intelligence would probably have remained riveted to the material objects which it was interested in considering. It would have lived in a state of somnambulism, outside itself, hypnotized on its own work. Language has greatly contributed to its liberation" (159). The development of language also brings new intangible experiences into awareness. Because words are transferrable between objects, they have contributed to the development of consciousness: The intellect takes the word, "made to designate things, ... and appl[ies] it to an object which is not a thing and which, concealed till then, awaited the coming of the word to pass from darkness to light. But the word, by covering up this object, again converts it into a thing" (160). This latter objectifying power of language, which accompanies so easily its exploratory and expansive power, is what Bernard resists as his life unfolds in *The Waves*.

Even after his experience in the National Gallery, Bernard retains the sense of his need to engage the world linguistically, but rather than describing it as taking the world in and translating it, he continues to describe his language as proliferating in unexpected and productive ways: "I

throw my mind out in the air as a man throws seeds in great fan-flights, falling through the purple sunset, falling on the pressed and shining ploughland which is bare” (181). This is not the sort of imperialistic imposition of language Bernard offered before. Whereas early in the novel he was cavalier in his extension of concepts onto the world around him, late in the novel he expresses his awareness of the shortcomings of language: “Life is not susceptible to the treatment we give it when we try to tell it” (223). He distrusts conventional language’s pretense of completeness: “How tired I am of stories, how tired I am of phrases that come down beautifully with all their feet on the ground.... How I distrust neat designs that are drawn upon half-sheets of note-paper” (199). Such designs that he previously would have enjoyed he now actively seeks to stave off; he notes that he “ignore[s] newspaper placards” (220), and he laments the “dullness and doom” of his linguistic habits that entreat him to respond to the world with “what [he] had said before” (224).

Bernard’s distrust of language and his self-consciousness of his own linguistic habits exist in tension with his recognition that he desperately needs language to rise above the habituated cotton-wool life, with its inertia of unconsciousness that is only strengthened by unquestioned, habituated concepts. Bernard’s use of language simultaneously engages his world and wrests him out of habituated inertia wherein that world ceases to provoke his conscious engagement: he rescues his world “from formlessness with words” (225). The words that Bernard finally advocates are knowingly insufficient; they point towards experience without attempting to be equal to it. In doing so, they facilitate his continued engagement with his world. The provocation of another person at the restaurant leads Bernard to use this provisional and insufficient language to recognize his world-involvement: “I will record in words of one syllable how also under your gaze with that compulsion on me I begin to perceive this, that and the other.

The clock ticks; the woman sneezes; the waiter comes” (245). This leads him to a sense of his interconnection with the environment but also simultaneously the individuality of the items in that world: “there is a gradual coming together, running into one, acceleration and unification. Listen: a whistle sounds, wheels rush, the door creaks on its hinges. I regain the sense of the complexity and the reality and the struggle, for which I thank you” (245). The provocation and Bernard’s response with simple, insufficient language allows him to grasp the complexity of his moment without presuming to conceptually pin it down. Given the relationship with language Bernard arrives at, his fashioning himself as a hero at the end of the novel is not some return to his earlier imposition of narrative, but a self-aware usage of an obviously insufficient trope that helps to facilitate his understanding of his final moments: “It is death against whom I ride with my spear couched and my hair flying back like a young man’s, like Percival’s.... Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!” (247-48). As Susan Dick (1983) writes of the closing of *The Waves*, “Like the artist, he commits himself to his illusion, knowing it is an illusion yet knowing too that without our lies and beautiful phrases, without our defiance of ‘the enemy,’ we lose the hope (which we must have) of finding meaning in life” (50). Without the use of language, one cannot know the world, but one must be conscious of its insufficiency so as not to allow it to damage important and fragile elements of experience. If Bernard has not bought into the vision of himself as a hero, at the end of the novel he is un-ironically heroic as he faces the world and his own death head-on.

Undoing Stable Definitions

In *Women in Love*, Ursula acknowledges the insufficiency of words to represent her experiences: “She knew, as well as [Birkin] knew, that words themselves do not convey meaning, that they are but a gesture we make, a dumb show like any other” (186). Such a

realization seems to suggest her frustration or despair regarding language, but the fact that language can “gesture” suggests her acknowledgment that it can still offer something, even if not a clear articulation. In this same scene, Birkin acknowledges that despite its shortcomings, language was necessary for human development: “There was always confusion in speech. Yet it must be spoken. Whichever way one moved, if one were to move forward, one must break a way through” (186). While his description seems to be suggestive of more functional language, the words he speaks to Ursula, as a gesture, reach her and affect her: “She seemed to feel his gesture through her blood...” (186).

In their struggles with articulation, both Ursula and Birkin are wary of words that have taken on too much conceptual baggage. No word receives more of their focus than “love,” and they struggle throughout the novel to divest it of its conceptual baggage, of any stable definition, to redeem it so that it might represent their connection. Birkin’s first discussion of love in the novel identifies it as central to Gerald’s life and denies it as part of his own: “I should call love a single pure activity. But I don’t really love anybody...” (57). His brief definition of the word reflects its connection to an idealized concept. He feels a desire for this certainty—he “want[s] the finality of love”—which makes him resist it all the more.

Between Ursula and Birkin, the word “love” is rescued from fixed emotion into more richly meaningful feeling. As Birkin and Ursula begin to talk of love, Birkin, relying on a conventional, emotional understanding of the word, discusses the way humanity pursues and idolizes it: “And they say that love is the greatest thing; they persist in saying this, the foul liars, and just look at what they do! Look at all the millions of people who repeat every minute that love is the greatest, and charity is the greatest—and see what they are doing all the time” (126-27). Birkin identifies how the word “love” is applied by hateful people to their selfish, hateful

actions. He is outraged at their self-deception: "It's the lie that kills. If we want hate, let us have it ... but not in the name of love" (127). Birkin's outrage is partially directed at the idea connected to the word, and it reflects his desire to do away with the word and with the human race that uses it so duplicitously.

Ursula, however, understands love in a way that defies its fixed, conventional meaning: as a feeling. When she and Birkin talk about the word initially, there is a breakdown in communication because of this fundamental difference of understanding: Ursula is prepared to declare "that love is the greatest," while Birkin, angry at the way it is made "absolute," is adamant that he simply "do[es]n't believe in love at all," that it is "one of the emotions like all the others" (129). As they talk, Birkin's attitude towards the word shifts; he begins to direct his ire at the way the word has been abused and made inflexible, rather than at the word as a fixed concept. As he speaks with Ursula about love, the narrator tells us that "his consciousness [was] quickly adjusting itself" and "there was a beam of understanding between them" (130). He concedes that the problem is not with the word, but with how it is used: "The point about love ... is that we hate the word because we have vulgarized it. It ought to be proscribed, tabooed from utterance, for many years, till we get a new, better idea" (130). Birkin's desire is to do away with the term in the hope that he and Ursula might find a better way of describing the feeling circulating between them. But such a prescription is unrealistic. Birkin and Ursula cannot do without language, and they have no better words. Through their navigation of this, the novel suggests that it is better to transform and expand the representative capacity of language than to do away with it, for any new word used in the conventional way would falter in just the same way.

Birkin's desire for a new term is eventually abandoned, and he and Ursula begin to extensively negotiate how and what the word will signify. When discussing the will of horses with Ursula and Gerald, Birkin says that the desire to "resign your will to the higher being" is "the last, perhaps highest, love-impulse." Ursula retorts by rejecting his definition, telling him that he has "curious notions ... of love," that if he thinks love is that impulse, he will find her to be "a bolter" (141). In proposing a relationship with Ursula shortly thereafter, Birkin expresses discomfort with the term love while proposing a lifelong "pledge." This discomfort is the result of the word not yet being adequately opened up; it still carries conventional baggage for him. He confesses, "I can't say it is love I have to offer—and it isn't love I want. It is something much more impersonal and harder, —and rarer." She asks if he then does not love her, and he replies: "I don't know. At any rate, I don't feel the emotion of love for you—no, and I don't want to." He declares that "there is a real impersonal me, that is beyond love, beyond any emotional relationship. So it is with you. But we want to delude ourselves that love is the root. It isn't. It is only the branches. The root is beyond love, a naked kind of isolation, an isolated me, that does not meet and mingle, and never can" (145). This sense of his own isolation is a product of his inability yet to explore and articulate the life of his feelings, a product of the confusion and separation bolstered by the influence of fixed, closed concepts. Birkin's use of the word "emotion" is telling, as it is derived from Lawrence's own distinction in "The Novel and the Feelings" between "emotion[s]" and "feeling[s]," where the former are conceptually closed and the latter are prelinguistic experiences. He cannot recognize the experience of his feelings as related to the word, seeing the word as referring only to the static product of his feelings. Thus, he rejects the word, declaring to Ursula, as she presses him on his rejection of love, that "there is no love," but "there is something else" (146). This "something else" is the wild chaos of feeling.

Birkin is simply unwilling, given his hatred of fixed emotion, to let the word “love” take on the meaning of this “something else.” At the same time, however, he is willing to explore that “something else,” to move forward into experience with Ursula for which he has no language: “I deliver myself over to the unknown, in coming to you, I am without reserves or defences, stripped entirely into the unknown” (147).

It is Ursula who, wanting to have language to communicate what they feel, draws Birkin into applying the word love to that unknown feeling he has for her. She insists that love, rather than necessitating that one “forfeit all the possibilities of chaos,” as Birkin suggests it does, “is freedom” and “includes everything” (152). She pleads with Birkin to “Say you love me, say ‘my love’ to me.” The description of him looking at her as she says this suggests a dawning awareness of a more flexible, open use of language: “He looked back into her eyes, and saw. His face flickered with sardonic comprehension.” He then confesses his love, and while he wants it to be “something else,” she brings him towards letting the word “love be enough” (154).

Despite this moment, the novel suggests that the negotiation of how language is used must constantly persist, dramatizing the struggle one must sustain to keep language open. As their relationship is established, Birkin and Ursula continue to struggle with their use of the word “love.” Not long after the previous scene, the narrator explains that Birkin believes Ursula to be drawing him into “the old way of love” which “seemed a dreadful bondage, a sort of conscription. What it was in him he did not know...” (199). The distinction of “old way” suggests that Birkin now realizes there are two ways of understanding and using the word. For the reader, this qualification calls upon them to simultaneously recognize the open application of the word and the foreclosed emotion it conventionally represents, replete with its conventional trappings: “marriage, and children, and a life lived together, in the horrible privacy of domestic

and connubial satisfaction, was repulsive” (199). The vigilant debate around the word does not come to any satisfactory finality. By the end of the novel, the couple is still debating “love” as a concept, with Birkin concerned about conventionality, expressing his desire for “another kind of love,” and Ursula committed to the open definition, castigating the emotional definition as misleading: “You can’t have two kinds of love ... because it’s false, impossible” (481). The definition of the word is never settled for Ursula and Birkin, and this negotiation, extending throughout the novel, suggests that such an unsettling of definitional certainty can be the foundation for a fulfilling relationship, for it fosters room for the recognition of uncircumscribed feelings.

The dramatized relationship of Ursula and Birkin demonstrates that one must use language, even when the language leads to confusion, even when the words one must speak are inadequate to the experience to which they are applied. Through the depiction of their successful relationship, the novel also advocates for people to constantly negotiate that ill fit, drawing attention to it and using the language as best they can to move their understanding towards their preconceptual experiences. The “love” that Ursula and Birkin arrive at has a transformative effect. It saves Birkin from the deathly stasis to which Gerald falls victim. With the expansive understanding of love he has established with Ursula, Birkin is redeemed: “the passion of gratitude with which he received her into his soul, the extreme, unthinkable gladness of knowing himself living and fit to unite with her, he, who was so nearly dead, who was so near to being gone with the rest of his race down the slope of mechanical death...” (369). Lawrence resuscitates the word and brings his characters and readers into confrontation with their feelings, with the scope of experience at the fringes of consciousness. Both Lawrence and Woolf, through a careful engagement with the possibilities of ambiguous language, bring the reader into

confrontation with extensive experiences that surround conceptual consciousness, a confrontation that brings the characters and the reader into new ways of understanding themselves and their relationship with others and the world.

Chapter 4: The Relational Constitution of the Self

In the midst of her critique of materialist writers in “Modern Fiction” (1919), Virginia Woolf expresses her belief that fiction can not only offer a broadened understanding of life, but also refigure what matters in that understanding. She writes that great fiction can reveal that “there are not only other aspects of life, but more important ones into the bargain” (108). Through the worlds of their novels, Virginia Woolf and D.H. Lawrence seek to reveal a radically interpenetrating world, one that reveals the seemingly discrete self to be substantially constituted through its relations. The superposition of the self’s constitution, which is one of the shared convictions of these authors, defies the dominant rationalist convictions of their time. In *A Pluralistic Universe*, William James offers philosophical support for this seemingly irrational position. He explains that his turn to irrationalism was in response to the logically irreconcilable way that “psychic entities” both constitute and contribute to a “complex mental fact”—that is, he could not logically resolve the simultaneously discrete and collective identities of parts of thought. The resolution at which he finally arrives, after reading Bergson, is to accept that things can simultaneously be both themselves and constituent parts of something else. James defends the seeming “irrationality” at which he arrives by asserting that it offers more of the nature of reality than the visions of “rationalist” or “absolutist” positions:

I have finally found myself compelled to *give up the logic*, fairly, squarely, and irrevocably. It has an imperishable use in human life, but that use is not to make us theoretically acquainted with the essential nature of reality.... Reality, life, experience, concreteness, immediacy, use what word you will, exceeds our logic, overflows and surrounds it.... I prefer bluntly to call reality if not irrational than at least non-rational in its constitution, – and by reality here I mean reality where

things *happen*, all temporal reality without exception. I myself find no good warrant for even suspecting the existence of any reality of a higher denomination than that distributed and strung-along and flowing sort of reality which we finite beings swim in. This is the sort of reality given us, and that is the sort with which logic is so incommensurable. (212-13).

James's pluralistic philosophy allows for the simultaneous juxtaposition of oneness and manyness as irrational but nevertheless real, and this philosophical position, replete with its consequential reflections on interconnection and identity, helps explain the constituting situation of human beings within these novels. Human beings in these works are simultaneously singular and implicated in and constituted by a relational field within which they live.

At the time when Woolf and Lawrence were writing, there was precedent in the field of science that suggested that such seemingly irrational views of the constitution of reality actually correspond to a universe that, as James puts it, "obeys a higher logic, or enjoys a higher rationality" (213). In the realm of physics at the time, scientists were discovering that the world does not operate as simply as it seems, and critics have suggested that this work may have inspired contemporaneous literary production. Writing on the "relative nature" of Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* (46), who "has a holistic relationship to the world around her, which confounds the notion that subjects and objects are specifically located and bounded" (48), Paul Brown (2009) explains that "the study of radiative phenomena by physicists in the early 1900s revealed the baffling fact that light and matter express the paradoxical properties of being both particles and waves" (50). Max Planck's discovery of quanta in 1900 revealed the capacity for entities to "change ... spontaneously and randomly, without warning or apparent cause," a discovery that "profoundly call[ed] into question the notions of identity and locality" (50).

Brown suggests that the “holistic nature of subatomic phenomena” is reflected in Woolf’s vision of “the permeable boundaries of consciousness between entities” (40), and he points out that her “exploration of the fuzzy boundaries between subjects and objects coincides with the quantum physical understanding of a holistic universe” (42-43). In Brown’s estimation, Woolf’s work moves far beyond the potential implications of quantum physics to depict “some form of unification in the whole,” “a form of ubiquitous consciousness” (55). The seemingly mystical connections between Woolf’s characters requires a leap to neither some transcendental, totalizing unification nor a collective *spiritus mundi*, for her characters live in a field of concatenated implication made sensible through radical empirical philosophy. What the experiments of modern physics suggest is that measurable reality does not necessarily conform to the rigid strictures of rationalistic thought, but exists in states that defy simple categorization. Such a realization is certainly reflected in the answer that Woolf develops in her fiction to a problem that circulates throughout her work, a problem articulated in an early journal entry where she wonders how it is that “our minds are all threaded together” (*Passionate* 178).

The desire to understand the self and its relationship with the world is equally important for Lawrence, and the paradoxical nature of the self produces quite disparate depictions throughout his nonfictional explorations of the issue. While he seems to assert a thoroughgoing individuality in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922), stating “I am I,” that assertion follows Lawrence acknowledging a debt to physics. He thanks Einstein for destabilizing the agreed-upon vision of the world, “for knocking that eternal axis out of the universe. The universe isn’t a spinning wheel. It is a cloud of bees flying and veering round” (66). Lawrence’s assertion of individuality is problematized as soon as it is stated: “One is one, but one is not all alone. There are other stars buzzing in the center of their own isolation... you are me and ... I am you, owing

to the oneness of mankind...” (66). This “buzzing” of the myriad, star-like, mutually-constituted selves is the universe that Lawrence is striving to understand, and while physicists like Einstein are working on a model of scientific relativity, Lawrence strives to better understand how the human is implicated in the world, insisting that “we are in sad need of a theory of human relativity” (66). Earlier, in “The Crown” (1915), Lawrence offers some insight into what that model might look like. He warns against a model that is either too rooted in atomistic separation or too rooted in mystical oneness. The former is “the activity of utter going apart,” which is “the triumph of death, of decomposition” (47); with the latter, “the mist darkens and ebbs-in in waves, the trees are melted away, all things pass into a universal oneness” that is a similarly death-like “universal stillness” (35). Thus, for Lawrence, any adequate understanding of the human situation must account for both separateness and interconnection.

In *Science and the Modern World* (1925), Whitehead notes that “our experience, dim and fragmentary as it is, yet sounds the utmost depths of reality” (23). Each seemingly separate person experiences not only their individuality but their implication in the world, and the writing of Woolf and Lawrence probes these experiences to understand not only the relational nature of the world, but also the complex constitution of the self. The human being is implicated in its environment, affectively influenced and shaped by its conterminous world as it reciprocally affects and shapes that world. In this sense, the human being is not discretely separate from the world; simultaneously, the human being is experienced as a separate individual. Neither the intimations of one’s relational implication nor the experience of one’s individuality is false. The accounts produced in the works of Woolf and Lawrence seek to contend with this paradoxical situation of the human being.

Critique of Fixed Identity

The radical depictions of both the world and the human being in the works of Woolf and Lawrence are situated against models of identity that the authors castigate as destructive. Woolf's *Night and Day* is a novel about young people working out a means of transforming the community within which they live, and the barriers to achieve this come not only from the older generation, but also from internalized habits within the younger generation. Woolf depicts several members of the older generation in the novel as stuck in their ways, having adopted a fixed order of conduct and a fixed identity compatible with their routinized ways. They project upon the future only what has already been, and thus they are incapable of change. Such is found in Mary's father, who engages in the same mindless conduct day-in, day-out, and it is also found in Katharine's aunt, Lady Charlotte Otway. Under years of pressure from her husband, Sir Francis, whom Woolf describes as fixated upon his professional failure and as a thoroughgoing "egoist," Lady Otway has become passive: "His wife now offered so little resistance to his moods that she was practically useless to him" (214). She is pacified by not only the imposition of her husband's will, but also the upper-class social order and its codes of conduct. But this pacification is not merely imposed upon Lady Otway from outside; she is complicit in the routinization of her being and in the fostering of a fixed self-conception:

Lady Otway was one of the people for whom the great make-believe game of English social life had been invented; she spent most of her time in pretending to herself and her neighbours that she was a dignified, important, much-occupied person, of considerable social standing and sufficient wealth. In view of the actual state of things this game needed a great deal of skill; and, perhaps, at the age she

had reached—she was over sixty—she played far more to deceive herself than to deceive anyone else. (215)

Lady Otway's being exceeds the "dignified" conception, but she works tirelessly at sustaining and perpetuating that image. She actively consumes the parts of her world that reinforce this conception, consuming media that reflects her social conventions and her sense of propriety, which "she imbibed from reading in fashionable papers" (225). The result is a woman taken up wholly in the pattern of bored upper-class domesticity, with "very little of substance to think about" as she sits "knitting white wool, with her eyes fixed almost perpetually upon the *same* embroidered bird upon the *same* fire-screen" (215, my emphasis). Her observational experience is limited to sameness while her cognitive order is limited in its "substance."

If Lady Otway reflects the life (or lack thereof) that younger characters like Katharine and Mary want to avoid, the novel suggests that the desire alone is often not enough, for people cannot completely eschew an external order in which they are compelled to participate. This is certainly the case in the Mary's suffragette office. While the mission of the suffragette office within which Mary works is to bring about social change, it is ironically a place where sameness is encouraged, where the conduct of the past is projected into the future. The order of Mary's suffragette office, with the mechanized typewriters and the repeated jokes (79), reflects the order of civilized London society, whose workers walk in "single file" with heads lowered day after day (76). Such routinization allows the city to function with ease but fosters the perpetuation of sameness into the future. Any project for change must struggle against the pressure towards repetition and routine. Woolf describes such a pressure in "A Sketch of the Past" when she describes "the consciousness of other groups impinging upon ourselves; public opinion; what other people say and think; all those magnets which attract us this way to be like that, or repel us

the other and make us different from that” (93). While Woolf posits here that one can respond to these “impinging” forces with attraction or repulsion, her novel complicates the simplicity of that bifurcating choice, suggesting that the power of routinization is much stronger than the nascent attempts at change.

Such a failing is emphasized most powerfully through the fate of Katharine and Ralph. The ending of the novel seems to offer the tidy knitting-up of social order that a romance formally requires, with Katharine and Ralph establishing themselves as a couple that will ostensibly have children to perpetuate their lines; however, the novel’s closure is troubled by descriptions of Katharine’s undermined autonomy in her fusion with Ralph and their quest to perpetuate a new social order, just as “make believe” as the one that fosters Lady Otway’s regimented life. Rather than continuing to struggle to understand the ever-changing other, Ralph and Katharine come to believe that they have adequately cognitively grasped the other and been likewise grasped: “The moment of exposure had been exquisitely painful—the light shed startlingly vivid. She had now to get used to the fact that someone shared her loneliness” (518). Katharine surrenders her separateness to the unity with Ralph—he had “destroyed her loneliness” (531)—and they prevent each other from changing as they enter into a fusional relationship: “they sat, clasping hands, near enough to be taken even by the malicious eye of Time himself for a united couple, an indivisible unit” (518). There is no longer any friction, any conflict, in the relationship; they fall into accord “with scarcely a word of discussion” (528), and the resolution of this relationship likewise offers Katharine a simplified, resolved world: “It seemed to her that the immense riddle was answered. The problem had been solved; she held in her hands for one brief moment the globe which we spend our lives in trying to shape, round, whole, and entire from the confusion of chaos” (530). Out of this fixed, fusional relationship,

Katharine and Ralph seek to perpetuate his simplified vision of the world. “He had a vision of an orderly world” (533), one produced from an amalgam of “fragments of belief” (534), which, while “unfinished,” they choose to treat as whole, giving it “the semblance of the complete and the satisfactory” (534). *Night and Day* leaves the critique of this relationship implicit, but it shows the extent to which stasis and foreclosure threaten even those like Katharine who are committed to novelty, imagination, and openness.

In his nonfiction, Lawrence explicitly identifies the danger of a static self-conception that forecloses the experience of an unconscious that precedes categorization and is best identified not by what it *is*, but by what it *does*, which is to facilitate novelty. As this dissertation has already established, Lawrence is committed to the importance of abstraction, and thus in his writing, he calls not for the removal of a concept of self, but instead works to determine what sort of abstract models of self can facilitate the creative activity of the unconscious and which shut it down. In other words, since one can never have a perfected sense of self, the issue at hand is between competing models of selfhood. Such concerns with selfhood are attached to Lawrence’s critiques of deleterious forms of abstraction. Lawrence indicates such a deleterious form in his critique of the “ego”: “Our own self-conscious will,” he writes in *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, is a form of “idealism,” and “we are so overloaded and diseased with ideas that we can’t get well in a minute” (122). This idealism stands in opposition to, and misrepresents, “our true spontaneous self” (122)—the creative unconscious. Lawrence is opposed to a narrowly-conceived and unchanging self-identity: “we are going to inculcate more and more self-consciousness, teach every little Mary to be more and more a nice little Mary out of her own head, and every little Joseph to theorize himself up to the scratch” (121-22). People who treat themselves as a finished theory cease to recognize the protean aspects of their being, and the

unconscious, incongruous with the static self, loses potency. The result for Lawrence is a deathly hollowing-out of the human being. In "The Crown," he suggests that such people are closed off, but that this immurement protects only a hollow core: "This is the state of man, when he falls into self-sufficiency, and asserts that his self-conscious ego is It. He falls into the condition of fine cabbages" (40). The misplaced concreteness of this fixed human ego ensures that the human being never encounters that which exceeds the limited confines of their conceptualized worldview: "The ego," he writes, "is merely the sum total of what we *conceive* ourselves to be" (*Psychoanalysis* 28). Egoism treats the ideational self as the complete self, neglecting or rejecting all parts of the living, unconscious self that do not fit this conception, and reducing the activity of the self to the limited parts that can be articulated. Thus, with an inflexible, concretized ego, the unconscious cannot find living expression; the human being cannot grow, change, and engage new relational occurrences. In *Study of Thomas Hardy* (1914), Lawrence describes this as a stifling imprisonment of the human being; with the "enclosure of the idea," the subject is contained in a "system" that makes it "impotent to be" (26).

In *Study of Thomas Hardy*, Lawrence explains the danger of the fixed self-conception through his critique of Hardy's novel, *The Return of the Native*. Lawrence describes the tragedy of Clym, the novel's protagonist, who is a vital man with creative potential that is hampered by a restrictive conceptual order that suppresses and encloses him:

He was born out of passionate Egdon to live as a passionate being whose strong feelings moved him even further into being. But quite early his life became narrowed down to a small purpose: he must of necessity go into business, and submit his whole being, body and soul as well as mind, to the business and to the greater system it represented. His feelings, that should have produced the man,

were suppressed and contained, he worked according to a system imposed from without. The dark struggle of Egdon, a struggle into being as the furze struggles into flower, went on in him, but could not burst the enclosure of the idea, the system which contained him. Impotent to *be*, he must transform himself, and live in an abstraction, in a generalisation, he must identify himself with the system.

(26)

Clym's self-conception comes to be tied to his professionalization, and the fixing of Clym's identity-concept is a narrowing of his being, a constriction of "his feelings" that are barred from his conscious life and from expression in the world. For Lawrence, the harm of the conception is that it not only alienates Clym from his feelings, but also stifles the creative potential inherent in his living being. Later in the *Study*, Lawrence describes the way the egoistic self-conception contributes to a fragmented worldview. It transforms the experience of the world, including personal experience and feelings, into that which is disconnected from the self:

Man's consciousness, that is his mind, his knowing, is his grosser manifestation of individuality. The further he goes, the more extended his consciousness, the more he realises the things that are not himself. Everything he perceives, everything he knows, everything he feels, is something extraneous to him, is not himself, and his perception of it is like a cell wall, or more, a real space separating him.... And the more that I am driven from admixture, the more I am singled out into utter individuality, the more this intrinsic me rejoices. (42)

The egoistic observational order cannot find "admixture" in the world. It can only confirm a fundamentally discontinuous world. Rather than revealing the human being's implication in the

world, egoistic perception functions as a barrier, bolstering the conception of the self as a subject in the midst of a world of discretely separate objects.

Lawrence elaborates on this transformation of perception, and its relation to the constitution of a degraded self, in his essay “Art and Morality” (1925), where he describes the reciprocal relationship between one’s observations and a new, dominant conceptual framework that assumes the objectivity of vision; this assumption produces reified, concretized notions of self and other, and it divorces the experiencer from the seemingly irrelevant, ambiguous aspects of their experience. Describing the selection active in all perception, Lawrence suggests that the perception of most people has been coopted by mechanizing forces represented by the camera: “the man who sees the object ... does not, even now, see for himself. He sees what the kodak has taught him to see” (164). Lawrence’s use of the Kodak camera to represent the contemporary observational order is an apt one, for the relatively new technology of the photograph at the time seems to offer a complete, objective account, but one that only records visual sensations. For Lawrence, this is a dramatically limited range of experience:

Through many ages, mankind has been striving to register the image on the retina
as it is: no more glyphs and hieroglyphs. We’ll have the real objective reality.
 And we have succeeded. As soon as we succeed, the kodak is invented, to prove
 our success. Could lies come out of a black box, into which nothing but light had
 entered? Impossible! It takes life to tell a lie. (164)

For Lawrence, accounts of reality founded upon this privileging of vision offer a fallaciously complete account, one that takes precedence over not only haptic, auditory, olfactory, and gustatory sensation, but also what cannot be found simply in sensation: the non-sensory experience of “feeling” and the “very different” experience “in our dark minds” (164). This

dominance of sight within perception drives the development of the camera along with new abstract notions of self that are subjected to the fallacy of misplaced concreteness: “As vision developed towards the kodak, man’s idea of himself developed towards the snapshot. Primitive man simply didn’t know *what* he was: he was always half in the dark. But we have learned to see, and each of us has a complete kodak-idea of himself” (164). This assumption of a complete, finished self-conception, once established, is extended to others. One ignores the limitations of the “kodak vision” that fails to account for complex ambiguities, and the other becomes, through this observation, “complete, perfect ... ‘a picture’” (165). Within the world of those who have adopted this observational order, the self and others are violently abstracted from temporal change: “we *are* what is seen: each man to himself an identity, an isolated absolute, corresponding with a universe of isolated absolutes. A picture! A kodak snap, in a universal film of snaps” (165). For Lawrence, it is vitally important that humanity recognize the abstract assumptions underlying observation to free itself from the perpetuation of sameness, to allow for the novelty and change that Lawrence associates with life itself.

In his nonfiction, Lawrence describes this fixity as a nigh-inescapable trap, for his vision of cabbage-people suggests an incurable hollowness borne within most of the populace. In both *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, Lawrence instead explores his characters vacillations between fixity and transformative possibility, and while many of the characters ultimately fail to escape conceptual closure, these explorations suggest that creative freedom is more accessible than he would otherwise have it seem. The critique of fixed self-identity is consistent throughout both novels, and the threat of it dogs all of the characters, even and especially Ursula. The descriptions of her foreclosure of being in her time teaching at the school (explored in the second chapter of this study) are not very different from characters who do not, as she does, go on to

liberate themselves creatively. When characters fail, it is often because they become arrested in some closed conception, one that is usually fostered in a dependent relation to the other. Such is certainly true of Will Brangwen in *The Rainbow*, who, in the struggle of his relationship with Anna, becomes increasingly inflexible, finally refusing to undergo any further change: “[H]e wanted her. Something fixed in him for ever. He was hers” (116). Shortly thereafter, he doubles-down on his commitment to remain static: “He felt he could not alter from what he was fixed upon, his will was set. To alter it he must be destroyed. And he would not be destroyed” (118). Lawrence hammers upon this language to emphasize the extent to which Will’s identity has become intransigent: he “was only colder and more fixed. He was abstract, purely a fixed will” (119).

Anton Skrebensky, an early lover of Ursula’s in *The Rainbow*, is a character who founds his identity on a static conception, one that does not allow for the affective influence of others. Lawrence explains that “[h]e seemed simply acquiescent in the fact of his own being, as if he were beyond any change or question. He was himself. There was a sense of fatality about him that fascinated her” (270). Ursula finds Anton’s independence appealing, even as she simultaneously recognizes that it has a deathly quality to it: “So he seemed perfectly, even fatally established, he did not ask to be rendered before he could exist, before he could have a relationship with another person” (271). Whatever relation Skrebensky enjoys, it only exists conventionally and socially; he is not open to any affective influence from himself or the other. Instead, Lawrence explains that “[h]e was irrevocable in his isolation,” that “[o]ther people could not really give anything nor take anything from him. His soul stood alone” (271). Through Skrebensky, Lawrence calls into question the axiomatic wisdom that every man should be an island, for by the end of the novel, the character crumbles in the face of the passionate twilight

experiences to which Ursula exposes him on the beach at night. The experience exposes the insufficiency that this isolation has fostered within him: “He felt his chest laid bare, where the secret was heavily hidden. He felt himself fusing down to nothingness, like a bead that rapidly disappears in an incandescent flame” (443). As Ursula seems to meld with her environment, giving “her breast to the moon, her belly to the flashing, heaving water,” he is merely “a shadow ever dissolving” (444). His inadequacy exposed, Skrebensky, who feels he has “no soul, no background,” does not seek a transformative rebirth, but instead retreats from Ursula who represents for him “the darkness, the challenge, the horror” of the inadequacy of his self. He flees to the most conventional life he can grasp: “He turned to immediate things. He wanted to marry, quickly, to screen himself from the darkness, the challenge for his own soul. He would marry his Colonel’s daughter” (447).

This hollowing out of self resulting from a fixed conception that fails to engage the unconscious is at the heart of the failure of Gudrun and Gerald in *Women in Love*. Listening to Ursula sing, Gudrun feels her own insufficiency, a “desolating, agonized feeling, that she was outside of life, an onlooker, whilst Ursula was a partaker” (165). Her feeling of distance from the world suggests her own objectifying remove from her experience, a key difference between her and her sister that leads her into an unsatisfying relationship with Gerald. If Gudrun is frequently unsure of the direction she is taking, Gerald’s confidence in his own vision makes him all the more destructive and doomed. Birkin recognizes Gerald as “completely and emptily restless, utterly hollow,” a man who, when not working, is “suspended motionless, in an agony of inertia, like a machine that is without power” (266). Gerald’s life becomes the expression of an instrumental, industrial order. He inherits the family mining business from his father, and he becomes the driver of mechanization and efficiency, extending this mechanizing order to the

miners who work for him. Gerald is originally obsessed with the idea “that the essential secret of life was harmony,” a word that is not inherently troubling until he pins it down as a fixed concept: “he proceeded to put his philosophy into practice by forcing order into the established world, translating the mystic word harmony into the practical word organization” (227). This “translati[on]” represents the closure of his amended concept; the flexible, musical term “harmony,” with its associated divine balance, becomes the instrumental, earthly “organization.” Gerald’s idea of this is intransigent and leads him into a destructive chain of conduct, one where the world he experiences is reduced to raw material for him to exploit through the perfect realization of repetition:

This was the sole idea, to turn upon the inanimate matter of the underground, and reduce it to his will.... There were two opposites, his will and the resistant Matter of the earth. And between these he could establish the very expression of his will, the incarnation of his power, a great and perfect machine, a system, an activity of pure order, pure mechanical repetition, repetition ad infinitum, hence eternal and infinite. He found his eternal and his infinite in the pure machine-principle of perfect co-ordination into one pure, complex, infinitely repeated motion, like the spinning of a wheel. (227-28)

Gerald transforms his sense of life’s secret, “harmony,” into the expression of industrialism, the machine, made absolute as something “pure,” “eternal,” and “infinite.” This absolute idea severs his relations to the world; he ignores his own implication in the environment and believes “his will” and “Matter” to be antagonistically opposed. He wishes to instantiate “repetition ad infinitum,” a state that rejects and persistently inhibits the principle of creative life that Lawrence valorizes. This automatism that he actively values is furthermore imposed upon the miners who

work for him and his father. Gerald's employees are reduced in his vision to cogs in his great machine, to tools that will help facilitate perfection on earth:

He had his life-work now, to extend over the earth a great and perfect system in which the will of man ran smooth and unthwarted, timeless, a Godhead in process. He had to begin with the mines. The terms were given: first the resistant Matter of the underground; then the instruments of its subjugation, instruments human and metallic; and finally his own pure will, his own mind. It would need a marvelous adjustment of myriad instruments, human, animal, metallic, kinetic, dynamic, a marvelous casting of myriad tiny wholes in to one great perfect entirety. And then, in this case there was perfection attained, the will of the highest was perfectly fulfilled, the will of mankind was perfectly enacted. (228).

For Lawrence, the unfinished concept is dead because it is divorced from the unpredictable and continuous change that characterizes life. Gerald's extension of his "perfect system" is the imposition of stasis spreading from the earthly material of the mines to the machines, the employees, and to Gerald himself. Rather than recognizing the natural relations that circulate between the employees and the material world, Gerald conceives of them as separate "wholes" that require the imposition of an intermediary structure to produce a new whole, one that crystallizes its components into an unchanging unity. His ideas make the related world seem like a series of separate, self-contained objects, and the imposition of his vision upon that world is thus an act of ideational violence.

Despite his confidence in his idealized, mechanized vision, Gerald cannot help intimating the deathly insufficiency he has perpetuated within himself: "everything seemed to be stopped in him. He did not want any more to do the things that offered. Something dead within him just

refused to respond to any suggestion” (266). Rather than recognize the cause of this lack, and consequently abandon the ideology he holds as absolute, Gerald turns to Gudrun to offer him fulfillment. He looks to her to

come with him into the hollow void of death in his soul, fill it up, and so equalize the pressure within to the pressure without. For day by day he felt more and more like a bubble filled with darkness, round which whirled the iridescence of his consciousness, and upon which the pressure of the outer world, the outer life, roared vastly. (322)

While the “roar[ing]” impositions of the flux expose the insufficiency of Gerald’s self and drive him towards Gudrun to rectify this hollowness, he cannot let go of the machine-like ideology at the root of his identity. As such, there is no reciprocal exchange and transformation in their relationship, only a toggling of domination back and forth between them: “Sometimes it was he who seemed strongest, whist she was almost gone, creeping near the earth like a spent wind; sometimes it was the reverse. But always it was this eternal see-saw, one destroyed that the other might exist, one ratified because the other was nulled” (445). This adherence to fixity and a corresponding lack of openness leave Gerald empty inside, and the failure of his relationship and his death in the novel are the consequence of this.

Gerald’s fate in the novel represents the danger of adherence to fixed ideas. Gerald’s commitment to perfect repetition fosters what Lawrence sees as deathliness. Tying one’s self-conception and will to that same idea is to deny life and the novelty of lived experience. As the novel progresses, Gerald becomes increasingly associated with a perverse, deathly solidity, which is representative of conceptual stasis and its destructive agency. For example, as Gerald tries to choke the life out of Gudrun near the end of the novel, Lawrence describes his hands as

“hard and indomitably powerful.” He becomes a great force of solidity brought to bear on “the slippery chords of her life” that he feels within Gudrun: “this he crushed, this he could crush” (471). While he hesitates in killing Gudrun due to a moment of “revulsion and contempt” in his “soul” (472), he does not, even at his most desperate moments, turn against his ideology. He frames his failure to kill Gudrun as a “weakness,” and he wanders away “unconscious ... unconsciously climbing” into frozen mountains (472). The method of Gerald’s death suggests his ultimate inability to escape the clutches of stasis; his physical failing in his last moments involves a destruction of his spirit: “something broke in his soul” (474). Through Birkin’s perspective after Gerald’s death, Lawrence describes Gerald as literally made solid: “the frozen dead body that had been Gerald.... Stiff as a board, curled up as if for sleep, yet with the horrible hardness somehow evident” (477). Birkin’s reaction to seeing Gerald in this form emphasizes the symbolic nature of this death, the dangerous, contagious power of Gerald’s stasis:

He reached and touched the dead face. And the sharp, heavy bruise of ice bruised his living bowels. He wondered if he himself were freezing too, freezing from the inside.—In the short blond moustache the life-breath was frozen into a block of ice, beneath the silent nostrils. And this was Gerald! (477).

The last description Lawrence offers of Gerald is of the very immaterial life-force within him—his final breath—made solid. At the end of the novel, his calcification is complete.

Intimations and Explanations of Interconnection

As their critiques of fixed identities suggest, Woolf and Lawrence are invested in exploring the ways that human beings are constituted in relationship with their environment. The extensive connections into which characters enter has been identified by many critics who recognize the centrality of this issue to the literary projects, but the variety of explanations

offered speaks to the fact that there is not yet an established critical consensus about this quality in their works. S.P. Rosenbaum's influential essay (1971) on the philosophical import of Woolf's middle novels insists upon the importance of G.E. Moore's "epistemological dualism" as a "basic philosophical presupposition of [her] criticism and fiction" (6). Rosenbaum's analysis pursues both sides of a dualism he finds persistently expressed in Woolf's work. He explains that she is interested on the one hand in "states of mind" and on the other in "sense impressions," (7) in "the interrelations of thought *and* external reality, of consciousness *and* the objects of consciousness" (9). Rosenbaum's interest in the relationship between mind and world in Woolf's writing never overcomes the divide of dualism. For him, "Moore's dualistic theory of perception underlies [her writing's] representation of the acts and objects of consciousness" (9). Thus, he finds Woolf's writing to be primarily interested in "the privacy of consciousness" that cuts one off from the other: "we can never be sure their consciousnesses respond in the same way as ours do" (11). Moore's philosophy leads Rosenbaum to read *The Waves* as perpetuating "the familiar dualism of consciousness and external reality" (30), and he asserts that in the novel, "there seems to be a distinction between the awareness and what one is aware of" (31). Also picking up on the interest in the relationship between mind and world, Madeline Moore (1980) recognizes the tension between singularity and unity that Woolf dramatizes. She suggests that *The Waves* does not seek "to overcome the phenomenological opposition between subject and object, but rather to dramatize the conflict" (220). Instead of recognizing the extent to which the novel problematizes the logic of discrete identity, Moore finds only a toggling between two separate states, an "inevitable cyclical alternation between a momentary absorption in nature and the necessary emergence from it into the present of particularization" (240).

Instead of Moore, Ann Banfield (2000) suggests that the primary philosophical influence of Woolf's writing is Bertrand Russell: "underlying Woolf's art was a thought, a philosophical project worthy of new attention. This was the theory of knowledge Russell developed and synthesized between 1912-14, reconnecting in the process with the empiricist tradition Leslie Stephen was instrumental in rediscovering" (ix). In Banfield's estimation, Woolf's work engages in a "critique of common-sense realism" (xiv), wherein "[o]bjects are reduced to 'sense-data' separable from sensations and observing subjects to 'perspectives'" (1). Like the above critics, Banfield is invested in a dualistic reading of Woolf, one where "[t]here are two realities, one sensible and the other inaccessible to the senses; nonetheless, 'both are real, and both are important to the metaphysician'" (13). She suggests that Woolf's writing offers "an implicit theory of modern knowledge, divided ... into dual realities and dual ways of knowing" (53). She takes Woolf's famous interest in the "world seen without a self" to mean that the author was pursuing "an unseen vision which reflects the abolition of the subject but not of its object" (53). Thus, in Banfield's estimation, the objective world independent of the human being is Woolf's primary aim: "a world in which 'what there is' is not dependent on anyone being there to observe it" (53). She understands Woolf as producing an "art of the unobserved," offering "unobserved perspectives" to "work out an aesthetic more in conformity with Russell's thought than his outworn romanticism" (54). Such a reading recognizes the importance of the extensive world in Woolf's work, but it fails to account for the extent to which the world she depicts participates in and is the site of mutual implication with her characters.

Critics of Lawrence have also variously engaged his interest in the relationship between the self and the world. Akin to the dualistic readings of Woolf above, Patrick Whiteley (1987) notes how for Lawrence knowledge "draws a line around the self and between subject and

object” (77-78), and he identifies in Lawrence the “moral imperative” to overcome such circumscription (78). However, he places the mind’s “cognition” in a dualistic opposition to “darkness” (78). Whiteley’s interest is in the relationship between self and other, but he places such completely outside of any engagement with the mental faculties, describing such as an idealized, unmediated experience: “To embrace the darkness is to crumble the mediating terms between self and other.” He writes that Lawrence

bring[s] a model of direct knowledge into the purview of realistic fiction. By direct knowledge I mean an unmediated and monistic relationship between subject and object. This form of knowledge allows for no doubt, unlike Cartesian epistemology, because to know directly is no longer to have the critical distance that would provide the leverage for doubt. (78)

While Lawrence would no doubt enjoy the satisfaction that direct knowledge provides, he does not produce in his novels such a freedom from doubt, and such a resolution would lead only to the very sort of uncreative closure he finds morally repugnant. Writing on the ameliorative quest of Lawrence’s literary project “to bring gifts of healing truths,” Keith Sagar (2009) acknowledges the importance of relationships to the self. He finds the ending of *The Rainbow* Ursula’s “recognition of the self’s total dependence on the whole spectrum of relationships, human and nonhuman, material and spiritual, symbolized by the rainbow itself, a symbol that adumbrated for Lawrence ... the complete life that was his ultimate goal” (211). The experience and effect of those relationships and the constitution of the self that comes to light in Lawrence’s novels requires further clarification, a task this chapter seeks to fulfill.

Bringing together the relational interests of both Woolf and Lawrence, Violeta Sotirova (2013) draws attention to the way both authors present “characters’ thoughts in dialogue” (x).

Her interest is primarily with the stylistic manner in which the authors accomplish this, focusing on free indirect discourse and placing that narrative style under the lens of Bakhtinian dialogicity. In the work of each she finds the implication that these characters are in contact with the inner lives of the other. For example, Lawrence's characters "seem to pick up on each other's emotions" (63-64), and the author's approach suggests less a desire to understand the world from a number of perspectives than to demonstrate "integral links across consciousnesses occurring naturally" (86). She likewise suggests that Woolf "present[s] a less dichotomized understanding of human subjectivity vis-à-vis the other," wherein the overlapping thoughts of characters "presents them not as a solipsistic or inaccessible realm, but as open minds, and ones deeply engaged with the consciousness of others" (133). For Sotirova, Woolf's work implies a "permeable boundary between self and other" (154), and she cautiously suggests with this idea of a "permeable boundary" pervasive interconnection and simultaneous self-identity. One possible explanation that she offers for understanding how characters can know this is through the philosophy of Bergson, noting that Bergson's intuition offers "complete and absolute knowledge" (175) of the other, giving the intuitive person "the integral whole of a thing" at once in immediate experience (177). Such a reading gives far more power to Bergson's intuition than the philosopher himself would offer, and it suggests a far less problematic access to the other than this study finds in the novels of these authors. However, Sotirova's examination of Woolf and Lawrence's work is exemplary of a critical movement upon which this study wishes to build: recognizing this interconnection in Woolf's and Lawrence's writings as capable of coexisting with the constitution of self, and as "occurring naturally," as something that is accessible in moments of immediate experience.

Interconnection and Affect

James's Pluralistic World

In *A Pluralistic Universe* (1908), writing in response to monistic philosophical models of the world that do not allow for changing relations, which facilitate “no taking up and dropping of connexions” (324), James develops his vision of a world where concatenation and interdependence are defining parts of all seemingly discrete things. This vision offers a philosophical model confluent with and illuminating of the worlds that Woolf and Lawrence develop in their novels. The foundational tenet of this philosophical approach is the same as James's radical empiricism: “[f]or pluralism, all that we are required to admit as the constitution of reality is what we ourselves find empirically realized in every minimum of finite life” (322). What one can intimate in an experienced moment is the immediate involvement of a thing with its neighbors, an involvement that implicates it and connects it through a chain of connections with a vast array of seemingly discrete things. In each moment, James finds that “every smallest bit of experience is ... plurally related” (322). Simultaneously, these relations do not undermine the identity of the thing related: “Without losing its identity a thing can either take up or drop another thing...” (323). From his intimations of relations within moments of finite experience, James builds his model of a vastly interrelated world:

Our ‘multiverse’ still makes a ‘universe’; for every part, tho it may not be in actual or immediate connexion, is nevertheless in some possible or mediated connexion, with every other part however remote, through the fact that each part hangs together with its very next neighbors in inextricable interfusion. This type of union, it is true, is different from the monistic type of *alleinheit*. It is not a

universal co-implication, or integration of all things *durcheinander*. It is what I call a strung-along type, the type of continuity, contiguity, or concatenation. (325)

Each thing functions as an organic unification of their individual parts, and they simultaneously contribute to larger forms of organic unification: “Finite elements have their own aboriginal forms of manyness in oneness,” he explains, and while they may “have no immediate oneness” between them, they are “continued into one another by intermediary terms—each one of these terms being one with its next neighbors” (327). Thus, each thing – and each person – is simultaneously constituted in three different ways: they are an amalgam of the plurality of their parts, they are the singular unification of those parts, and they contribute to large pluralities like the environment within which they are situated: “The collective and the distributive ways of being coexist [in the whole field], for each part functions distinctly, makes connexion with its own peculiar region in the still wider rest of experience” (289). Such a constitution is never finished. Because the relations that constitute the individual are constantly being taken up, dropped, and changing, the “‘oneness’ ... never get[s] absolutely complete” (327).

This concatenated model of reality and the commitment to exploring the nuances of human experience lead James to consider the extent to which the human being can know beyond itself. In working out an answer to this question, James elaborates his definition of the human being. He insists that the human being is more than what is conventionally considered to be the conscious self, and that hints of its more expansive character are available in experience, albeit not reducible to analyzable conceptions:

What we conceptually identify ourselves with and say we are thinking of at any time is the centre; but our *full* self is the whole field, with all those indefinitely radiating subconscious possibilities of increase that we can only feel without

conceiving, and can hardly begin to analyze.... Every bit of us at every moment is part and parcel of a wider self, it quivers along various radii like the wind-rose on a compass, and the actual in it is continuously one with the possibles not yet in our present sight. (289)

James describes the human being as distributed, comprised as it is not only of a conceptualizable and analyzable identity, but also of the alternating, undulating relations that form its “quiver[ing] ... radii.” For James, there is no easily definable point at which the self ends and the environment begins, for the two interpenetrate and constitute each other. From this assertion, he posits the possibility of two people being implicated in a higher organic unity: “Just as we are co-conscious with our own momentary margin, may we not ourselves form the margin of some more really central self in things which is co-conscious with the whole of us? May not you and I be confluent in a higher consciousness, and confluently active there, tho we now know it not?” (290). James is not content to stop there; he goes further, positing that people might be able to develop their awareness such that they can know the other in ways that seemed inaccessible, transcending the solipsistic isolation of the self. While disconnections still abound in the world, such an “incompleteness of the pluralistic universe” is “self-reparative through us, as getting its disconnections remedied in part by our behavior” (329-30). If humans attend to the right things, developing and exploring their connections with the extensive world, they may come to know each other in ways previously unavailable. He elaborates on this possibility in *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (1909), where he writes of the way two people come into contact in a shared world: “our minds meet in a world of objects which they share in common” (41). Through mutual, simultaneous implication in this world, one might come to know the shared nature of their experience with the other: “whatever differing contents our minds may eventually fill a place

with, the place itself is a numerically identical content of the two minds, a piece of common property in which, through which, and over which they join. The receptacle of certain of our experiences being thus common, the experiences themselves might some day become common also” (44-45).

Affect

How one might go about understanding such relations, and discerning them in moments of lived experience, still bears further explaining, and James’s understanding of “affect” helps provide this explanation. Separating James’s definition of the term from Bergson’s, and from the current dominant critical discourse on the term, is necessary before proceeding. For Bergson, affect is an experience that exists purely within the body. For Bergson, affect is not merely another sense. In *Matter and Memory* (1896), he distinguishes “affection” from “perception” as “a difference of kind” (57). It is the body’s “power to absorb” within itself the provocations of the experienced world (57), and it is for Bergson a purely internal, embodied phenomenon: “My perception is outside my body, and my affection within it. Just as external objects are perceived by me where they are, in themselves and not in me, so my affective states are experienced there where they occur, that is, at the given point in my body” (59). For Bergson, affect is a buildup of intensity within the body that defies clear representation and functionally disrupts the body’s immediate response to provocation. It is like a stockpile of potential energy built-up through sensation that has yet to become the kinetic energy of action. Drawing upon Bergson’s and later Deleuze’s theories of affect, Brian Massumi (2002) explains that affective experiences have “intensity,” “a nonconscious, never-to-be-conscious automatic remainder.... It is narratively delocalized, spreading over the generalized body surface...” (25). This intensity is located at the body as a site of potentially productive indetermination: “It is a state of suspense, potentially of

disruption” (26). For Bergson and for Massumi, affect is situated at the body as a disruptive force.

In her exploration of other contemporary deployments of the term, Ruth Leys (2011) explains that amongst other disciplines, “affect” represents embodied, unconscious emotional intensity: “for both the new affect theorists and the neuroscientists from whom they variously borrow—and transcending differences of philosophical background, approach, and orientation— affect is a matter of autonomic responses that are held to occur below the threshold of consciousness and cognition and to be rooted in the body” (443). Leys’s own engagement with affect works within this tradition; this intensity is tied to what she calls a “‘nonrepresentationalist’ ontology” (442, n.22), wherein the intensity circulates in “a gap between the subject’s affects and its cognition or appraisal of the affective situation or object, such that cognition or thinking comes ‘too late’ for reasons, intentions, and meanings to play their role in action and behavior usually accorded to them” (443). Such affective intensity is a driver of pre-rational activity, circulating within the body and building until it erupts in action. Emily Martin’s work on affect (2013) similarly places it as an intensity within the body, and she emphasizes that within affect, clearly definable categories break down: “Among the affects, at the physiological level, categories that are cognitively separate (such as sad or pleasant) get connected, and this is one way that affects are thought to open up new and creative potential.” They are “disruptive of fixed (conventional) meanings” and are a “rich reservoir of unpredictable potentiality” (S155). This focus on embodied affect and the novelty that its defiance of categorical clarity produces sheds light on the embodied elements of Lawrence’s vibrational vital force, which similarly circulates within the unconscious. But Lawrence’s vibrational force, while circulating through the unconscious body, exceeds the limitations of the body like a wireless

signal, circulating between bodies and across distances. If the site of affection breaks down categorical divisions and thus fosters new, pre-linguistic experiences within the self (as Martin suggests about emotions), in the extension of vibration in Lawrence this undermining of clear distinction and the potential for novelty that affection fosters extends beyond the body into the experienced world and the relationships between people. James's thinking on affect focuses on just such relational elements of experience, and it offers an alternative philosophical framework to the dominant critical discourse on affect through which to understand what is occurring in the novels of Lawrence and Woolf.

Affectional experiences are important to James's radical empirical philosophy because, as he understands them, they are elements of immediate experience where the human being can know their implication in the environment; they undermine discrete separation between the self and the other such that relational implication is experientiable within them. In *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, James begins his explanation of affect by describing an atomistic understanding of the universe, wherein "the only alternatives between neighbors would be either physical interaction or complete inertness. In such a world the mental or the physical *status* of any piece of experience would be unequivocal. When active, it would figure in the physical, and when inactive, in the mental group" (74). This perfect categorization of experience between mental and physical realms is troubled by affect: "the universe we live in is more chaotic than this," for it contains "the hybrid or ambiguous group of our affectional experiences, of our emotions and appreciative perceptions" (74). These affectional experiences are not solely produced in the mind or body: "the popular notion that these experiences are intuitively given as purely inner facts is hasty and erroneous" (74). While many thinkers want to classify experiences as either subjective or objective, James insists that "subjectivity and objectivity are affairs not of what an experience

is aboriginally made of, but of its classification” (74). While they may be classified as subjective, affective experiences are not aboriginally subjective or objective. In James’s “affectional experiences,” as in the conventional reading of affect, something circulates that has yet to be classified: “no urgent need has yet arisen for deciding whether to treat them as rigorously mental or as rigorously physical facts” (76). This reflects for James the ontological nature of the world: “There is no original spirituality or materiality of being, intuitively discerned, then; but only a translocation of experiences from one world to another” (77). Moreover, this breakdown of dualistic notions extends beyond the inner constitution of the human being into the world. While “our body itself is the palmary instance of the ambiguous” (80), the ambiguity one finds there reflects the nature of the world. The attributes that one finds in natural objects, which “are what give *emphasis* to [them]” (78), are commonly taken to be produced within and assigned by the perceiver. However, the “preciousness of a diamond” is neither simply “a quality of the gem” nor “a feeling in the mind” (75). The quality of “preciousness” exists in the relation, which connects the perceiver with the things and people perceived. For James, one can change the way one attends to experience to hold off classification and to recognize the distributed, relational nature of that experience. If one hopes to realize this affectional relational connection to the world, one must “check” the natural classificatory impulse and momentarily allow experience to circulate undifferentiated.

Admixture and Affect in the Works of Woolf and Lawrence

In Virginia Woolf’s vision of her own world, she finds an environment that impinges upon people and has transformative effects upon them. In “A Sketch of the Past” (1939), she remarks on the affective influence of the environment upon her, noting “how many other than human forces affect us” (133-34). To illustrate this, she observes “the light chang[ing]” and “an

apple becom[ing] a vivid green. I respond – how?” (134). While Woolf cannot pin down the effect upon her, she notes its presence before proceeding to describe her relationship with the world in terms of a persistent, immersive contact, imagining “herself afloat, [in an element] which is all the time responding to things we have no words for – exposed to some invisible ray” (134). Woolf’s novels develop this vision of a world thick with transformative influences, and in them she explores the “things we have no words for” and the responses they provoke.

The world that Woolf builds in *Night and Day* is ever impinging upon and influencing its denizens. Such is on display as Ralph walks down a suburban street. The views within “half-drawn curtains” offering “with mute power different scenes from different lives” cause “his own experience [to] lose its sharpness” and “under[go] a curious change.” This environment has a powerful effect upon Ralph’s emotional register: “His speed slackened, his head sank a little towards his breast, and the lamplight shone now and again upon a face growing strangely tranquil” (18). Noting the effects of the environments of the different London streets allows Katharine to choose what she exposes herself to: “should she walk on by the Strand or by the Embankment? It was not a simple question, for it concerned not different streets so much as different streams of thought” (282).

The relationship between characters and their environment is not one-sided, either. Many places in the novel pick up influences from the routine collective conduct that occurs within them, like Mary’s office and the Hilbery drawing room. However, the novel suggests that individual actors can likewise have a transformative and strangely indirect effect on the quality of their environment. Katharine’s speech, for example, “produced a curious change in the light, sparkling atmosphere” (369). After Katharine leaves Ralph’s room, he notes the slow fading of her effect upon it: “Like a strain of music, the effect of Katharine’s presence slowly died from

the room in which Ralph sat alone. The music had ceased in the rapture of its melody. He strained to catch the faintest lingering echoes” (404). The influence that any one person can have on their environment is temporary, persisting as long as the moment’s event does.

Beyond this environmental influence, the novel suggests that characters have strange and pervasive effects upon each other. When she speaks with Katharine, Mary notes a feeling of being accosted: “As usual, when she found herself in talk with Katharine, she began to feel rapid alternations of opinion about her, arrows of sensation striking strangely through the envelope of personality, which shelters us so conveniently from our fellows.... [N]ot in her words, perhaps, but in her voice, in her face, in her attitude, there were signs of a soft brooding spirit...” (283). Mary’s experience of Katharine suggests that the feelings arising are not borne within her, but enter as “arrows of sensation” that penetrate the protective “envelope” of her identity and alter the way she feels. And it is not what Katharine is saying to her that has this effect, but intimations of her “spirit.” This kind of compelling, transformative influence circulating between characters is emphasized repeatedly throughout *Night and Day*: Ralph and Mary are reconfigured in each other’s presence (131-32); Rodney’s presence “overcloud[s]” Katharine’s metaphorical illumination (292; 295); “Mary’s presence” provokes Ralph into articulation, such that he notes that “[s]omehow he had been forced into speech” (410); Katharine’s aunt has a powerful influence upon her feelings, such that even after she leaves, she “still vibrated through all the rest of her feelings” (433). Woolf repeatedly refers to these moments with language like “curious” and “strange,” for they are reflective of a quality in the world that she cannot grasp. Katharine comes close to describing this vision of this immersive and interconnected world when she describes what would be lost were the world left to the stewardship of people like Mary Datchet: “a place where any line of blue mist softly linked tree to tree upon the horizon” (377). These

fragile connections are easily ignored, but they link everything together. In *The Waves*, Woolf is able to further develop her vision of this world.

The world that Woolf develops in *The Waves* through the voices of its six characters is suggestive of just such a world of affective breakdown of the conventional dichotomy of inner and outer. Throughout the novel, the characters make frequent reference to their vulnerability to the other and the environment, to a sense of their own admixture with the world, and to a sense that such complicates the understanding of the self at which they might arrive. Such an awareness is expressed early in the novel by a number of the children, who will go on to transpose that awareness into the foundation of very different relationships with the world. For example, hiding alone in a garden, a young Louis examines the flowers, noting the way they are enmeshed in an atmosphere like water, one that connects the elements within it: “Flower after flower is specked on the depths of green.... Stalks rise from the black hollows beneath. The flowers swim like fish made of light upon the dark, green waters.” As Louis touches a flower, he recognizes himself within it: “I hold a stalk in my hand. I am the stalk. My roots go down to the depths of the world, through earth dry with brick, and damp earth, through veins of lead and silver. I am all fibre. All tremors shake me...” (7). As the novel progresses, he transposes this nascent realization of his admixture with nature into his sense of connection with the cultural inheritances of Western civilization and his need to perpetuate them. But at this early stage in his development, he simply recognizes the momentary intuited experience of his affective implication. Likewise, Jinny, running through the leaves of the garden, intuitively connects with the environment: “The leaves went on moving.... What moved the leaves? What moves my heart, my legs?” As she discovers Louis and kisses him, she feels her “heart jumping under [her] pink frock like the leaves, which go on moving, though there is nothing to move them” (8). Jinny

suggests here that the same force that animates the natural world also animates her body, and she finds herself mulling over the connection she shares with the natural world around her. Shortly thereafter, Bernard reflects on the way that characters not only experience interconnection with the natural world, but also with each other. With Susan, he notes that, “[w]hen we sit together, close ... we melt into each other with phrases, we are edged with mist. We make an unsubstantial territory” (11). Bernard here reflects the extent to which language is not only implicated in this admixture but has the ability to heighten it. Later in the novel, he describes the world that these children intuit at the beginning. The world of *The Waves*, as it is reflected in the worlds of all six of its characters, is, as Bernard says, a “radiant yet gummy atmosphere” (209). Each character and thing radiates their potential relations into the atmosphere.

Woolf suggests this mutual implication in a shared world, wherein human involvement fosters strengthened connection, through *The Waves*’s structure, and a microcosm of this implication is offered in the image a flower placed in the midst of the characters during a pivotal dinner scene in the novel. The previous chapter discussed how the structure of the novel places the reader in the environment as the recipient of the myriad forms of communication emerging from each of the characters. The novel’s perspective is within the relational matrix between characters; it places the reader in the environment and exposes them to the communicated relations extending outward from the characters. The flower at the dinner that the six characters attend becomes the receptacle of the plurality of their conveyances. Bernard explains how, from separate lives, the characters come together and produce the shared moment: “We have come together (from the North, from the South, from Susan’s farm, from Louis’s house of business) to make one thing, not enduring—for what endures?—but seen by many eyes simultaneously” (104). The environment to which the relations of each character contribute works as a common

receptacle unifying their experiences, and the flower is representative of the way each participant and the elements of their environment become receptacles for the others: “There is a red carnation in that vase. A single flower as we sat here waiting, but now a seven-sided flower, many-petalled, red, puce, purple-shaded, stiff with silver-tinted leaves—a whole flower to which every eye brings its own contribution” (104). The flower functions like the central hub of a wheel with radiant spokes connecting the different experiences relating to it, forming in relationship with those experiences an “event” in the Whiteheadian sense. Laci Mattison (2011) explains that the flower is “seven-sided” because of the seven different sets of relations (including Percival, the friend who they are meeting to celebrate) that contribute into it in seven different ways: “This flower, instead of exhibiting fixed or essential qualities, fluctuates precisely because of the connection assembled around it” (72). Mattison emphasizes the fluctuating and temporal nature of this and all things in the world Woolf depicts: “As Woolf recognizes with the ‘seven-sided flower’ passage and elsewhere in her fiction, objects continually fluctuate” (74). Thus, while the carnation as a material object preexists this moment, it will be different within other events, just as the characters will be. They are continuously subject to the fluctuations of their environments, bringing together disparate influences within the event of the moment and later dropping them. James’s ontological equivalence between consciousness and matter helps to explain what is occurring in the flower’s event. In *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, he writes that “consciousness and matter cannot be handled as being of disparate essences.... [I]t is by the addition of other phenomena that any given phenomenon enters our consciousness or becomes known; it is not by a self-division of an inner nature” (121). That is, material is not translated into the stuff of consciousness in one’s involvement with it. Conscious engagement with an object involves not a reduction into mind-stuff, but an addition in

the engagement. The object in question in Woolf's scene, a red carnation, is not reduced through a translation into the conscious experience of each character; the single object enjoys relations with each character that, rather than diminishing it through a limited transposition into mind-stuff, contributes to it. The image of the carnation brings together the disparate experiences of the characters who often interpret their relationship to the world in seemingly incompatible ways (e.g. Louis's civic belonging as a "spoke on the huge wheel" of society" [26] and Rhoda's sense of troubling fusional implication, where "one things melts into another" [110]) and suggests they are connected in the environment through their contributions to something greater than them: the shared event. Thus, within each moment, the characters are entering into complex event-relationships with each other through a shared environment, and indeed, moreover, the material world is not even a necessary intermediary, for the characters themselves can function as these relational events. The world of the novel is itself a six-sided flower, a world revealed in the communiques of six different approaches to experience forming together the organic totality of the novel itself.

These intimate, immediate connections Woolf's characters are involved in in *The Waves* help to explain how they might come to intuit pervasive knowledge of each other. An exchange between Neville and Bernard as they look at a willow tree emphasizes a moment of pervasive connection between the two. In the scene, Bernard approaches Neville, who senses the influence of his friend upon his experience of the world and himself: "Something now leaves me; something goes from me to meet that figure who is coming, and assures me that I know him before I see who it is. How curiously one is changed by the addition, even at a distance, of a friend." He notes the troubling way the event of his own being is affected, how his self is altered by this addition: "how painful to be recalled, to be mitigated, to have one's self adulterated,

mixed up, become part of another. As he approaches I become not myself but Neville mixed with somebody..." (67). Like the carnation, he becomes different in that moment, both affected by the implication of identity in being "recalled," but also sensing his admixture with Bernard.

Bernard's experience offers another side to this interaction, noting how the external world is transformed. Before coming into Neville's proximity, he observes a willow tree in connection to his active thoughts and memories, inflected by his youthful literary preoccupations: "I was Byron, and the tree was Byron's tree, lachrymose, down-showering, lamenting" (67). With the addition of Neville, the experience is transformed: "Now that we look at the tree together, it has a combined look, each branch distinct ... under the compulsion of your clarity" (67). In the shared experience of the tree with Neville, Bernard notes his own admixture with his friend: "I feel your force. I become, with you, an untidy, an impulsive human being..." (67). The influence of each friend on the other is here a neutral fact of existence. Through these characters Woolf demonstrates the commonality of the protean nature of self, of its vulnerability to influence and its capacity for reconfiguration.

For Lawrence as for Woolf, the world is rife with relations. Where Woolf suggests the bridging nature of relational connection through objects in the environment, Lawrence uses the metaphor of vibration to suggest the transfer of influence from one to another. In *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1921), he establishes such vibration occurring first in direct physical contact between mother and child, a circulating, reciprocal transfer of energy: "The unconscious sparkles, vibrates, travels in a strong subjective stream from abdominal centres, connecting the child directly with the mother..." (30). Throughout the follow-up book, *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, he develops the idea that this sort of vibrational connection is a communication across two nervous systems—that in touch, something fundamental is communicated to the other

that can be sensed and thus mentally registered: “Whenever a pure circuit is established, there occurs a pure development in the individual creation, and this is inevitably accompanied by sensation; and sensation is the first term of mental knowledge” (109). For such a sensation to occur, Lawrence suggests that touch is necessary. But if what he is describing is a “pure circuit,” what he goes on to describe in the book is a more pervasive network of what must be less pure connections. Through technological metaphors, Lawrence develops his idea of the vibrational connection that circulates between two bodies, describing it as a “powerful circuit of vital magnetism, call it what you will, but a direct flow of dynamic *vital* interchange and intercourse” (163). As *Fantasia* goes on, he claims that this sort of connection can in fact occur across spaces, that it is “like a dark electric current connecting you with the rest of life....” It is “the marvelous wireless communication between the great centre and the surrounding or contiguous world” (69). In Lawrence’s estimation, while direct contact between bodies provides the strongest and purest dynamic connection, these connections extend throughout the environment. As with James, Lawrence describes his understanding of this relationally-implicated world as “contiguous.”

This vibrational metaphor becomes in Lawrence’s writing the foundational metaphor for the sort of relation he advocates, one that bridges individuals into a vital pair or community that does not seek to erase their separateness. In “Education of the People” (1918), Lawrence both defends the need for “perfect solitary integrity” while calling for “a new mode of human relationship” (615). That mode of relationship centres around the vibrational exchange between the self and the extensive world, and he describes it circulating in the environment:

The motion arises spontaneous, we know not how, and is emitted in dark vibrations. The vibration goes forth, seeks its object, returns, establishing a life-circuit. And this life-circuit, established internally between the four first poles,

and established also externally between the primal affective centres in two different beings or creatures ... constitutes in itself our profound primal consciousness, and contains all our radical knowledge, knowledge non-ideal, non-mental, yet still knowledge, primary cognition, individual and potent. (628)

While for Woolf the physical world often acts as an intermediary receptacle, the connections Lawrence describes are only between living beings. However, the “primary cognition” is part of the relational environment, for it exists in the circuit “between” two beings. As the “individual” is established through its extensive relational circuits, the environment comes to be the carrier of that distributed self. Lawrence’s conviction in this relationally-constituted self only strengthened throughout his career. In *Apocalypse and the Writings on Revelation* (1930), penned on the eve of his death, Lawrence expresses a continued and strengthened commitment to this vision:

There is nothing in me that is alone and absolute except my mind, and we shall find that the mind has no existence by itself, it is only the glitter of the sun on the surface of the waters.

So that my individualism is really an illusion. I am part of the great whole, and I can never escape. But I *can* deny my connections, break them, and become a fragment. Then I am wretched. (149)

Regardless of what one experiences, one cannot help but be implicated in a “great whole.” Thus, situating one’s awareness away from such a connection, as Woolf and Lawrence find so much of their contemporary society doing, leads to a degraded existence. Conversely, there is an attentive disposition one can adopt that increases awareness of these connections and provokes the development of a sense of a self that acknowledges them. The concept of affect makes more sensible Lawrence’s initial grounding of this connection in the body, for the experience

Lawrence describes moves from his initial descriptions of tactile sensory experience to a more distributed model where the relation hangs distributed between its two poles.

Lawrence's writing in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* explores the trans-linguistic affective influences that circulate between characters. In *The Rainbow*, Lawrence focuses repeatedly on moments of physical connection, exploring within them the extraordinary extent of experience offered in a seemingly straightforward moment. For example, Lydia's physical contact with Tom has pervasive transformative effects on both of them that a description of a simple embrace would belie. Lawrence's narrative focus slows down during such moments to dwell on the important exchange taking place:

he burst into flame for her, and lost himself. They looked at each other, a deep laugh at the bottom of their eyes, and he went to take her again, wholesale, mad to revel in the inexhaustible wealth of her, to bury himself in the depths of her in an inexhaustible exploration, she all the while reveling in that he reveled in her, tossed all her secrets aside and plunged to that which was secret to her as well, whilst she quivered with fear and the last anguish of delight. (60)

While this exchange is problematically one-sided, involving Tom trying to lose himself within the other person, Lawrence dwells upon the moment to emphasize the ecstatic experience offered to the characters, as they explore "that which was secret" to both of them.

Such exchanges occur between almost all intimately-involved characters in these novels, but they are not limited to living beings. While Lawrence is primarily interested in direct, passionate connections between individuals, as with Woolf, the physical world can act as an intermediary. Such occurs as a close intermediary to physical contact in a scene between Ursula and Skrebensky in *The Rainbow*, wherein her clothing acts a receptacle that brings together the

experiences of the two young lovers: “The silk, slipping fierily on the hidden, yet revealed roundness and firmness of her body, her loins, seemed to run in him like fire, make his brains burn like brimstone. She liked it, the electric fire of the silk under his hands upon her limbs, the fire flew over her... She vibrated like a jet of electric, firm fluid in response” (442). The electric vibration of affective implication circulates *through* the silk garment as its fiery quality transfers to the young lovers; the same fire, provoked by the silk’s figuration in the intimate moment, runs through both of them.

The physical environment not only takes part in the exchanges between characters at the direct level of physical touch, but also exerts across distances its own transformative effects upon characters. For example, the world impinges upon Lydia as she changes environments, moving to the country: “It hurt her brain, the open country and the moors. It hurt her and hurt her. Yet it forced itself upon her as something living, it roused some potency of her childhood in her, it had some relation to her.... Her soul roused to attention” (51). She is drawn into the awakening summer world: “she stepped into the heather as into a quickening bath that almost hurt” (51). Such a world imposes upon her “force[fully],” and in this case, perhaps because she is in the natural environment, its effect is positive, calling up in her the feelings and the strength of her youth and provoking a more attentive state. But often in Lawrence’s work, the impositions of the environment, particularly ones transformed by human agency, are quite harmful.

The physical and social environment in Lawrence’s novels exerts a homeostatic force upon characters, imposing something of its qualities upon them. Ursula experiences this late in *The Rainbow*, where, exposed to a throng of people, she is disturbed by her own porousness: “all the time, among those others, she felt shocked and wincing, as if her violently-sensitive nakedness were exposed to the hard, brutal, material impact of the rest of the people” (443). Like

Woolf's Rhoda, Ursula finds herself incapable of "extricat[ing] herself" (456). Ultimately for Lawrence, this perpetual vulnerability characters have to affective implication is neutral. It can open one up to positively transformative experiences, or it can expose one to negative qualities that they may or may not be able to resist, like the dehumanizing mechanized force circulating in the mining town in *Women in Love*, with its mechanical "buzzing" talk that "vibrated in the air like discordant machinery" and "affected Gudrun almost to swooning" (117).

While the nonhuman environment is an important part of the interrelated world Lawrence develops in his novels, his primary focus is on the affective relations circulating between characters. *Women in Love* focuses on the development of two different relationships, one an unqualified failure and the other a relative success. Through Gudrun and Gerald, the novel dramatizes a destructive way that characters engage with one another. While their relationship ends disastrously, they are exposed to the same sort of affective relations that lead Ursula and Birkin toward a creative, productive relationship: "Between [Gudrun] and Gerald was this silence and this black, electric comprehension in the darkness" (73). Because their engagements are repeatedly one-sided, they are unable to develop a relational balance that the novel suggests is vitally important. In one moment, Gerald experiences his own self-loss as "the rapid vibrations ran through his blood and over his brain, he was no longer responsible" (73), and at another, in Gerald's presence, Gudrun "perished in the keen frission of anticipation, an electric vibration in her veins" (119). Lawrence repeatedly shows these characters by turns losing themselves, and consequently losing one of the poles of the relation they could be exploring. As suggested above, this is in large part because of Gerald's failure to establish an adequate sense of self.

Rather than establishing a balanced recognition of their individuality and intermingling, Gerald and Gudrun's relationship involves the fusional obliteration of one into the other. They

appear capable only of modulating between the conceptual fixity with which they are often associated and a loss of identity in a destructive fusional model. Their incapacity to hold these states simultaneously is exemplary of a negative engagement with affective experience in Lawrence's work, which is indicated by the grotesque, dehumanizing language he uses to describe such moments. In the aptly named chapter "Death and Love," Lawrence displays Gudrun's self-obliterating fusion into Gerald. In the scene, Gerald and Gudrun walk together, and as they proceed, she becomes increasingly fused with him: "As they walked, he seemed to lift her nearer and nearer to himself, till she moved upon the firm vehicle of his body. He was so strong, so sustaining, and he could not be opposed. She drifted along in a wonderful interfusion of physical motion, down the dark, blowy hill-side" (329). As they embrace in the shelter of a bridge, Lawrence describes Gudrun as destroyed in the intense moment: "His body vibrated taut and powerful as he closed upon her and crushed her, breathless and dazed and destroyed, crushed her upon his breast. Ah, it was terrible, and perfect.... She felt she would swoon, die, under the vibrating, inhuman tension of his arms and his body—she would pass away" (330). The intensity of this moment leads to the temporary obliteration of Gudrun's separate self, and perversely, this experience to her is perfection. Gerald pursues this absorption of Gudrun into himself, the vacuity of his own character provoking his desire to fill himself with her being: "His arms were fast round her, he seemed to be gathering her into himself, her warmth, her softness, her adorable weight, drinking in the suffusion of her physical being, avidly. He lifted her, and seemed to pour her into himself, like wine into a cup" (331). Rather than resisting such a consumption, Gudrun surrenders herself in an extended moment that emphasizes the grotesque melding of their fusional connection:

So she relaxed, and seemed to melt, to flow into him, as if she were some infinitely warm and precious suffusion filling into his veins, like an intoxicant. Her arms were round his neck, he kissed her and held her perfectly suspended, she was all slack and flowing in to him, and he was the firm, strong cup that receives the wine of her life. So she lay cast upon him, stranded, lifted up against him, melting and melting under his kisses, melting into his limbs and bones, as if he were soft iron becoming surcharged with her electric life.

Till she seemed to swoon, gradually her mind went, and she passed away, everything in her was melted down and fluid, and she lay still, become contained by him, sleeping in him as lightning sleeps in a pure, soft stone. So she was passed away and gone in him, and he was perfected. (331)

In this exchange, both characters become objects: Gudrun is taken as an intoxicating “suffusion,” and Gerald is reduced to a “cup” or “soft iron.” In either case, not only is Gudrun’s self obliterated as she melts into Gerald, but he becomes simply a container for her “electric life.” Any separate being either might have is thoroughly compromised, and the melding that occurs, without any locatable self, destroys the possibility of communication or knowledge. The relationship such a connection fosters is one of debilitating dependence, wherein Gudrun becomes Gerald’s “everything” (329) while herself feeling “bound to him” such that “she could not live beyond him” (463). When she finally breaks free of Gerald, he cannot survive without her, for his emptiness is all the more apparent with her absence.

While Gerald and Gudrun’s failure arises out of their inability to achieve a balanced connection, falling into a grotesque and destructive fusional oblivion, Ursula and Birkin succeed because they are able to explore their pervasive connections without sacrificing their separate

selves. In *The Rainbow*, Ursula recognizes this coexistence of individuality and interconnection, and it sets her apart from her lover Anthony, who cannot recognize the same. As he proposes marriage to her, Ursula “realised with something like terror that she was going to accept this,” but before she does, she looks out at the environment: “She turned away, she turned round from him, and saw the east flushed strangely rose, the moon coming yellow and lovely upon a rosy sky, above the darkening, bluish snow. All this so beautiful, all this so lovely!” (386). In looking at her environment and considering the affective register of that experience, Ursula notes a significant difference between herself and her lover; Anthony “did not see it. He was one with it” (386). Rather than being an individual recipient of his experience, Anthony is merged with the world. Ursula, on the other hand, is both: “she saw it, and was one with it. Her seeing separated them infinitely” (386). This simultaneous “one[ness]” and “seeing” sets Ursula apart. *The Rainbow* situates Ursula as the culmination of several generations evolving a successful way of relating to the world and the other. In Anthony, Ursula has not found a partner who can appropriately understand and engage his experience in the same way. She finds her match in Birkin.

In *Women in Love*, Birkin contends that “[o]ne must commit oneself to a conjunction with the other—forever. But it is not selfless—it is a maintaining of the self in mystic balance and integrity—like a star balanced with another star” (152). The star appears utterly individual, separate and discrete and masterful, yet it is simultaneously implicated in the fabric of the forces that produce a galaxy. The image of a pair of stars balanced with each other suggests a complex and perfect interrelation of forces between them that produces the pair. Were one star’s pull stronger than the other’s, it would swallow it; they would merge in a destructive fusion. Were they truly isolated, they would fly apart. It is only their mutual influence on each other and their

implication in an elaborate texture of forces that fosters their fruitful, balanced existence. Through Ursula's relationship with Birkin, the novel develops a concrete version of this idealistic vision, one that emphasizes the continuous effort and negotiation necessary to maintain such a balance between conjunction and the self. Unlike Gerald and Gudrun, when Ursula and Birkin's bodies come together, one does not consume the other. Lawrence describes their connection as two dark nights brought together:

the body of mysterious night upon the body of mysterious night, the night masculine and feminine, never to be seen with the eye, or known with the mind, only known as palpable revelation of living otherness. She had her desire of him, she touched, she received the maximums of unspeakable communication in touch, dark, subtle, positively silent, a magnificent gift and give again.... (320)

The connection that they realize is the coming together of their darknesses—the unarticulated, unconscious aspects of their beings. Through their affective connection they gain access not to an obliterating sameness but to the “palpable revelation of living otherness.” Ursula's identity remains; she is simultaneously participant and recipient, as is Birkin. Together, they can be themselves and simultaneously know their situation within the impinging, overlapping flux.

Lawrence explores the nature of the affective exchange between Ursula and Birkin through his use of the term “fire.” The word is introduced as representative of something like the conventional emotion of anger as they argue about his involvement with Hermione, but Lawrence quickly suggests that it exists not within Ursula but circulates between the pair, and the word itself takes on an expanding significance as it comes to represent the pervasive, ambiguous feelings that circulate in the affective exchange. After Ursula accuses Birkin of using her to fulfill only his “common and fleshy” needs (306), Lawrence describes a fire that seems to

represent her quick anger: “Suddenly a flame ran over her, and she stamped her foot madly on the road, and he winced, afraid she would strike him” (307). What seems representative of conventional and subjective anger takes on more significance as Lawrence repeats the symbol, next indicating it in her eyes, suggesting her ferocity: “Her brows knitted, her eyes blazed like a tiger’s” (307). The scene calls into question any reading of this fire as Ursula’s subjective emotion when it transfers to Birkin. He doesn’t merely “read” it on her face; he is immediately struck with its force: “Her fury seemed to blaze out and burn his face. He shrank a little” (307). This affective register has a pervasive, transformative effect on Birkin as he is caught up in this circulating force with Ursula. As he watches her “vibrating fingers” working to fasten berries to her coat, “A wonderful tenderness *burned* in him, at the sight of her quivering, so sensitive fingers: and at the same time he was so full of rage and callousness” (307, my italics). Rather than being emblematic of anger, this “burning” within him exists alongside his more conventional anger. Something more than mere emotion is conveyed; an unnamed affective force circulates between the two characters with transformative effects on both of them. Birkin realizes an immediate transformation in his demeanor, indicated when the narrator notes that “A clearer look had come over [his] face,” and it leads him to change his disposition towards Ursula and open up to her position in the argument: “He knew she was in the main right. He knew he was perverse, so spiritual on the one hand, and in some strange way, degraded, on the other” (308). This transformation of perspective is borne not out of what she says to him but the immediate affective relation between them.

Such transformative gains are indicative of Lawrence’s valorization of the balanced approach towards affective interconnection. The relationship Birkin and Ursula foster, wherein they simultaneously realize their pervasive interrelation and their individuality, facilitates new,

more nuanced understandings of the other person. Birkin “could see her so completely” (311). Ursula “looked at him” and “[n]ew eyes opened in her soul, she saw a strange creature from another world, in him. It was as if she were enchanted, and everything were metamorphosed” (312). She is able to see Birkin beyond readymade conceptual frameworks as something new. Furthermore, their experience facilitates new relations with and understandings of the world and of the self. Ursula finds herself “in a strange element, a new heaven round about her” (311), and she describes herself as “a strange, transcendent reality” (312). The experience of “Excuse” occurs on the road, away from the immediate influence of civilized life, but the location also symbolically represents their distance from the conventional understanding of their relationship with the world. The church bells from Southwell Minster ring out “like dim, bygone centuries sounding. It was all so far off” (312). The attentive disposition and resultant relationship they develop distances them from the conventional, religious, idealistic way of understanding their situation in the world, and fosters instead a heightened attentiveness to the subtle details of their immediate experience: “He drove on in a strange new wakefulness, the tension of his consciousness broken. He seemed to be conscious all over, all his body awake with a simple, glimmering awareness, as if he had just come awake, like a thing that is born, like a bird when it comes out of an egg, into a new universe” (311-12). Lawrence suggests that they are born into a heightened awareness, where each experience is new and raw, and thus unmediated by habitual abstraction.

Pluralistic Monism

William James offers a philosophical context contemporaneous to Woolf and Lawrence for understanding the simultaneous superposition of individuality of unity found in their novels. William James’s pluralism, described above, provides an explanation for the superposition of the

human being that serves as a philosophical exploration of the same insights physics was contemporaneously developing. The fundamental fabric of James's ontological vision is "pure experience," which is constituted by a plurality of things that can be taken discretely: "there is no *general* stuff of which experience at large is made. There are as many stuffs as there are 'natures' in the things experienced" (*Essays* 14). James posits a "vague monism" wherein, rather than situating the human consciousness outside of experience, he situates it a constituent part of the experience ontologically equivalent to all other parts. The vision of the world he arrives at insists on both separateness and concatenation: it is an "undeniable fact that the content of experience not only has an existence of its own, some immanent and intrinsic existence," but also "each part of that content leaves its mark, so to speak, on its neighbors, giving an account of itself to others and, in some manner, going out of itself so it can be known" (118). As the individual content enjoys this "going out of itself" in its relations, it is both discrete "in itself" and interpenetrating simultaneously. James defines the "monism" he arrives at as one "that is altogether rudimentary" (119). In his vision, human beings are "subjects," but they are only such as a secondary assignation upon that monistic fabric of experience, which is "subjective and objective, both at once" (5). The experience of subjectivity is *real* because it is experienced, but it is not the only way of knowing the self, for it coexists with an accessible experience of continuity, the experience of a world of "simultaneous characters" that "overlap each other with their being" (*Pluralistic* 288). They are both independent and unified in a monistic continuity. How they are understood is a matter of perspective. For James, this monistic continuity, while vague, can be known in experience and is valuable:

Two parts, themselves disjoined, may nevertheless hang together by intermediaries with which they are severally connected, and the whole world

eventually may hang together similarly, inasmuch as *some* path of conjunctive transition by which to pass from one of its part to another may always be discernible. Such determinately various hanging-together may be called *concatenated* union. (56)

Human beings can know their participation in the continuity of experience, and, James posits, they can know from the position of discrete identity the other person. Through mutual participation in a shared world, one's experiences are "members of a world-experience defined expressly as having all its parts co-conscious, or known together" (221). James's monistic ontological vision leads him to consider the radical conclusion discussed above, that two individuals may be able to achieve direct access to each other through their shared monistic implication. He posits that "exceptional individuals" may be able to access "information ordinarily shut out" (299), but draws short of exploring such further. It is the novelists who explore such people, like *The Waves*'s Bernard and *Women in Love*'s Ursula.

Recent critical scholarship has recognized the tension between individuality and interconnection that runs throughout the works of both Woolf and Lawrence. Angela Hague (2003) reads *The Waves* as reflecting "Woolf's own obsessive interest in the relationship between the flux and fixity of experience, the tendency of reality endlessly to make and unmake itself" (265). While she recognizes the interest in the relationship between the two modes within the novel, wherein Woolf explores a "tension between the individualized, separate self that seeks order, sequence, and differentiation, and the porous, aesthetic consciousness that welcomes flux and the potential dissolution of the individual" (265), Hague reads the entire drama of *The Waves* as divorced from the environment that holds these two aspects of experience together. In her reading of the novel, "The outer world disappears, replaced by the internal dialogue of characters

who effortlessly share their thoughts, emotions, and images with one another” (264). Reading it as a novel fixated entirely on the inner-workings of consciousness, Hague’s reading subordinates individuality to unity, suggesting that all separateness and identity are illusory additions to the actual fusion occurring; she writes that *The Waves* works “to make ‘separateness impossible,’ to provide an excess of ‘sympathy’” (264). Hague detects the unity with which Woolf is so interested while undermining the individuality that so importantly coexists with it: *The Waves*’s “narrative structure ... eliminates the external world, abolishes voiced speech, and offers instead a ‘new assembly of elements’ in which her characters’ minds are so inextricably entwined at deep levels that they have difficulty retaining any illusion of individuality or separateness. All ‘events’ become the psychological property of the group mind created in the novel” (269). As individual identity and collective unity are logically contradictory states, it is understandable that critics might read one as “true” and the other as “illusory,” but radical empirical philosophy helps to explain how these two states coexist equally in the fabric of experience.

Critics frequently situate the coexistence of contradictory states in the work of Woolf and Lawrence alongside the development in modern physics introduced at the start of this chapter. Gillian Beer (1996) suggests that the work of John Tyndall may have influenced Woolf to see in wave-forms relatively stationary particles transmitting a pattern, as in water particles moving upwards and downwards as the waves pass through them. She reads Woolf’s characters as an indestructible “part of an endlessly fleeting pattern of coincidental crossing of waves” (107), wherein “the wave-form flows onwards but the substance is not transferred. Psychic life remains fluid yet strangely unchanging. Individuals do not move much: they reach the crest and then fall back” (89). While recognizing the complicated relationship between individuality and unity, this particular characterization of the confluence of particles and waves situates the individual as a

conduit for forces it has little power over. It downplays individual agency, which is an important part of the production of the “waves” that run through the world of Woolf’s novels, which metaphorically would look more like a complex interference pattern than the simple transmission of a series of unidirectional waves. Louise Westling (1999) draws upon quantum physics as a means of understanding the coexistence of individuality and unity she finds in Woolf’s novel *Between the Acts*:

From the perspective of quantum mechanics ... various local events, or the alternating appearances of unity and dispersity, can be simultaneous or equally potential states of a given entity, as a subatomic entity can be either a particle or a wave, depending on circumstances and observation. Such seems to be the case for individual humans and other animals in the novel, with their multiple voices which are both separate and part of the group.... (868)

Quantum physics offers critics like Beer and Westling a way of understanding how an object can be in two states at once, for the entities studied by the physicists are potentially both a particle and a wave until they are observed. So too characters in Woolf’s novels are potentially singular and distributed, and they materialize as one or the other in each act of observation.

Lawrencian criticism too picks up on this confluence with contemporaneous developments in physics. Nancy Hayles (1982) links the development of Lawrence’s aesthetic to “the ‘both-and’ epistemology implied by the Uncertainty Relation” (89). Hayles understands Lawrence to be working with two dynamics, “linearity and dipolarity” (95). In *The Rainbow*, she finds Lawrence dramatizing “within each generation ... a dipolar interaction between the man and the woman,” one that involves a “tense opposition of contraries” (91), “a space that is at once infolded and open, threatening and liberating, isolated but potentially dynamic” (92).

Alongside this she finds “a linear decline through the generations. As child succeeds parent and as the society becomes more ‘conscious’ and ‘mechanical,’ the partners are less able to engage each other in the ‘frictional to-and-fro’ that is the key to the doorway of the unconscious” (91). Her reading brings this framework to bear upon the linguistic problem in Lawrence’s writing, noting the tension between a pre-linguistic “sensual and immediate” experience and the need to articulate it “through the verbal abstractions and stylizations of art-speech” (95). She brings Lawrence’s concerns with language, which are the subject of the previous chapter, into concert with his ontological situation of the human being, who struggles to find a balance between the Scylla and Charybdis of individuation and unity. She suggests that Lawrence embraced not a strict dialectical method, but that his work performs a “dissolving dialectic,” one that reflects his commitment not to the importance of “consensus,” but to “passionate struggle between contraries” (107).

Craig Gordon (2007) explores the superposition of the characters in Woolf’s and Lawrence’s novels without recourse to quantum physics. He offers the term “the Multitude” to define the sort of community he finds Lawrence developing in his writing, wherein the individual coexists with a whole. “The Multitude” is

a form of totality, a whole, composed in the assemblage of multiple singularities, but rather than a closed transcendent form into which individuals are incorporated, or subsumed, it is a whole that is itself produced as a singular form through which vitality actualizes itself. The Multitude, as a totality that assembles singularities into a constellation, itself exists on the same plane as the singularities themselves as another local intensity in the self-differentiating movement of vitality. As such it functions to create new forms of life in the combinations of

individuals that it actualizes, but it can never become a closed remainderless system. (124)

This “Multitude” that Gordon posits is confluent with James’s pluralism but derived from the more recent critical thought of Michael Hardt. It incorporates the vitalistic notion that this particular form of totality facilitates the creation of new living structures out of the various “constellation[s]” it assembles. It is an open model of community, one that does not subsume the individual to the whole, but rather “is constantly traversed by the shifting forms of, and antagonisms between, the singularities it composes.” It facilitates through the open collectivity both novel social forms and “purer” singleness in its constituent subjects. Gordon situates this model of collectivity against democratic (and totalitarian) models that seek the “fusion of individuals into a unified whole” (122) and that transform its members into “‘functional units’ within a mechanical system” (123). While such models “promote organic structures of collectivity,” they also seek to destroy “[t]he singularity of living identity” (123).

Literary Expressions of Pluralistic Monism

The novels of Woolf and Lawrence explore the human experience of this simultaneity of individuality and unity, and while there appears to be in their explorations a dualistic toggling between these states, such is, from the perspective of James’s philosophy, only an alteration in perspective on the same experience. The perspective that one adopts, of course, has profound consequences in one’s life, and the work of both authors serve to correct an imbalance towards an atomistic individualism while both agreeing that total fusion is no solution. In their writing, Woolf and Lawrence both recognize the simultaneous coexistence of states. Woolf depicts this as a choice of perspectives, and suggests through her broad use of thalassic tropes the implication of not only individual characters but also language and the world in a pervasive ontological fabric

confluent with James's "pure experience." Lawrence's novels offer a similar depiction of the world, and he advocates for a simultaneous realization of and negotiation of individuality and interconnection.

Woolf's Thalassic Trope

Water is perhaps the most dominant metaphor that Woolf uses throughout her writing to express the strange monistic continuity of her own world and the worlds she creates in her novels. Woolf makes consistent use of thalassic metaphors to suggest the perspectively-oriented simultaneity of individuality and interconnection. The metaphor of a wave perfectly encapsulates this superposition, and Woolf's use of it conjures up not the abstract claims of physicists about particle-wave duality, but the common-sense experience of the surface of a body of water. Individual existences really are there – waves really do form on the surface of water – but such expressions are simultaneously continuous with a greater totality, just as waves are continuous with the water from which they are formed.

A number of critics have drawn attention to Woolf's engagements with images of water, but while there is little doubt of Woolf's consistent use of the image, there are a variety of interpretations of it. Difficulty resolving the significance of the thalassic trope is unsurprising if it is meant to reflect experiences that transcend the logic of simple identity. Several critics read Woolf's interest in water as reflective of her interest in deep psychology. Bonnie Kime Scott (2012) describes the "underwater worlds" of a number of Woolf's characters and explains that "[u]nderwater imagery is suggestive of the importance placed on the unconscious in Freudian-inspired modernism." These watery depths represent the unknown unconscious that characters explore: "[t]reasures, which may represent ideas ..., lie beneath the surface" (215). The "fin" image that Woolf repeatedly returns to is then an intimation of the gains hidden in these

unconscious depths: “Though disembodied, the fin calls attention to what is beneath the surface, to a life worthy of comprehension” (216). Also connecting the thalassic trope to the depths of consciousness, Rebecca McNeer (2011) examines Woolf’s use of water imagery in her nonfiction, explaining that Woolf uses aquatic imagery to represent the source of her creative process. McNeer points out that Woolf describes the source of her “creative power” (99) as the unknown, watery depths within her, and she identifies a number of Woolf’s diary entries referring to her inner depths as a wellspring of creativity, “a cistern, a hidden spring, bubbling, boiling, freshly flowing” (97). McNeer describes Woolf’s creative process as “swimming and diving” in her “wet and fertile brain” (99).

Woolf’s water imagery is not restricted to the deep, dark places of a psychology of the unconscious, and regularly throughout her work Woolf describes the physical and social world in similar terms. As Mary Ann Gillies (1996) notes, Woolf uses water to describe the relational intermingling and interpenetration of the human social world, the “stream of humanity” in which Woolf’s characters “enter intuitively into each other’s life” (127). Savina Stevanato (2012) suggests that the thalassic imagery Woolf uses in her writing connotes “the watery depths of darkness and silence” and “hold nothingness. Depths contain death” (266). If we understand the water in Woolf’s writing as representative of the potentially fusional, unifying flux, the extreme depths of it would be deathly, as they are in Lawrence’s writing, for they would represent the obliteration of singleness. From such a perspective, these depths are not representative of deep psychology but of the loss of self that interconnection perpetually threatens. The flux that Woolf explores in her writing implicates deep psychology, the social world, and the extreme extent of ecstatic possibilities, and in this way each reading of Woolf’s use of water imagery is accurate

but partial. As Woolf describes the world, things can manifest in singleness and dryness, as shells on a beach, or in interfusion, as saturating waters.

Part of the way Woolf describes the affectional impingements in the atmosphere of *Night and Day* is through her use of thalassic language and imagery. Woolf refers to a number of environments in the novel as having an underwater quality. For example, the Hilbery household exerts a homogenizing force over its inhabitants, troublingly undermining individual identity: “their identity was *dissolved* in a general glory of something that might, perhaps, be called civilization” (415, my emphasis). Characters within these fluidic environments are at times situated as dissolved and a part of the fluid, and at others as solid objects situated in various relationships with such an environment. Such is on display when Katharine describes the mechanical, noisy world of London as a “changing tumult” in which people are subordinated to a fusional, indifference force: it “had the inexpressible fascination of varied life *pouring* ceaselessly with a purpose which, as she looked, seemed to her, somehow, the normal purpose for which life was framed; its complete indifference to the individuals, whom it swallowed up and rolled onwards, filled her with at least a temporary exaltation” (462, my emphasis). All the people in the street Katharine looks at “tended the enormous rush of the current—the great flow, the deep stream, the unquenchable tide” (462-63). They may resist the current of their city, but they cannot avoid its influence and their implication in it. If a lack of individual identity makes one too susceptible to being “dissolved,” then individual identity is necessary not only to avoid the trauma that Rhoda suffers in *The Waves*, but also to avoid being utterly coopted by fusional models of civic belonging.

Throughout her writing, and consistently throughout *The Waves*, Woolf uses water imagery to suggest that each part of the world is equally subject to affective, relational influence,

that moments of unity include a wide variety of experiences that might otherwise seem incommensurate. As Kime Scott notes, Woolf describes seemingly subjective, emotional experience in such terms. Early in *The Waves*, Bernard describes the contents of his mind as a body of water, with dark, unexplored depths: “The lake of my mind, unbroken by oars, heaves placidly and soon sinks into an oily somnolence” (27-28). This placid quality within the lake of Bernard’s mind is produced when he isolates himself from the experience of his environment. One of Bernard’s refrains in the novel is his repeated self-representation as a droplet of water. As he describes it, his “self” is derived from his relationship with the environment: “I, pausing, looked at the tree, and as I looked in autumn at the fiery and yellow branches, some sediment formed; I formed; a drop fell; I fell—that is, from some completed experience I had emerged” (211-12). Bernard’s alteration between the “sediment” or “a drop” and “I” suggests the simultaneous otherness of the world and its implication as constitutive of Bernard. Bernard’s experience of himself as constituted by a fluidic environment reflects Woolf’s description of her own constitution in her diaries. Therein, she describes her emotions as waters arising: “Oh its beginning its coming—the horror—physically like a painful wave swelling about the heart—tossing me up. I’m uphappy uphappy! Down—God, I wish I were dead” (D3: 110). While these emotions are obviously a part of her, Woolf’s description acknowledges the extent to which they are also a pluralistic part of her, for they act *upon* her in “tossing [her] up.” The seemingly internal location of this experience is complicated as she attends further to the source of the disturbance: “Pause. But why am I feeling this? Let me watch the wave rise. I watch. Vanessa. Children” (110). The “wave” she observes is comprised of her sister and her sister’s children. The thalassic metaphor breaks down the distinction between inner and outer here, for the “wave” she finds within herself are the people in her environment.

The influence of other people in Woolf's writing is frequently figured as forces moving through water, such that the inner life of characters is continuous with the people creating the influence. In *The Waves*, Jinny describes the people at a party as discretely separate before suggesting their interconnections through thalassic imagery. First, the people in the room "are the abraded and battered shells cast on the shore" (145). As she describes these people, they are shells, so originating from the ocean, but they are *dry*, separate from this ocean. Jinny then figures them quite differently, and the change occurs when she metaphorically drops the logic of identity: "I drop all these facts—diamonds, withered hands, china pots and the rest of it—as a monkey drops nuts from its naked paw" (146). As she lets go of the "facts" that she carries into the world, the people are figured as a saturated, interconnected substance: "I am going to be buffeted; to be flung up, and flung down, among men, like a ship on the sea" (146). Jinny still figures herself differently from them, but the environment of other people here is transfigured as she abandons the logic of separate identity, and she recognizes the complicating "buffetings" to which she is subjected.

Woolf likewise describes the social world in watery terms in her short story "An Unwritten Novel" (1921), when the speaker, who has been travelling on a train, disembarks into a crowd: "the look of them ... brims me with wonder—floods me anew.... Oh, how it whirls and surges—floats me afresh!" (40). Her experience of the crowd is as a flood entering into her and filling her up, "brim[ming]" her with their presence. The world is thoroughly saturated with the overlapping implication with others. Woolf figures it as a sea comprised of seemingly discrete people: "Wherever I go, mysterious figures, I see you, turning the corner, mothers and sons: you, you, you.... This, I fancy, must be the sea" (40). While the speaker figures herself as a container

for the experience of these other people, the description implies the possibility for the inverse effect—that the speaker is herself is part of the sea of experience entering into the others.

For Woolf, one can be taken as individual, but one is always simultaneously also part of the flowing interconnection that saturates her world. Her critique of her husband's rational clarity in her *Diary* is precisely a criticism of his inability to recognize that omnipresent latter quality in the world: he “suffers from his extreme clarity. He sees things so that he can't swim float & speculate” (D2: 222). His problem is precisely with how he attends to the world, how he “sees things.” His rational mind takes the world only in the discrete mode, and fails to recognize the productive other half of the superposition of everything, and in particular the human being. In “A Sketch of the Past” when talking about her half-brother George, Woolf makes it clear that one's atomistic view of the world in no way disconnects them from the pervasive connections that circulate throughout it. George's mentality is tied to “the laws of patriarchal society,” which are doubtless rigid and fixed, but nevertheless, “he was in the swim” (154).

Woolf's commitment to this vision of a world of actors “in the swim” extends also to literature. Her commentary on literature as participating in the same thalassic field of interpenetration suggests an elevated importance for her work, and it likewise suggests that the world of the novel and the world of the reader are connected. Woolf frequently figures writing in thalassic metaphorical terms, just as she frequently figures people. In “Phases of Fiction” (1929), Woolf describes her writing as derived from a “deep reservoir of perception.” It comes from her experience of the thalassic flux, and her characters are part of the substance of the world, discrete manifestations within the substance: “characters rise, like waves forming” (84-85). She figures the novelist not as someone who creates something out of nothing, but as someone who is particularly sensitive to the flowing nature of the world, which flows into their writing; the

novelist “is terribly exposed to life.... He can no more cease to receive impressions than a fish in mid-ocean can cease to let the water rush through his gills” (131). There is continuity between Woolf’s world, the contents of her mind, and her writing. In her diary, she describes her act of writing as “swimming in the highest ether known to me” (D2: 314), yet she also explains that the words she puts down on paper “pour out” (L4: 266), and she figures her own literature as something she can swim in, which she must do when she picks up where she left off: she lowers herself “like a diver, very cautiously into the last sentence [she] wrote yesterday” (D3: 33). Thus, as she describes the explorations that provoke her writing, her own environment is the water; in the moment of articulation, the language is the water entering the text; once it is written, the text itself is the water. Woolf understands her novels as continuous with her world. In her diary, she describes the process of working on *The Waves* as “making the good phrases shine. One wave after another” (D3: 303). Literature and the language therein is thus figured as a source of affective influence in the world, but not one that is discrete from the world it affects, its reader, or its author. It is implicated within a network of relational events, figured both as a discrete source of influence and part of the substance of the world. The continuity between literature and people is described in *The Waves* when Bernard reads Neville’s poem. The effect of the poem is indistinguishable from the effect of its author, and it saturates Bernard: “Like a long wave, like a roll of heavy waters, he went over me, his devastating presence—dragging me open, laying bare the pebbles on the shore of my soul” (71). There is no distinct separation in that moment between author, poem, and reader as they form an affective event.

The world that Woolf describes and all the various objects and individuals within it are implicated in this unifying sea. Her purpose in writing *The Waves* is in part to acknowledge separateness while exposing that implication, which she notes in her diary:

I think even externality is good; some combination of [the internal and external] ought to be possible. The ideas has come to me that what I want now to do is to saturate every atom... to give the moment whole; whatever it includes. Say that this moment is a combination of thought; sensation; the voice of the sea. (D3:209)

She wishes to indicate the “externality,” the discrete separation of things, while simultaneously exposing each atom’s implication in the “sea” through “saturation.” Each separate thing is porous—the seemingly minimally individualized stuff of the material world, atoms, are saturated. Her work thus serves as a corrective to a myopically dry view of the world.

The Waves dramatizes a struggle between these two superimposed states in its interludes, which describes the sea rhythmically attacking and saturating the dry shore: “Up spurted stones and shingle. They swept round the rocks” (137). The earth, seemingly apart from the sea, comes to be saturated in these interludes with the dampness: “the dampness of the wet earth ... the sodden, the damp-spotted, the curled with wetness” (88). The division between the two realms is undermined in Woolf’s symbolism. What is fluid can be metaphorically taken as solid—the waves “swept the beach with steel blue and diamond-tipped water” (88)—and solid material objects can be taken as liquid, like when bird movements are described as “the interlacings of a mountain stream whose waters, meeting, foam and then mix, and hasten quicker and quicker down the same channel...” (89), or when, as night falls, “the rocks lost their hardness” and an “iron black boot became a pool of deep blue” (174). Just as the water can be taken as solid material, the seeming solidity of the dry world is repeatedly implicated in and described as a constitutive part of a watery field. The interludes suggest through their naturalistic imagery that this tension between dry individuality and saturated unity is natural and unavoidable.

Lawrence's Equilibrium

While Lawrence's writing moves between championing individuality and unity in the world, he advocates for a balanced coexistence between individuation and unity. The world that Lawrence describes in "Chaos in Poetry" (1928) coheres through a tumultuous and chaotic fabric: "Man, and the animals, and the flowers, all live within a strange and forever-surgings chaos. The chaos which we have got used to, we call a cosmos. The unspeakable inner chaos of which we are composed we call consciousness, and the mind, and even civilization. But it is, ultimately, chaos, lit up by visions, or not lit up by visions" (109). As with James, this vision of the world involves a plurality of individual forms implicated within and constituted by a substance that Lawrence calls "chaos" and that James calls "pure experience." Like James, Lawrence is not inclined towards any totalizing monistic vision, which he makes clear when he defines the "Absolute" in "The Crown." He writes that the foundation of experience, the "Absolute," is inherently borne out of the relation of opposites, out of "the clash and foam" of two seemingly absolute poles: "The direct opposites of the Beginning and the End, by their very directness, imply their own supreme relation. And this supreme relation is made absolute in the clash and the foam of the meeting waves" (12). The only sort of absolute he can posit exists not as the poles, but in the overlapping of two poles. The poles themselves are abstract, and the simultaneous coexistence of them is actual. In this vision of the world, human beings are the waves, but also, "We are the foam in the foreshore, that which, between the oceans, is not, but that which supersedes the oceans in utter reality..." (15). The human being is part of the "absolute" that exists in the liminal space where these apparently paradoxical dichotomies overlap.

The Rainbow follows generations of development of the Brangwen family out of a simple, agrarian way of life. The structure of the novel mirrors the Bible, opening with the prelapsarian mythical origins of the Brangwen clan. They lived in a world where the finite, represented by the earth, and the infinite, represented by heaven, cohere:

heaven and earth was teeming around them, and how should this cease? They felt the rush of the sap in spring, they knew the wave which cannot halt, but each year throws forward the seed to begetting, and falling back, leaves the young-born on the earth. They knew the intercourse between heaven and earth.... (9-10).

When Lawrence writes that “they knew the wave,” he suggests that they understood their implication within a totalizing unity, for in “The Crown,” he figures water as representing “universal oneness” (47). In the above passage, the Brangwen progenitors enjoyed a prelinguistic knowledge of oneness and the individuation that arises within it. The opening of this novel dramatizes the origin of mankind out of the immediacy of precognitive animality and into mental life. As the Brangwens move away from this, the novel dramatizes their multi-generational quest to replace this originary naïve awareness with a developed, mature recognition of one’s relationship to the world.

For Lawrence, neither the assertion of individual form nor the realization of such unity is enough. Both tend towards deathly stasis—the former resulting in the calcification of form, the latter in the obliteration of any creative potential as difference is destroyed. As Lawrence explains in “The Crown,” in total interfusion, “[t]he mist darkens and ebbs-in in waves, the trees are melted away, all things pass into a universal oneness, with the last re-echoing dove, peace, all pure peace, ebbing in softer, softer waves to a universal stillness” (35). Life thrives in the simultaneous intermingling of these opposite tendencies, and the moral life—which increases the

creative potential of the human being—seeks to embrace this paradoxical being. “The Crown” serves as a manifesto on the balance that must be achieved. Humanity is either too beholden to unity or individuation, which Lawrence represents respectively in the essay by darkness and light: “we make war upon the lion of darkness, annihilate him, so that we may be free in the eternal light. Or else, suddenly, we admit ourselves the lion, and we rush rampant on the unicorn of chastity” (6). The opposition between these elements must be maintained, “for we are two opposites which exist by virtue of our inter-opposition. Remove the opposition and there is collapse, a sudden crumbling into universal nothingness” (6). This opposite inheres in the human being. To deny one part of it is to deny half of the human being and languish in stasis. In “The Crown,” Lawrence describes the rainbow, the symbol of Ursula’s burgeoning maturity, as a symbol of this superposition: “It is that which comes when night clashes on day, the rainbow, the yellow and rose and blue and purple of dawn and sunset, which leaps out of the breaking of light upon darkness, of darkness upon light, absolute beyond day or night; the rainbow, the iridescence which is darkness at once and light, the two-in-one; the crown that binds them both” (16). Thus, the ending of *The Rainbow* reflects Ursula’s mature realization of her situation in the world.

Nancy Hayles suggests that *The Rainbow* dramatizes the ultimate failure of the Brangwen family, who throughout the novel suffer “the long decline into linear consciousness.” She suggests that by the end of the novel, the titular symbol has lost its “power to effect reconciliation between opposites” (94). However, it is difficult to accept this conclusion, and an examination of the use of light and dark imagery as it relates to Ursula suggests the balanced disposition at which she arrives. As Lawrence uses it in these novels, darkness is representative of a loss of distinction, of the nonlinguistic inner life, and light is representative of distinction

and of linguistic, cognitive understanding. In *The Rainbow*, Ursula describes people in a lighted railway carriage as existing on the precipice of an unexplored darkness. Her desire, however, is not for the darkness, but for the twilight that mingles the two worlds: “all the stir and seethe of lights and people was but the rim, the shores of a great inner darkness and void. She wanted very much to be on the *seething, partially illuminated shore*, for within her was the void reality of dark spaces” (316, my italics). She seeks the twilight, the interfusion of dark with light, representative of a state of superposition. It inheres in her, which Lawrence reflects through his descriptions of her “darkly lighted face,” her “warm, dark, lit-up face” (421). This mingling of dark and light in Ursula is representative of her disposition bridging individuality and unity. At the beginning of *Women in Love*, Lawrence depicts in her a “strange brightness of an essential flame” and “underneath,” a “darkness” wherein “something was coming to pass.” She laments that “If only she could break through the last integuments!” (9). Ursula seeks to break down the final divisions between the qualities of light and darkness in her, to establish the superposition that Lawrence valorizes.

Birkin’s own values are confluent with Ursula’s, a fact revealed in passing as his mocking acquaintances discuss his philosophical letters: “Isn’t that the letter about uniting the dark and the light...?” (383). Lawrence ties this merging of darkness and light to experience, to the desire for “the phosphorescent ecstasy of acute sensation” (383). Phosphorescence, a dim glowing light only visible in dark conditions, suggests a combination of light and darkness. In the chapter “Mooney,” Birkin and Ursula move out into the natural world to explore such an interfusion, a world characterized by the meeting of two oceans of experience:

there was a burst of sound, and a burst of brilliant light, the moon had exploded on the water, and was flying asunder in flakes of white and dangerous fire.

Rapidly, like white birds, the fires all broken rose across the pond, fleeing in clamorous confusion, battling with the flock of dark waves that were forcing their way in. The furthest waves of light, fleeing out, seemed to be clamouring against the shore for escape, the waves of darkness came in heavily, running under towards the centre. But at the centre, the heart of all, was still a vivid, incandescent quivering of a white moon not quite destroyed, a white body of fire writhing and striving and not even now broken open, not yet violated. (247)

Ursula and Birkin are approaching the superposition of the world, which bridges the identity of individual form (suggested when a fish jumps from the dark waters and “reveal[s] the light in the pond”) and unity. The world they move within is “a battlefield of broken lights and shadows, running close together” (247). It is this disposition that facilitates their productive affective interconnection, their ability to understand the world and, more important, themselves, in this complex manner.

The pluralistic monism suggested in Lawrence’s novels is reflective of the constitution of the human being that he posits. *Women in Love*’s “Mooney” chapter brings its metaphorical descriptions to bear upon the constitution of the human being through Birkin, who spontaneously considers

the way of freedom. There was the Paradisal entry into pure, single being, the individual soul taking precedence over love and desire for union, stronger than any pangs of emotion, a lovely state of free proud singleness, which accepts the obligation of the permanent connection with others, and with the other, submits to the yoke and leash of love, but never forfeits its own proud individual singleness, even while it loves and yields. (254)

This “freedom” is a paradoxical superposition of “proud singleness” and “permanent connection,” which describes the positive relationship Ursula and Birkin foster. Being both, it is never simply and statically resolved. As Lawrence suggests in “The Crown,” the human being is implicated in a strange, monistic unity: “we are all waves of the tide. But the tide contains all the waves” (23). The tide is composed of and unifies a plurality of entities. This paradoxical position is expressed again in “John Galsworthy” (1927) where he laments that most people are not aware of the complex constitution of their being: “humanly, mankind is helpless and unconscious, unaware even of the thing most precious to any human being, that core of manhood or womanhood, naïve, innocent at-oneness with the living universe-continuum, which alone makes a man individual, and as an individual, essentially happy...” (213). Human individuality is paradoxically constituted through connection to the unity of a “universe-continuum.” The price of not realizing the full complexity of our “own manhood” is to “let it be destroyed” and reconstituted by social forces as “social beings,” whose complex superposition is utterly distorted (213).

The Human Being and Provisional Identity

The works of both Lawrence and Woolf suggest that the human being is relationally constituted through a delocalization of “inner” and “outer” not unlike James’s vision of affect, just as is every other part of the world. The figurations of the human being that they offer are concrete expressions confluent with the pluralism of philosophers participating in James’s “humanism.” Lawrence and Woolf delve into the lived experiences of characters coming into contact with the distributed qualities of their being, with the strange knowledge of the world and the other that such offers, and negotiating such destabilizing, troubling, even painful experiences.

In closing, this study will examine the confluent visions of the human being at which both authors arrive and examine the models of provisional identity related to this that each advocates.

The models of the self that the authors offer find their philosophical correlative in Whitehead's "event," which is an ontological unit that applies to far more than the human being, being an explanation of the way each object in the world coheres its environment. In the chapter "Science and Philosophy" in *Science and the Modern World*, he explicitly addresses the constitution of the human event as constituted through relations. Human identity, "the private psychological field," is a reflective perspective on one's own event, "merely the event considered from its own standpoint" (186). The human being is, beyond the conceptualized identity, constituted through its implication in the flux: "The fundamental principle is that whatever merges into actuality, implants its aspects in every individual event" (187). The human being coheres in and with its environment and reciprocally invests itself in the other events in the environment, which likewise do the same. Whitehead suggests that in the human event, there is not only implication in the constitutive field, but also the possibility of knowing that implication and one's connection to other implicated events. The human event can know itself as a "complex unity, whose ingredients involve all reality beyond itself, restricted under the limitation of its pattern of aspects. Thus we know ourselves as a function of unification of a plurality of things which are other than ourselves. Cognition discloses an event as being an activity, organizing a real togetherness of alien things" (187). Whitehead's theory of the event insists that human beings and every other part of the world participate in the same matrix of interpenetrating, overlapping coherences. The dualistic notion of subject and object breaks down in this vision, for every part of the world is an active participant in every other; individual entities exist as events, and human beings exist individually as modulating coherences that persist through time, but

what is seemingly interior to the human being is always implicated beyond that individuality. For Lawrence and Woolf, the porousness and modulating nature of the human being is vitally important to recognize but also deeply troubling, and some more stable but flexible identity for the human event is necessary to ensure one's ability to fruitfully live.

Lawrence's Relational Individual

The situation of the human being in Lawrence's work involves a balance between individuality and implication in a vast, unifying matrix. Human beings are constituted by this matrix, and they can thus realize their singleness only in realizing their implication. John R. Harrison (2000) explains that the understanding of self that Lawrence establishes in his early writing is founded upon paradoxical tensions. For Lawrence, there are two ways to understand the human self: "Lawrence differentiated between the ego, which he defined as the ready-made mental self, conscious and self-assertive, and identity, something deeper and infinitely more complex and obscure" (30). Lawrence lauds the "identity" while castigating the "ego", which is the static conceptualization of the self described earlier in this chapter. The tension that Harrison explores in Lawrence's conception of the human is between abstraction, which he associates with the "Word," and the Flesh, which involves affective relations, a "primal sympathy" (40). In relation to the latter, Harrison identifies intimations throughout Lawrence's early writing of the paradoxical implication of opposite tendencies: "a deep, instinctive sense of the subtle and intimate intermingling of the human and the non-human, birth and death, joy and grief..." (41). The struggle upon which Harrison focuses, the "internal conflict between the over-developed word and the suppressed flesh" (43), is important not only to Lawrence's critique of the intellect, but also to his model of a fruitful self. The singleness that Lawrence lauds exists simultaneously and paradoxically within unifying relations.

While Lawrence posits a radically-interconnected world, individuality appears throughout his writing as an important part of the human being. He advocates for it in “Education of the People,” which he wrote just after completion of *Women in Love*. Earlier, this chapter drew attention to a passage from the same essay explaining the affectional, vibrational relation passing between two people. Alongside this relational model, Lawrence paradoxically endorses an educational model that pursues a “fullness of being” (603) found in the production of “distinct individuals” (606). Such individuals break with ego-bolstering civic collectivity:

instead of finding our highest reality in an ever-extending aggregation with the rest of men, we shall realize at last that the highest reality for every living creature is its purity of singleness and its perfect solitary integrity, and that everything else should be but a means to this end. All communion, all love, and all communication, which is all consciousness, are but a means to the perfected singleness of the individual being. (637)

This passage seems to show Lawrence valorizing the human being achieving a perfect separation from any unifying implication. However, “the individual being” he indicates here is fostered only through its myriad relations. Any “singleness” that Lawrence posits is always simultaneously implicated in relation. In the same essay, Lawrence eschews the term “individualism” in explaining that the perfected self exists in “the exquisite arresting *manifoldness* of being, multiplicity, plurality, as the stars are plural in their starry singularity.” The separate self is “the perfect singleness of a full and flashing, orb-like maturity,” which is achieved only “through all the processes of communion and communication, love and consciousness” (638). Here again he describes the individual as a “star,” situated metaphorically within a complex network of gravitational forces to which it contributes. Lawrence explains this

configuration of selves in *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* in terms of polarity: the human being “cannot exist save in polarized relation to the external universe, a relation both functional and psychic-dynamic” (44). The language of electrical polarization suggests simultaneously distinctness and a mutually-constitutive connection, a sort of entanglement.

As with Whitehead’s events, this kind of entanglement exists not only between human beings, but is a fundamental aspect of the constitution of all things, which the human being is a part of. In *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, Lawrence implicates even dead elements of the environment: “The dead beech-twigg can’t pretend to be a waggling caterpillar. Yet how the two commune!” (65). The human being is implicated in the network of such “commun[ions]” that circulate in the world, achieving their singleness only in realizing and embracing such implication. Such communions exist not only with the material world, but also with the echoes constituted by literature and memory. Lawrence explains that his own personal constitution involves the departed voices of his forebears:

How many dead souls, like swallows, twitter and breed thoughts and instincts under the thatch of my hair and the eaves of my forehead, I don’t know. But I believe a good many.... I am sorry to say I believe in the souls of the dead. I am almost ashamed to say, that I believe the souls of the dead in some way re-enter and pervade the souls of the living: so that life is always the life of living creatures, and death is always our affair. This bit, I admit, is bordering on mysticism. I’m sorry, because I don’t like mysticism. It has no trousers and no trousers seat.... (64)

Lawrence intimates that the foundational level of his being is “pervaded” and constituted by voices that are not his own. It is through a recognition of this implication that his sense of

identity is established. Lawrence's identity, as he expresses it, involves far more than himself: "I am I, the vital centre of all things. I am I, the clue to the whole. All is one with me. It is the one identity" (75). In each of these statements, the centrality of the self increasingly involves the totality of a sympathetically-related whole: the "vital centre" is one with "[a]ll."

Birkin and Ursula represent the two most successful, valorized characters in the pair of Lawrence's novels that this study examines, and the remaining discussion of those novels centres on their explorations of self. *Women in Love's* Birkin experiences his implication in the world in the chapter "Breadalby." The chapter describes Birkin venturing out into the verdant natural countryside and disrobing, "lying down and letting [the primroses] touch his belly, his breasts. It was such a fine, cool, subtle touch all over him, he seemed to saturate himself with their contact" (107). The description of *saturation* reflects Lawrence's assertion that aspects of the environment enter the human being and contribute to its constitution, and it also reflects the importance of the body in Lawrence's estimation of knowledge-fostering experience. As the scene unfolds, Lawrence describes the sensations of Birkin's physical engagement with the natural world, with thistles scraping his skin, branches beating against him, the dewy grasses caressing him. In becoming naked, Birkin symbolically casts off the trappings of ego that Harrison identifies and engages a less restricted identity, one that allows him to recognize the world's contribution to his selfhood; he experiences the "coolness and subtlety of vegetation travelling into one's blood. How fortunate he was, that there was this lovely, subtle, responsive vegetation, waiting for him, as he waited for it" (107). Lawrence indicates not only that the vegetation enters into and contributes to Birkin, but also the reciprocal agency in the relationship Birkin has with the natural world through the mutuality of the "waiting" at the end of the passage. Out of this experience, along with his singleness, Birkin paradoxically establishes his

connection to the flora with which he has communed, recognizing his own agency as sharing the natural impulses of plant-life, and sharing in the same vital force that circulates in the world: “He knew where to plant himself, his seed: along with the trees, in the folds of the delicious fresh growing leaves. This was his place, his marriage place. The world was extraneous” (108). The folds of the leaves in which Birkin will plant his seed suggests a sexual unity with the natural world, one figured as “marriage.” Simultaneously, this moment suggests Birkin’s singleness, for he insists upon the “extraneous[ness]” of “the world,” which in the context of this scene seems to represent the social world which loses its hold on him through this communion.

This figuration of the fruitful identity as a realized superposition of singleness and unity is also established in the character of Ursula in *The Rainbow*. Even as a youth, Ursula has a burgeoning awareness of her identity existing in relation to a unifying field. The novel explains that part of her early maturation was the development of this awareness: “As Ursula passed from girlhood towards womanhood... [s]he became aware of herself, that she was a separate entity in the midst of an unseparated obscurity...” (263). While Ursula really is a distinct human being, her “separateness” does not exist apart from that “unseparated obscurity.” The singleness that Ursula realizes in the novel is distinct from the egoistic identities of many of the people she encounters. She recognizes that everyone is moving like “little paper ships in their motion. But in reality each one was a dark, blind, eager wave urging blindly forward, dark with the same homogenous desire” (415). The egos are founded upon abstract notions, which she suggests through the connotation of the written word in the “paper” boats representing them. Blind to their implication, such people have no control over it, and thus they become “homogenous” in their identical desires, given over to a unity that destroys their potential individuality. Ursula notes the way such inauthentic egos deny a richer identity connected to all that exceeds curtailed

conceptual boundaries: “They think it better to be clerks or professors than to be the dark, fertile beings that exist in the potential darkness” (415).

In contrast to such rejection of implication in “darkness” and the resulting homogeneity, Ursula’s more mature acknowledgment of the constitution of her identity embraces the paradoxical nature of the human being. As she observes a microscopic organism, Ursula considers the sort of unity implicated in “the gleam of its nucleus,” and her thoughts quickly turn to considerations of her own self-constitution:

Suddenly in her mind the world gleamed strangely, with an intense light, like the nucleus of the creature under the microscope. Suddenly she had passed away into an intensely-gleaming light of knowledge. She could not understand what it all was.... It was a consummation, a being infinite. Self was a oneness with the infinite. To be oneself was a supreme, gleaming triumph of infinity. (409).

This description breaks down the distinction between the content of her mind and the world, just as it breaks down Ursula’s separateness from what she observes. The gleaming is first “in her mind” but of “the world,” and it exceeds her, for she “passe[s] away into [it].” The “knowledge” into which Ursula enters is not conceptual, but is instead instinctive. In this moment of realization, Ursula recognizes herself as an event that brings together her world, simultaneously single while unifying the environment. In recognizing her implication in the world, she develops the capacity to recognize and resist the inertia of socially-imposed homogeneity, and she develops a sense of self that embraces the potential for novelty and change.

While Ursula recognizes the importance of her implication in a vast unified field, she comes to realize that she cannot dispense with her identity. Ursula attempts to do so, to lose herself completely in the natural world: “And she lay face downward on the downs, that were so

strong, that cared only for their intercourse with the everlasting skies, and she wished she could become a strong mound smooth under the sky, bosom and limbs bared to all winds and clouds and bursts of sunshine” (430). But it’s not possible; one cannot be completely mindless, cannot entirely shut out the important separateness of human constitution: “But she must get up again and look down from her foothold of sunshine, down and away at the patterned, level earth, with its villages and its smoke and its energy” (430). Lawrence’s quest is for neither mystical connection nor complete independence. A separate identity is a necessary aspect of being a living human, but it must be fostered in relation to the recognition of implication to prevent its calcification; it must remain open to the more fruitful transformations that such relationality provokes.

Woolf’s Provisional Self

In *The Waves*, while similarly suggesting that the human being is constituted within and through a matrix of relations to the circumambient world, Woolf implicitly advocates for a provisional conceptual identity, under the condition that those employing such identities recognize them as provisional, as insufficient to the selfhood they represent. While Banfield suggests that Woolf seeks a Russelian obliteration of the subject, Sotirova (2013) insists that Woolf is pursuing not the obliteration of the self, but the obliteration of the fixed formulation of the self: “Woolf’s comments on the omnipresence of the *I* point towards a rejection not of subjectivity per se, but of egoic thinking and perceiving of the world, which obscures true essences, because of a failure to transcend the ego” (127). Sotirova explains that the problem is the conception of an immutable identity, not the existence of the self altogether. Lisa Marie Lucenti (1998) reads *The Waves* as dramatizing a number of different quests for an adequate form of the fixed self-conception, while contending that such does not exist. She writes that the

self is “nothing more than a rhetorical illusion,” albeit a useful one: “there is perhaps no other illusion so necessary for life” (76). What Lucenti means by this illusory self is confluent with Lawrence’s stable ego: a static identity. While this project takes issue with the identification of any human experience as illusory, Lucenti’s work does acknowledge something of the provisional identity Woolf valorizes in her description of the “fractured” self:

the subject thus fractured is, for Virginia Woolf, the only *ethical* subject since it is actively and continually engaged in a process of interrogating both its own construction and its relationship to everything it cannot contain. This subject is ethical because it refuses to be content with the illusion that it is whole, autonomous, and therefore independent of all that eludes its grasp. (92)

What Lucenti’s account does not recognize is that there is no distinct separation between the human being (which is not, speaking precisely, a subject) and the world within which it exists. The self of course cannot contain everything that exceeds it, but much does contribute to and cohere within the human being, whose selfhood is constituted only with that coherence. This is what Tamar Katz (1995) notes, writing that in *The Waves*, “subjectivity is dispersed, multiple, decentered” (237). She figures Bernard not as searching for fixed identity, but rather as someone who “seeks out conversations with strangers to court the dissolution of boundaries that such contact brings” (237-38). Katz specifically draws attention to Bernard’s provisional use of identity-labels to mark his selfhood and facilitate his activity within and reception of the world, “his sense that he does not have one fixed identity but rather many, which emerge in response to his surroundings” (238). She situates Bernard’s identity as “multiple” because he produces a number of provisional identities from “conventions” from which he is “separate” (238). Ultimately, she notes how in *The Waves* “abstract self” and “perpetual unravelling” (248) are

“standing in perpetual tension, rather than as the secure containment of one by the other” (247).

Bernard is able to embrace this rhythm and to recognize that the identities he adopts are temporary, individual momentary coherences of the world within the perpetually-changing and pervasively-interconnected event that he is.

The Waves offers extensive depictions of its characters navigating their identities, and two are of particular importance to this study: Rhoda, who suffers because she is incapable of developing a strong sense of self, and Bernard, who is able to transform his self-conception and presentation as the changing needs of his life require. Through Rhoda, Woolf demonstrates that a developed sense of self is a necessary protection against the persistent, impinging influences of others. This lack of a robust ego is a problem for Rhoda throughout her life. As a young girl at school, she avoids the mirror in the hall in which the other girls admire themselves because she does not identify with her body and feels that whatever she is, it does not represent her: “for I am not here. I have no face, other people have faces.... Their world is the real world” (32). Rhoda finds this “real world” painful to navigate. Faced with a small symbol of the interfusion to which she is exposed, a puddle in a path, she becomes paralyzed: “Identity failed me. We are nothing, I said, and fell” (50). Without an identity with which to withhold the full brunt of her world’s impinging influences, Rhoda is unable to act and exceptionally vulnerable to others. For example, when she encounters a miserable Neville, her affective implication is extremely destabilizing to her:

Even I who have no face, who make no difference when I come in (Susan and Jinny change bodies and faces), flutter unattached, without anchorage anywhere, unconsolidated, incapable of composing any blankness or continuity or wall

against which these bodies move. It is because of Neville and his misery. The sharp breath of his misery scatters my being. (100)

Rhoda wishes she had a face, a composed identity, to withhold some of this influence, for such a face would help ground her and function as a “wall” to prevent her being continuously overwhelmed. Despite being the most vulnerable character, Rhoda’s need for a composed identity is not unique to her. Identity functions as an “anchorage” for other characters, as a means for them, as Neville says, to “[o]ppose [them]selves to this illimitable chaos, ... this formless imbecility” (188). The stable identity exists in opposition to the harrowing, unmooring experience of the flux. While such an identity is useful and necessary, the danger is that one can become rooted in a fixed conception and live within its static and immuring form. As Bernard notes, as one grows older, “[t]he mind grows rings; the identity becomes robust” (215).

Of the six speaking characters in the novel, Bernard is the most able to achieve a balance between an awareness of his interpenetrating relations with others and functional and provisional identities. Throughout the novel, Bernard reiterates his sense of the way the environment and others cohere in the constitution of the human being. At school, he speaks of an awareness of his distributed nature and his connection with others; at his “most disparate,” he is simultaneously “most integrated. I sympathize effusively” (52). Whatever Bernard is (and he is frequently unsure), it is constituted in relation with other people: “To be myself (I note) I need the illumination of other people’s eyes, and therefore cannot be entirely sure what is my self” (95). Just as the flower at the dinner is seven-sided because of its relation to the events of the seven people observing it, Bernard describes himself in similar terms with other people: “With them I am many-sided” (95). Thus, he acknowledges his reciprocal implication and constitution with the others that he encounters. With each of his friends, he detects a slightly different configuration of

himself, for he is particularly aware of the way the world affects and transfigures him: “When I have joined them another arrangement will form, another pattern” (175).

While Bernard is aware of the relational nature of the human constitution, he also recognizes the importance of having an identity. When he thinks about his “self,” Bernard considers what it would be like for it to suddenly be absent: “But *you* understand, *you*, my self, who always comes at a call (that would be a harrowing experience to call and for no one to come; that would make the midnight hollow...)” (62). Later in his life, Bernard comes to consider more fully what the world “without a self” is like, and it is a place where one can barely perceive and cannot act other than automatically: it “fades ... undergoes a gradual transformation, becomes ... habitual” (239). For Woolf, the self must be asserted in some capacity for there to be any reception of knowledge. Without it, Bernard is unable to receive the world: “How can I proceed now, I said, without a self, weightless and visionless, through a world weightless, without illusion?” (238). Without a self-conception, there is nothing received – becoming one with the world, becoming transparent, light passes through him. Some self is necessary, but through Bernard, Woolf advocates for a provisional and pluralistic identity.

Bernard develops throughout *The Waves* a number of different self-conceptions, and while his linguistic project takes time to become more provisional, his identity is early on already multiple and flexible. In college, he interrogates it: “What am I? I ask. This? No, I am that. Especially now, when I have left a room, and people talking, and the stone flags ring out with my solitary footsteps, and I behold the moon rising, sublimely, indifferently, over the ancient chapel—then it becomes clear that I am not one and simple, but complex and many” (61). The multiplicity articulated at this early point in the novel is a series of provisional identities that Bernard employs, for which he must “cover the entrances and exits of several different men who

alternately act their parts as Bernard” (61). He knows these identities to be provisional; he is “only superficially represented” by them (62). By adopting such identities he prevents himself from hardening like the rings of a tree and remains aware of and receptive to the environment. Part of what he receives is other people, who enter into his composition. He revels in “the unexpected joy of intercourse” and realizes himself “mixed with an unknown Italian waiter—what am I? There is no stability in the world” (97). While such an experience ends in a more firmly-established identity—“I remember: I am engaged to be married. I am to dine with my friends tonight. I am Bernard, myself” (97)—he is repeatedly able to eschew that label, to note its insufficiency both to his more receptive self and the world. This self, he explains, “is in part made of the stimulus which other people provide, and is not mine...” (109). Bernard is an event in which the world coheres, and upon which he places provisional identity labels that allow him to function in that world, labels that he can dismiss when they become restrictive, just as a snake outgrows its skin, “shedding one of my life-skins” (156). As he notes, “[t]here are many rooms—many Bernards” (217).

At the end of the novel, Woolf offers through Bernard a recognition of the extent to which a life like Bernard’s has facilitated pervasive and transformative connections with other people, connections that mean that he is, to some extent, carrying on in life the other characters who have died:

Our friends, how seldom visited, how little known--it is true; and yet, when I meet an unknown person, and try to break off, here at this table, what I call "my life", it is not one life that I look back upon; I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am--Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis; or how to distinguish my life from theirs. (230)

While Bernard insists that these friends are “little known,” he finds himself incapable of distinguishing where he ends and they begin, for he has never allowed himself to settle into a static and limited conception of self, and as such, he recognizes the extent to which he is constituted in numerous reciprocal relationships with them. Bernard declares his formal identity “dead, the man I called ‘Bernard,’ the man who kept a book in his pocket in which he made notes” (242-43). In its place is a self that is constituted by its relations with the other characters of the book, a self for which Bernard cannot quite find an adequate name:

Am I all of them? Am I one and distinct? I do not know. We sat here together. But now Percival is dead, and Rhoda is dead; we are divided; we are not here. Yet I cannot find any obstacle separating us. There is no division between me and them. As I talked I felt, ‘I am you.’ The difference we make so much of, this identity we so feverishly cherish, was overcome. (240-41)

Within the event of Bernard, for which his name is insufficient, coheres the lives of all the other people with whom he had such vital relations. He is simultaneous and paradoxically one and many.

The seemingly transcendent knowledges that animate the works of Woolf and Lawrence – the strange ways characters know the thoughts and feelings of other people – are not mystical in nature. They are rooted in an understanding of the human being as capable of being intimately receptive of the constant affective relations that circulate within their environment. Such a receptivity can only be realized through a reconfiguration of one’s identity. The novels of Woolf and Lawrence are moral and revolutionary in advocating for such and seeking to provoke the reader into a new way of knowing the self and the world, into adopting an identity that does not

seek to pin down and solve once-and-for-all either the self and the other, but that is fostered in relation to the environment, only provisionally conceptualized, and open to continuous change.

Conclusion

The work of Virginia Woolf and D.H. Lawrence central to this study draws upon the atmosphere of a shifting philosophical perspective that I situate with James's radical empiricism, and my study is a first step towards identifying a stream of literary modernism invested in that transatlantic epistemic shift. While Woolf and Lawrence differ in the experiences they examine and the innovations of style they pursue, and while there was only antipathy between them (at least on the part of Woolf), their work is animated by confluent concerns and hopes that are suggestive of their mutual reception of the atmosphere James describes as a new sort of "humanism."

The first chapter of this study establishes this epistemic atmosphere and situates Woolf and Lawrence within it. I argue that, confluent with radical empirical thought, their engagements with abstraction are not directed towards grasping essential reality, but towards revealing different ways of being in the world. The explorations of concrete life that unfold in their novels suggest different possibilities for human experience and the limitations or opportunities they offer. Through their novels, Woolf and Lawrence work to reveal the extensive field of provocations within which human beings live and through which they can develop new understandings of the world and themselves. The novelists reveal and critique the restrictive habits of thought that prevent one from attending to the fringes of their experience. They each explore and laud alternative modes of attentive engagement to reveal new possibilities for experience. Woolf's daydream involves a withdrawal from action that allows for new experiences and possibilities to emerge. Lawrence's faculty of wonder is a kind of intuitive disposition that allows one to recognize their immanent connection to others and the extensive world.

Delineating Woolf's and Lawrence's critiques of abstraction, the second chapter situates their works in opposition to fixed abstract frameworks that endure largely unchanged and are circulated throughout British society through both interpersonal connections and institutions. Such means of understanding the world foster objectifying definitions of the environment, others, and the self, and they immure the experiencer from provocations that can facilitate change. I argue that there is a moral imperative in Woolf's and Lawrence's works to develop mindfulness about abstraction, for such a mindfulness is the key to liberating human creative potential. This argument stands in contrast to readings of their oeuvres as animated by anti-intellectualism or apophatic mysticism. They seek to overcome ideational fixity through alternative modes of abstraction that eschew the functional tendency of language.

The third chapter explores Woolf's and Lawrence's literary engagements with language and examines the formal innovations they pursue to disclose to the reader the complex relational experiences central to both their interests. Not only do Woolf and Lawrence enact linguistic innovation through productive ambiguity, they dramatize characters in their novels who likewise grapple with the limitations and possibilities of language. Rather than evasive or careless, the novelists' engagements with language are sophisticated attempts to disclose the pre-conceptual experiences of their characters as their lives unfold. Through both the formal and emplotted engagements with language, Woolf and Lawrence work to bring readers into encounters with the possibilities of language to bring new worlds into consciousness.

The final chapter of the dissertation argues that the implied ontology of the novels of both Woolf and Lawrence is a pluralistic monism, wherein the human being is situated paradoxically as existing in a superposition of simultaneous individuality and relational constitution. They both criticize modes of identity that are rooted in habit for the foreclosure to change that such

imposes, and they explore the relational experiences available to characters as a fruitful foundation not for overcoming the experience of subjectivity, but for undermining the fixity they find so troubling. Lawrence emphasizes the need to establish an individual identity (which he opposes to the stable ego) that is fostered through its very relationality, and Woolf insists upon the need to develop and amend a provisional self-identity that can facilitate returns to a recognition of the relational flux. For both authors, the moral imperative of fostering this form of identity is the need to facilitate change and the novelty that such change makes possible.

While this study makes its case for Woolf and Lawrence, further work is needed to determine the extent to which other authors in the period are engaged in a similar endeavor. Thomas Hardy may prove to be an early proponent of many of the commitments of these two later authors, and contemporaries of Woolf and Lawrence like E. M. Forster merit further investigation in this context. These philosophically-invested literary projects may find confluent expressions in North American and European literature, for the philosophers of this study, who lived in Britain, France, and the United States, suggest the international reach of these ideas. Furthermore, the extent to which these early developments of radical empirical humanism contribute to the more recent developments of posthumanist and new materialist thought bears further investigation.

The relevance of this study is not exclusive to the early-20th Century. The call for a recognition of the ways that people's experiences are canalized by abstract frameworks, the understanding of the way such restrictive frameworks are propagated, and the importance of recognizing the relational constitution of the self are all highly relevant to the 21st Century. The careful attentiveness and identities that Woolf and Lawrence laud may be more difficult to instantiate than ever, given the ubiquitousness of technological mediation and the drive towards

reductive categories of identity that such encourages. As Lawrence claims, the novel is a living text; the influence of these authors remains available to readers willing to carefully engage them. Their explorations of productive engagements with language that eschew its functional, instrumental tendency are more important than ever, even if only a few will receive the message. While the social transformations the authors hoped for did not emerge, the possibilities for individuals remain open.

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