Botanically-infused prose: An examination of nature forms in Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway (1925), To the Lighthouse (1927), The Waves (1931), and Between the Acts (1941)

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Alexandra Beata Clarke

Department of Arts and Humanities, Brunel University London

2026

Botanically-infused prose: An examination of nature forms in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *The Waves* (1931), and *Between the Acts* (1941)

Alexandra Beata Clarke

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Declaration

This thesis has been produced in line with academic supervision from Brunel University London.

Acknowledgements

The thesis research began, to some extent, years ago when I was working as a gardener and horticulturalist. Following on from early literary endeavours on a BA in English Literature at the University of East Anglia, I was interested in the connection between tangible and literary gardens. The way in which both the creative design of a garden or landscape, and the sensory-powered experience of being in a garden, transferred into phenomenologically-shaped scenes in Modernist novels. The Bloomsbury Group reoccurred in my thoughts in relation to the current thesis research question, which examines nature's influence on Woolf's nature writing style and creation of literary, nature, scenes, because of their experimentations across different creative mediums. In this way, the research is inspired by their openness to connecting different thematic ideas and the way in which they established artistic garden-spaces during a time of national and even at times international crisis. As I moved from North Yorkshire towards London and Sussex, working on yearly garden projects at Woolbeding, Kew Gardens and then with a design company throughout the city, I took advantage of funding opportunities and encouragement to seek out field work and visit Charleston, Monk's House, and Sissinghurst. Rather than quench my thirst for literary gardens, these visits became the highlight of my horticultural career. So, after a period which was committed to carrying out physical work in the woods, meadows and gardens of the UK, I returned to academia to focus once more (with a less youthful, but equally dogged fervour) on the analysis of nature writing. This was followed swiftly by an initially tentative evaluation of Woolf and Expressionist art, which then transformed into an increasingly voracious consideration of Woolf, art, autobiography, the interwar, nature, gardens and environmentalism during the progression of my PhD research.

I would like to express thanks to David Jackson, a mentor who encouraged me to find colour in the interpretation of words.

Thank you to Dr Claire Lynch, Dr Jessica Cox and Dr Ellie Reed who brought greater clarity to the PhD process and a renewed sense of my own voice as a writer.

Further thanks to Dr Jane Goldman and Dr Emily Horton for sharpening the written thesis.

I would like to also give a respectful nod to the institutions, organisations and places that formed part of the pre-thesis investigations into the relationship shared by horticulture and literature:

University of East Anglia, Norwich – Literature faculty and Sainsbury Centre Art History department

Leeds Beckett University, Leeds – Landscape Architecture and Design
Lake District National Park, Kew Arboretum at Castle Howard and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
Landscape architecture projects in Malta, Bordeaux, Amsterdam, Copenhagen and Hamburg

Sissinghurst, Great Dixter and Perch Hill in Kent
Woolbeding Gardens (National Trust), Petworth and the Sussex landscape
Heligan and the Eden Project in Cornwall

Historic and Botanic Garden Training Programme – managed by English Heritage – at Trentham Gardens: Staffordshire, Chatsworth: Derbyshire, Audley End: Saffron Walden and Mount Stewart: Belfast
Japanese Zen Gardens and Nursery Bursary – via RHS and The Merlin Trust – with thanks to the Okutsu family and my friend Manami
Kew Gardens training, Richmond
Parham House work experience and Sussex Gardens Tour: Arundel, Monk's House, Charleston and West Dean

Birkbeck University – MRES in Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies
Supervised by Dr Marcos Centeno and Dr Mari-Paz Balibrea

Accompanied by Radhika Mohite – a true friend in research

Brunel University – Literature Research Thesis Opportunity

Literature, Creative Writing and Research Support –

Poetry Workshops Community: Dr Emma Filtness

Mentoring training and experience: Dr Hannah Lowe, Dr Senthi Quirke

Literature Cambridge Series – Trudi Tate and Karina Jakubowicz

The Virginia Woolf Miscellany – Vara Neverow

Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain – Marielle O'Neill

International Virginia Woolf Society: paper presentation in Florida, 2023 – Laci Mattison and Shilo Rae McGiff

Modern Language Association: Symposium attendance in Glasgow, 2022

Woolf Studies Annual – Ben Hagen

Thanks to my family who continue to support my endeavours.

Abstract

The thesis examines how Virginia Woolf's nature writing in *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts* illustrates her, and her characters', engagements with nature. With a focus on Woolf's creative relationship with nature, the thesis looks at the naturalistic and nature writing context, autobiographical material, forms of nature, naturalistic horticulture, the natural sciences and the natural environment. The thesis considers how Woolf's own horticultural knowledge, and her observations of garden techniques used by family and friends, had a powerful impact on her establishment of naturalistic scenes. The thesis explores how Woolf's physical engagement with and her appreciation of the tangibility of nature contribute to an investigation into the significance of being aware of the interconnectedness of ecosystems that support both human and non-human beings. The research therefore draws on the works of Woolfian critics who capture Woolf's horticultural and environmental lines of thought and enters into dialogue with existing eco-criticism on Woolf and her work. The thesis argues that Woolf, by observing and interacting with the ecological web of life, goes so far as to map out this human and non-human relationship as a foundational pattern of nature forms in the above-mentioned selection of works. The close reading of the choice of four novels is conducted with an emphasis placed on Woolf's use of the four nature form types: formal design, naturalistic gardens, rurality, and estate grounds. The thesis contributes to existing and current research, in the combined fields, by adopting a scale of planting styles which is drawn from horticultural and landscape design terminology. This range of styles that stretches from the inner domesticity of formal design to the outer extension into the 'wild' is then used as a structural method for discussing and evaluating Woolf's expression of environmentalism and her exploration into how energy is exchanged between the beings and phenomena that exist as part of these habitat ecosystems.

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Introduction

Woolf's interwar writing process, fictional and autobiographical, tends to begin with a literary detailing of a chosen form of nature. To achieve this Woolf relies on her own observations of flora, fauna, landscape features and weather or seasonal patterns. In Woolf's diaries there are passages of eloquent nature writing. Woolf uses a painterly expression to describe how she could see 'gorse yellow against the Atlantic blue', when she stayed with Leonard Woolf in Cornwall (1981, p. 105). In her novels, her characters are endowed with a similar sense of perception in regard to nature. For example, in *The Waves* (1931), Bernard focuses on the details of a spider-web. He examines how 'it has beads of water on it, drops of white light,' drawing attention to the impressionistic quality of his surrounding environment (Woolf, 1981, p. 6). These visual descriptions of nature scenes in Woolf's writing suggest that she was strongly influenced by artistic developments that began during the mid-nineteenth century. Woolf reflects these changes creatively by becoming increasingly interested in trialling different methods for viewing and recording the natural world. Intriguingly for Woolf, inspired by figures such as revolutionary art-critic Roger Fry and new-naturalist W. H. Hudson, these experimentations were taking place in both the arts and the life sciences.

This thesis examines four of Virginia Woolf's interwar novels through the primary lens of environmental criticism: *Mrs Dalloway* (1925)*, To the Lighthouse* (1927)*, The Waves* (1931), and *Between the Acts* (1941). The thesis argument is led by the identification of four nature form habitats that run throughout the chosen novels and evidence Woolf's environmental undertones and spiritual philosophy: 'formal design'; 'naturalistic gardens'; 'rurality' (in relation to managed farmland); and 'estate grounds'. Each novel focuses on one of the key nature forms in particular. Each nature form relates to a garden and landscape design scale which moves from more to less cultivated as the thesis progresses. The nature forms follow aspects of garden and landscape design theory, in so far as there is a range that superficially extends from most cultivated to most wild - with the 'formal design' nature form representing the most overtly cultivated and estate grounds the least. As the nature forms become 'wilder' they are also situated further from the domesticity of the built environment of the household. The research highlights Woolf's awareness and experience of distinct forms of 'natural'

habitats, in order to assert the importance of this context for her creation of literary nature forms. The thesis demonstrates that Woolf's literary nature forms provide energetically animated spaces for the exploration of her 'scene making' process and 'moments of being' philosophy that centred around a spiritual interconnectivity existing between all life forms.[1]

1. Methodology and Choice of Works

The four chapters progress chronologically, in order of the publication dates of the chosen novels, as well as moving from more to less cultivated in respect of the four nature forms discussed. The chosen novels are analysed through the lens of one of the four 'nature forms'. This balance of nature form and selected novel allows for a succinct and structured analysis of Woolf's botanically-infused prose. The four nature forms relate to ecosystem habitat types that would have been recognisable in the environment hinterland of Woolf's life in Britain: formal design, naturalistic gardens, rurality and estate grounds.

To analyse Woolf's nature forms, these four novels have been chosen for the purpose of an environmentally-focused series of close readings. The four chosen novels were selected for the analysis of Woolf's botanically-infused prose because of the ways in which they environmentally resonate with each other – in terms of how the human characters interact with identified nature forms. In each novel, all of the four nature forms are present to some extent, yet one nature form dominates individually and powerfully. *Mrs Dalloway* is analysed for the sense of multi-layered interactions between beings – between Woolf and nature and Woolf's characters and nature – via the formal design nature form. *To the Lighthouse* is examined via the naturalistic gardens nature form. *The Waves* is considered in relation to the rurality nature form, whilst the study of *Between the Acts* concentrates on the estate grounds nature form.

2. Nature Forms

[1] See page 145 for 'scene making' and page 83 for 'moments of being' in Virginia Woolf's 'A Sketch of the Past', *Moments of Being: Autobiographical Writings,* (Pimlico: London), 2002.

The research focuses on Woolf's underlying environmental interest and examines how her interaction with non-human, living environments led to a literary creation of habitats – the nature forms. The thesis notes the tangibility of Woolf's experiences with nature because of the numerous observational details that are seen in her diaries and in the descriptive parts of the novels. Woolf's responses to nature are triggered by the examples of formal design, naturalistic gardens, rurality and estate grounds that surrounded her.

The formal design nature form is the botanical habitat type that Woolf uses to describe both small-scale ecosystems of plants and animals, as well as those that appear to be more closely influenced by humans. The formal design nature form tends to rely on the distinctive presence of dominant architectural buildings and features. Both floristry for vases or pots and floral arrangements in city parks, for the purpose of this thesis investigation, have been united as one group under the label of 'formal design'. This nature form is the least wild of the four nature form habitats. It centres around rules-based designs that are smaller in size and more intensely anthropocentric, in comparison to the extensive diversity and 'wildness' of the other three nature forms.

Woolf's naturalistic gardens nature form relates to the Bloomsbury Group's adoption of the naturalistic planting style that was being championed alongside the Edwardian Arts and Crafts Movement and into the Modernist period. The trend in horticulture developed around William Robinson and Gertrude Jekyll. This was because of their experiments with 'cottage garden planting' and the inclusion of natural habitats, such as wildflower meadows and woodland zones. This aesthetic context often contributed to Woolf's immediate living and working environments, hence she was able to describe this form of nature from direct observation. This blurring of physical and literary garden spaces appealed to Woolf's interest in nature writing and the naturalist's enthusiasm for recording ecological and ethological patterns as part of regular fieldwork.

The rurality nature form encompasses Woolf's descriptions of managed farmland, which differs in function and style from the more aesthetic designs of the garden and the wider estate grounds. Depth is added to the definition of this nature form by situating the trope in relation to Jim Stewart's referencing of Woolf's pastoral modes, which 'create new hybrids' (2007, p. 35). To add some context, as literary Modernism adapted

Romantic aspirations, which often strove to slow the pace of industrialisation, urbanisation and the rapid increase in common land being converted into enclosed land, bucolic ideas on nature were manipulated once more to highlight modern changes in environmental and social policies. Woolf had partially moved away from what Buell has termed 'traditional pastoral' which was set up 'in contrast to and often in satire of urbanism' and she actively deconstructed the hierarchical notions that were associated with this genre (2006, pp. 144-145). Woolf's rurality nature form was therefore more of a realistic encapsulation of the habitats that she explored, just beyond the boundaries of the gardens that she frequented.

The estate grounds nature form represents the less managed, though still very often privately owned, ranges of land that attempted to mimic popular associations of 'natural landscapes' in modern Britain. With a focus on the estate grounds nature form, Woolf still emphasises the restricting nature of the Enclosure Movement and the layers of personal histories that have been subordinated by the hegemonic attitudes of these governmental and aristocratic policies. The interwar years pushed the management of estates towards more open access for communities in order that food, land and cultural resources might be shared and contribute towards a united war effort. Despite Woolf's ironic use of the bucolic, alongside E.M. Forster, she uses the power of the pastoral image to bring attention to the connection between less insular land use and both greater social autonomy and growing concern over the conservation of natural habitats brought about by fears of invasion and the concurrent threat to natural resources. In this manner, changes in environmental and social awareness seemed to begin on estate grounds – where the expansiveness of nature could perhaps be seen the most overtly.

The four selected novels have also been chosen because together they stretch across the interwar period of Woolf's writing career. Each novel illustrates Woolf's 'life-philosophy' and narrative linking of nonhuman and human beings and independently each of the novels represents one of the nature forms with greater dominance. The interwar period is particularly important in terms of Woolf's tangible relationship with nature and her engagement with the habitats that would inspire her literary nature forms, because the reminder of the First World War triggered a renewed interest in what would nowadays be referred to as sustainable living and the protection of the natural world in Britain. During the wars, the Bloomsbury Group deliberately chose to live away from the increased danger of the city, and in doing so Woolf herself experienced a more in-depth sense

of the range of nature form habitats. Whilst *Night and Day* (1919), *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Orlando* (1928), *Flush* (1933) and *The Years* (1937) also form part of Woolf's interwar oeuvre, the decision was made to focus on four key novels from this period, which together speak to Woolf's interest in ecosystem habitats.

3. 'Nature'

The research for this investigation has centred on nature encompassing a range of living habitats. The presence of ecosystems of non-human beings – categorised in the thesis into a series of nature forms – in Woolf's works, evokes discussions about the environmental awareness that is threaded throughout *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts.* In order to hone the use of the nature concept in this thesis, the research looks to Raymond Williams's third definition of the word. Williams states that, although nature refers to 'what man has not made', in some cases the concept might be used to describe something if humans 'made it long enough ago' (1983, p. 223). In this sense, the thesis also analyses forms of nature that have been influenced by overt human designs. Katharine Norbury's introduction to her anthology, *Women on Nature,* mentions her distrust of traditional definitions of the word 'nature' that have often been taken up by patriarchal and hegemonic powers. She asserts that the description 'is implicitly anthropocentric' and sets up a division between humans and the rest of the natural world (Norbury, 2022, p. 3). Believing in the connection that all living things share, Norbury also feels that even the scientific-focus of the word ecology 'takes no cognisance of a spiritual or other-than-physical aspect' that a relationship with the natural world entails (2022, p. 3). To some extent, though acting years apart, Norbury's standpoint supports Woolf's underlying ecofeminist attitude in *Between the Acts.* This is because she asks for a complete reformation of the patriarchal attitudes that surround Western terminologies – which were developed to label natural processes. Buell explains that in some schools of thought, inclusion of 'natural and built environments' has been labelled as 'second wave ecocriticism' – both types intermingled are now a part of our critical definition of what nature is (2006, p. 22). This is the ecocritical standpoint of the thesis, before the analytical strategy expands to investigate the spectrum of habitat types used in Woolf's works as she describes nature in the four observed forms.

A more contemporary categorising of nature by philosopher Kate Soper, enables the thesis to argue that aspects of nature writing in Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts* relate to the functioning of ecosystems in habitats. Soper identifies nature as a concept which is simultaneously composed of 'metaphysical' associations, 'processes […] operative within the physical world' and 'observable features' (1998 , p. 155). Again, the definition of nature itself – as an interconnected and nonhuman energy (albeit partially conceptualised and contributed to by humans) – fits with the concentration on Woolf's ecologically-influenced 'life-philosophy'. This is because her 'nature writing' style emphasises a perspective that suggests that energetic relationships between all beings provides us with a spiritual belief system that prioritises an acknowledgement of universality. Despite Woolf's acknowledgement of the complex aspirations that humankind places on a relationship with nature, the thesis examines how the interwoven pattern of a range of nature forms in the selected interwar novels by Woolf illustrates her overarching affiliation with biocentric concerns.

Over the course of this thesis, nature will often be referred to as the chapters investigate how Woolf's interaction with nonhuman, energetic beings influenced the prose of *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts.* Whilst the concept of nature remains multi-layered and interdisciplinary in analytical discussions of Woolf's works that focus on ideas relating to ecocriticism or environmental criticism, this thesis will also emphasise horticultural aspects of ecological interaction. This means that the key nature forms indicate how Woolf uses a spectrum of habitat types as illustrations of nature. Woolf acknowledges designed and domestic 'nature', alongside 'wilder' representations. In this way 'naturalized' aspects of the environment are included as part of her observation of the 'natural world'. Following Lawrence Buell's attempts to define the development of environmental studies 'from a "first wave" of ecocriticism to a "second" or new revisionist wave or waves', this thesis works to acknowledge urban, built or human-designed environmental habitats in *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts* (2006, p. 17). The thesis also deliberately avoids the deeper cynicism of some second wave ecocritical perspectives on nature writing. Even though some second wave stances assert that literature from the nature writing genre foremostly celebrates and romanticizes the notion of primordial nature, in relation to the four key novels by Woolf, this thesis adopts a slightly different approach. Instead, the standpoint for analysis aligns with Buell's

suggestion that both first and second wave ecocritics consider how 'environmental entanglement' described in nature writing (in this case in the aspects of nature writing that are included in Woolf's hybrid prose, in the four texts under discussion) allows us to appreciate how humans function as living organisms (Buell, 2006, p. 23). Yet, when focusing on the terminological link of ecocritical to "ecology", critics are able to stretch their interpretations further to focus on "energy-exchange and interconnection" (Buell, 2006, pp. 12-13). The close reading of the above texts will examine the ways in which Woolf's relationship with 'nature' impacted her writing style. The thesis will investigate the proposal that, just as Woolf articulates the compositional parts of her 'life-philosophy' in *A Sketch of the Past,* her characters' interactions with the energetic beings that surround them highlight her idea of a 'life-pattern'. For Woolf, the 'pattern hid behind the cotton wool' is the actuality of our interwoven lives and the source of artistic momentum, because all life forces

> are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. *Hamlet* or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself
> (2002, p. 85).

4. Horticulture

Formative Botanical Experience

As she developed fictional pieces, Woolf made use of her ability to conjure up 'memory supplies' (2002, p. 80). She was able to vividly recall sensory scenes from her childhood, with a method that let her 'plug into the wall; and listen in to the past' (Woolf, 2002, p. 81). These early evocations surround the Stephen family's time spent at Talland House. The sense of 'rapture' that Woolf repeatedly mentions, seems to have been largely triggered by her recollections of becoming immersed in the natural world (2002, p. 80). Woolf describes how the pastoral bustle of the coastline at St Ives appeared to be 'intensified, after the months in London' (2002, p. 133). Woolf often returns to the sense of freedom that they had, as siblings, 'to dig in the sand; to go sailing in

a fishing boat; to scrabble over the rocks and see the red and yellow anemones flourishing their antennae' (2002, p. 133). The garden at Talland House seems to reach a crescendo of sensory rememberings in Woolf's head, due to the personal nature of that outdoor space. Woolf describes this rich feeling by detailing how 'the buzz, the croon, the smell' of the garden, created a pressure that hummed 'voluptuously against some membrane' (2002, p. 80). From Hancock's research, we are presented with a context that develops our broader understanding of Woolf's 'formative' introductions to both horticulture and botany (2012, p. 96). Remembering the Summers at Talland House, Woolf reminisces about often finding her mother 'surrounded by the passion flowers that hung loosely from the wall' (Hancock, 2012, p. 92). In equal measure, 'Woolf's rhythmic listing of plants' evokes images of her father (Hancock, 2012, p. 96). Leslie Stephen is described in Fisher's autobiography as a man who would frequently be seen 'striding over the Cornish cliffs, botanizing as he went, repeating poetry' (Hancock, 2012, p. 96). There was an instinctive yearning, experienced by both Woolf and her sister for the floral 'rapture' that their mother and father had captured in St Ives. Woolf called her first home in the country at Firle Cottage 'Little Talland House', in a romantic nod to her past, whilst Vanessa, at Charleston, forms a garden that 'preserved her mother's tradition of a garden of childish delights and nascent sexuality' (Scott, 2012, p. 88). Both Hancock and Scott are very aware of Woolf's 'modest record as a gardener' (Scott, 2012, p. 71). Yet, they are deeply intrigued by how her 'vivid impressions' of the 'delicate flowers' that the Cornish climate supported, produced a lifelong need for a horticultural framework (Scott, 2012, p. 72). This botanical heritage therefore provided Woolf's literary experimentations with escapism and a theatrical setting for her enactment of intense, emotional experience.

Practical Gardening – Woolf's own Contributions – from Leonard's Perspective

From Leonard's standpoint, Woolf's time in these garden spaces was essential for managing depressive symptoms. He was convinced that countryside living offered periods of contrasting practicality and calm routine, which 'helped to tranquilize her mind' (1975, p. 16). For Leonard, however, it was the historicity of the houses in which they lived that granted the Woolf's the greatest sense of solace. Leonard referred to his deeper interest in the historical contexts of their houses, as a 'soothing, chastening feeling of that long line of

quiet people' (1975, p. 16). Again, with Leonard's diaries this time, we see evidence of the deep importance of house and gardens for the Woolfs and their closest family and friends.

Woolf's memories are based on the sensory whirls of nature she remembers experiencing in the gardens of her childhood spent at Hyde Park Gate and Talland House. Later on, Leonard sites the presence of houses and gardens that they shared together as waymarkers for their lives. Leonard focuses on the fact that 'the Leonard and Virginia who lived in Asham House from 1912 to 1919 were not the same people who lived in Monks House from 1919 to 1941' (1975, p. 14). Leonard acknowledges that the two houses had witnessed different phases in their private lives, accompanied by different contextual movements of wider change. For Woolf 'a topographical approach' provided the centrifugal source for all of her writings – autobiographical and fictional (Hancock, 2012, p. 92). Woolf found that creative themes for her writing emerged from her experiences of being in gardens with her family and close friends. As a consequence of Virginia and Leonard Woolfs' combined connectedness to their places of living, Lee also traces the 'powerful associations' of houses and gardens as a mapping device in her biography of Woolf (1997, p. 35). It is aptly noted by Hancock that the artistic desire for establishing a sense of place, around cultural identities, is repeated in cycles throughout the history of the Bloomsbury Group. Today, artists and researchers make regular pilgrimages to Monk's House and Charleston in homage to the legacy that the Bloomsbury Group left behind in these gardens. For visitors, these gardens appear to hold the 'biographical and historical narratives' of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell (Hancock, 2012, p. 92). Today's rise in horticulturally-based, non-narrative fiction can be traced back to the Arts and Crafts style of gardening. This Jekyll-inspired movement became a popular focus for British people experiencing the implications of the interwar years.

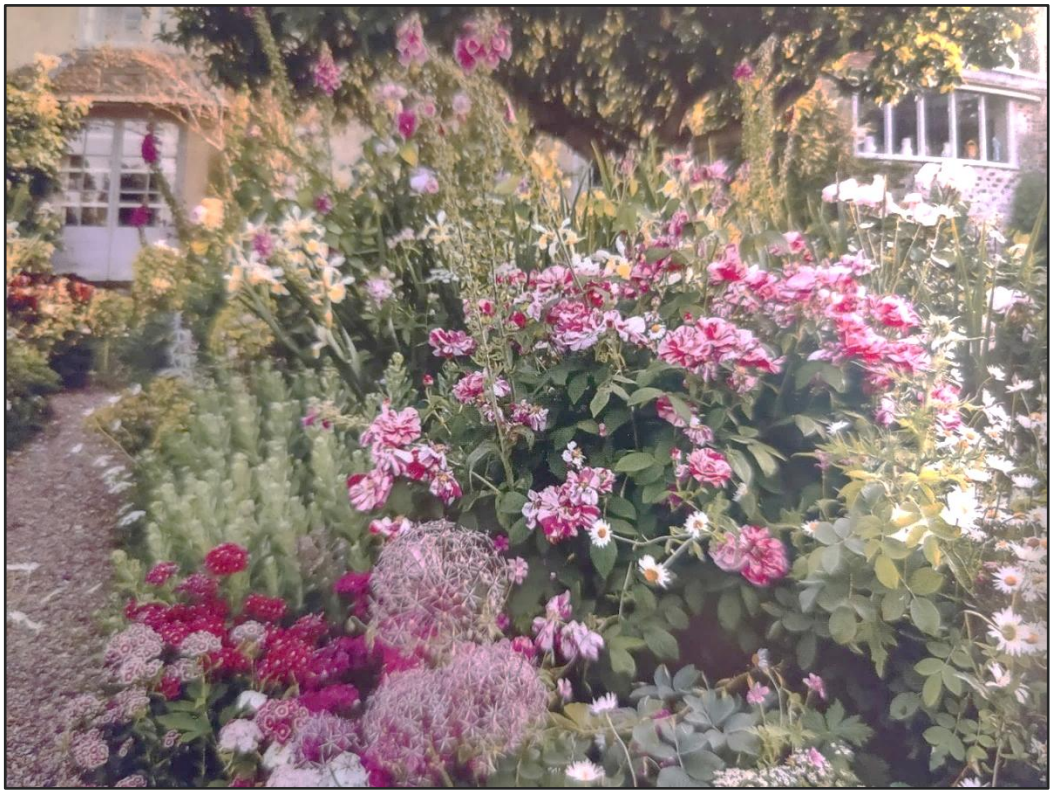

Figure 1. Charleston (Bell & Nicholson, 2018, p. 138)

Figure 2. Monk's House (Zoob, 2013, p. 63)

Practical Gardening – Surrounding Influences

In her act of weeding 'till 9 at night' in the garden at Monk's House, Woolf seems to have momentarily joined in with the thrill and pride that her upper-middle class contemporaries took from labouring in their gardens. It is well known that Vita Sackville-West considered gardening and garden design to be her enthusiastic hobby. Sackville-West defends her credentials in a letter to a naysayer by writing: 'for the last forty years of my life I have broken my back, my finger nails, and sometimes my heart, in the practical pursuit of my favourite occupation' (Kellaway, 2016, p. 24). There is also evidence of Sackville-West sharing her fascination for gardening with Woolf. On 2nd September, 1925, Sackville-West wrote to Woolf from her much loved garden at Long Barn explaining how she had been 'making a tiny garden of Alpines in an old stone trough – A real joy' (2021, p. 23). Sackville-West then went on to ask whether Woolf would like her to: 'make an even tinier one for you? In a seed pan, with Lilliputian rocks?' to cheer her up during a period of recovery (2021, p. 23). This example shows that, for Sackville-West especially, horticulture had progressed – in the same way as writing and painting – towards offering another artistic form of communication.

According to her diary extract, Woolf could be found sitting with Vita Sackville-West's children in their garden at Long Barn in Kent with 'Nigel riding round in between the flower beds on his bicycle, & Ben stretched on the seat' (Woolf, 1980, p. 252). Woolf's close relationship with Sackville-West often enabled Woolf to engage with a more practical form of cognition, due to Sackville-West's own hands-on approach to gardening. Woolf's niche, literary, position – as a Modern follower of Naturalism – meant that whilst at times she genuinely respected evocations of the natural world, she was open to ironizing its Romantic heritage. She would have been an observer of nature's figurative and physical manipulation due to seeing 'the gardens of Caroline Emilia Stephen, Violet Dickinson, Ottoline Morrell, Vita Sackville-West, Vanessa Bell, and Leonard Woolf, all of which influenced Woolf's literary consciousness' (Czarnecki, 2013, p. 264). Woolf's greatest involvement with the natural world would have taken place in the gardens that she experienced during the interwar years: the 'cottage-gardens' at Monk's House, Charleston and Sissinghurst [see Figure 1. p. 23].

Gardens – for Horticultural References

Leonard's focus always appeared to be foremostly concentrated on respecting the history of a place. For example, Zoob records how he positioned millstones to remember the Glazebrook family who owned Rodmell Mill. It is therefore likely that Leonard was influenced by observing the Arts and Craft style that was being used amongst their cohort. For Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicholson, at Long Barn, in Kent, it was amusing to tease Leonard for attempting 'to construct Versailles on a quarter acre' (Scott, 2012, p. 98). The Sackville-Wests were much more open about Jekyll's influence on their garden design style. Jekyll's collaborator: the architect Edwin Lutyens, was asked to help with the early design layout of their garden as he was 'a good friend of [Vita's] mother' (Anderton, 2016, p. 232). Sarah Raven reminds us of how Vita Sackville-West often quotes Jekyll's horticultural advice. In relation to her own gardening habits, Sackville-West remarks that when cutting flowers she defers to how Jekyll 'used to advise hanging the bunch upside down for a bit, to stiffen the stalks' (Raven & Sackville-West, 2014, p. 332). We gain a sense that Sackville-West admired the stalwartness of this great, Victorian, woman – who continued in her own vein despite entering the Modern era. Taking on these Arts and Crafts influences and elevating them to the next 'stage', Sackville-West also injected her own style into her planting plans. She favoured 'unusual' forms and colours, causing her husband to comment 'Vita only likes flowers which are brown and difficult to grow' (Raven & Sackville-West, 2014, p. 102). As a result of a vivid 'dream of a verdigris garden' she was fascinated with 'hellebores and euphorbias and the extraordinary green-flowered rose' (Raven & Sackville-West, 2014, p. 102). Sackville-West's creative activity, perhaps in this way similarly to Woolf, seemed to increase in relation to how she experienced the flora that she chose to surround herself with. Another strong indicator of a Jekyll-influence came from Woolf's family-friend Violet Dickinson. She was considered by her contemporaries to be a 'redoubtable gardener' in her own right and she was close friends with both 'Kate Greenaway as well as William Robinson' (Sparks, 2017, p. 44). Dickinson acted, in some ways, as a maternal figure for Woolf. It was Dickinson who introduced Woolf to the idea that a 'legacy of delight in color and design' was considered highly important, although Woolf was more suspicious of the traditional floral associations that the older lady still adhered to (Sparks, 2017, p. 44). The extent to which Woolf was in close contact with ideas surrounding 'naturalistic planting', in the 'cottage-garden' style, is evident even with the friends that she made later in life.

Ethyl Smythe the musician, was known to have ‘performed at Munstead Wood [Jekyll’s garden] in 1923’ and Roger Fry chose to commission ‘Jekyll to design [his] garden at Durbins’ (Sparks, 2017, p. 44). We can conclude from Sparks’ research that people who were part of Woolf’s inner circle of friendship, were directly engaging with Jekyll and her established garden designs.

Woolf was as familiar with Jekyll’s Arts and Crafts style of ‘cottage garden’ planting as she was with the literary traditions of the Romantic poets. Jekyll’s organically shaped and ‘naturalistic’ style of garden design was so striking because “like [William] Robinson she was breaking new ground – bringing to the garden ideas about colour massing and colour combination which themselves owed something to Impressionism” (Lively, 2017, p. 87). Jekyll ‘was born in the 1840s, the close contemporary of Claude Monet and Thomas Hardy, when Queen Victoria was newly crowned’ (Anderton, 2016, p. 222). She also lived long enough to cross the boundary between the Edwardian Era and the interwar reign of George V, because ‘by the time she was designing her last planting schemes in the 1930s, Modernism had arrived and Hitler was coming to power’ (Anderton, 2016, p. 222). In many ways, like Woolf, Jekyll represented a creative figure who branched several artistic movements. She also remained true to her own, unique style. Jekyll’s niche approach to garden design was partly strengthened by the fact that, though Modernism evolved across Europe ‘it was never really taken up in European gardens’ (Anderton, 2016, p. 222). Jekyll’s advantage also came in the form of the Arts and Crafts movement. Her educational background included fine art painting ‘at the South Kensington School of Art in London’, where she developed a deep interest in ‘the theories of the art critic John Ruskin’ (Anderton, 2016, p. 224). This early and determined dedication meant that she too would move in the Arts and Crafts’ circles fronted by both Ruskin and William Morris.

Gertrude Jekyll’s Influence on Virginia Woolf’s Horticultural Experience

Gertrude Jekyll’s garden designs inspired the gardens that surrounded Virginia Woolf during her lifetime. We know that Leonard Woolf was an avid gardener and significantly their shared garden at Monk’s House in East Sussex was shaped by elements from the Arts and Crafts Movement that Jekyll championed. Partially in harmony with Jekyll, the Woolfs’ planting schemes at Monk’s House favoured hot colours and splashes of

vivid palettes. Leonard Woolf was keen on valuing the history of the house and authentic materials and together they were also interested in connecting their garden to the wilder growth of the water meadows beyond the gate and into the wider landscape. They adopted ideas around the creation of different zones and associated plant groups that responded to the specific environmental conditions of that area. There was a freeing aspect to their choice of plants and sculptures. They were not restrained by the formality of city parks in Sussex, choices were made because Woolf 'liked the colours: "a perfect variegated chintz: asters, plumasters, zinnias, geums, nasturtiums & so on"' (Lee, 1997, p. 427).

Similarly, Vanessa Bell's garden at Charleston in East Sussex developed around a painterly colour-palette concept which also reflects on Jekyll's artistic foundations and her focus on experimenting with warm and cold hues. At Charleston, we see Bell and Duncan Grant producing a wash of expressionistic strokes of colour and billowing textures. Yet, through choice, spaces are provided for further expressions of ideas in different mediums. The garden seems to speak a sensory language and in Summer the view of flora from the studio and Bell's bedroom is described as showing 'a mass of flowers […] with holly hocks & sweet peas & zinnias' (Bell, et al., 1987, p. 148).

Vita Sackville-West writes directly, and with admiration, about how Jekyll had inspired her collection of plants at Sissinghurst in Kent (see Figures 4 & 5. p. 145). Sackville-West's style of gardening at Sissinghurst took on Jekyll's creative rejection of fashionable trends and shaped her garden for a more Modern audience. Her horticultural acts allowed her to push societal boundaries, by collecting eccentric species forms and combining colours of similar hues: such as browns and greens, which had previously been thought of as vulgar. Sarah Raven's collaboration with Sackville-West's own writings on gardening pays careful attention to Sackville-West's unique choices. Raven puts forward the understanding that 'she liked a full range of plants all mixed up in the borders together, as you'd see in a cottage garden, […] within a narrow colour range; she liked every inch of each bed, every corner and every surface of her garden to be abundant and luxuriant' (2014, p. 90).

This thesis draws on an awareness of how Gertrude Jekyll's garden designs influenced the gardens of some of Virginia Woolf's closest family and friends. This context is important because it further highlights how Woolf's foundational understanding of 'natural' and horticultural spaces, added depth to her literary nature form habitats in *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts.* Practical horticulture provided a direct and tangible part of Woolf's personal well-being, which ultimately led into the effectiveness of her creative-writing process. Penelope Lively, Caroline Zoob and Marion Dell – among others and alongside both autobiographical and biographical writings from the Bloomsbury Group – present numerous records of Woolf's involvement with horticulture. This information was then combined with repeated evidence of Woolf's horticultural referencing (in the nature form scenes of her interwar novels) to prove, via critics such as Bonnie Kime Scott, Elisa Kay Sparks and Karina Jakubowicz, that her horticultural credentials were crucial to her narrative structuring.

As Woolf's personal and professional life progressed, her living circumstances became increasingly associated with gardens and gardening. The greatest shift towards Woolf's direct involvement with horticulture, occurred when Leonard and Virginia Woolf bought their house and cottage garden at Monk's House, in Rodmell, 1919. In her writing Woolf often captures the importance of their experience at Monk's House and the feeling for both of them that, in overlapping but different ways, 'The point of it is the garden' (Scott, 2012, p. 96). This shared appreciation of the natural world, meant that the garden at Monk's House quickly evolved into the rural site for the research, writing and editing of the majority of Woolf's most influential works. We can see the intertwined process of how these active interludes in gardens and landscapes functioned as a source of recuperation for Woolf, during her management of the highs and lows of her mental-health complications. Woolf's gardens in Sussex, at Firle Cottage, Asheham and Monk's House, also gave her the space she needed to cultivate a renewed sense of creative inspiration. This opportunity to live in countryside gardenscapes gave Woolf time to embark on new projects, which required abstract thinking and the eventual culmination of an idea in writing. In 1925, Woolf remarks with a sense of excitement that she was 'having a superstitious wish to begin *To the Lighthouse* the first day at Monk's House' after arriving from London (Woolf, 1980, p. 36). She seemed to feel renewed by the challenge of portraying 'the flight of time' and 'consequent break of unity' that the design of *To the Lighthouse* prepared for, believing that she might even 'finish it in the two months'

during which they were in Sussex (Woolf, 1980, p. 36). These diary notes suggest that there was a direct correlation between Woolf's renewed sense of motivation for completing her experimental prose for *To the Lighthouse*, and the knowledge that she had a stretch of time in the countryside.

5. Environmental Criticism

The analysis in this thesis of Woolf's four nature forms considers how early environmental concern (environmentalism) is managed in *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts*. The research draws on the backdrop of Woolf's life-long observation skills and her interest in the different ways in which humans interact with nature. By understanding that Woolf fostered an interest in nature that was initiated during childhood, the analysis acknowledges how and why her writing developed to include an underlying discussion about the protection and conservation of the natural world in Britain. Whilst Woolf inherited a cultural backlash against rapid industrialization from the Romantics, it was the task of her generation to record how the new swathe of modern and mechanical technology – which was greatly influenced by the First and Second World Wars – contributed to societal focus-points. As shifts in society emerged during the interwar years, environmentalism was pushed forward by a surge of empowerment that took place amongst the working classes as they questioned elite ownership and management of land. Following the end of the First World War, questions over freedom of access, ethical animal and land management and public ownership of natural spaces quickly became popular matters of debate. As a result of this, these concerns were prevalent for Woolf and her contemporaries.

The thesis examines the impact that early attempts at conservation had on Woolf's environmental perspective. The discussion here draws on Woolf's interest in nature writing, evidenced by her 1939 essay 'White's Selborne'. The essay attempts to define the enigmatic White, in terms of his passion for studying birds and their habitats, his personality and hybrid nature writing style. Charles Darwin had grown up 'with White's *Antiquities of Selborne* by his side' and Woolf also respected Gilbert White's approach due to his literary ability to layer scientific observations on to prose (Abberley, et al., 2022, p. 1). White describes the topography and vegetative habitat of Selborne with efficiency as he notes that 'the covert of this eminence is

altogether beech', but also with a language that stirs the imagination (1891, p. 7). He favours the beech: 'the most lovely of all forest trees', for 'its smooth rind or bark, its glossy foliage, or graceful pendulous boughs' (White, 1891, p. 7). Even in this brief sentence, White's description identifies key features of a beech tree, whilst also poetically engaging his reader's emotions. We see White's poetic techniques with his alliteration of 'beech', 'bark' and 'boughs', or 'glossy' and 'graceful' and his use of sibilance further forms a peaceful mood and a sense of his own admiration of the beech trees: 'forest trees […] smooth […] glossy […] pendulous boughs'. It is also evident that White considers the perspective and composition of the different habitat zones, as he surveys his surrounding landscape, because he makes a particular point to note how:

> The down, or sheep-walk, is a pleasing park-like spot, of about one mile by half that space, jutting out on the verge of the hill-country, where it begins to break down into the plains, and commanding a very engaging view, being an assemblage of hill, dale, wood-lands, heath, and water
> (White, 1891, p. 7).

White's combination of natural science details and poetic depictions of nature appealed to Woolf's modern pursuit of a poetic prose that could capture her observations of human and non-human lives in shared ecosystems. Furthermore, historically foreshadowing Woolf's literary foray into eco-politics, White wields a prose which, 'whether consciously or not', appeared to reflect on 'the politics of landownership and usage in late eighteenth-century Britain' (Abberley, et al., 2022, p. 2). For example, as White delves into historical topography, we gain a sense of the rural labours that took place in the region. White records that with historical Selborne, 'the woods and coverts might extend down to the opposite bank' (White, 1891, p. 8). As a result of this notation, we can infer that there were large stretches of wooded and thicketed habitats which would have been apparent as a key feature of the natural landscape in the area. Following on from this topographical illustration of the ecological layout of the land, White then refers to the previous uses of the landscape as a mixed resource for human activity and notes that

> As the parish still inclines down towards Wolmer-forest, at the juncture of the clays and sand the soil becomes a wet, sandy loam, remarkable for timber, and infamous for roads. The oaks of Temple and

> Blackmoor stand high in the estimation of purveyors, and have furnished much naval timber; while the trees on the freestone grow large, but are what workmen call *shakey*, and so brittle as often to fall to pieces in sawing
> (1891, p. 8).

From White's references, we can determine that the abundant natural resources, that the wooded slopes provided, attracted forestry companies and he alludes to the chopping of trees for warfare and expeditions beyond British lands. Re-reading White between 1937 and 1939 Woolf remarks in a letter to literary editor Raymond Mortimer [dated 7th September 1939] that she 'plunged by way of respite' into White's works (1980, p. 356). Woolf seems glad for the escapism 'of trying a weekly article on old books' and goes on to assert 'that it would be a relief', as she had both 'been steeped for months in memoirs' and more recently caught in a 'general mess' of 'unpacking furniture' in London amidst acknowledging that 'the war caught us on the move' (1980, pp. 356-357). In 'White's Selborne', the essay that she sent to Mortimer for publication in the *New Statesmen* on 30th September 1939, Woolf displays her interest in White's style more deeply. She suggests that whilst it may 'seem to tell a plain story', the literary quality of the prose creates scenes that 'no novelist could have opened better' due to his poetic depths of sensory awareness (Martin, 2021, pp. 87 - 88). White formulates a flexible prose that, however unconsciously, comments on the state of the environment. He does this by using poetic language to form vegetative backdrops for the more detailed recording of the state of habitats and ecosystem-orientated behavioural-patterns. In this sense, Kosugi would argue that White's formula encouraged both the establishment of Woolf's prose template; for layering detailed observation with poetic imagery, and her surprisingly 'anti-anthropocentric point of view' (2007, p. 88). Woolf, like White, could traverse between Romanticism (1798-1832) and Naturalism and for this reason her own 'nature writing in her essays, diaries, and novels' describes a distinct 'crossing point of two different, but interrelated, trends of culture in Britain: the amateur drama movements in the twentieth century and the amateur fashion for natural history, which had been popular since the Victorian era' (Kosugi, 2007, p. 82). Even though Woolf's Modernist outlook and family influences made her lean more towards a 'Darwinistic rather than 'romantic' focus in her writings, aspects of both genres were used to actively comment on the state of the British

environment (Kosugi, 2007, p. 82). In a similar way to how Woolf adapts aspects of Victorian literature, we also see how she transforms her writing in relation to developments in the natural sciences.

6. Evidence of 'Naturalistic' Influence

In this manner, the thesis reads *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts* to show how Woolf's nature writing plays with 'naturalistic' ideas. Moreover, the thesis notes that Woolf's nature descriptions are drawn from the various interactions and influences that she has with the non-human beings that surround her. So, the source of her 'naturalistic' prose in these four texts is illustrated by the evidence of her awareness of naturalistic designs used in the gardens owned by her contemporaries. This can be seen, for example, with the garden atmosphere that Woolf constructs in *To the Lighthouse.* Lily Briscoe remembers the garden, landscape and Mrs Ramsay as forever entwined in a painterly mirage: 'For days after she had heard of her death she had seen her thus, putting her wreath to her forehead and going unquestioningly with her companion, a shadow, across the fields' (Woolf, 2000, p. 197). She recalls the Scottish garden's meadow-effect, where grasses interspersed with 'hyacinths or lilies' looked like 'folds, purplish and soft' (Woolf, 2000, p. 197). We see 'naturalistic' influences with the environmental backdrops that coexist with Woolf's characters in *The Waves* – such as when it is made apparent that Susan is most at ease when she can 'see the swallow skim the grass' (p. 36). Again, naturalistic influences come to the forefront of our attention when we observe Woolf's awareness of plant propagation knowledge. It is noted in *Between the Acts*, for example, that Woolf relates the ongoing presence of certain plant species with the likelihood of their plant propagation method being successful. The narration notes that at the pond at Pointz Hall 'there had always been lilies', because the plants had 'self-sown from wind-dropped seed' (Woolf, 2012, p. 326). Woolf's appreciation of plant diversity and specialist habitats for the growth of certain species of flowers is recognised as a naturalistic influence in *Mrs Dalloway.* Aunt Helena's expertise in the field of Orchidaceae is revealed by the fact that she had written a 'book on the orchids of Burma' (Woolf, 2000, pp. 160-176). The examples mentioned from each of the four novels highlight Woolf's creative interaction with concept of nature in a manner that is naturalized and so aware of the inescapable fallibility of the anthropomorphic attitudes that seep into artistic production from cultural dialogue.

7. ‘Naturalism’

Naturalism is relevant to my discussion of Woolf because her adoption of some of the key techniques that defined this literary genre highlights an interest in observation-driven nature writing. The presence of this modern natural science approach, which favoured fieldwork experience, is then evidenced and analysed in the thesis via Woolf’s nature form habitat types of formal design, naturalistic gardens, rurality and estate grounds. The definition of Naturalism that the thesis uses values an awareness of how Modernist influences transformed the initial emphasis of the genre. Woolf’s creative gathering of different aspects of artistic impressionism and literary naturalism – alongside the back-and-forth clash of early Modernist ideals – leads Simon Joyce to argue that this combination was ‘the origin of literary modernism’ in England (2015, p. 151). He suggests that Woolf’s Free Indirect Discourse technique showed the ways in which Modernist writing depicted the fallibilities of Naturalism and questioned the reliability of our inner-monologues and perceptive powers.

In an equally forward-thinking manner, Woolf’s sister, Vanessa Bell, was strongly influenced by French transformations in painting that came about as Impressionism led into Expressionism. Bell’s relationship with Fry shaped his own development as an art critic. Bell was ‘a painter belonging to the younger generation’ and so she ‘had all the ardour of the young for new movements’ (Woolf, 2003, p. 162). It was Fry who made the bold decision to bring the Post-Impressionist exhibitions of 1910 and 1912 to London. Both were mostly met with a ‘rhetoric of hostility’ by the British public and art critics alike (Lee, 1997, p. 289). The paintings on display were considered to be very sensuous, even ‘illicit’, and inspired by ‘modern French painting’ (Harris, 2010, p. 19). As a result of these tensely debated critical viewpoints, the exhibitions ‘were as influential as they were controversial’ and they contributed to a dramatic change of style in British art (Smith, 2021, p. 26). *Mrs Dalloway*, in a similar way to Woolf’s short stories, experiments with nature-informed scenes that are influenced by the Post-Impressionistic style of Vanessa Bell and the 1924 Surrealist ideas concerned with unconscious thoughts. Charleston and Monk’s House both showed nature to be at once an inspiringly uncompromising force and a resource for the artists to use as a backdrop to their questioning discussions.

Woolf combines the burgeoning artistic endeavours of Bell, Fry and Duncan Grant with her own reliance on distinguishing scenes of the natural world as a background to her exploration of the growing interest in showing motion and feeling. Woolf's 'The Mark on the Wall' (1917) is a short story which is centred on the visual presence of 'a small round mark, black upon the white wall' that avoids coherent meaning until the final sentence (Woolf, 2018, p. 26). Woolf presents the ambiguity of seeing by showing how even this small mark could be mistaken for 'a hole' or 'a small rose leaf' (2018, p. 27). The narrator becomes fascinated by this shape and uses its presence to stimulate philosophical questionings relating to the suddenly much more complex 'mystery of life' (2018, p. 26). The abstract images in *Mrs Dalloway* also allow Woolf to introduce theories that query the surrounding repression of emotions and rigid societal roles. As Clarissa sits at her dressing table she focuses on becoming 'composed […] into one centre, one diamond, one woman' and then, as she descends the stairs before her party, Woolf has her character preparing herself to be a hostess and 'assembling that diamond shape' (2000, pp. 36-37). Yet, Woolf suggests that Clarissa's notion of the meaning associated with the diamond shape has altered over time. A youthful reference to the diamond sees Clarissa excited at the prospect of a moment experienced out of societal-time with Sally Seton:

> The others disappeared; there she was alone with Sally. And she felt that she had been given a present, wrapped up, and told just to keep it, not to look at it--a diamond, something infinitely precious, wrapped up, which, as they walked (up and down, up and down), she uncovered, or the radiance burnt through, the revelation, the religious feeling!-- (2000, p. 35).

The pause following Sally kissing Clarissa seems to spread out into a realm of momentary possibilities for Woolf's central protagonist in *Mrs Dalloway*. In this situation the 'diamond' represents freedom and an authentic sense of wholeness, rather than a deliberate formation of a beautiful façade (2000, p. 35). Clarissa experiences the formation of the diamond in her youthful experience as 'precious' which speaks to her desire for intimacy (2000, p. 35). Instead of the aloof, dutiful, outer-protection that the diamond shape constructs for Woolf's older version of Clarissa, the diamond that felt like a 'present' from Seton left a warm 'radiance' that 'burnt through' the years as a lasting embrace (2000, p. 35). The contrast between Clarissa's young and old experiences of the 'diamond' is further depicted with how stimulating the initial experience was – with the

suggestion of finding spiritual 'revelation' – in relation to the habitual performance of her aged and socially-acceptable diamond (2000, p. 35). The balanced shape of the diamond that Clarissa conjures in present time, represents a public façade which aligns with society's recognition of etiquette. Woolf heightens this idea of Clarissa existing amongst society's entrapment, with a further comparison being highlighted between hard-lined shapes and blurring. Whilst Clarissa's diamond is outlined and definitive in purpose, the old woman who Walsh gives a coin to outside of Regent's Park tube station no longer sees anyone as a clear shape. In her eyes, Walsh appears as 'only a looming shape, a shadow shape' (2000, p. 81). And yet, despite the other characters' pity for her, Woolf insinuates that this old woman lives with greater freedom because she exists on the edges of social conventions. The presence and absence of the 'diamond' in different passages – and the way in which this abstract outline is used as a device for determining the presence and absence of defined or undefined social personas, is reflective of how Naturalistic writing is often concerned with depicting the details of human behaviour and commenting on social morality from an abstracted and distant perspective. The close attention that is paid to the many roles that a minor character – the old woman – plays, amongst the network of social interactions that surround Clarissa and Septimus in *Mrs Dalloway*, further highlights Woolf's use of the way in which Naturalism attempted to evaluate social ethics through the inclusion of everyday interactions.

In terms of contemporary definitions of Naturalism in Woolf's time, we are still finding evidence of how the movement was not taken seriously. Naturalism was thought to be a part, or a new branch, of Realism. Literary institutions debated over whether Naturalism was centred around content that listed groupings of social issues, or an approach that attempted to mimic the neutral observations of modern natural science fieldwork reports (Joyce, 2015, p. 5). It was suggested that this leaning towards a scientific approach questioned 'normative understandings of what literature is and does' (Joyce, 2015, p. 6). Yet, from the perspective of naturalist writers, theses rebukes were outdated and identified literature as too focused on the superficial. With the hindsight of looking at Naturalism and Woolf's own context, we become aware of how the movement commented on the challenges of social structures and yet frequently from the position of financial stability. Nevertheless, the topical conversations that started to surround Naturalism enabled Woolf to diversify her style and begin to represent voices that had been subordinated in dominant social structures.

Woolf adopts aspects of British Naturalism's tendency to observe realist and literal details. In *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts* we see evidence of her Naturalistic influences when she refers to growing socio-political issues, although these references are situated within her Modernist context. Woolf holds the space between Naturalism and Modernism and plays with aspects of both genres to develop a narrative that remembers the voices of feminine and nonhuman characters. The hybridity comes into play further with Woolf's manipulation of Romantic tropes and her genuine respect for poetry. Joyce asserts that for many critics 'her novelistic practices seem as far from our received notion to naturalism as you can get' due, perhaps, to her painterly style and poetic-prose, or, to her limited rarer inclusion of working-class characters and issues of poverty. Yet, as Joyce goes on to mention, this stance may have been built up as a result of Modernist preoccupations with 'separating out form from content' (2015, pp. 151-152). Woolf combines her impressionistic prose with a focus on important socio-political themes such as gender equality, class freedoms and (most importantly for this research) increasing conservational concerns over the state and management of the environment in England – exacerbated by the threat of war. This thesis looks at the four selected novels in relation to Woolf borrowing a realist observational approach and an interest in socio-political affairs from Naturalism, through the additional lens of an environmental stance. In this sense, the central focus of the thesis examines Woolf's naturalistic observations and the way in which she combines an experience of the naturalistic planting style in horticulture with her literary nature forms to comment on modern society and the subsequent state of the functioning of multi-being ecosystems.

Woolf's positioning as a hybrid writer of poetic-prose seems to be enhanced by her formation of a liminal version of British literary Naturalism. It is important to note that Naturalism, especially in England, is a movement that has often been treated as undefinable since its formation. Therefore, the sense of liminality was already present and ready for Woolf to play with. The movement aimed to be literally descriptive, but not necessarily limited to 'the every day' in the way in which strict realist prose might be. Woolf's style of Naturalism was not without poetic form or poetic sensibility. The Naturalism that Woolf would have recognised did refer to philosophical observations at times, although in England themes tended to branch towards discussions of socio-political issues. Nevertheless, Naturalism did not directly reject Romantic tropes and tended to adapt traditional Victorian modes in favour of more naturalistic storytelling. We can see in the

case of Henry James, for example, as well as Woolf, that Naturalism did not deny all spiritual thought, supernatural associations or impressionistic aestheticism. Plots were not simple or confined to the musings of just a sole protagonist and characters were neither distant and forensically depicted, or entirely dramatic and hyperbolic. Woolf recognised how adaptions to Naturalism, Modernism and even Romanticism could be used to her artistic advantage. Literary Naturalism is situated in the modern context of Woolf's life and it was a cultural period when writers were placing an emphasis on ideas that related to the 'passage of time', but, as Bruno Latour posits, in terms of 'a rupture' (1993, p. loc. 266). Modernists felt that change was inevitable after the increasingly developmental yet long, 'archaic and stable' past that the Victorians represented (Latour, 1993, p. loc. 266). Naturalism provided a cultural space where Woolf could manipulate strands of literary influence to create a poetic-prose that also escaped concrete identification and instead expanded and contracted, with the pivotal context of the interwar years in which she was writing *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts.*

8. Nature Writing

In considering the lens of environmental criticism, the thesis works on the premise that 'nature writing has been of central interest for ecocriticism from the movement's beginnings' (Buell, 2006, p. 144). For a summary of nature writing in an ecocritical context, the definition the research initially turns to is Slovic's identification of the genre from 'Nature Writing' in *Encyclopedia of World Environmental History* (2004). Slovic remarks that nature writing works 'as literary nonfiction that offers scientific scrutiny of the world (as in the older tradition of literary natural history), explores the private experience of the individual human observer of the world, or reflects upon the political and philosophical implications of the relationships among human beings and the larger planet' (2004, p. 888). Whilst following the principles of Slovic's definition, the thesis trajectory moves away from a definition concerned primarily with nonfiction. The analysis of *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts* builds on these foundational points, in relation to nature writing as a genre, by reflecting on Woolf's observation of environmental changes, her awareness of how humans perceive nature and the relationship between human and nonhuman living beings. This ecocritical stance examines how Woolf's own hybrid poetic-prose expanded naturalistic approaches to literary

writing. Lance Newman's standpoint adds to a growing definition of the nature writing genre in this research, by proposing that it 'is not a stable form of reaction to a stable problem', because (in a similar way to Woolf's reflection of modern times) nature writers are also responding to issues, patterns and strategies that they observe in society as well as in ecological habitats (2002, p. 18). In *Modern British Nature Writing*, the genre is also broadly defined as 'fundamentally celebratory or escapist, yet it is also very much in tune with the conflicts of a natural world under threat' (Abberley, et al., 2022, p. i). In relation to how nature writing traces moments of concern for the state of the environment, the literary movement owes some of its popularity to the objectivity and morality questioning of late nineteenth-century Naturalism. Yet, the genre has experienced several reinventions and the Modernist influence on nature writing provides both a retreat from the rapidly-mechanized anthropogenic world and a means of transforming naturalist observations into literature. Contemporary critics who focus on nature writing and ecocriticism tend to place the origins of the genre in the eighteenth century – with an emphasis on the gathering momentum that took place towards the end of the nineteenth century. A key figure often labelled as the originator of nature writing is 'the genial parson-naturalist Gilbert White,' who produced *The Natural History of Selborne* in 1789 (Abberley, et al., 2022, p. 1). This piece of writing has been praised due to its hybridised format of presenting an 'English country diary,' alongside an 'empirical study of the natural world' (Abberley, et al., 2022, p. 1). White also draws specific attention to the ecological consequences brought about by a combination of human and non-human activity.

In the British context of nature writing, Jean Arnold writes that Darwin's research had been labelled as 'foundational' for future collaborations between literature and science as it contained 'the unifying principle for the study of biology' (2003, p. 11). This is significant because at the time there was no overarching, academic concept for the study and presentation of the life sciences and medicine. A further source of nature writing inspiration for Woolf was drawn from the school of thought that followed Henry David Thoreau. Whilst Thoreau is often described as a founder of American nature writing, he influenced the growing naturalist niche in British cultural circles. The fact that Woolf read pieces by and about the American naturalists, as shown by her 1918 essay, 'Visits to Walt Whitman', in the *Times Literary Supplement,* also highlights the extent of her interest in the genre.

There are multiple definitions of nature writing and new definitions are evolving to align with contemporary perspectives. Jean Arnold makes some comparisons between British and American nature writing forms, referring to Charles Darwin and Henry David Thoreau as key nature writing influences for the genre. The Land Lines project, led by Will Abberley, Christina Alt, David Higgins, Graham Huggan and Pippa Marland, is a more contemporary and comprehensive analysis of British nature writing and this work is referred to throughout the thesis in greater detail. Examples of ecocritical references – mostly termed as environmental criticism – that deal with definitions of nature writing in this thesis include works by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, Lawrence Buell and Scott Slovic. More specifically however, my analysis will draw on a combination of references concerned with Woolf's oeuvre, in particular *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The* Waves and *Between the Acts*, through an environmentally critical research lens that links her approach to the genre of nature writing. Sei Kosugi specifically examines Woolf and nature writing in her chapter titled 'Representing Nation and Nature: Woolf, Kelly, White' from *Locating Woolf: The Politics of Space and Place* (2007). Justyna Kostkowska, in *Ecocriticism and Women Writers: Environmentalist Poetics of Virginia Woolf, Jeanette Winterson and Ali Smith* (2013), draws Woolf's writing style together with her process of observing nature in her surrounding environs. The environmental focus of various other critics also adds further context to the analysis of Woolf's nature form habitat types in the chosen novels: Gillian Beer's 1988 'The Victorians in Virginia Woolf: 1832 – 1941' in *Dickens and Other Victorians,* Diane Gillespie '"The Bird is the Word": Virginia Woolf and W.H. Hudson, Visionary Ornithologist' from the Virginia Woolf and the Natural World conference publication of 2011, and Elizabeth Lambert's 1995 article 'Unsocial Impulses and Writhing Dinosaurs: Evolution as Fiction in Virginia Woolf's Novels' offer various discussions surrounding Woolf's nature writing influences from her literary inheritance.

Nevertheless, Woolf's nature writing, whilst being inspired by naturalists such as Gilbert White, is situated in the modern times of her environmental surroundings. In their Introduction to *Modern British Nature Writing, 1789 –2020: Land Lines,* Abberley, Alt, Higgins, Huggan and Marland describe nature writing as a genre that encompasses 'miscellaneous forms of writing' that 'have consciously sought some kind of cognitive and emotional engagement with the natural world' (2022, p. 4). In this description of what nature writing is, we

see similarities with Woolf's approach – in terms of the 'cognitive and emotional engagement' with her environmental surroundings. Yet, this research is also concerned with Woolf's physical (and sensory) interaction with ecological ecosystems. The thesis seeks to show how her multi-layered relationship with nature impacted the creation of nature forms in the selected interwar novels. As with Woolf's use of her experiences of the natural world in her thought processes and creativity, Glen A Love reminds us that the critical lens of nature also 'reveals adaptive strategies far more complex than any human mind could devise' (1996, p. 231). It is then suggested by Love that 'one of the great challenges of literature, as a creation of human society, is to examine this complexity as it relates to the human lives which it encompasses' (1996, p. 231). Scott Slovic in *Nature Writing and Environmental Psychology* (1996) discusses the psychological and the physical connection that humans have with nature. He does this by firstly referring to Sharon Cameron's *Writing Nature: Henry Thoreau's Journal* (1985). Cameron suggests that humans 'write about nature' in an attempt to demystify how we 'see nature' and, by default, the thought processes of our own minds (1985, p. 44). Slovic then goes on to mention the nature writers' pursuit of a physical engagement with nature – whereby they are continuously seeking to 'walk a fine line (or, more accurately, *vacillate*) between rhapsody and detachment, between aesthetic celebration and scientific explanation […] to achieve an equilibrium, a suitable balance of proximity to and distance from' the environmental processes that are appreciated as part of our lives (1996, p. 353). We see this intermingling of psychological and physical influences with Woolf's play between nature-inspired character monologues and the intermittent descriptions of habitat nature forms and the sense of nonhuman characters emitting energetic vibrations in *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts.* This combined approach contributes to our understanding of the interwoven functioning of ecosystems – which can be seen as a vital motive that underpins Woolf's nature writing style. With regard to Woolf's nature writing, via her nature forms, and the pastoral, we can assert that her approach shows evidence of environmentalism because she questions the literary tradition in a similar way to how ecocriticism aspires to navigate beyond human-centric views of habitats.

There is an emphasis in Woolf's works on observing human life via moments of detailed factual evidence, which is not overly romanticized. The Realist approach that Woolf takes, follows Naturalist ideas that concentrate on humans being subject to changes in the natural world that surrounds them in their living and

working pursuits. In terms of Naturalism's interest in biology, we see Woolf paying greater attention in the poetic-prose of her novels to depicting environmental details. Woolf's appreciation of the natural sciences was also influenced by the growing genre of nature writing which seemed to stem from the natural science endeavours of writers like Charles Darwin, Gilbert White and W. H. Hudson. We know, for example, from Saskia McCracken's 2021 research: *(R)evolutionary animal tropes in the works of Charles Darwin and Virginia Woolf,* that Woolf was interested in ornithological works. McCracken writes that Woolf's 'library contained multiple bird-watching guides' and she goes on to list titles such as Hudson's *Adventures among Birds* (1924) and *Birds in London* (1924) (July 2021, p. 198). This is significant, alongside our awareness of Woolf and her husband Leonard's collection of botanical and plant design books, because it shows that she had a genuine interest in writing about flora and fauna. With these valued additions to their libraries, there is a sense of Woolf's creative fascination with the styles of natural science and nature writing books.

For Woolf and her contemporaries, the poetry of Romanticism was not able to observe the truth of war time realities. Novels, too, lacked the required vocabulary for the new interest in creating characters who could embody universally apparent, psychological qualities. Free Indirect Discourse results in a narration of Woolf's characters' thoughts via a shifting between third person reporting and some instances of direct speech in the first person. This layers our view of each character's expressions, because we see inner and outer perspectives in play throughout the chosen novels. Woolf's own use of the Free Indirect Discourse technique allowed her to produce the raw musings of her character's personal responses, but through the lens of a sensory experience that was intimately related to the natural world. The discussion of Woolf's poetic-prose style notes that for Woolf's novel writing an aspect of poetry was essential due to poetry's ability to express emotional responses to sensory stimulations. Alongside examining Woolf's style, the research questions the influences that her personal relationships had on her writing. We begin to see how she was inspired by the artists connected to her social circles, as a result of witnessing their experimentations within the movements of Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Expressionism,[2] Futurism and Surrealism. The thesis analysis also concentrates on how

[2] Expressionism: a modernist movement that circulated amongst several other cultural influences between 1905 and 1920 and became a pivotal resource of artistic thought for the Bloomsbury Group. For more on the development of Expressionism, refer to Gäeton Picon's *Modern Painting* [1974], Ashley Bassie's *Expressionism* [2005], Ulrike Lorenz's *Die Brücke* [2022] and Norbert Wolf's *Expressionism* [2004].

personal spaces, gardens and local landscapes contributed to Woolf's overall ability to manage her own experiences of living a human life and the process that she followed for developing her creative approach and system for writing novels.

The nature writing that Woolf becomes absorbed with – which stemmed from the late nineteenth century into the twentieth century, seems to grow out of the branching movement of Naturalism (1865-1920). Following the rise of Realism (1800-1920) in the early nineteenth century, Naturalism was to gain greater momentum from 1865 to the dawn of the twentieth century. This was largely due to its ability to align with Realism's rejection of Romanticism. It is likely that Woolf enjoyed the liminality of Naturalism, because of its positioning between Romanticism and Realism. As a new, literary movement it was adaptable and would have allowed Woolf to play with 'the contrast between the deterministic universe of naturalistic fiction and the "compensating humanistic value" (Campbell, 28 July 2011, p. 500). Woolf's readers will notice how intermittent, moral questioning rises to the surface of her characters' consciousnesses before they return to their two-dimensional, social performances. In *Mrs Dalloway*, for example, Clarissa seems to slide into moments of reverie relating to the enchanting quality of 'the trees with the smoke winding off them' at Bourton during her teenage years (Woolf, 2000, p. 3). These memories appear to be juxtaposed with Clarissa's dutiful and urban life as a married woman in London, where 'her husband, who was the foundation of it', expected her to maintain a domestic presence (Woolf, 2000, p. 29).

In terms of British Naturalism, writers followed Realism's 'impetus to write from life as observed' and 'throughout much of the nineteenth century in French and English literature, the emphasis was on the novelist's observation rather than on imagination' (Marriott, Nov 2002, p. 243). If literary Naturalism had a crusade, then the focus was on identifying the harmful consequences of false and entrenched behaviours in traditional social systems. For this reason, writers who followed ideas relating to Naturalism were often criticized by their British readers and critical audience. A number of prominent figures in British and American society were offended by the harsh reality that was being reflected back at them in the form of the Naturalistic novel. Despite Henry James's agreement with the importance of author observation, he was against many of the themes chosen by Naturalist writers:

> Applying the epithet “muckrakers” to naturalist authors is consistent with the European criticisms of Naturalism, in that those who wrote naturalistic fiction were dealing, as Henry James said in a letter to Howells, with “unclean things” and purveying, according to others, a “literature of the sewer” (Marriott, Nov 2002, p. 139).

George Gissing and George Moore, as British writers who were often associated with literary Naturalism, ‘were, at one time or another, accused of writing unwholesome novels and of publishing accounts of such moral turpitude as might offend the average Victorian reader’ (Marriott, Nov 2002, p. 87). In many cases, reviewers prioritised popular opinions stating that the literary content of Naturalism concentrated on socially unacceptable topics. Whilst Naturalism aimed to champion technical observations of the natural and human world with enforced ‘objectivity’, it also often lapsed into presenting as ‘a particularly self-referential genre, calling attention to its impersonal pose, and thus to the presence of the author, in language that inserts the author-as-scientific observer into the flow of narrative’ (Campbell, 28 July 2011, p. 500). The fallibility and flexibility of this earnest and yet emotionally hindered genre, existing between Romanticism and Modernism, provided the literary freedom that Woolf required for her social observations and creative responses to the experience of transitioning between Victorian traditions and the aspirations of modernity.

Another related influence on Naturalism’s increase in popularity as a malleable set of ideas for Woolf’s choice of writing style comes from the Naturalistic Garden Movement led by ‘William Robinson, whose treatises on the “wild garden” began the 19th-century garden fashion we now call “English cottage style”’ (Sparks, 2011, p. 44). This is because several of Woolf’s close circle of contacts followed the gardening approaches of Robinson’s fellow colourist – Gertrude Jekyll. Naturalism carved an adaptable cultural position, by partially conforming to the Romantic ideals surrounding ‘that sense of wilderness just beyond the horizon’ (Gifford, 1995, p. 128). At times, the literature of Naturalism conveys an interest in how the natural environment stretches through the gate at the boundary of ‘The English Garden’ and past the first hillscapes of a national park (Gifford, 1995, p. 127). In a similar way to Naturalism then, Woolf’s nature scenes often represent a sliding scale of forms of nature that range from domestic floristry to the wildness of wooded estate grounds.

Nature writing is a literary movement which, similarly to Woolf's own work, had the ability to traverse cultural phases. It emerged as both a late defender of the Romantic bucolic and as a heralder of the developing life sciences. In *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935), Empson illustrates how writers command the bucolic notion for the purpose of determinedly 'reducing the whole material world to nothing material' (1950, p. 119). He draws attention to the historical approach of referring to nature as a philosophically universal realm that acts as a reminder of the insignificance of human life in relation to the wider natural world. Paradoxically, the bucolic concept is also represented by Empson as a stylized, poetic technique. This is demonstrated with Empson's concentration on Andrew Marvell's 1681 poem, 'The Garden'. Here Empson analyses Marvell's phrase, 'To a green thought in a green shade,' by focusing on how any artistic reference to the natural world is deliberately designed to appear authentic, unconscious and instinctively 'in harmony with' nature (1950, p. 119). There is a mocking quality to Empson's analysis, because he ridicules the anthropomorphising of nature's 'greenness' or innocence and points out that humankind is not acting in 'harmony' with nature. Instead, the human world has constructed cities and disconnected in many ways from the natural cycle of the seasons. He argues that the poet's attempt to connect with the universality of nature creates 'a fundamental contradiction (seen in the etymology: turning all *ad nihil*, *to* nothing, and *to* a thought)' between moving with nature's processes and trying to maintain control of them by labelling them with human associations (Empson, 1950, p. 119). The action of 'turning all ad nihil, to nothing', is 'to' actively form a new meaning (Empson, 1950, p. 119). Empson therefore highlights the intentionality of the act of writing, despite artistic references to nature's untameable reactions.

Woolf, in some ways like Empson, was suspicious of the bucolic idealism of her literary forbears. Woolf's work draws on the romantic imagery of her Victorian childhood, in order that she might then partially undermine it to express the raw truth of the Modernist experience. The Victorian form of the bucolic trope is represented by Alfred Lord Tennyson's garden depictions, such as with *Maud: A Monodrama* where the poet commands:

> Come into the garden, Maud,

For the black bat, night, has flown,

Come into the garden, Maud,

I am here at the gate alone;

And the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,

And the musk of the rose is blown

(Tennyson, 1973, p. 1253).

Woolf plays with Tennyson's bucolic idealism in *The Waves*, when Rhoda tries to encapsulate London streets with picturesque and floral imagery. Rhoda seems to imagine herself capable of enchantment, exclaiming: 'let there be rose leaves, let there be vine leaves' (Woolf, 1981, p. 138). Woolf emphasises Rhoda's deep need to soothe her anxious mind with nature when she feels threatened by the noise, energy and mechanization of the city. As well as Woolf's awareness of Tennyson's subdivided bucolic-garden evocations, she acknowledges the Victorian fashion for floral symbolism. Woolf uses her irony to highlight the way in which a socially-inscribed female persona has been linked to the excessively-floral imagery in Victorian literature.

It is important to distinguish the bucolic that Woolf manipulates, as opposed to the idea of the pastoral more generally. The bucolic notion that Woolf uses in her novels tends to draw on her personal observations of the Arts and Crafts gardening influences that were being adopted by members of her close set. In *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs Ramsay is given an interest in horticultural tasks by Woolf and the reader observes that she begins to wonder 'whether it was any use sending down bulbs' from London to Kennedy the gardener in the Hebrides (Woolf, 2000, p. 73). In Empsonian terms, the pastoral is presented as any literary form which aims to achieve social organicism, by allowing people of an upper-class to imaginatively project themselves into the lives of the lower and rural class. Woolf's ironic component places her characters in situations where they also play at belonging to the natural world more tangibly.

We see Woolf's modern hybridisation of the pastoral at play in *To the Lighthouse,* via her adaption of some of Marvell's lyrical prose from *The Garden* and *To his Coy Mistress,* and Stewart's "Woolf and Andrew Marvell:

The Gendering of Modernism" supports this assertion. It makes sense that Stewart was able to hone in on her association between Marvell's 'birds of prey' [*To his Coy Mistress]* and Mr Ramsay's habitat of looming over his wife with 'a beak of brass' [*To the Lighthouse]* (Stewart, 2007, p. 32). This is because we know of Woolf's interest in the figures of birds and her respect for the way in which Gilbert White gives enlivened feature-descriptions of this collection of species. Woolf details that, in line with 'the good ornithologist' that White is, one 'should be able to distinguish [birds] by their air – "on the ground as well as on the wing, and in the bush as well as in the hand" (Woolf, 1981, p. 19). As Woolf lightly mocks White as presenting like 'a clerical owl', she also seems to be surprised by her respect for him as an individual and as a writer (Woolf, 1981, p. 23). White's nature writing style suggests a 'hybrid' form that Woolf had been seeking (Woolf, 1981, p. 23). He, too, was 'haunted by the classics' and able to combine an essence of romance and poetry to his striving for biological detail and an absorption in the interconnectedness of the ecosystem cycles that he witnessed in the natural habitats where he observed birdlife (Woolf, 1981, p. 23). In *To the Lighthouse,* Woolf merges her own interest in animalistic descriptions with known verses from Marvell's oeuvre that follow bucolical motifs to portray her characters and manipulate the hierarchical aspects of the pastoral genre to suit her own projections. The complex dynamic that is developed in *To the Lighthouse,* between Mr and Mrs Ramsay, allows Woolf's reader to note how the abrasiveness of Mr Ramsay's ongoing frustration and need for validation appears as an intrusion; like a 'beak', that waits on the edge of Mrs Ramsay's consciousness and mental equilibrium. Yet, after this concentration on the presence of Mr Ramsay, albeit via a criticism of patriarchal demands, Woolf draws Mrs Ramsay into the naturalistic gardens space by alluding to 'Marvell's fountain and fruit tree' in *The Garden* (Stewart, 2007, p. 32). As if in anticipated response to Mrs Ramsay's 'beak', Mrs Ramsay 'braced herself' in order to charm those around her with 'a rain of energy, a column of spray' (2000, p. 42). As Mrs Ramsay becomes 'this fountain and spray of life', she possess the bucolic genre that Woolf momentarily places her in. Woolf's momentary referencing of Marvell's pastoral verse, in a hybrid and modern adaptation, allows her to give more insight into the limiting gender stereotypes that she herself had witnessed. As Stewart puts it, this manipulation of the canon shows how she 'reclaims […] the notion of a pastoral space which had been notoriously monosexual and exclusive of women' (Stewart, 2007, p. 35). Whilst Stewart draws our attention to Woolf's purposeful adaption of Marvell's inclusion of nature, or flora and fauna, in his poetry, to

make a comment on cultural disparities in gender equality, this thesis posits that Woolf uses her four nature forms to make further observations on modern society.

We also know, from Woolf's autobiographical writing, that one of her rest-cures involved recording species of mushrooms and butterflies that she found in the Sussex countryside. When at Asheham in August of 1917 Woolf paid particular attention to the realisation that: 'Most of the butterflies have red spots on their necks– some parasite' (Woolf, 1977, p. 44). This hobby was fuelled by a long interest in the natural science pursuits of her father and brother Thoby. Woolf would have been aware of 'Jean–Henri Fabre's work on insect behaviour; she alludes to Richard Jeffries; and she read and reviewed W. H. Hudson's nature writing, expressing admiration' (Alt, 2010, p. 38). It seems that Woolf appreciated Hudson's ability to combine literary writing with biological survey evidence. Woolf commended Hudson's multi-disciplinary style in a *TLS* review of his 1918 *Far Away and Long Ago* and notes in her essay *Modern Fiction* that 'we reserve our unconditional gratitude for […] Mr Hudson of *The Purple Land*, *Green Mansions*, and *Far Away and Long Ago'* (Woolf, 2009, p. 6). The below extract from Hudson's *Green Mansions* illustrates how poetic story-telling and descriptive natural science detail are blended together:

> There were notes and cries familiar to me as the crowing of the cock—parrot screams and yelping of toucans, the distant wailing calls of maam and duraquara; and shrill laughter-like notes of the large tree-climber as it passed from tree to tree; the quick whistle of cotingas; and strange throbbing and thrilling sounds, as of pygmies beating on metallic drums, of the skulking pitta-thrushes; and with these mingled other notes less well known. One came from the treetops, where it was perpetually wandering amid the foliage a low note, repeated at intervals of a few seconds, so thin and mournful and full of mystery that I half expected to hear that it proceeded from the restless ghost of some dead bird. But no; he only said it was uttered by a "little bird"—too little presumably to have a name (Hudson, 1968, p. 51).

Hudson lists the names of birds, such as parrots, toucans, cotingas and pitta-thrushes, whilst also creating an evocative scene with literary depictions of the sounds of birdsong. From a colonialist perspective ('strange

throbbing and thrilling sounds, as of pygmies beating on metallic drums') he stirs the senses of his reader by using alliterative language, such as 'throbbing and thrilling', metaphors: 'as of pygmies beating on metallic drums' and personification: 'shrill laughter-like notes […] so thin and mournful and full of mystery', whilst referring to the communication rituals, movements and interrelated behaviours of the birds.

The descriptive interludes in Woolf's novels are built up with similarly minute details about the nature in a scene, via the third person point of view. In contrast, Woolf often lets her characters' emotions come to the foreground of a passage by flitting into the first person perspective and using quotations of direct speech. In *The Waves*, Jinny expresses an overwhelming experience of her teenage years at school by referring to known symbols of nature: 'I see every blade of grass very clear. But the pulse drums so in my forehead, behind my eyes, that everything dances – the net, the grass; your faces leap like butterflies; the trees seem to jump up and down' (Woolf, 1981, p. 31). Woolf follows this evocative simile by giving Jinny a much more serious tone, which illustrates that she also feels that 'There is nothing staid, nothing settled, in this universe' (Woolf, 1981, p. 31). Here, Woolf shows her personal philosophy encompassing both an existential anxiety and a fascination with the unifying connectivity of natural processes. The environmentally focused depiction of Woolf's own relationship with the natural world evidences how 'she observes, half with surprise, half with incredulity, the richness and energy of the outside world, flourishing without human presence" (Kostkowska, 2013, p. 14). Ecocritical studies of Woolf have argued that her works show early signs of an increasing awareness of the environmental movement – though she would have often learnt of this stance through her appreciation of nature writers (Kostkowska, 2013, p. 15). Woolf was drawn to nature writing because of its niche position in popular culture, due to its failure to respond in favour of the 'anthropocentric – let alone modernist and postmodernist – assumptions' (Love G. A., 1996, p. 230). Nature writing, similarly to Woolf's reading of her father's Victorian library, was a genre that felt known to her; or comfortable, but also exciting and adaptable. The flexibility that Woolf found in the nature writing genre, coupled with her experience of horticultural spaces, enabled the literary nature forms in *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts* to comment on the state of the environment and the need for a rebalancing of hegemonic viewpoints towards non-human beings.

9. Modernism and Woolf

Woolf's poetic prose was also shaped by her associations with literary Modernism and her nature writing style was formed to voice the environmental concerns of modern society in England. In terms of Woolf's Modernist influences being adapted from her prior experiences of Victorian and Edwardian traditions, Robert Adams positions Modernism in relation to how modern writers, such as Ezra Pound, pursued a 'deliberate cultivation of the past' (Adams, 1978, p. 20). For Adams, despite Modernism's associations with the mechanical revolution being triumphed by the Futurists in paintings, there was a concentration on manipulating known 'archaic forms and manners' to shock readers from within recognised patterns of literary style (1978, p. 20). The modern desire to shift dramatically from tradition was being reflected in literature, by creating an anxious reading experience. Classical frameworks were implemented in poetry and prose, but their old social meanings were often undermined and questioned. In this sense, as Joyce proposes, Naturalism and naturalistic techniques were initially 'at the center of overlapping debates about aesthetics and morality' during the latter part of the nineteenth century (2015, p. 4).

The thesis discusses Woolf's response to her own literary ancestors – in particular in relation to the bucolical heritage that she was building on, even if only to undermine its established intent in her own novel writing. Woolf distinguishes the romantic style of her forbears, by comparing authors in her critical works. Woolf remarks that whilst the Brownings' 'story appeals to all that is dramatic and romantic in our natures,' her admiration lies with George Eliot (2019, p. 207). This is because, for Woolf, Eliot undermines Romanticism with a realism that focuses on the depiction of the scene, over the exaggeration of any character. Woolf, supported by her Modernist appreciation of honest descriptions and the subdued voice of the author, feels that Eliot is pioneering for her time, for 'she has none of that romantic intensity which is connected with a sense of one's own individuality' (1984, p. 166). Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group's criticism is frequently changeable – depending on the nature of any allegiances or feuds that were taking place at any one time – and yet Woolf was remarkably 'aware that literary form must adapt to the needs of the age' (Kopley & Sullam, 2013, p. 1). Woolf was insistent on the need for 'novelists to reflect deeply on their prose medium' and she resolved to be daring and experimental with her own transformations of the novel (Kopley & Sullam, 2013, p. 1). In

comparison to the grand evocations of the Romantic, Woolf captures the day-to-day highs and lows of her characters' reactions to Modern stimulus. In opposition to Romanticism's sublime landscapes, Woolf stages her fictionalised observations against the backdrop of flower beds, gardens, rural meadows and estate grounds.

Woolf's own choice of Modernist tropes meant that her style was 'dependent on a vast network of allusions' as we know that her writing was also tempered by the Post-Impressionistic art world of her sister and Bloomsbury friendships (Sparks, 2011, p. 42).Woolf was also comfortable with the synaesthetic qualities of Impressionism and these ideas enabled her to create fictional scenes that captured 'human bustle' as a 'liveliness in the natural surroundings' (Weekes, 1962, p. 109). This is reflected in Woolf's italicised interludes in *The Waves*: '*rays of light flashed and wandered, like signals from sunken islands, or darts shot through laurel groves*' (Woolf, 1981, p. 140). Woolf is attracted by Impressionism and Post-Impressionism's obsession with 'the very vibrations of light in the air' (Weekes, 1962, p. 109). Despite the First World War's dulling influence on colour, the arrival of 'a small painting of seven apples by Paul Cezanne' at Charleston, in 1918, reawakened the intrigue of the Bloomsbury Group (Spalding, 2014, p. 106). Woolf quickly began to question Cezanne's setting up of the apples' 'relationship to each other, & their colour, & their solidarity' (1977, p. 140). For Fry, Cezanne differs and pulls away from the Impressionist absorption with capturing 'the full complexity of the coloured mosaic of vision […] which their eyes had learned to perceive in nature' (Fry, 1958, p. 40). Cezanne's approach emphasised a use of layers of block-colouring, or 'planes of colour', to suggest an object's three dimensional nature, depth and volume – the emphasis was not so directly on what the eye could see in terms of literal light, shadow and perspective. This Post-Impressionist shifting spoke to the liminality that intrigued the Bloomsbury Group in their artistic movements towards Modernist tendencies and bold displays of energetic movement [see Figure 3. p. 51]. Cezanne was to become an ongoing source of fascination for the Bloomsbury Group and in her introduction to *Oh, to Be a Painter!* Claudia Tobin notes that he is seen as 'a painter who glows in Woolf's prose' (Tobin, 2021, p. 16). Woolf admired the creative and intellectual stretching that Modern paintings pursued and she subsequently noted that Cezanne 'seems to challenge us [writers], to press on some nerve, to stimulate, to excite' (2021, p. 16). The far reaching impact that the fine-art world had on Woolf's fictional writing style is shown to us by Spalding when she hones in on

a quote from Fry, as he states to Woolf: 'You're the only one now Henry James has gone who uses language as a medium of art' (2014, p. 107). Fry, to an extent, praises Woolf's individual creative achievements, because he admires a quality in her style that shows how 'language' produces 'art'[istic] expressions. In this regard, Woolf did not shy away from Modernism's 'dehumanized' characters and deep awareness of the act of writing (Adams, 1978, p. 23). The character of Sir Philip Wingrave in James's *Owen Wingrave* is described to the reader in terms of 'the thick red ray' that he cast on people, from eyes that suddenly gleamed like 'stirred embers' (2009, p. 103). Instead of a well-documented list of personal qualities, James uses a supernatural theme to visually give impressions of relationships between his characters and their environments.

Figure 3. Still Life with Apples by Paul Cezanne, c. 1878 (Spalding, 2014, p. 106)

In contrast to many of his contemporaries, James was keen to record the transient nature of human interactions. In his rejection of literature that was structurally strong in design, he chose to project how 'art lives upon discussion, upon experiment, upon curiosity' and dialogue or movement (James, 1884, p. 1). Like James, Woolf's novels value texture over traditional English narrative structures. Her writing moves beyond the linear development of plot, content and character portrayal. Yet this thesis highlights and focuses on Woolf's talents as a nature writer – who is equally able to depict nature form habitats via a method of in-person observations. In *Between the Acts*, we see Woolf's concern for the authenticity of sensory experience inspired

by the actions and presence of non-human beings. Mrs Swithin pauses by the pond to see ‘a glimpse of silver—the great carp himself, […] in and out between the stalks, silver; pink; gold; splashed; streaked; pied’ (Woolf, 2012, p. 403). Woolf captures the flashes of colour seen by Swithin and in doing so further conveys how human perception is momentary. By alternating between novelistic structuring and poetic expression, Woolf’s visual descriptions create a hybrid form of poetic-prose. We see her producing a written style which conjures up an attitude that can be compared to De Quincy’s idiosyncratic assertion that ‘with all his poetic sensibility he was not a poet’ and so must write in prose, but by making ‘a class for himself’ (Woolf, 2009, p. 57). Woolf argues in her essays that she believes this form of expression to be necessary because the Victorian power of the isolated, poetic form had dwindled. She remarks that ‘poetry is not lending her services to us nearly as freely as she did to them,’ for it seems as though without any change in perspective or style this form had ‘narrowed itself’ (Woolf, 2009, p. 74). During the interwar years and often via the novel, a new form of emotive expression was required to lend meaning to the phenomenological experience of modern European war on such a global scale.

For Woolf, Modernist aspirations to honestly interpret the era were appealing and Modernism provided a forward motion for literary exploration. Woolf remarks that young Modernists, like James Joyce, focused on coming ‘closer to life’ as a means of expressing ‘more sincerely and exactly what interests and moves them, even if to do so they must discard most of the conventions that are commonly observed’ (2009, p. 9). Woolf’s own attempts to mention war in *Mrs Dalloway,* just five years after the end of the First World War, intimates that she admired the bravery of Modernist aims to reflect on the anxiety of the interwar years. Woolf’s references to the shell shock and suicide of one of her central characters, Septimus Warren Smith, were revolutionary in a British, post-war society where memories of war were repressed and those unable to keep silent were shunned.

10. Natural Sciences

Woolf’s tangible experience of horticultural and habitat spaces made a powerful impression on her approach to creativity and influenced the creation of her literary nature forms in *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The*

Waves and *Between the Acts.* This impression was intensified by Woolf's respect for the methodological advances in the modern natural sciences. It is evident that with twentieth-century Modernism, there came an increased desire to establish the sciences as significant fields of academic research. Scientific researchers needed to establish an academic unity before the accurate division of scientific subjects. In 1833, William Whewell 'coined the word *scientist*' as a focused title for research into the rapidly developing investigations that were taking place in what was previously known as the general subject of natural philosophy (Wilson, 2011, p. 344). Acting as an influential fellow of the original Royal Society, the oldest national academy for scientific research, Whewell was well placed to combine religious and scientific pursuits. There is no doubt, when looking at evidence from his early spiritual positioning 'and decades of sermons,' that he was a figure who was devoted to Christianity as well as science (Wilson, 2011, p. 346). In the late nineteenth century, the Royal Society was also then divided into several, academic subject-groups. Early society groups included the natural sciences of physics, chemistry and biology, the applied sciences of medicine and engineering and the formal science of mathematics.

Woolf had gained an understanding of botanical nomenclature, biological processes and vegetation habitats from her father, and yet Leslie Stephen was to some extent a reminder of 'the stagnation of popular natural history in the late Victorian period' (Alt, 2010, p. 36). He had brought up his otherwise revolutionary children, on 'the tradition of taxonomy' (Alt, 2010, p. 35). Following on from science's mainstream lull, the important modern shift in scientific approaches, to eventually be adopted by Woolf, involved the growing popularity for monitoring the behaviours of plants and animals in their native habitats. These site surveys contrasted from the race for an immediate collection of species and the following instalment of the capture results in an exhibition. Scientists were slowly becoming more motivated by collaborative field investigations, than by museum cases or hunting expeditions. As Woolf progressed further into her profession as a writer, her engagement with the natural world became more subtle and less concerned with plant and animal collection. For example, the family 'rituals [of] night-time moth hunting – which began at St Ives and went on for some time afterwards,' dissolved into a literary fascination with what the symbol of the moth could represent (Lee, 1997, p. 58). The moth became a repeated metaphor that she could wield in her writing to examine the paradoxes of night and day, love and hate and life and death. In Woolf's own planning notes for *The Waves,*

we gain a glimpse of her determination to use observations of the natural world. For example, Woolf works on a scene in her diary that involves a series of notes that relate to how she is trying to capture the reality of our perceptive experiences. She conveys this notion of life by describing how we might notice a 'current of the moths flying strongly' and the presence of a 'lamp and a flower' (Woolf, 1980, p. 229). Her main concerns, however, are that the flower represents nature in both its individual cycle of transformations and in the fact that it is linked to the 'unity' of an ecosystem (Woolf, 1980, p. 229). Woolf's later decisions on how she depicts this hypersensitivity towards sensory reactions is evident in *The Waves* with the continuous movement between the friends' perceptions. Jinny's hopes for a feeling of life-long freedom, which seems at times to lie outside of 'the cold iron railing' of social expectations, are momentarily realised as she leaves the domesticity of the house and lets 'the cool tide of darkness' wash over her (Woolf, 1981, p. 119). She poignantly states: 'We are out of doors' where 'night opens' and the language immediately presents a further reaching perspective (Woolf, 1981, p. 119). This expansion is aided by the motion of the 'wandering moths' who symbolise the escapism of 'night hiding lovers roaming to adventure' (Woolf, 1981, p. 119). Woolf appears to choose her key symbols – waves, windows, birds, butterflies – for their transitory associations. Similarly, she formed a hybrid style of poetic-prose that could be positioned between Naturalism and Modernism. For example, moths that fly by day caused Woolf substantial intrigue. She suggests that their overall temperament seems to be 'neither gay like butterflies nor sombre like their own species' (Woolf, 1942, p. 1). Woolf is drawn to these symbols, because of how their particular qualities meant that in fiction they could be used to occupy her idea of liminal realms – or realms in motion. She experiments with the concepts of momentum and the undulation of energy, in both natural and psychic environments. In *The Waves,* Woolf ensures that each character notices their sense of time passing, their need to fulfil some desires and leave others behind. Nature, it seems, always enables Woolf's characters to express their streams-of-consciousness more fluidly and truthfully – by following the factual description of a natural scene they are able to discuss their contradictory emotions with greater articulation and vulnerability.

The thesis discusses Woolf's approach to nature writing and how this was influenced by the changes that she experienced and witnessed in the natural sciences. Her admiration for nature observation is seen with her awareness of modern approaches to ecological studies. In relation to her adoption of ideas around ecology,

ethology and ethnobotany, Woolf was looking at some of the modern methodology being used by naturalists and nature writers. We see from Woolf's depiction of Lucy Swithin and Bart Oliver, for example, in *Between the Acts*, that a paradox is set up that also links to the ongoing argument between traditional and modern science. Woolf prefers Swithin's interest in observing nature and questioning the impact of humans on habitats. Swithin looks out of the 'window' – a viewing portal and thin layer between the more domesticated human home and the wilder stretches of the estate grounds – as often as she can (Woolf, 2012, p. 310). In the morning she records how 'the birds' are 'singing' and revels in noticing that a 'thrush hopped across the lawn; a coil of pinkish rubber twisted in its beak' (Woolf, 2012, p. 310). Yet, there is an ambiguous tone around this observation of the thrush. The 'coil of pinkish rubber' is both an elaborate description of a worm and a harmful material of industrialisation – which could become dangerous for the bird if it becomes 'twisted' around 'its beak'. Woolf shows how Swithin's engagement with nature also enables her to extend 'the bounds of the moment', because her enthrallment over the behaviour of the birds strengthens 'her imaginative reconstruction of the past' (Woolf, 2012, p. 310). The intellectual stimulation of her natural science research adds to the absorbing power of her escapist reveries. To highlight her favoured natural science methodology, Woolf places Swithin in direct contrast with the attitude of her brother (Bart Oliver) who walks out of the room when she hopes to challenge the traditions of collection and taxidermy. For Bart, who also represents ideas surrounding patriarchy and colonialism, the natural world is a human resource to be manipulated and exploited for the pursuits of the nation. He seems to align himself more with the older scientific methods and he determinedly pursues 'fact' and 'truth' in the hope of maintaining a sense of order. Scientifically, this technique would limit a development in understanding the complexity of life's processes. The thesis develops to show how the combination of Woolf's literary and personal context works towards supporting her uptake of an early form of environmentalism – directing the ecocritical analysis of the chosen novels. This is due to the fact that we see Woolf's creative approach in association with an interaction with the natural world and a practical experience of different forms of nature – set alongside her enthusiasm for modern pursuits in the natural sciences.

The thesis considers the impact that three of the key subjects, which were developing under the establishment of the Natural Sciences, had on Woolf's interwar writing. These subjects were labelled as ecology, ethology

and modern ethnobotany which became more concerned with sharing socio-cultural research than capturing plants and objects for display. The twentieth century heralded ‘the establishment of the British Ecological Society and the *Journal of Ecology* in 1913’ (Alt, 2010, p. 3). With this came an increasingly pronounced concern for species and habitat protection, as a result of renewed research into ‘origins in the plant sciences, with early studies of plant distribution and vegetation dynamics’ (Alt, 2010, p. 3). Ethology, no doubt increased in status by the introduction of laboratory-based experimental psychology – attributed to Wilhelm Wundt in Leipzig, Germany in 1879 – was primarily absorbed with ‘the study of animal behaviour’ (Alt, 2010, p. 3). Ethnobotany, whilst a pre-existing research pursuit, was expanding as a modern biology subject that greatly influenced anthropological and cultural investigations. Contemporary ethnobotany has developed from this Modernist transition, defined in 2021 as ‘The study of the interactions between plants and people, including the influence of plants on human culture’, to become a truly interdisciplinary field (Balick & Cox, 2021, p. vii). This emergence of a more confident and modernised ecological field of research studies captured the attention of Woolf’s contemporaries and provided an exciting context for Woolf’s own establishment of nature scenes.

Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895) can be seen as a source of early inspiration for Woolf. It is arguable that the greatest insight that he provided Woolf with was his ability to use science to engage ‘in debates about virtually every aspect of English civilization and culture’ (Magner, 2002, p. 342). His wide-reaching approach to articulating ideas and recording observations, allowed him to attract a wider readership. His approach represented another liminal style for Woolf – one that once again branched between the late Victorians and the Modernists. Much like a traditional forerunner to W. H. Hudson, ‘Huxley passages, may be compared to the language of self-discovery in the childhood section of *The Waves’* (Beer, 1988, p. 229). This is due to his ability to write about science in a style that was similar to the prose of literature, and as a result of his ‘recognition of other [life]forms as our 'unacted parts'’ (Beer, 1988, p. 229). Hudson represents another nature writing inspiration for Woolf and this was because he aimed emphasise the connection that exists between all living beings. He, too, seemed to achieve ‘a form of spirituality through sensory immersion in the living, natural world’ (Gillespie, 2011, p. 133). Beer goes on to suggest that Woolf’s writing shares Huxley’s fervour, as it seeks to present his interest in ‘the fibrous connectedness of bodily life and physical world’ and Woolf’s

belief in the universal sense of energy experienced by all living organisms (Beer, 1988, p. 229). Woolf's oeuvre reflects on the growing interest in ecosystem functioning that was taking place in the realm of modern science. Woolf's own earlier reading, influenced no doubt by the Victorian texts of her father's library, led her to acknowledge the writing of Charles Darwin and Thomas Henry Huxley[3] (Darwin's vociferous supporter). Thomas Henry was, significantly, the grandfather of Aldous Huxley. Woolf writes in her diary on Wednesday 23rd June, 1920, that she had 'summed up Aldous Huxley' as if there was no more complexity to be found in either his prose or his personality (1981, p. 49). The Huxleys would have been known to Woolf's family because of Thomas Henry's extensive contribution to the establishment of Darwin's evolutionary theory at the Royal Society and as a result of his position as President in 1883. Despite Woolf's often contradictory attitude towards pre-Modernist values, she was very aware of Darwin and Huxley's theories and she admired their contribution to the diversification of academic approaches.

Another critic looking closely into Woolf's affinity with broader scientific fields is Louise Westling, who asserts that 'Woolf also recognized the efficacy of science and mathematics in opening windows upon the workings of Nature' (Alt, 2010, p. 4). Westling also hones in on an ecological viewpoint which is 'surprisingly' expressed by Einstein as he writes in a letter to a grieving father Dr Robert S. Marcus, who had just lost his son to polio (Westling, Autumn 1999, p. 855). Einstein appears to comfort the Rabbi, by reiterating: 'A human being is part of the whole, called by us "Universe" (Einstein, 1950, p. letter). He continues to discuss how humankind phenomenologically experiences life as isolating and yet this is a 'delusion' created by the 'thoughts and feelings' of the 'consciousness' (Einstein, 1950, p. letter). In her article, Westling affirms that 'Woolf would have agreed' entirely with the 'ecological call for humanity to abandon its fictions of separateness and embrace the whole of nature' (Autumn 1999, p. 855).

[3] Huxley was a family friend of the Stephens, a figure who was an important member of Leslie Stephen's group of scholars and a strong influence on his transformational scepticism. In relation to Stephen's growing interest in botany, we know that Huxley 'was elected a Fellow of the Linnean Society in December 1858 and awarded the Linnean Medal in 1890' (Wyhe, 2019). We also see evidence of his impact on Woolf's respect for Darwin's work as Huxley 'is most celebrated for his pugnacious defence and promotion of Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory after the publication of *On the origin of species* in 1859' (Wyhe, 2019). https://www.linnean.org/news/2019/07/01/1st-july-2019-why-there-was-no-darwins-bulldog.

Even though we see Woolf habitually looking at the paradox of aloneness and togetherness throughout her works, when she describes the natural world she seems to align with the idea of organisms being connected as part of the universal animism of ecosystem life. To build on this standard definition, the online *Oxford English Dictionary* provides three senses of the word. The first defining [labelled 1832] is taken from a philosophical stance of the meaning, inspired by an earlier terming of anima by Georg Ernst Stahl (1660–1734) as the spiritual soul: 'Any of various theories postulating that an animating principle, as distinct from physical processes (chemical, mechanical, etc.), directs the energy that moves living beings and governs their growth and evolution; = vitalism n' (OUP, July 2023, pp. "animism (n.), sense 1,"). The second definition, which suggests a meaning centred on objects in nature possessing individual life, reads: 'The attribution of life and personality (and sometimes a soul) to inanimate objects and natural phenomena; = animatism n' (OUP, July 2023, pp. "animism (n.), sense 2,"). Finally, the third definition emphasises a spiritual focus: 'Belief in the existence of a spiritual world, and of soul or spirit apart from matter; spiritualism as opposed to materialism' (OUP, July 2023, pp. "animism (n.), sense 3,"). Throughout this thesis, the concept of animism aligns to some extent with the first definition from the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The use of the term animism (in relation to Woolf's nature forms) engages with ideas that speak of an 'energy that moves living beings and governs their growth and evolution', yet the focus is on ecosystem functioning. To briefly situate animism in a contemporary anthropological context, Katherine Swancutt asserts that:

> Animism is both a concept and a way of relating to the world. The person or social group with an 'animistic' sensibility attributes sentience – or the quality of being 'animated' – to a wide range of beings in the world, such as the environment, other persons, animals, plants, spirits, and forces of nature like the ocean, winds, sun, or moon (Swancutt, 2023, p. Introduction).

This description has significance for the thesis investigation, because it identifies animism as 'a way of relating to the world' and this relates to how Woolf's *scene-making* draws on *moments* of experience and memory situated in nature form habitats. The above definition also enables the thesis to draw attention to the way in which Woolf plays with the notion of human and non-human; swinging between moments of energy

expression and moments of isolation or stillness, as it specifically refers to how 'animistic' sensibility' assigns 'sentience – or the quality of being 'animated' – to a wide range of beings in the world' (Swancutt, 2023, p. Introduction).

From an environmental history standpoint, the following concept of animism in the thesis relates to Michael P. Nelson's statement in his 'Animism' entry from the *Encyclopedia of World Environmental History*: 'Animism can be defined as the belief either that all natural things and phenomena are alive, or that they possess an innate soul or spirit' (Nelson, 2004, p. 55). A contemporary ecocritical extension of this statement, that purposefully suggests at directions for future environmental studies in literature, places 'animism as part of the wider transformative process by which bodily exchanges (both human and nonhuman) enact material and spiritual transfers from one state to another, including the ritual passage between death and life' (Abberley, et al., 2022, p. 235).

To add to this emphasis on animism as a term that describes the sense of movement and energy exchange that influences the beings, processes and phenomena that make up ecosystems, the thesis investigation is concerned with Woolf's 'life philosophy'; her belief in a sense of a 'pattern', which involves 'all human beings', and non-human beings, in a 'connected' network that is 'not confined to one's body' (Woolf, 2002, p. 85). Woolf's 'shock-receiving capacity', in some ways similar to the spark of animism that creates motion, and the awareness of how living beings interact with one another energetically as part of a 'whole', is examined in association with ecological understandings of energy transference both within living beings and between living beings (Woolf, 2002, pp. 84-85). It is significant that White's nature writing draws on a sense of animism, because Woolf admired his ability to combine scientific observation with poetic prose. In *The Natural History of Selborne* White celebrates the 'range' of 'chalk-hills' that make up the South Downs 'which runs from Chichester eastward as far as East-Bourn' (White, 1987, p. 152). As White continues to build up the historical and biological presence of the chalk-hills, he notes:

> I never contemplate these mountains without thinking I perceive somewhat analogous to growth in their gentle swellings and smooth fungus-like protuberances, their fluted sides, and regular hollows

> and slopes, that carry at once the air of vegetative dilatation and expansion. . . . Or was there ever a time when these immense masses of calcareous matter were thrown into fermentation by some adventitious moisture; were raised and leavened into such shapes by some plastic power; and so made to swell and heave their broad backs into the sky so much above the less animated clay of the wild below? (White, 1987, pp. 152-153).

For White, the chalk formations appear to move and grow as he observes them. During his consideration of the processes that change the structuring of the chalk over time, the Downs are depicted as energetic 'masses' which are subject to both 'gentle swellings' and 'dilation' (White, 1987, p. 152). In comparison to other mountainous landforms – described by White as different from chalk in so far as they look 'rugged, broken, abrupt, and shapeless' – he suggests that the Downs produce a sensation of 'power[ful]' motion in the onlooker, because of his repeated reference to how they 'swell and heave' when the soft rock is altered by heat from the Sun and pore pressure due to water from rain droplets and sea splash (White, 1987, pp. 152-153). To strengthen his interpretation of how the chalk cliffs of the South Downs possess a superior amount of active movement, White finishes the passage by questioning whether the 'calcareous matter' is propelled by these forces 'into the sky so much above the less animated clay of the wild below' (White, 1987, pp. 152-153). With White's specific use of 'less animated', in reference to the clay in the wealds below, and in contrast to the animated chalk cliffs, it is further possible to show the influence that ideas around animism had on his nature writing style.

We know from diary evidence that Woolf was particularly interested in keeping copies of Charles Darwin's works. When the Woolfs' house at Mecklenburg Square in Bloomsbury was bombed in 1940, 'Darwin and the silver' were initially rescued alongside their diaries (Woolf, 1990, p. 312). In a similar way to Thomas Henry Huxley, Darwin appeared to revolutionize the literary writing of science in the nineteenth century and Lambert asserts that a discourse that Woolf 'often appropriated' was 'evolutionary theory' (1995, p. 91). Evidence indicates that formulating an interdisciplinary prose may have been a secondary achievement for Darwin as he 'struggled with conflicting metaphors […] to forge a satisfactory language for talking (and thinking) about the transmutation of species' (O'Connor, 2007, p. 8). Nevertheless, his use of imaginary

language and his simultaneous understanding that this language 'will obscure as much as it reveals' had a dramatic influence on the nature writing genre that would come to influence Woolf (Lambert, 1995, p. 91). The nature writing style that Woolf adopts proves that she was open to experimenting with modern approaches that were being developed across an entire range of subjects.

Woolf's interest would have been piqued by the developing biological methods used to investigate flora and fauna. These new scientific approaches provided a modern template for the articulation of life experience in the form of metaphors being layered onto ecological and ethological research. Woolf was keen to use these academic advancements to question Victorian creativity and traditional writing methods. Woolf felt that the writer, like the biologist, was searching in habitats for words. The task she appeared to set herself with her own 'scene making' strategy involved the manipulation of shifting natural contexts. Woolf proposes that her words are in motion, just as the new biologist values the observation of nature over the acts of capturing and collecting. For Woolf, the problems associated with the taxonomical collection of natural species also emerge when a taxonomical approach to finding words is used. This is because Woolf asserts that the sterile method of choosing words becomes too forced. Instead she admired how modern science presented her with an objectivity due to the need for more accurate – less agenda driven – observational records of the natural world. She is aware that in both the sciences and humanities, there is a need for researchers to move away from a taxonomical approach to learning and investigating. Korrakod Paetsasadee, in her recent thesis, reinforces this idea of Woolf's modern awareness by suggesting that her oeuve can be pictured as 'a kind of metaphorical laboratory in which new kinds of literature-science interaction are explored' (2019, pp. 17-18). Twentieth-century development in biology formed thematic frames of nature reference that could also be appropriated across the academic subjects found in the arts.

As the sciences and the arts evolve over time, they offer up different thematic positions from which Woolf's works might be analysed by critics. In relation to the natural sciences, Woolf's own interest in scientific advancements had a direct impact on the style of her writing. Contemporary Woolfian research maps out the environmental undertones in her novels and the research community sees this in frequent citations that draw attention to the ecological, academic, responses from Gillian Beer, Elizabeth Lambert, Louise Westling,

Bonnie Kime Scott, Kristin Czarnecki and Carrie Rohman. Woolf, as a critic herself, was intrigued by the extent to which the natural sciences, although biological writing initially offers a slightly different focus to the observation of nature, were 'shaped by cultural assumptions' (Alt, 2019, p. 250). The reciprocal relationship between the arts and the sciences, in an education system that frequently divides and isolates departmental subjects, appears in Woolf's works as an effective collaboration of astute observations of the natural world and poetical, sensory expression. This thesis identifies this collaborative context in relation to Woolf's works in order to establish key factors that influenced her creation of the literary nature forms in *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts.*

11. Ecology, Ethology, Ethnobotany and Woolf: A Developing Narrative

Regarding this contemporary and scientific lens that is being adapted for the criticism of Woolf's works, the thesis seeks to analyse the four interwar novels by concentrating on Woolf's creative use of the act of observing the natural world. The research into Woolf's observation of different nature forms will include an awareness of how she involves ideas surrounding ecology, ethology and ethnobotany in her novels. In terms of Woolfian critics focusing on the ecological themes that are threaded throughout her writing, there has been an increasing interest in taking an ecocritical approach. With the rise in the popularity of ecocriticism – partly triggered by the new nature writing genre and its response to the climate crisis – it makes sense that an ecological exploration of Woolf's works has become more prevalent. Woolf's liminal Modernism and naturalistic nature scenes provide a strategic template for contemporary discussions surrounding the significance of a human-nature relationship.

Rebecca Schisler reminds us, however, that in our eagerness to adopt an ecocritical approach that prioritises how Woolf uses her scientific knowledge of the life-cycle of organisms – to create her universal philosophy – we forget how anthropocentric the human narrative can be. For Schisler, Woolf's life-cycle also refers to the human cycle of production and destruction and she sees ecocritical theory being in favour of this philosophy. She perceives Woolf's work as illustrative of 'the repetition of violence' that is seen in the human cycle (Schisler, 2012, p. 18). Schisler's argument follows the idea that humans always manipulate natural processes

for their own endeavours. As a result of this, she contends that Woolf's 'cyclical vision of the natural world where decay and destruction are requisite for growth and propagation', draws attention to the 'inverse condition of social formation' which exists in 'parallel' to the functioning of the natural world (Schisler, 2012, p. 18). This assertion that writing which draws too much on ecosystem phases results in anthropogenic ideologies that are harmful to the natural environment, further reveals the importance of analysing Woolf's nature-scene strategies for ecocritical debates.

Haraway's 'layers of naturecultures' highlights the need for a defence (against the anthropogenic agenda) of the ecological systems in the natural world but, in contrast to Schisler, 'complexity is the name of our game' (Haraway, 2008, p. 16). The approach that Haraway assumes is therefore easier to translate onto Woolf's universal philosophy surrounding the natural world because, like Woolf, she studies the significance and flexibility of the 'encounter' in ecosystems (Haraway, 2008, p. 25). Whereas, Schisler's focus is on the binaries of the life cycle and the relationship that she identifies as existing between human growth and habitat destruction. For Haraway, there is more of a three-dimensional quality to the influences that humans and animals have on ecological cycles. The encounters, whether they be 'sometimes-joined, sometimes-separate […] before [or] lateral', create repercussions (Haraway, 2008, p. 25). Haraway calls these movements 'patterns' and 'rhythms of conjoined process', which then relate to what she terms as 'the heterogeneous scales of evolutionary time' (Haraway, 2008, p. 25). Helen Merrick, in her chapter 'Naturecultures and Feminist Materialism', determines that the introduction of Haraway's 'naturecultures' into research on gender and the environment opens discussions surrounding both 'hope' and 'oppression' (MacGregor, 2017, p. 101). With its beginnings in biological investigation, Haraway's term questions 'how (and why, and in whose interests) we humans encounter nature'? (MacGregor, 2017, p. 101). In order for these questions to keep being asked, Abberley, Alt, Higgins, Huggan and Marland also posit that 'a collective recognition' is vital – humans must accept that 'we are subject to elemental forces beyond the human capacity for management' (2022, p. 253). In this regard, Woolf's use of her animistic nature forms in *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts* highlight a respect for nature's energetic continuum and disseminate these ideas widely.

By looking to Woolf and Animal Studies, in relation to Haraway's work, it is evident that her interwar novels offer a critique of human-centric narrations of life-experience. Woolf's *Flush* causes much more explicit questioning over the notion of a singularly human perspective, with the readers' awareness that Woolf shows a dog's perspective and his emotional capacity to feel 'shivers of terror' (Woolf, 2013, p. 462). In *Between the Acts,* though less direct, Woolf adds further nuance to Miss la Trobe's expansive view of art-making amongst nature by describing how the birds seemed to share her sense of wonder as they flew 'to the unheard rhythm of their own wild hearts' (2012, p. 337). Miss la Trobe draws a sense of reassurance from the personal associations that she makes with the birds in flight. Yet Woolf appears to temper this sense of connection between the human and the non-human beings in *Between the Acts* with an emphasis on each being's individual self. She does this by referring to the 'wildness' of the birds and how they followed 'their own' impulses during flight, amongst their ultimate connectedness in the energetic movement of an ecological ecosystem. In a similar way to Haraway – in reference to the below extract from *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science,* Woolf often draws our attention (in this case via her estate grounds nature form) to the importance of appreciating the presence of multiple voices in interconnected habitats. For Haraway, there is an ongoing call to break through isolated and 'specific class, race, and national narratives' (Haraway, 1989, p. 348). Haraway also argues that an integrated perspective towards ecological functioning must go beyond the reframing of patriarchal hierarchies 'that allowed woman the gatherer to be born', in favour of a freer 'telling' of 'heteroglossic stories of sexual difference and difference within sex' (Haraway, 1989, p. 348).

> In the feminisms of the 1980s, the historical conditions have been challenged that allowed woman the gatherer to be born, with her animating tensions structured by a maternalist and individualist dialectic that did not finally put into question specific class, race, and national narratives about what it means to be human. Zihlman has realized for years that scientific narratives of human evolution are part of the contest for citizenship in the body politic. That contest has vastly expanded and intensified on a global scale in the last half of the twentieth century; setting the terms of the contest is no longer a western monopoly in life science or in political theory. The challenge facing those who generated the figure of

> woman the gatherer is to mutate her further to tell better the heteroglossic stories of sexual difference and difference within sex—
> (Haraway, 1989, p. 348).

In this sense, Miss la Trobe's self-involved connection with nature communicates another binary-led and environmental narrative that Haraway wishes us to expand on. Miss la Trobe's feeling of existing between the realms of the non-human beings and the human beings is reflective of Haraway's discussion over the still-binary role of 'woman' in relation to the natural world. Haraway describes how, during the shifts brought about by the questioning 'feminisms of the 1980s', women have been placed in a role that exists between a patriarchal desire to control nature for personal gain and an environmentalist standpoint that wishes to protect nature from the patriarchy (Haraway, 1989, p. 348). Haraway suggests the distracting quality of these power-structure myths, because they still create fear around difference. In *Modern British Nature Writing 1789 - 2020 Land Lines* Will Abberley, Christina Alt et al reinforce Haraway's point by reminding us that the zoological discoveries of the 1960s revealed that 'apes were more like us than we could ever have thought' (2022, p. 165). Haraway's nature philosophy – in perhaps a similarly realistic, but more hopeful, style to Woolf's – though its main stance follows the coexistence of nature and humans, sees the coexistence as an unruly combination of voices that results in a largely unordered ecological network that ultimately rejects the restrains of human ordering systems. This acknowledgement of the hegemonic attitude of humankind and yet the interconnectivity of all living beings is something that Woolf refers to subtly in her novels. She appears to psychically and creatively move with the interwar undercurrent of concern for the conservation of the British (and European) natural landscape.

Critics have analysed the extent to which behavioural aspects of nature scenes point to Woolf's environmental positioning of non-human beings as the higher and most essential life force. In Derek Ryan's article: 'Posthumanist Interludes: Ecology and Ethology in *The Waves*', he quotes Beatrice Monaco discussing how in Woolf's nature scenes 'there is much that is out of reach of human intelligence and perception' (2016, p. 148). He then goes on to refer to Frank McConnell's suggestion that Woolf's use of nature in her literary fiction relied on 'neither the […] pastoral' of her Victorian heritage, nor the 'malevolent but equally anthropomorphic'

attitude of Modernist influences (Ryan, 2016, p. 148). Following this, Ryan expands on what he too considers to be her ecological stance – brought to our attention structurally in the descriptive 'interludes' in *The Waves* – by referring to the '*nonanthropocentric* anthropomorphism' of these sections (2016, p. 149). Interestingly, in relation to Woolf's belief in the benefits of her contemporary experience of the developing natural sciences – and ethology as a concept – Ryan goes on to proffer that his essay will also examine Woolf's fascination with 'animal environment-worlds' and her 'response to Darwinian evolution' (2016, p. 149). In doing so, Ryan situates Woolf in a critical theoretical position in regard to animal studies and environmentalism. This is because Woolf is represented as a writer who is aware of and builds on ideas surrounding evolutionary theory, whilst also supporting the increasingly modern interest in the significance of respecting ecological networks that exist between all living species.

As well as critically assessing Woolf's oeuvre in terms of the influence that ecology and ethology had on her approach to life and writing, the practice of taking an extended ethnobotanical view of the scientific interests and adaptions that Woolf focuses on in her literature is also re-emerging as an area of literary scholarship. Ethnobotany draws attention to our human reliance on botanical vegetation and the ways in which a relationship with plants contributes towards the ways in which we function on Earth. Despite there always being an essential relationship between the lives of plants and humans, over 'the past several decades, the science of ethnobotany has evolved […] to a multidisciplinary endeavor' (Balick, 1996, p. 58). Susan McHugh goes so far as to propose the view that the wide-scale, collaborative approach to ethnobotanical research explains 'why plants are moving from the margins to the center of literary study' (2021, p. Article Introduction). This trend has increased, with access to information on a global scale has increased. The critical approach is now more inclusive, flexible and engaged. In this sense, the study of ethnobotany raises our 'awareness of the value of biological diversity and support for its conservation among a broad range of people' (Balick, 1996, p. 58). Contemporary ethnobotanical writing therefore aims to scientifically record the 'changing social and ecological conditions' of our times (McHugh, 2021, p. Article Summary). As a result of this shifting attitude, ethnobotany is tasked with reconsidering entrenched or classical attitudes that have become habitual modes-of-thought in current socio-cultural spheres. Woolf's understanding of ideas that relate to ethnobotanical studies caused her to challenge Victorian ideas about femininity and nature. Yet, she

was also writing during the beginning of a much greater shifting of viewpoints that was to take place in the ethnobotanical and anthropological fields.

The study of ethnobotany involves research that links to the disciplines of anthropology and botany. Anthropological criticism relates to autobiographical readings of Woolf's works due to how it 'situates the making, dissemination and reception of literature' in the context of social norms (Coates, 28 March 2008, p. n.p.). It is important to consider, however, that the traditional choice of mores have been recognised as being 'increasingly suspect in the twentieth century' (Coates, 28 March 2008, p. n.p.). Contemporary perspectives in anthropology now also focus on the emphasis that has been placed on conventional, hegemonic narratives. Ethnobotany, too, 'first proposed in a lecture by John Harshberger' in 1895 and then 'typified in a paper by J. Walter Fewkes' in 1896, has recently shifted focus from earlier approaches (Balick, 1996, p. 58). Early fieldwork involved 'compiling lists of common and Latin names of plants used by an indigenous group' without the contribution of diverse contextual information (Balick, 1996, p. 58). By studying Woolf's literary oeuvre anthropologically, from a contemporary position, we are able to consider her creative behaviours and writerly process in the context of a wider sphere of influence. The thesis expands on existing criticism that links Woolf's interest in how the natural sciences were developing more observation-orientated approaches to research in the fields of ecology, ethology and ethnobotany, by noting how her own nature writing transforms observations of natural habitats into the key literary nature forms.

12. Woolf's Inheritance of an Early Environmentalism

The modern meaning of the word 'environment' is thought to have been coined by Thomas Carlyle in 1828, alongside a response to rapid industrialization and modernising.[4] Carlyle wrote frankly and often satirically about the working conditions of northern, working-class employees. He could also construct an effective landscape scene. His scenes, much like Woolf's, often made space for metaphysical musings. In his *Sartor*

[4] In Jessop's 'Coinage of the Term Environment', there is a sense that Thomas Carlyle was speaking for the modern age. His focus on nature and land appears to symbolise the cultural backlash that occurred in response to increased mechanisation. (Ralph Jessop, 'Coinage of the Term Environment: A Word Without Authority and Carlyle's Displacement of the Mechanical Metaphor', *Special Issue: Literature and Philosophy in Nineteenth Century Britain in Literature Compass*, Vol. 9, Issue. 11, (Glasgow University: Glasgow), pg. 708-720, 16th November 2012, pg. 708, Wiley Online Library, https://compass.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1741-4113.2012.00922.x , Accessed: 25/07/22, 11:57.)

Resartus of 1836*,* the narrator attempts to transcribe the deeper experiences of the main protagonist, Teufelsdröckh, by remarking how he felt surrounded by 'the azure Dome' and 'four azure-flowing curtains,—namely, of the Four azure winds' (Carlyle, 1973, p. 811). In her own critique of Carlyle, Woolf appears to admire the bravery of his prose. Despite her usual hesitancy towards favouring any writing that is 'colloquial & scrappy', she comments on how she finds Carlyle's writing to have 'more punch in his phrase than in [Edward Bulwer-] Lytton's' politically focused works (Woolf, 1981, p. 110). Woolf and her British contemporaries would have been aware of the incredible impact that industrialization had on British landscapes and the popularity for romanticizing countryside scenes, because of the response from their forebears the Victorian writers. Carlyle's coining of the term 'environment' provided the necessary vocabulary for 'spurring writers, scientists, and social thinkers to forge a diverse conceptual lexicon for describing the relationship between organisms and their material surroundings' (Hildebrand, 2018, p. 3). Woolf's oeuvre continued to shape the lexical meaning of the term environment, as it was being presented in her modern and hybridized forms. The thesis examines the state of environmentalism in Britain during both Woolf's and her parents' lifetimes. We know that Woolf was influenced by the writings of the American Transcendentalists, because she wrote on Thoreau, Emmerson and Whitman and detailed how she felt Whitman left his readers 'with a sense of an "immense background or vista" and stars shining more brightly' (2011, p. 231). The Transcendentalists believed that nature held all that humankind required and to a great extent the modern use of the word 'conservation' was given meaning with the American establishment of National Parks. Starting with the establishment of Yellowstone in 1872, large expanses of natural land were 'to be "dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people"' (Watson, 2019, p. 2). In Britain, although there is a longer history of public parks in England, the first official National Park was not confirmed until the Peak District became a designated site in 1951.[5] There is a sense that the need for greater awareness over the protection and conservation of British habitats was a course that continued to develop throughout Woolf's life.

[5] [*History of our National Park,* Peak District National Park, https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/learning-about/about-the-national-park/our-history, Accessed: 161223, 18:48.]

'The 1950s marks a decade of new National Parks for England & Wales – and several more follow in subsequent decades.' [*The History of National Parks*, National Parks UK, https://www.nationalparks.uk/the-history-of-national-parks/, Accessed: 161223, 18:48.]

13. The Environment as Politics

The World Wars had actively shaken the authority of existing class-systems and during the interwar years there was a growing fervour for land accessibility across the social stratum. The 'Freedom to Roam' campaign had previously been established as a Parliamentary bill proposal by James Bryce MP in 1884.[6] Though repeatedly rejected, campaigners would determinedly fight for its instigation until the Countryside and Rights of Way Act was passed in 2000. The build-up towards modern and contemporary legislation involved a gradual relinquishing of estate land for the use of the public. North Derbyshire's renowned Snake Path into Sheffield was one of the earliest tracks to be granted wider access in 1897. Though a seemingly small advancement, the Peak District and Northern Counties Footpath Society must have felt that the opening of the track 'was a kind of triumph itself over injustice and social exclusion' – with their plaque reading 'DEDICATED FOR EVER' (Cocker, 2019, p. 79). The more direct scene of activism that 'triggered an immediate increase in public attention for the issue' and caused more people to question attitudes to land ownership came with the 1932 march on Kinder Scout in North Derbyshire (Cocker, 2019, p. 95). These direct and physical examples of activism over restrictive land ownership and walking rights illustrated the enviro-political climate that was developing as a consequence of the impact that the First World War had on attitudes towards countryside rights.

In the wake of the Second World War, the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 contributed to significant changes in attitude towards land ownership in Britain. Although finalised six years after Woolf's death, protests over the inequality of land ownership, designation and use would have been something that Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group were aware of. This is because the '1947 system was an evolution of legislation' (Ellis, 2017, p. 1). The changes 'began with very basic public health legislation in the 1870s […] [as a] result of concern over basic living standards […] led by the Garden Cities movement' (Ellis, 2017, p. 1). Nearly a

[6] As the British Ramblers Association records the political fight for walking freedom, across the countryside of the UK, involved decades of activism. Moreover, the charity is still politically active today, due to live debates over access to natural land. ['Winning the right to roam', *Ramblers: At the heart of walking,* (The Ramblers Association: London), https://www.ramblers.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-with-us/past-campaigns/right-to-roam-crow.aspx, Accessed: 25/07/22, 12:12]

year before Woolf's death, the Barlow Report was published. This national report put improved quality of life at its centre and included a new land tax system as well as 'the designation of National Parks' (Ellis, 2017, p. 3). The development of the legislation was one of the most significant societal changes to occur in the modern era of British history. This is due to the fact that the system supported the rebuilding of houses alongside land management plans that would be sustained over the long term – planning permission power was taken from the landed gentry and given to the local councils. Moreover, from a conservation perspective, the Act made further 'provision for the preservation of trees and woodlands' by 'prohibiting […] the cutting down, topping, lopping or wilful destruction of trees' and 'securing the replanting' (Anon, 1947, p. 42). The legislation surrounding the protection of vegetation will have drawn information from the 1919 Forestry Act, which organised commissioners – chaired by Simon Fraser[7] – to manage reforestation following the First World War.[8] During the interwar years, conversations over social injustice, accessibility, landscape preservation and environmental politics were starting to gain more widespread momentum. This background of a growing concern for the state of the environment in Britain further explains Woolf's interest in habitat ecosystems. Her literary translations of these living networks into the identified nature forms in the four chosen novels that are analysed in this thesis combines her awareness of environmental politics with a belief in a universal flow of energy.

14. Woolf's Receptivity towards Environmentalism

Woolf inherited, and then fostered, the ability to momentarily quiet the sensory disruption of the modern era in order to zoom in on a snail traversing 'brown cliffs with deep green lakes in the hollows' (2018, p. 22). This ability was honed during her childhood when she would mimic her father's interest in botany as she took part

[7] Simon Joseph Fraser – the 14th Lord Lovat, 'the first Chairman of the Forestry Commission', founded the Commission and the act of planting trees to replace those that were felled. ['Tree planting re-enactment marks 100 years of forestry', *Royal Scottish Forestry Society*, 09th December 2019, (Royal Scottish Forestry Society: Edinburgh), https://www.rsfs.org.uk/index.php/news-articles/29-news-2019/97-tree-planting-re-enactment-marks-100-years-of-forestry, Accessed: 25/07/22, 11.32.]

[8] Forestry England reiterates, on the centenary of the establishing of the Forestry Act, that the organisation was 'founded to restore the nation's woods and forests following the First World War'. ['Celebrating 100 years of forestry 1919-2019', *Forestry England*, 09th Sept 2019, https://www.forestryengland.uk/100, Accessed: 25/07/22, 11.40.]

in natural science expeditions with her siblings in Cornwall. Woolf, like White, not only observed and recorded nature: she possessed powers of receptivity which enabled her to listen to several strands of globally significant changes. These shifts were then incorporated by Woolf into various aspects of her writing. Woolf had the foresight to combine Darwin's scientific detail with Henry James's sensory highlights – which were scattered between the realism of his characters' everyday lives. With this diverse perceptivity, Woolf's creative perspective became much more universal. Woolf's position as the collaborative detailer of natural and human scenes leaves her mostly 'convinced of the "inertness of the human condition"' (Alt, 2010, p. 83). She remains aware of the ignorance that humans hold towards the impact they are having on their surrounding environs. In this manner, Woolf and E. M. Forster held an expanded viewpoint for their time and an astute '"ethic of care" which was often directed toward non-human others' (Scott, 2010, p. 3). Consequently Scott argues that this perspective enabled them to place an emphasis on environmental approach toward their literary writings – a method that had frequently been underappreciated in the classical literature that was typical of their literary inheritance. This environmental niche in Woolf's literary texts allowed her to begin 'refining and extending cultural ecofeminism' (Scott, 2010, p. 3). Observing and writing about the natural environment offered a twofold opportunity for Woolf to highlight the experience of previously subjugated characters – the voices of female and non-human beings.

Forster expressed more open concern for the protection of the British environment. He pronounced in the prologue to his pageant play, *England's Pleasant Land* (1940), that the 'play is about the countryside, how it was made, how it changed in the centuries past, how today it is in peril, and maybe lost forever' (Forster, 1996, p. 359). Woolf's environmentalism, by contrast, subtly comes across in her detailed and naturalistic scene making. Her works offer environmental lines of thought, when she instinctively alters her readers' trajectory. For example, when she momentarily concentrates on the life-perspective of an animal. In *An Unwritten Novel* (1920), Woolf's scenes flit in and out of personification and zoomorphism as she describes the movements and responses of 'the moth that hangs in the evening over the yellow flower', the narrator and central character [Minnie Marsh] (2018, p. 12). The narrator suddenly speaks of how human existence is similar to that of the moth: 'I, too, on my flower', before personifying the perceptive experience of the moth in flight: 'Alone, unseen; seeing all so still down there, all so lovely' (2018, p. 13). For the moth, like the protagonist

Minnie Marsh, is living in a state that is vulnerable to the 'flicker' of human hands and Woolf uses this interplay to also see the moth as a 'soul, spirit' and then, momentarily, the narrator as another creature perched on a 'flower–the hawk over the down–alone, or what were the worth of life?' (2018, pp. 12-13). We can argue that these narrative interruptions conjure up a view of the animistic, nature-influenced life philosophy that Woolf often muses on herself. It is this underlying belief-system that raises themes of environmental concern in her literature. Janet Wilson's criticism focuses on the paganistic attitude that Woolf appears to have towards a belief in the universality of all living things. In typical Woolf style, there is an initial alignment with earlier forms of the nature trope. Woolf shows how her central characters frequently adhere to the idea of 'Nature as goddess […] a source of healing', before she stages her own observations. Woolf notices the complex emotional dynamics at play for both humans and non-humans, during phases of higher and lower 'interactions' (Wilson, 2017, p. 17). In this regard, Wiemann's metaphor of the 'banyan as an emblem of cross-cultural textual migration and diffusion' comes close to explaining Woolf's awareness of the increasing globality of Modernist influences and her own belief in the interconnectivity of lifeforms (Wiemann, 2021, pp. 33-34). In Woolf's deviance from the traditional nature imagery of her forbears and 'the linearity of the Darwinian 'tree of life', we see evidence of Wiemann's enthusiasm for the beneficial potentiality that is posed by literature that is structured on the 'multi-layered interweavings' of cultural ideas (2021, pp. 33-34). Whilst this thesis is not arguing that Woolf's writing was bridging diverse themes relating to international cultures, it does suggest that her approach to writing made space for different perspectives on nature and gender identity. Wiemann, in relation to his metaphor that linked botanical growth with cultural connectivity, admired Woolf's literary structuring. We know this because he explicitly mentions *Kew Gardens* and the way in which a multitude of voices and sensory expressions in the story challenge the established way of ordering narrative ideas. For Wiemann, the gathering of narrative viewpoints in *Kew Gardens* 'merge[s] into one all-embracing organic fluidum' (2021, p. 35). Woolf's ability to fragment descriptions of nature scenes again recognises the non-human and the human experiences of life. With this animal and plant inclusive attitude being adopted throughout Woolf's works, it is possible to see the far-reaching environmental impact that literature possesses when used to question the social mores of a human-dominant culture.

15. Woolf's own Adaption of Environmental Themes in her Interwar Novels

The research presented here identifies how Woolf manipulates the genre of what we would now term environmentally interested nature writing in order to make comments on the social mores of her time. Woolf enjoys recording the peculiarities of the seasons in her diary writings ('May coming and asparagus and butterflies. Perhaps I'll garden a little; oh and print'), but she then also uses nature references to describe people she is intrigued by (Woolf, 1984, p. 276). In a striking simile she decides that Proust is 'as tough as catgut and as evanescent as a butterfly's bloom' (Woolf, 1980, p. 7). This statement emphasises the extremes within Proust's personality – comparing his resilience and evocative charisma with the robust quality of a bovine or sheep gut and the fragility of an insect wing – but also highlights Woolf's fascination with observing (often in a tone than appears to imitate the naturalist's attempt at a scientific neutrality) even the various parts of animals. Woolf seems to be aware that she can build up meaning around the human experience by associating concepts such as time, change and character traits with various details about flora and fauna that have caught her eye. There is an underlying comprehension of how we are ultimately connected to the entirety of our environments and because of this awareness she is more likely to draw on references from her non-human hinterland. In her book, *Ecocriticism and women writers,* Kostkowska includes discussion of Woolf. This is because Kostkowska believes that Woolf 'evidences an obvious interest in the environment, even if it is not usually her foremost focus' (2013, p. 5). And yet, Kostkowska is clear in her temporal definitions. She identifies the fact that, as critics, we are now analysing Woolf's works through a specifically ecocritical and environmental lens and 'using our contemporary definition, we can label Woolf an environmentalist because of her philosophy' (Kostkowska, 2013, p. 5). In this regard, any ecocritical analysis of Woolf's works must be approached within the wider context of developing environmental terminologies.

With Woolf's use of the formal design nature form in *Mrs Dalloway*, for example, we see glimpses of her own understanding of the ecological links between all creatures in both city and countryside spaces. The analysis looks at how Woolf's characters in *Mrs Dalloway* interact with the nature that surrounds them. We see Peter Walsh and Rezia Warren Smith listening to a rising sound that makes them think of an 'ancient song' (Woolf, 2000, p. 82). This then causes them to shift from their own emotional turmoil to look up at the canopies of

‘beech trees’ (Woolf, 2000, p. 82). Amongst these truthful intervals, Woolf offers her characters a revelatory feeling and a brief respite from the superficiality of the anthropogenic world.

The analysis of Woolf’s environmentalism in *To the Lighthouse*, in Chapter 2 of the thesis, concentrates on how her characters gain a wider perspective on the composition of the natural world when they are viewing the further reaches of ecological habitats from the edges of naturalistic gardens. We see Mr Ramsay gazing out to the sand dunes and musing on the changes that have occurred to the landscape, in relation to how humans now use the land differently. He recalls that ‘years ago’ there used to be so few humans walking along this stretch of the Scottish beach, where the Ramsay family always took their holidays, that ‘one could walk all day without meeting a soul’ and so ‘the seals sat up and looked at you’ (Woolf, 2000, p. 76). This specific referencing of coastal wildlife shows that Woolf had an appreciation of how animals rely on certain biological sites being free from increasing human activity, as Mr Ramsay suggests that the seals are now so used to humans that they no longer look up in surprise. Woolf’s suggestion that human activity interrupts the lives of the animals that dwell in these areas also emphasises her often-sceptical attitude towards any anthropogenic aspirations that disrupt nature-locations.

Regarding the identification of ecosystem-centred themes in *The Waves*, the dominance of the rurality form signifies the ways in which Woolf animates nature. The fields and hedgerows of the central characters’ childhoods in *The Waves* form spiritual characters that also resonate with energy throughout the narrated years of Bernard, Susan, Rhoda, Louis, Jinny and Neville, amplifying the sensory responses of Woolf’s human characters. The aliveness of nature surrounds the friends. This realisation is more present in *The Waves* than in any of Woolf’s other interwar novels. We read that plant species ‘*run together in one fluent green blaze*’ and sense Woolf’s belief in the universal interconnectedness of organisms in the wider ecosystems of life on Earth (Woolf, 1981, p. 100). Woolf’s environmentalism in *The Waves* seems to develop from a life-philosophy that follows natural science’s emphasis on how ecological and ethological links are important for the existence of both humans and non-humans.

Woolf's *Between the Acts* emerges as a novel which is constructed on her own experiences of the English landscape, due to its numerous referrals to the history of the estate. Woolf opens the novel at Pointz Hall with her introduction of the owner Mr Bart Oliver. He is pontificating about how you could see 'the scars made by the Britons; by the Romans' on his grounds, from an aerial perspective (Woolf, 2012, p. 307). Woolf teases out the human desire to own land in *Between the Acts*, placing it in a historical timeline of human manipulation of the natural environment. In her dislike of Mr Oliver as a hegemonic character, who owns a vast amount of land, Woolf begins to assert an interest in the standpoint of an environmentalist. Despite her background, Woolf projects a liberal viewpoint onto her fictional writing about human interactions with nature. Much like her direct contemporaries, she echoes the idea that (to an extent) much of the landscape of the British Isles should be free to roam in.

With her focus on reviewing literary writers who commented on the growing interest in the 'environment', Woolf highlighted the fact that conservationists feared for the eroded state of the natural landscape. There is a sense that many people blamed the poor state of the natural world in Britain on the fact that swathes of forests were felled for resources during the two World Wars.[9] This opinion is seen with Woolf's interest in supporting the protection of the environment and her writing that focuses on both American and British nature writers, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Thoreau (for the *TLS* in 1917), and E. M. Forster. Even granting that Woolf thought Thoreau 'put in practice the doctrines of the Transcendentalists more thoroughly than any one of them,' a greater environmentalist influence came from her friend E. M. Forster (Woolf, 1917, p. 5). Forster bought a wood called Piney Copse, in Surrey, which became the subject of a short essay from his collection – *Abinger Harvest*.[10] Forster wrote: 'It is not a large wood – it contains scarcely any trees, and it is intersected, blast it, by a public footpath. Still, it is the first property that I have owned, so it is right that other people should participate' (Forster, 1996, p. 21). Forster questions what it means to have access to land, ownership of land and the intention to conserve land. It is significant that he chooses, during his first foray into purchasing

[9] The loss of forest due to higher resource demands, during the World Wars, prompted politicians to draft legislation pertaining to the Town and Country Planning Act in 1947.

[10] Piney Copse was bought by E. M. Forster in 1924 to save it from the threat of development. The wood was acquired from the author's estate by the National Trust in 1970. https://nt.global.ssl.fastly.net/abinger-roughs-and-netley-park/documents/read-em-forsters-essay-my-wood.pdf 28/04/22, 17:00

property, to also buy a wilder area of natural habitat. It seems that following the First World War, there was a greater concern in Britain for both the protection of nature and equal access to the countryside. In *Between the Acts*, Woolf sets up a layer of tension between the aristocracy and the people of the rural village and thus we can further determine that she is aware of the way in which the landscape is set in the social agenda of British class-systems. She uses the topographical aesthetic of the scene to favour the working class as 'the terrace was the very place for a play', but the estate house of the upper-classes' lives is built 'in a hollow' which is damp, cold and desolate (Woolf, 2012, p. 333). Woolf displays a socio-geographical understanding of the fact that the upper-class social dominion was in decline and, as David Cannadine writes, 'the land of the British Isles was becoming politically vulnerable' (1990, p. 88). We know that there was a decrease in the ownership of rural land by the hereditary aristocracy during the latter part of the nineteenth century, and an increase in suburban garden plots and allotments following the First World War (Cannadine, 1990, p. 88). Woolf would have been aware of both of these influential changes.

16. Ecotheory

The ecotheory that the thesis places a particular emphasis on has emerged from Donna Haraway's 'naturecultures' concept, which proposes that there are numerous 'histories' reflecting on the interwoven lives of energetic beings on Earth (2008, p. 25). The term naturecultures, in proposing that our ecologically interconnected lives are inseparable from social acts that have determined cultural references, pulls together research that similarly maps out the cyclical links between Woolf's experience of nature and her creation of literary prose. We see this pattern (in a raw manner) in Woolf's *A Sketch of the Past* notes:

> To hear the waves breaking that first night behind the yellow blind; to dig in the sand; to go sailing in a fishing boat; to scrabble over the rocks and see the red and yellow anemones flourishing their antennae; or stuck like blobs of jelly to the rock; to find a small fish flapping in a pool; to pick up cowries […] To smell all the fishy smells in the steep little streets; and see the innumerable cats with their fishbones in their mouths; and the women on the raised steps outside their houses pouring pails of dirty water down the gutters; every day to have a great dish of Cornish cream skinned with a

> yellow skin; and plenty of brown sugar to eat with blackberries . . . I could fill pages remember one thing after another. All together made the summer at St Ives the best beginning to life conceivable. When they took Talland House father and mother gave us – me at any rate – what has been perennial, invaluable. Suppose I had only Surrey, or Sussex, or the Isle of Wight to think about when I think of my childhood […] Our house, Talland House, was just beyond the town, on the hill. For whom the Great Western Railway had built it, I do not know. It must have been in the forties, or fifties; a square house, like a child's drawing of a house; remarkable only for its flat roof, and the crisscrossed railing that ran round the roof; again, like something a child draws. It stood in a garden that ran downhill; and had formed itself into separate gardens, surrounded by thick escallonia hedges, whose leaves, pressed, gave out a very sweet smell. It had so many angles cut off, and lawns surrounded, that each had a name; there was the coffee garden; the Fountain – a basin with a funnel that dripped, hedged in with deep evergreens; the cricket lawn; the Love Corner, under the greenhouse, where the purple jackmanii grew – where Leo Maxse proposed to Kitty Lushington (Woolf, 2002, p. 134).

Woolf traces the ebb and flow of close relationships, alongside observed changes in planting in the garden or along the coastline, whilst revering the 'perennial' inspiration these settings and dynamics provided for her thought-processes, creativity and writing (Woolf, 2002, p. 133). We see Woolf's pattern of tracing observations of the natural habitats and non-human beings that surround Talland House when she uses trailing and descriptive memories that appear to follow a remembered walking route and passage through a day, during their established holiday routines in Cornwall. The initial reference to sound is pivotal, because 'the yellow blind' that seems to transmit the noise of 'the waves breaking that first night' represents Woolf's portal to the escapism of rurality and difference (Woolf, 2002, p. 133). The 'yellow blind' captures the sense of changing natural light and the notion of 'the waves' sounding 'behind' captures the idea of Cornwall and the coast offering both a physical and a psychological portal or transition into new habitats and also new creative scenescapes. The poetic expansion of these details and the sensory fascination that accompanies her recollection of 'the steep little streets', is emphasised by Woolf's repetition of both 'smell' and 'fish' and the sibilance that appears to continue throughout this evocative passage (Woolf, 2002, p. 133). The passage gathers momentum as Woolf takes us through the various senses. Alongside 'the fishy smells' that pervaded

the spaces beyond the garden, Woolf hones in on how they could tangibly create ‘a very sweet smell’ having ‘pressed’ the ‘leaves’ of the ‘thick escallonia hedges’ (Woolf, 2002, p. 134). Woolf describes the marine wildlife as if she is writing whilst ‘see’ing and standing in front of ‘the red and yellow anemones flourishing their antennae; or stuck like blobs of jelly to the rock’ (Woolf, 2002, p. 133). Woolf repeats the verb ‘see’ as she recollects watching ‘the innumerable cats’ seeking out ‘fishbones’ in the coastal streets (Woolf, 2002, p. 133). The sense of touch is evoked in this passage, due to Woolf’s notes on how herself and her siblings would ‘scrabble over the rocks’ to investigate rockpools and ‘pick up cowries’ (Woolf, 2002, p. 133). The textured difference between the rough ‘rocks’ near the approach of the waves and the smooth and decorative-like shells of the ‘cowries’ draws us into Woolf’s capturing of those memory-moments. Finally, in the rush of memories in this passage, Woolf triggers reflections on taste when she states that ‘every day’ there was the opportunity ‘to have a great dish of Cornish cream skinned with a yellow skin; and plenty of brown sugar to eat with blackberries’ (Woolf, 2002, p. 133). The contrasting textures of the ‘sugar’ crystals in relation to the softness of the fruit, and then the ‘skin’ layered on the top of the ‘Cornish cream’, recapture the present and intimate nature of the experiences at Talland House. Woolf’s pace increases as she overlays the geographical habitats in her descriptions of the land around Talland House with sensory associations. The energy in Woolf’s prose increases, as she lists the forms of botanical and natural habitats and species recalled from her childhood experiences on the Cornish coast. Descriptive passages about the gardens stretching out and forming distinct spaces reflect Woolf’s own sentiments when she writes: ‘I could fill pages remember one thing after another’ (Woolf, 2002, p. 133). There is an innocence to Woolf’s memories of Talland House and this is reflected in her repeated description of the architecture looking ‘like something a child draws’, because it encompasses the ‘invaluable’ freedom that she feels their childhood holidays offered (Woolf, 2002, pp. 133-134). The ease of creativity that these memories inspire, recalls an unencumbered state of mind. The memory spaces of childhood at Talland House form a mental space that existed before an awareness of patriarchal strategies of division and related rigid thinking about how species should act in the shared ecosystem of earthly resources. Here, in Woolf’s *A Sketch of the Past,* we see a correlation between her tangible immersion in nature and the act of recording these memories. *A Sketch of the Past* formed an important source of ongoing inspiration for the poetic-prose and nature writing style that we read in her novels.

Haraway, too, in her discussion of the natural world as an intermingled diversity of species, draws our thinking towards how 'layers of history, layers of biology, layers of naturecultures' result in a 'complexity' of connections (2008, p. 16). Haraway builds up her foundational idea of existence on Earth as an overall web of communication that is in motion between 'companion species' who live, engage and react with the environment, temporarily, in a physical mode against the backdrop of the continuum of lived histories (2008, p. 25). Woolf adds to this understanding of the living 'complexity' of interrelationships suggested by the notion of 'naturecultures' by ensuring that her non-human habitats (nature forms) speak back to the characters as part of coexisting dialogues in *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts.* Haraway's insistence on 'situated naturecultures' envisions ecosystem functioning as 'the dance of relating', which forms 'patterns' of ecological histories - 'sometimes-joined, sometimes-separate heritages both before and lateral to this encounter' (2008, p. 25). Woolf's creative representation of this ecological motion is seen more overtly in her diaries where she refers to the *'scene making'* process. During these writing segments Woolf allows herself to experience a sensory rush of responses. These moments are often provoked by her interaction with gardens or habitat sites, such as the water meadows in Sussex, which then propel the writing of her literary nature forms in *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts.*

In her identification of bigger shifts in species' relational habitations, Haraway's *When Species Meet* asks her readers to acknowledge 'the knots of technological, reinvented pastoral-tourist economies and ecologies' in regards to how we will 'respond' to the complexities of these 'entanglements' (2008, pp. 40-41). Through this lens of accepting ecological changes and Haraway's insistence on our 'recognising' the interactions that we share with 'companion species' in contemporary society, we can also approach Woolf's environmentally-aware philosophy with a greater appreciation for her deliberate intermingling of non-human and human characters in *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts* (Haraway, 2008, p. 42). Within a modern context, the First and Second World wars led to a shift in attitude towards the use of the land in Britain. By adopting a creative approach that actively evolved around maintaining a tangible and literary involvement with non-human species, Woolf engages with the environmental shifting that began to take place through the interwar years. Though her lived experience, Woolf refuses to shy away from the reality of humanity's impact on the natural world and on the anthropogenic psyche that surrounds nature. The research

for this thesis extends environmental criticism in the literary field via the identification of Woolf's non-human nature forms and in relation to the use of a horticultural and landscape design scale that determines the 'formality' or 'wildness' of a planting scheme in a garden or ecosystem site. This is because these interconnected, but specific, nature forms have been recreated from Woolf's observation of different habitat types to form literary ecosystems in *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts.* Instead of isolating one specific form of nature in an analysis of Woolf's oeuvre, as is frequently now the case with any ecocritical analysis of Woolf's oeuvre, the four nature forms observed in the above mentioned novels by Woolf (formal design, naturalistic gardens, rurality and estate grounds) are analysed together and shown to link to an increasing interest in wider scale ecosystem functioning during the interwar years in Britain. This is because the identified nature forms represent smaller and larger habitats that range from domestic to wild, the functioning of different ecosystems and the ultimate reliance that each ecosystem has on ecosystems on a national and even global level. The inclusion of these nature forms provides a connecting structure that can be found in all of the chosen novels and therefore the thesis investigates how Woolf's botanically-infused prose reflects on the growth of ecologically-informed environmental awareness through this framework. The examination also shows how the dominant nature form type becomes larger, in terms of the scale and 'wildness' of the habitat, through the progression of the four novels that are published between 1925 and 1941.

17. Chapter Overviews

This structuring of the thesis chapters reflects the way in which horticultural and landscape design theory often differentiates garden spaces by assessing varying degrees of formality or wildness. This is especially significant as we know from autobiographical and biographical records that Woolf was influenced by horticultural terminology. During the progression of each chapter, the thesis moves through overtly formal nature forms to 'wilder' styles. Via the nature form descriptions, Woolf interweaves her characters' stronger, emotive displays with depictions of their surrounding natural environment.

In Chapter 1, we note how, in *Mrs Dalloway,* Woolf portrays the diminished personalities of Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith. Clarissa and Septimus are both seen to be battling to maintain a balanced

sense of self and this in turn reflects on how repressive the social setting in post-First World War London was felt to be. The characters' more truthful traits and desires appear to be represented by their memories, which are evoked when interacting with Woolf's formal design nature form. Chapter 1 concentrates on analysing how Woolf's botanically-infused prose adds greater animism to our understanding of her protagonists' lives in *Mrs Dalloway*. The focus on Woolf's formal design nature form in Chapter 1 begins to establish the landscape design structuring that follows an increase in nature form habitat 'wildness' throughout the chapters. An awareness of this horticulturally informed structuring also presents the ecocritical stance of the investigation by highlighting Woolf's awareness of the interwar popularity of biodiverse gardening approaches and a growing concern for the conservation of habitat ecosystems.

In Chapter 2, the analysis looks at how Woolf creates a repeated pattern of misunderstanding between Mr and Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*. The Ramsays only reach a state of intimacy when they channel their emotions through the naturalistic garden nature form. Individually, both Mr and Mrs Ramsay seem to be able to identify themselves with self-assuredness when they observe a relationship with the non-human beings who co-exist with them in the spaces that are associated with Woolf's naturalistic gardens nature form. Chapter 2 enhances our appreciation of Woolf's horticultural context amongst the lives of the Bloomsbury Group and evidences her interest in nature writing that draws from tangible observations of the natural world – in this case by honing in on naturalistic gardens.

In Chapter 3, the analysis examines how the group of friends: Bernard, Neville, Jinny, Rhoda, Louis and Susan, in Woolf's *The Waves*, spend the phases of their human lives seeking out individually-accepted identities. Woolf traces a shared desire to link childhood experiences of the rurality nature form with their adult lives. The rurality nature form acts as a reminder of the significance of their togetherness with each other and the non-human world. Woolf's admiration for the universality of ecosystems is asserted in Chapter 3, via a close reading of *The Waves* in relation to the presence of the rurality nature form.

In Chapter 4, the investigation considers how Woolf gives Lucy Swithin and Isa Oliver the chance to escape traditionally-dictated roles in *Between the Acts*. Woolf awakens her female protagonists to a feeling of empowerment, because of how Miss la Trobe's play, set in the estate grounds nature at Pointz Hall, expands

their perspective of how they are connected to more life in the ecosystem that lies outside of the hegemonic grasp of the Oliver family unit. The play at Pointz Hall invites Woolf's characters and readers to view her estate grounds nature from as a network of present energies and in doing so she suggests that existence on the land is collaborative: all organisms are momentarily equal.

In *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts*, nature and emotional content exist in a structural dialogue with one another, creating artistic undulations of higher and lower feelings and understandings. The thesis chapters explore this dialogue within the contexts of biographical and autobiographical writings and in relation to the Bloomsbury Group's horticultural practices. Each chapter further evaluates the significance of Woolf's ecocritical stance, through the lens of her attitudes towards nature writing, modern approaches to the natural sciences and early forms of environmentalism.

Chapter 1: Formal Design in *Mrs Dalloway*

Chapter 1 offers an innovative reading of Woolf's use of her literary formal design nature form in *Mrs Dalloway*. This chapter begins by illustrating the biographical and horticultural context and then expands the analysis to consider Woolf's naturalistic style, her natural science influences and environmental undertones. Chapter 1 specifically traces how the formal design nature form in *Mrs Dalloway* acts as an animated conduit for the expression of Woolf's characters' complex emotional states. The floral displays and parks that surrounded Woolf informed her formal design imagery and, due to Woolf's gardening credentials and therefore her developing knowledge of plants and biodiversity, the horticultural references represent interconnected ecosystems on two levels in her novels. Both the descriptions of floral arrangements and depictions of formal park designs produce the formal design nature form and together these aspects begin to suggest Woolf's awareness of a renewed concern (following the destructive nature of the First World War) for habitats that also provide for non-human beings. This thesis analyses through tracing Woolf's uses of nature forms and therefore places an emphasis on, for example, how the domestic flora in this novel creates liminal moments of expansive experience for the central protagonists.

1.1 Nature Form: Formal Design

This chapter will investigate Woolf's nature form of formal design, by looking at the traditional ways in which she symbolises nature in *Mrs Dalloway*. Firstly, we witness how collecting floral displays is part of Clarissa's preparation for the social gatherings that she holds in London:

> Not a straw, she thought, going on up Bond Street to a shop where they kept flowers for her when she gave a party. Elizabeth really cared for her dog most of all. The whole house this morning smelt of tar. Still, better poor Grizzle than Miss Kilman; better distemper and tar and all the rest of it than sitting mewed in a stuffy bedroom with a prayer book! […] Year in year out she wore that coat; she perspired; she was never in the room five minutes without making you feel her superiority, your

> inferiority; how poor she was; how rich you were; how she lived in a slum without a cushion or a bed or a rug or whatever it might be, all her soul rusted with that grievance sticking in it, her dismissal from school during the War--poor embittered unfortunate creature! For it was not her one hated but the idea of her, which undoubtedly had gathered in to itself a great deal that was not Miss Kilman; had become one of those spectres with which one battles in the night; one of those spectres who stand astride us and suck up half our life-blood, dominators and tyrants; for no doubt with another throw of the dice, had the black been uppermost and not the white, she would have loved Miss Kilman! But not in this world. No. It rasped her, though, to have stirring about in her this brutal monster! to hear twigs cracking and feel hooves planted down in the depths of that leaf-encumbered forest, the soul; never to be content quite, or quite secure, for at any moment the brute would be stirring, this hatred, which, especially since her illness, had power to make her feel scraped, hurt in her spine; gave her physical pain, and made all pleasure in beauty, in friendship, in being well, in being loved and making her home delightful rock, quiver, and bend as if indeed there were a monster grubbing at the roots, as if the whole panoply of content were nothing but self love! this hatred! Nonsense, nonsense! she cried to herself, pushing through the swing doors of Mulberry's the florists. She advanced, light, tall, very upright, to be greeted at once by button-faced Miss Pym, whose hands were always bright red, as if they had been stood in cold water with the flowers. There were flowers: delphiniums, sweet peas, bunches of lilac; and carnations, masses of carnations. There were roses; there were irises. Ah yes--so she breathed in the earthy garden sweet smell as she stood talking to Miss Pym who owed her help, and thought her kind, for kind she had been years ago; very kind, but she looked older, this year, turning her head from side to side among the irises and roses and nodding tufts of lilac with her eyes half closed, snuffing in, after the street uproar, the delicious scent, the exquisite coolness
> (2000, pp. 11-13).

It is significant that Woolf shows Mrs Dalloway ‘going on up Bond Street to a shop where they kept flowers for her when she gave a party’, because this action is performed by Clarissa herself and usually any collection tasks would still be undertaken by the servants of the middle and upper-classes during the years following the First World War (2000, p. 11). Woolf’s formal design nature form, represented in this scene in *Mrs Dalloway*

by floristry, is the energetic space that invigorates the protagonist's sense of self. Not only has Clarissa opted to choose and collect the floral bouquets herself, but Woolf highlights how 'she advanced, light, tall, very upright' into Mulberry's (2000, p. 12). There is a sense of Clarissa's physical stature growing as she enters the floristry shop – in tune with the ecstatic rush she feels when momentarily acting with greater authenticity, because she is suddenly more confident.

The contrast between Clarissa's mental state when she is walking on the streets of London, and then when she is approaching the floristry shop, is marked. Before she enters the florist's, she is haunted by prolonged ruminations on her 'hatred' at the 'idea' of Miss Kilman (2000, p. 12). Yet, these difficult emotions vanish as she enters 'the delicious scent, the exquisite coolness' of the formal design nature form (2000, p. 13). The passage before Clarissa reaches Mulberry's builds up Clarissa's 'idea' of Miss Kilman at a rapid pace, whereby the term 'spectre' is repeated in relation to how her exchanges with Kilman contribute to her heightened sense of being 'stirred' by and 'battling' with psychological exhaustion (2000, p. 12). Woolf's choice of words: 'spectre' and 'stirred', highlights how her emotions are engaged with a fear of the consequences of her harmful thoughts overwhelming her resolve. The 'spectre' is intangible, but seems able to disturb her mental energy and in turn her physical strength. She is anxious that this personal melancholy will interrupt her routine of conducting composed interactions within the interiority of her immediate social world – which often exists as disconnected from the greater diversity that the wider multi-species habitats provide. Clarissa experiences a range of frustrated, fearful, angry and depressive symptoms, making 'all pleasure in beauty, in friendship, in being well, in being loved and making her home delightful rock, quiver, and bend' (2000, p. 12). The symptoms are 'spectres' because they are hidden to others and yet pursuing her like 'dominators and tyrants', or a 'brutal monster' of the mind (2000, p. 12). The further use of these powerful words: 'dominator', 'tyrant' and 'monster', which evoke creatures or people that pose a dangerous and physical threat, emphasises the degree of impact that Miss Kilman's rigid outer conformity has on Clarissa's interior narrative. Woolf goes on to illustrate Clarissa's inner turmoil by describing how the overwhelming uprising of 'hatred' felt like phases of weakness, where her 'soul' could not be 'quite secure' (2000, p. 12). The severe reaction that Clarissa has to her own intrusive thoughts, in the aftermath of Miss Kilman's presence and before she enters Mulberry's, is described in terms that appear to relate more to the non-human

voices that exist amongst Woolf's nature forms. Clarissa's usual enjoyment is interrupted to such an extent that she feels as though she has been left to 'rock, quiver, and bend'. These verbs immediately conjure up the idea of a landscape being ravished by a storm, rather than the emotional state of a human. Objects or structures may be 'rocked' by a great force, frightened animals may 'quiver' and the stalks of flowers are vulnerable to becoming 'bent' and yet when combined these responsive actions highlight Clarissa's sense of suddenly losing her position of safety in the habitat that she frequents daily and the interactions that she seeks out regularly.

The change in Clarissa's inner temperament is emphasised by her decision to break away from the trail of negative thoughts, associated with Miss Kilman, that she was obsessing over before she stepped across the floral threshold: 'Nonsense, nonsense! she cried to herself, pushing through the swing doors' (2000, p. 12). Both body and mind are united in this sudden assertiveness, because she chastises herself verbally at the same time as 'pushing through the swing doors'. In comparison to the way in which Clarissa's anxious mind, a few moments ago, had the power 'to make her feel scraped, hurt in her spine', the act of opening the door to the florist's shows a surge of physical strength and psychological determination. Any hint of vulnerability disappears as she is 'greeted at once by button-faced Miss Pym' who – just to reiterate the emergence into the formal design nature form – seems to have merged with the floral habitat that soothes Clarissa's perturbed mood (2000, p. 12). Miss Pym appears to have become one with the floristry that she cares for, as her 'hands were always bright red, as if they had been stood in cold water with the flowers' (2000, p. 12). Not only is there a merging of the human character of Miss Pym with the formal design nature form, but this increased awareness of the presence of flowers (rather than humans) allows Clarissa to relinquish her anthropocentric mask in favour of an immersive connection with the non-human microclimate in Mulberry's. Woolf proposes that flowers hold a unique power for Clarissa, in terms of providing an atmosphere that is engaging and warm. She implies that the act of floristry often signalled towards certain social engagements, relationships and duties that helped Clarissa to feel more in control within a social role that had the potential to be restrictive and limiting. As well as Clarissa, Rose Ramsay (in *To the Lighthouse*) is described (significantly by her mother Mrs Ramsay) in relation to her displays of social etiquette involving the decoration of the home with flowers. Out of the Ramsay children, Rose appears to fit the role of instinctive homemaker the most. She has

the practical and aesthetic abilities of a craftsperson, for 'she had a wonderful gift with her hands' and often 'made the dresses; made everything' (Woolf, 2000, p. 65). Although Mrs Ramsay seems to be conflicted, she praises traits in her children that adhere to her own adopted code of behaviour. For example, in terms of combining domestic skills, Mrs Ramsay herself knits and she seems to appreciate the enjoyment that Rose presents when she is immersed in the design of 'tables, flowers, anything' (Woolf, 2000, p. 65). Woolf plays with established floral norms to analyse how various social dynamics, tempered by Victorian values, can both create ease and tension for her characters. In Sparks' referencing of Ziegler's 'four practices'[11], which are considered to be 'characteristic of the late nineteenth-century culture of flowers', we are told that 'the decoration and presentation of the home' was used as a quick means of establishing social dominance (Sparks, 2011, p. 43).

In *Mrs Dalloway* we see the ceremonial use of flowers in relation to Sally Seton's marriage. Peter Walsh, on returning to London from India, reacquaints himself with Clarissa and Sally at the Dalloways' party. He wonders (after all their years apart) who Sally eventually married: 'But who was this Rosseter?' (Woolf, 2000, p. 184). All Walsh could recall being told was that 'He wore two camellias on his wedding day' (Woolf, 2000, p. 184). *Language of Flowers* informs us that the white form of *Camellia japonica* symbolised 'perfected loveliness' and it is not surprising that Woolf made use of this endearing meaning to highlight the romanticization of matrimonial engagements (Greenaway, 2013, p. 245). Woolf uses her heritage of these traditional floral languages to raise questions about English society during the interwar years. Woolf's formal design nature form plays on the established history of floristry and garden design that was popular in more populated settings and where formal social occasions tended to take place.

[11] Elisa Kay Sparks refers to 'Chapter 1: Tastes, Traditions, and Trade, 1870 - 1970' of Catherine Ziegler's *Favored Flowers.* Ziegler's book provides her reader with an extensive investigation into the ways in which the consumer market's fascination with flowers, identifies a link between floral purchases and the significance of establishing habitual social meanings 'to satisfy specific cultural needs and desires' (Ziegler, 2007).

1.2 Biographical Impact on the Formal Design Nature Form in Mrs Dalloway:

> ‘For although the clouds were of mountainous white […] and had all the appearance of settled habitations assembled for the conference of gods above the world, there was a perpetual movement among them’
>
> (Woolf, 2000, p. 137).

Woolf’s focus on the formal design nature form in *Mrs Dalloway* evidences her manipulation of this more urban nature form to highlight the two sides of Clarissa Dalloway’s personality. Woolf contrasts the superficiality of Clarissa’s socially-driven delight in her chance ‘to kindle and illuminate; to give her party,’ with the reflective atmosphere in ‘the Park, the silence; the mist; the hum; the slow-swimming happy ducks’ (2000, p. 5). Evidence of Woolf’s real-time walks amongst floristry and in city parks exist as descriptions of ‘the Broad Walk, the Round Pond, and the Flower Walk’ from when she lived as a child at Hyde Park Gate, Kensington (Woolf, 2002, p. 88). In a similar way to those of her protagonist, Clarissa, Woolf’s moods appear to have often become associated with her various walks in nature (in the city as well as the countryside). Whilst Woolf refers to the ‘monotonous’ nature of their family walks around Kensington Gardens, we gain a sense that they were undertaken throughout the seasons (Woolf, 2002, p. 89). Woolf mentions that they would perambulate despite the ‘thermometer’ indicating that the temperature was ‘below the little freezing bar’ (Woolf, 2002, p. 89). In this manner, there are similarities between Clarissa’s feeling of being observed in social situations and Woolf’s experience of being closely monitored by her family. At different points in time, Leslie Stephen, Vanessa Bell and Leonard Woolf all developed structures around Woolf that placed walking, gardening, or nature observation as part of her regular routine. These figures in Woolf’s life all imposed schedules on her daily life that involved an interaction with nature. In her memories ‘she ‘finds’ her father striding across the extended spaces of London’s Kensington Gardens’ and Hancock registers that (despite Woolf’s misgivings towards these repetitive engagements with nature) ‘the Gardens were an integral tract in Woolf’s and Bell’s formative geographies’ (Hancock, 2012, p. 95). Hancock emphasises the role that Woolf’s youthful walking experiences, amongst formal design, played in her own registry of memories, in the construction of the Stephen family’s homes and in the writing of novels.

In *Mrs Dalloway* we gain a powerful insight into Woolf's complex relationship with nature as a literary device. Clarissa's enthusiasm for floristry, as she begins 'turning her head from side to side among the irises and roses and nodding tufts of lilac with her eyes half closed, snuffing in, after the street uproar, the delicious scent, the exquisite coolness', is hyperbolised by Woolf to express the entrapment of her social role and the repression of her desire for expression (Woolf, 2000, p. 13). This is apparent because Clarissa's mood seems to become suddenly euphoric as she takes in the scents and refreshing atmosphere inside the floristry shop. For Clarissa, when she is distracted by her superficial duties, death seems to wait constantly on the other side of floral displays, parties and domestic affairs. A literal representation of this lurking sense of death is represented geographically with how the sound of the 'pistol shot in the street outside' took place just beyond the window of Mulberry's (Woolf, 2000, p. 13). Whilst Clarissa is in a trance at the floristry, considering 'this beauty, this scent, this colour', the sudden sounds of 'those motor cars' breaks her reverie (Woolf, 2000, p. 13). Woolf places Clarissa's experiences of tranquillity and fear directly next to each other. She does this by demonstrating how floral imagery might be used to ease the reader into her characters' expressions of truer emotions. She also illustrates how the bucolic trope of Victorian literary works might be manipulated in the modern context to amplify how the brutal reality of mechanised warfare dramatically contrasts with established structures of romantic ideology. Woolf also makes a serious comment on gendered ideals with Walsh's simile that compares the hegemonic, 'pyramidal accumulation' of conventional social structures, to 'those flowers Clarissa's Aunt Helena used to press between sheets of grey blotting-paper with Littré's dictionary on top' (Woolf, 2000, p. 160). This tradition of domestic floristry – in the form of pressure being asserted on flowers – is referred to by Woolf to mimic the intensity of society's demands on women to conform to feminine ideals and modes of etiquette. There is an undercurrent of patriarchal disrespect in Walsh's airy description of Aunt Helena's interest in 'those flowers' when in fact she was an expert in the field of orchids, passionate about recording them and had written a 'book on the orchids of Burma' (Woolf, 2000, pp. 160-176). Woolf, then, is showing an awareness of how the hegemonic narrative in Britain does not recognise the professional pursuits of women.

Woolf further experiments with her manipulation of flowers – for the purpose of representing social roles – with Emre's suggestion that Clarissa's flowers, because they are now cut, are 'perishable' (Emre, 2021, p. 3). Yet Clarissa's social persona appears to react with a sense of stubborn denial, in relation to the transitory nature of blooming flowers and moments of heightened human-delight. Despite the narrator's statement about Clarissa starting the novel with a decisive act – with the declaration that 'Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself', the context of the following sentence removes some of the reader's initial assumptions over the extent of Clarissa's independence: 'For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges; Rumpelmayer's men were coming' (Woolf, 2000, p. 3). The reader of *Mrs Dalloway* is quickly made aware of Clarissa's social positioning as an upper-middle class housewife, who usually does very little for herself and who is largely identified by her role as Mr Dalloway's wife. Woolf implies that Clarissa, like poor Septimus, in denying herself (and being denied) the freedom of every-day and honest thought, is equally cutting herself off from the reassurance of life's simple pleasures. Clarissa's social illusion is deeply connected to a fear of revealing emotions that deviate from the image of a stable, stereotypical, married woman. Woolf's references to this domesticated form of nature, found in floristry and city parks, is manipulated at times for character expression, but also to allow Woolf to comment on the imprisoning effect of deep conventions. These established modes often praised superfluous displays of happiness and to some extent frowned on either sadness or the mundanity of regular actions and feelings. When Woolf was living at Hyde Park Gate, whilst recovering from the breakdown that occurred after her mother died, she notes in her diary:

> Father has taken up Doctor Seton's notion that I should be healthfully employed out of doors – as a lover of nature – & the back garden is to be reclaimed – that will be a truly gigantic work of genius – nevertheless we will try (Woolf, 1990, p. 84).

Czarnecki asserts that for an intelligent, young, woman, the attitude with which her family's doctor approached her mental health felt more like 'patriarchal coercion and control' than restorative advice (2013, pp. 262-266). This attitude towards Woolf's mental health limited her empowerment as an individual. It also projected an opinion which linked feelings of grief and sadness with embarrassment.

The tension in Woolf's novels, and the sense of underlying control, which was exacerbated dramatically with references to the wars, shows evidence of anxiety on an individual and a universal level. From reading *Mrs Dalloway*, written a few years after the First World War ended, we see evidence of Woolf describing war-time emotions that were still permeating London's bustle. This repetition is seen most accurately with Woolf's detailing of Septimus' symptoms of shell shock amongst the 'excitement of the elm' trees undulating in the motion of the breeze (Woolf, 2000, p. 22). The back-and-forth movement of the wind rustling the branches and leaves of the elm trees: 'rising and falling, rising and falling', and Woolf's choice of the word 'excitement' mimics the panic and symptoms that Septimus's trauma triggers, such as rapid breathing and physical shaking (Woolf, 2000, p. 22). The reader is aware that Septimus finds it difficult to sit still, when he suddenly experiences a rush of sensory overload, as Rezia tries to steady him by putting 'her hand with a tremendous weight on his knee so that he was weighted down' in order that 'he would not go mad' (Woolf, 2000, p. 22). There is also a sense of Septimus's panic being reflected in the sound of the wind in the elm trees, because of how the natural scene becomes increasingly dramatic. The shaking of the elm trees results in a situation where 'all their leaves [are] alight', suggesting at the greater strength of the gusts and the greater influence that this has on Septimus's psyche (Woolf, 2000, p. 22). Confusion is evoked as Woolf writes that Septimus hyper-focuses on 'the colour thinning and thickening from blue to the green of a hollow wave', because his vision of the trees appears to also be moving and vibrating so much so that the intensity of the hues in the leaves fades and brightens (Woolf, 2000, p. 22). This unsteady visual perspective simultaneously suggests at how it would have been difficult to see clearly in a war zone due to the smoke of gunfire, the chaos of fighting and the impact of terror-fuelled adrenaline on the brain's processing of certain horrific images and overwhelming sensory impacts. The 'hollow wave' of sound and colour that Septimus sees in the shaking of the elm trees creates suspense, as both Woolf's characters and readers wait for the rush of cascading water and the crescendo of Septimus's sensory overstimulation – causing him to move from a 'transfixed' state to one of sudden reaction. With the onset of another War, and a drive up to London in October of 1939, Woolf appreciated how the early onset of fear quickly moved to a 'sense of siege' in the streets of the city (Woolf, 1984, p. 243). Francesca Wade elaborates on the context of the time by noting the contrast between 'the [living] waving plane trees in the square's garden' and 'pairs of soldiers in helmets and khaki greatcoats' who

were marching 'listlessly' towards violence, when Virginia and Leonard Woolf first moved into Mecklenburgh Square in 1939 (Wade, 2020, p. 268). For Woolf, even before the war, her philosophy could often be broken down into considering life and death. Woolf sets up an exchange between life and death throughout her novels, with nature subtly framing, revealing and providing a platform for the discussion of intense emotions. Overall, despite her frequent ironic use of the bucolical tropes with her characters, Woolf relates the cyclical process of nature to a universal life energy and the idea that emotions must be felt if beings are to thrive. With this overarching attitude in mind, Woolf sets up conversational scenes in her novels and uses nature to question her characters' truthfulness towards their own feelings.

Woolf uses her nature scene making to show glimpses of honest expressions from her characters – although these moments tend to follow on from the portrayal of a superficial or socially-driven attitude. A traditional view of the bucolic in *Mrs Dalloway* is mocked by Woolf with an interlude that focuses on Clarissa's cherished daughter: Elizabeth Dalloway. With Elizabeth, Woolf highlights society's aesthetic obsession with young women who are about to come of age. Woolf conveys how Elizabeth notices that 'people were beginning to compare her to poplar trees, early dawn, hyacinths, fawns, running water, and garden lilies; and it made her life a burden to her' (Woolf, 2000, p. 133). Elizabeth is also becoming aware of the complexity of feelings that exist between women. Whilst momentarily taking pity on Miss Kilman's zealous plight, Elizabeth 'was delighted to be free' of her (Woolf, 2000, p. 134). She has realised that Miss Kilman's extreme adoption of moral codes easily slips into a form of hyperbole, outrage and punitive behaviour towards others actions and choices. Elizabeth becomes sharply conscious of Miss Kilman's own agenda; the need to influence her more than her mother, but 'Mrs Dalloway had triumphed' (Woolf, 2000, p. 131). She could see that Miss Kilman's mission with others was secretly her own 'struggle' and desire 'to rid herself both of hatred and of love' (Woolf, 2000, p. 132). Miss Kilman seemed to want to achieve what she thought came easy to some: 'Yet to others God was accessible and the path to Him smooth' (Woolf, 2000, p. 132). Her idealisation of converting a young person to her religious order – involving a narrative that pictured Elizabeth as 'a fawn in the open, a moon in a glade' who needed Miss Kilman's, rather than Clarissa Dalloway's, spiritual guidance, ultimately felt imprisoning to Elizabeth (Woolf, 2000, p. 134). Miss Kilman's likening of Elizabeth to a deer in its first year of life suggests that she perceived Elizabeth to be very young and innocent

– the fact that the fawn is ‘in the open’ also implies that she thought her to be vulnerable, exposed and perhaps malleable to new ideas. The ‘moon in a glade’ association, similarly shows a depiction of Elizabeth as being traditionally feminine, passive and gentle. Miss Kilman’s hope to protect Elizabeth from aspects of society that she felt were flawed, appears to be matched by her aspirations to impose her religious ideologies.

Woolf finishes this arc of character realisation for Elizabeth by engaging the reader with the idea that Elizabeth is much more like her mother than is first presented. She has a public image that relates her to her father, Richard, and ‘the Dalloway family tradition of public service. Abbesses, principals, head mistresses, dignitaries, in the republic of women - without being brilliant, any of them, they were that’ (2000, p. 136). However, when Elizabeth is on her own she acts like her mother. She feels a freeing rush when she is taking in stimulus and noticing that

> A puff of wind (in spite of the heat, there was quite a wind) blew a thin black veil over the sun and over the Strand. The faces faded; the omnibuses suddenly lost their glow. For although the clouds were of mountainous white so that one could fancy hacking hard chips off with a hatchet, with broad golden slopes, lawns of celestial pleasure gardens, on their flanks, and had all the appearance of settled habitations assembled for the conference of gods above the world, there was a perpetual movement among them. Signs were interchanged, when, as if to fulfil some scheme arranged already, now a summit dwindled, now a whole block of pyramidal size which had kept its station inalterably advanced into the midst or gravely led the procession to fresh anchorage. Fixed though they seemed at their posts, at rest in perfect unanimity, nothing could be fresher, freer, more sensitive superficially than the snow-white or gold-kindled surface; to change, to go, to dismantle the solemn assemblage was immediately possible; and in spite of the grave fixity, the accumulated robustness and solidity, now they struck light to the earth, now darkness.
>
> Calmly and competently, Elizabeth Dalloway mounted the Westminster omnibus. Going and coming, beckoning, signalling, so the light and shadow which now made the wall grey, now the bananas bright yellow, now made the Strand grey, now made the omnibuses bright yellow, seemed to Septimus Warren Smith lying on the sofa in the sitting-room; watching the watery gold glow and fade with the

> astonishing sensibility of some live creature on the roses, on the wall-paper. Outside the trees dragged their leaves like nets through the depths of the air; the sound of water was in the room and through the waves came the voices of birds singing. Every power poured its treasures on his head, and his hand lay there on the back of the sofa, as he had seen his hand lie when he was bathing, floating, on the top of the waves, while far away on shore he heard dogs barking and barking far away. Fear no more, says the heart in the body; fear no more.
>
> He was not afraid. At every moment Nature signified by some laughing hint like that gold spot which went round the wall--there, there, there--her determination to show, by brandishing her plumes, shaking her tresses, flinging her mantle this way and that, beautifully, always beautifully, and standing close up to breathe through her hollowed hands Shakespeare's words, her meaning
>
> (2000, pp. 137-138).

In *Mrs Dalloway*, Elizabeth and Septimus are seeking out the universality of an energetic flow in nature in the formal design nature form that surrounds them in London. Woolf's formal design nature form is once more providing the momentum that her human characters' need to feel both motivated and a part of life. Elizabeth Dalloway, even as a younger woman, appears to instinctively find greater meaning in the sense of continuum that can be found via glimpses of the natural world on the streets of London. The 'perpetual movement' of the clouds and dashing glimpses of sunlight, as 'quite a wind' altered the tone of city parkscapes, seemed to merge human emotions with vast geographical transitions (2000, p. 137). Elizabeth compares the 'dignity' of dying to the rising of 'triumphing' music, to the delicate way in which the mighty force of a 'rough stream of a glacier' might transport 'a splinter of bone' in an icy hold (2000, pp. 136-137). With this revelation and belief in the constant passing on of energy in Earth's ecosystems, Elizabeth reaches new levels of maturity as a character: 'She liked the geniality, sisterhood, motherhood, brotherhood of this uproar. It seemed to her good' (2000, p. 136). Septimus, too, is freed whilst acknowledging this interconnectedness between all species. His perspective widens as he watches 'the watery gold glow and fade' as the changing light captures his senses and surrounds him with a lively animation. All at once he could hear as 'the trees dragged their leaves […] the sound of water was in the room […] through the waves came the voices of birds singing' (2000, p. 138). Septimus' s hypersensitivity to the sensory presence of nature is so powerful that he feels as though the non-

human beings have joined him inside the house. Both characters are elated through experiencing a woven relationship with ‘Nature’ and the merging of human and non-human lives also seems to momentarily raise them towards a higher spiritual realm. Woolf’s descriptions of the sky represent an otherworldly realm where gods would be in ‘conference’, whilst the more earthly lifeforms communicated to one another far below (2000, p. 137). Emre notes in her annotations that the depictions of the ‘broad golden slopes’ of the gods in *Mrs Dalloway* relate to Woolf’s reading of *The Odyssey* and her mentioning of ‘celestial pleasure gardens’ coincides with Leonard Woolf’s experience of Buddhist temple sites during ‘his years spent in Ceylon’ (Emre, 2021, p. 180). In analysing how Woolf portrays Elizabeth heightening her perception of energetic influence, to consider the spiritual and religious, we also see comparisons with Woolf’s deep respect for creative processing. As Septimus also identifies a godly presence in ‘Nature’, expressing that (as he experienced the sounds of the wind in the trees) he felt that the nonhuman ‘poured its treasures on his head’, he relates the spirituality of nature to aesthetics (2000, p. 138). Septimus, in awe of how the light and movement caused a ‘gold spot which went round the wall’ to appear as though Nature was ‘flinging her mantle this way and that’, absorbs himself in the evocative motion of the cycles in the natural world and notes that the expression is shown ‘beautifully’ (2000, p. 138). He links nature to aesthetics and in doing so represents Woolf’s aspirations for her life philosophy to be expressed in her novel via a ‘free indirect narrative style’ that undermines a patriarchal dominance over cultural modes (Goldman, 2010, p. 57). During her determinations of Woolf’s style in 'From *Mrs Dalloway* to *The Waves*: New elegy and lyric experimentalism' from *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, Goldman goes further to describe how a ‘model of collective participation in both art and life’ is produced (Goldman, 2010, p. 57). So, in the close reading above, Woolf’s reader also circles Elizabeth, Septimus and the narrator’s perspectives as we are taken through the formal design nature form. Elizabeth experience the clouds as ‘fresher, freer, more sensitive superficially than the snow-white or gold-kindled surface’ of the basic form (2000, p. 137). She feels herself being momentarily lifted to a meditative mood when she considers how when you look up towards the sky, the streets of human crowds begin to be subsumed by the rhythms of the elements. The voice of Woolf’s narrator then reminds the reader of the contrasting mix of the ethereal spiritual and the earthly mundane, as we are suddenly told that: ‘Calmly and competently, Elizabeth Dalloway mounted the Westminster omnibus’ (2000, p. 138). Elizabeth’s

interaction with aspects of nature in the formal design nature form in the city, that become apparent when she breaks away from Miss Kilman, rekindles her sense of self, personal empowerment and feeling of being connected to both her community and a more expansive universal energy.

The evocative utterances then return when Septimus; resting at home with Rezia, states that:

> He was not afraid. At every moment Nature signified by some laughing hint like that gold spot which went round the wall--there, there, there--her determination to show, by brandishing her plumes, shaking her tresses, flinging her mantle this way and that, beautifully, always beautifully, and standing close up to breathe through her hollowed hands Shakespeare's words, her meaning (2000, p. 138).

Woolf shows Septimus' respect for a personified, but godly, nature that he perceives to be 'standing close up to breathe through her hollowed hands' and speak to him, with the repetition of Nature as 'her' (2000, p. 138). It is significant that Woolf tells us in a short and direct sentence that 'He was not afraid' of the spirit of Nature, because, in comparison, he deeply fears 'human nature' and the representation of 'human cruelty' that he identifies in Dr. Holmes (the GP who initially treats Septimus for symptoms of psychological distress) (2000, pp. 138-139). There is a sense, in this scene, that despite his traumatic response to sensory stimulations from the human world that surrounds them, such as the physical advance of Dr. Holmes, Septimus feels that he is also approached by aspects of non-human beings, or phenomena, and yet does not react in the same way. The advance of Dr. Holmes is especially troubling because he associates the doctor with the unkindness that collective human conformity can show towards difference: 'human cruelty – how they tear each other to pieces. The fallen, he said, they tear to pieces' (2000, p. 139). Woolf's use of 'tear' emphasises the quick rise to act in a way that destroys the lives of non-conforming individuals. Septimus experiences the movement of sunlight: 'that gold spot which went round the wall', and the sounds of the breeze 'brandishing her plumes, shaking her tresses' as an interaction that was being expressed 'beautifully' (2000, p. 138). Septimus sees Nature as a goddess of the elements during this meeting, for although, like a human dancer, she appears to dance freely in extravagant garments with a feathery headdress and her hair loose, there is also a sense that she wields, or 'brandishes', an unearthly power over the winds and the sunlight and shadows. Through a

combination of Woolf's sense of irony and admiration, Septimus finds 'Shakespeare's words' to suit his belief that Nature is communicating with him. In having Septimus speak these words, Woolf suggests that Shakespeare's inclusion of many voices (especially those who are in opposition to the reigning powers) comes close to her own aspirations for literature to fairly include different voices (and non-human voices) responding to the modern age. Woolf is careful though and does not wholly raise Shakespeare's oeuvre as the pinnacle approach. Septimus states that 'Nature' speaks to him with 'Shakespeare's words, but her meaning' and in doing so he raises nature's cycles above human descriptions (2000, p. 138). The language suggests that Septimus is in dialogue with Nature, because of the way in which the words reiterate his sense of 'her' striving to communicate with him and create understanding: Nature 'signified by some laughing hint', presented a 'determination to show' and whispered 'her meaning' (2000, p. 138). In this way, Woolf's ever present and animate nature forms make space for the expressions of the feminine and the nonhuman and she surprises readers by sometimes doing so from within recognised, patriarchal and literary systems.

Woolf ensures that this idea of observing nature amongst formal design, either for leisure, refreshment or inspiration, runs throughout her novels. Following the connections that Woolf creates between her characters in *Mrs Dalloway*, we see how just after 'calmly and competently, Elizabeth Dalloway mounted the Westminster omnibus' whilst dreaming of 'celestial pleasure gardens', the resource of nature also creates a peaceful moment for Septimus and Rezia (2000, pp. 137-138). In contrast to the anxiety of Woolf's previous scene concerning Septimus under interrogation by the doctor, she places her character in a more lucid and gentle state of mind. As Rezia works on her hat-making, Septimus appears soothed by 'the sound of water […] the voices of birds singing. Every power poured its treasures on his head' (2000, p. 138). He considers Nature to be on his side: 'Fear no more, says the heart in the body; fear no more. He was not afraid. At every moment Nature signified by some laughing hint like that gold spot which went round the wall' (2000, pp. 136-138). He pictures the natural world as being strong and benevolent in 'her determination to show, by brandishing her plumes, shaking her tresses […] her meaning' (2000, p. 138). Clarissa, Elizabeth and Septimus are linked by this shared sense of renewal, feeling themselves to exist as part of a universal hubbub of people and the natural environment. Additionally, this psychological approach to life, with its unique blend of conscious realism and romanticism, reflects Woolf's musings on the importance of finding contentment in

both ‘exceptional’ phenomenological feelings and in the everyday motions of ‘non-being’ (Woolf, 2002, p. 83). Woolf does not deny that the natural world offers awe-inspiring experiences, but she is equally realistic about how nature also requires regular cycles of energy exchange. Woolf speaks of how even the act of navigating the streets in order to walk between London city parks, at times, ‘perpetually attracts, stimulates, gives me a play & a story & a poem, without any trouble, save that of moving my legs’ (Woolf, 1980, p. 186). The formal design nature form, despite often being a much more overtly anthropocentric and less diverse habitat, is still traversed and appreciated by Woolf. As she recalls her walk with Pinker ‘to Grays Inn Gardens’, and lists the sights that she passes: ‘Morris’es house; thought of them on winters evenings in the 50ties; thought we are just as interesting; saw the <street> Great Ormond St where a dead girl was found yesterday; saw & heard the Salvation Army’, there is an awareness that this brief interaction with nature sets her mind in readiness for formulating a new written piece of work (Woolf, 1980, p. 186). Another example of Woolf’s attention being diverted by the formal design nature form is seen when she writes of how, when completing a menial task, like walking with Leonard to the Clinic, she would note the extraordinary ‘purple grey clouds above Regent’s Park with the violent and yellow sky signs’ and revel in the uniqueness of that moment (Woolf, 1984, p. 223). This practice of walking and thinking was established in Woolf’s youth, when the Stephens factored in ‘family outings to Kensington Gardens, Kew Gardens, and Hampton Court’ as part of their weekly routine (Czarnecki, 2013, p. 264). It is therefore possible to see the direct correlations between Woolf’s own process of walking amongst nature, and her deliberate situating of characters amongst nature form scenery that eases the expression of repressed feelings.

1.3 Horticultural References and Formal Design in Mrs Dalloway

Biographical material relating to Woolf’s relationship with gardens has deepened our critical understanding of the context from which she was writing. Woolf’s autobiographical works hint at the importance of her own familial and friendship connections – formed in the confines of their private garden and landscape escapes. The scenic ebb and flow of nature that Woolf creates in her novels reflects the psychological scaffolding that immersion in the natural world and time with her contemporaries gave her. Woolf sought new resolve to seek inspiration in nature and craft prose, between each experience of ‘the old fear’ that grew every time a

manuscript was near to publication and criticism (Woolf, 1981, p. 308). In her diaries, Woolf's anxiety over the writing of certain parts of a novel is mixed with her excitement over the next walk she is to take in the countryside. She often hopes that she might return to her writing-desk feeling 'as tough and springy as – say heather root' (Woolf, 1983, p. 306). Each of the interwar novels draws from Woolf's own autobiographical material – that she herself had mentally sifted through and interpreted via her own philosophical outlook on life – for the essential backdrop of vegetative stage-setting. In her young-adult years Woolf walked with her father viewing domesticated flora in London parks, after having been 'prescribed a recuperative regime' (Hancock, 2012, p. 95). Woolf was encouraged to regularly take fresh air and immerse herself in simple, outdoor activities. Following on from these 'ameliorative' endeavours of her younger years, Woolf continued to share the task of 'collaborative garden-making' with Vanessa and Leonard as they created naturalistic gardens (Hancock, 2012, p. 97). The significance of Woolf's need for access to nature is identified by how she actively pursued an interaction with all that surrounded her in the habitats where she lived and worked. The living quality of the natural world seems to have been a spiritual source of renewable energy and the counter balance to heightened social engagements. In the detailing of Woolf's significant garden spaces and the way in which the thesis emphasises her use of nature forms, we see an important link between social functioning and expression in both Woolf's real life and in her fictional articulations. Both Woolf's ability to be engaged with society and her determination to represent social patterns of communication appear to be sustained by her relationship with non-human beings and living ecosystems of plants and animals. Woolf's autobiographical writing, and biographical writing about Woolf, frames her literary technique of combining an examination of relational dynamics with imagery that presents nature's animism.

On a more practical level, Woolf was able to counter the intensity of her writerly production by assisting Leonard in their garden. A passage from Woolf's diary – dated 31st May 1920, illustrates her horticultural credentials. Woolf mentions how herself and Leonard 'were out till 9 at night, though the evening was cold. Both stiff and scratched all over today, with chocolate earth in our nails' and gives an insight into how gardening appeared to be a dutiful endeavour for them both (Woolf, 1981, p. 43). This written record of Woolf physically tending to their garden at Monk's House, acknowledges that she was (at times) willing to actively engage in horticultural labour. This pragmatic layer to Woolf's approach to gardening is further revealed in

segments of her ‘Asheham Diary’, from *The Diary of Virginia Woolf Volume 1: 1915–19*, edited by Anne Olivier Bell and restored by Matthew Holliday. For example, in the account of her day from Tuesday 26th March, Woolf notes that she spent the ‘afternoon in the garden. L. planted vegetables. I sewed. L. found ground ivy yesterday. We forgot the change to summer time on Sunday, so didn’t have breakfast till 10’ (Woolf, 2023, p. 570). From these notes we gain a sense of Virginia and Leonard gardening separately, but together. There is a pattern to how she lists their individual tasks alternatively, with Leonard ‘planting vegetables’ whilst Woolf ‘sews’ seeds. The united purpose of their work ethic is made apparent when Woolf says ‘we’ and admits that, amongst their work in the garden, they both ate breakfast later than usual. A similar theme arises in the diary record from Tuesday 2nd April, where Leonard ‘had dug & levelled the round bed & planted grass seed’ and then they both came together to sew some seeds. Woolf mentions ‘we’ again to show that they focused on tending to the garden as a pair, before proceeding to detail their horticultural activities: ‘we planted seeds in the walled garden after tea; nasturtiums, columbines under the shrubs; wall flowers out & very splendid, red & yellow’ (Woolf, 2023, p. 572). The independent, but shared, arrangement that the Woolfs developed meant that Woolf would eventually accept many of Leonard Woolf’s obsessive gardening-habits. Initially, with the sales of her books, Woolf ‘continued to foot the bills for remodelling the house’ in Sussex (Scott, 2012, p. 98). Woolf committed herself financially to pursuing her own projects which focused on building writing studios that looked out onto the garden from different angles, whilst Leonard continued to lay out the garden structure and decide on a collection of plants. Scott identifies how Woolf was drawn into designing the garden. She draws our attention to this by noting how Woolf records that ‘revenues from Orlando helped to fund renovations of the garden and acquisition of additional land’ (Scott, 2012, p. 98). Woolf’s garden studios, perhaps unknowingly, show similarities with Gertrude Jekyll’s ‘Hut’. Leonard Woolf refers to how when Woolf was feeling ‘well’, she would be seen ‘making the journey across the garden to her writing lodge ‘with the daily regularity of a stockbroker’ (Zoob, 2013, p. 119). Woolf experienced this traversing of the garden realm – that existed between home and lodge – as a sensory meander. Woolf made the decision, in 1934, to pay £157 to have her writing lodge moved so that it could sit ‘tucked in the corner of the Orchard’ yielding to a better ‘view over the water meadows’ (Zoob, 2013, p. 116). Jekyll’s ‘Hut’, which existed as a small cottage that was ‘built across the lawn from the site where the main house was intended’, was designed for Jekyll by Lutyens, at Munstead Wood, in 1894 (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, p. 94). Jekyll,

who was to live in this cottage once her mother had died and her younger brother had taken over the central property, designed a planting scheme that associated well with ‘an archetypical cottage garden’ (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, p. 94). Jekyll focused on summer interest and so there was an abundance of old rose varieties, accompanied by ‘iris, lupins [and] peonies’ (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, p. 94). These colourful displays of flowers could be found when a walker passed through ‘a tunnel of yews’ (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, p. 94). This partially enclosed entrance to the garden, slowed the viewer’s delight by slightly concealing the composition of the floral beds. Each of Jekyll’s horticultural zones created a different painterly composition and a different layered habitat which contributed to the whole of her garden ecosystem.

In relation to Woolf’s first nature form of formal design, we see an entire array of human-centred, floral, horticultural references in her interwar novels. Woolf’s flowery depictions alternate between accurate detail and wild hyperbole. Woolf’s horticultural references relating to the lily plant, and to the formal design nature form, are noticeable with her analysis of Elizabeth in *Mrs Dalloway*. Sally suggests that Elizabeth appears ‘like a lily […] by the side of a pool’ and this allows readers to see Woolf’s dismantling of the Victorian association of lilies with the concepts of death and purity (2000, p. 189). Woolf uses Clarissa’s daughter to communicate her ideas around how the next generation of modern woman will push even further against floral symbolism, because Elizabeth does not strive to be representative in the same way as her mother. Instead of traditional nature imagery, that was made to be analogous with social constructs surrounding female identity, Woolf uses her formal design nature form to speak of the need for shifting attitudes towards women and non-human beings. Alongside her contemporaries, she believed that floristry could now begin to represent gender fluidity, cultural shifts and the emergence of artists. Again, Woolf draws her reader’s attention to the revolutionary spirit of Clarissa’s friend from younger years at Bourton. Horticulturally, Sally had dared to combine unusual arrangements of flowers, such as ‘hollyhocks’ and ‘dahlias’, and she ‘cut their heads off, and made them swim on the top of water in bowls. The effect was extraordinary--coming in to dinner in the sunset’ (2000, p. 33). The physical positioning of the blooming flowerheads on the water, with their petals unfurled, also represents the freeing and sexually-charged imagery that Woolf grants Clarissa in her descriptions of erotic discovery and stimulation:

> Only for a moment; but it was enough. It was a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush which one tried to check and then, as it spread, one yielded to its expansion, and rushed to the farthest verge and there quivered and felt the world come closer, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split its thin skin and gushed and poured with an extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores! Then, for that moment, she had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed. But the close withdrew; the hard softened. It was over--the moment. Against such moments (with women too) there contrasted (as she laid her hat down) the bed and Baron Marbot and the candle half-burnt
> (2000, pp. 31-32).

It is important to note that the repetition of 'moment' in the above passage, as a brief and excitable change in feeling, captures Clarissa's savouring of a particularly heightened infatuation and Woolf's theory of the 'moments of being' that are 'embedded in many more moments of non-being' (2002, p. 83). The moment, referred to as a 'revelation', appears to grow beyond the limits of the short duration in which it is felt (2000, pp. 31-32). Woolf develops this idea by detailing the 'spread' of the moment in relation to bodily symptoms (2000, pp. 31-32). The 'rapture' builds from being the size of 'a tinge like a blush' to a more noticeable wound-like appearance, that has 'swollen with some astonishing significance' and then 'split its thin skin and gushed and poured' (2000, pp. 31-32). The multi-levelled elation that Clarissa's feels when she recalls being attracted to someone (in particular, women); experienced as 'something warm which broke up surfaces', also conjures up trepidation and even fear – hence the references towards rupturing bruises (2000, pp. 31-32). Clarissa' s associations of this response with 'her relation in the old days with Sally Seton' is crucial in terms of the formal design nature form providing an ecosystem for Woolf's characters' important engagements with each other – often between figures who could not perform their interactions so openly – and with the non-human beings that shared the habitats with them. Clarissa expresses how her infatuation with Seton was vivid and beautiful: 'an illumination; a match burning in a crocus', caught between fire's potential to generate great heat and the delicate and often fraught nature of the inner sexual organs of a crocus, or a female body (2000, pp. 31-32). Woolf relates these long-lasting visualisations of Clarissa's attraction towards Sally Seton, with Sally's horticultural act of arranging 'all sorts of flowers that had never been seen together' (2000, p. 33).

Both physical feeling and observed aesthetic rebellion combine in Clarissa's memories to emphasise how the cumulative 'effect was extraordinary' (2000, p. 33). In Woolf's formal design nature form at Bourton, Clarissa found a space that was briefly free from societal pressures – herself and Sally creatively interacted with each other and the flowers in a refreshingly uninhibited manner. Clarissa's own escapes back into these younger memories, or into the heightened sensory experience in the floristry shop, produce moments of intense relief from the fatigue that accompanies her present role as 'Mrs Dalloway'.

In Woolf's novels and in her personal life, the intense interest in horticulture that initially took hold during the necessity of the war years expanded the Bloomsbury Group's dedication to Modern art into yet another medium. In Sally's experimentation with flowers, we see more traces of Vita Sackville-West. The garden design journey that Sackville-West embarked on, especially in relation to cultivating individual blooms, began with her 'love of the odd and the brave' in both the horticultural and the human worlds (Raven & Sackville-West, 2014, p. 104). The 'unifying theme' of Sackville-West's famous white garden at Sissinghurst, developed after years of relying on her own 'instinct' and a powerful desire to make bold decisions when she felt the need for a 'change' of atmosphere (Raven & Sackville-West, 2014, pp. 103-104). During one of these impassioned moods, Sackville-West writes of how she found herself in a frenzy on 'a wet January evening' (Raven & Sackville-West, 2014, p. 102). She had embarked on the task of surrounding herself 'with flowers of the queerest colours, shapes, and habits', by mixing a newly brought in, South African, 'Strelitzia reginae' with the eclecticism of 'clumps of the old primroses' (Raven & Sackville-West, 2014, pp. 102-103). Sackville-West praises the *Strelitzia* for its association with 'the little African sun-birds which perch and powder their breast-feathers with its pollen' and she feels joyous as she remembers 'that the whole primula family was gregarious in its tastes' (Raven & Sackville-West, 2014, p. 103). Sackville-West delighted in balancing the everyday upkeep of her gardens with a fascination for displaying her collected cultivars in the form of domestic floristry or outdoor designs that were staged like the formal planting found in city parks. The impact that Sackville-West's curiosity for plant collection had on Woolf is seen with how Woolf's characters – like Sally Seton – manipulated floral references to seek a sense of 'liberation' from the restrictive powers of domineering social structures (Sparks, 2015, p. 7). In this way *Mrs Dalloway* evidences Woolf's own cycle –

having been influenced by the natural world – from the tangible to the figurative representation of nature in relation to the nature form of formal design.

1.4 Formal Design Nature Form in Mrs Dalloway

In *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf's formal design nature form provides the momentum and connection that Clarissa inwardly seeks. She declares that it is a shame to remain indoors; leading the small party to traipse 'up and down, up and down' on the terrace outside, the movement that Clarissa instigates also propels her towards an experience that she describes as 'radiance burnt through, the revelation, the religious feeling!' (2000, p. 35). Clarissa's active desire to be amongst nature leads her to experience a poignant intimacy with Sally, but also a sense of Woolf's idea of a 'moment' of universal belonging and 'happiness' (2000, p. 35). We know this because the remembered motion of how Sally 'picked a flower' is simultaneously associated with how she 'kissed [Clarissa] on the lips' (2000, p. 35). The presence of the living flowers in the urn and the animism of Sally Seton are elevated, above both Peter Walsh and Joseph Breitkopf's attempts at capturing attention and deeper feeling of attachment. Woolf ironically portrays Walsh as a character who represents the 'sentimental' (2000, p. 36). This is because Walsh uses the same word as a mocking criticism of Clarissa and he also aspires to stand for the opposite: a patriarchal pretence of being associated with notions of "rationality" and an anthropogenic focus. Walsh's stance in this scene contrasts with Sally's 'exquisite' embrace (2000, p. 35). Clarissa experiences her kiss with Sally as all-encompassing. She feels bodily and spiritually whole and part of the 'flowers': the flowing ecosystem of Woolf's formal design habitat at Bourton (2000, p. 35). Kostkowska proposes that Woolf translates this idea of interconnection with the 'whole' by showing her 'characters desiring universal empathy and unity, which includes the nonhuman beings' (2013, p. 29). The presence of nature during Clarissa and Sally's youthful kiss at Bourton plays an equally important role at the time: by connecting the female characters in a moment of shared intimacy, and as part of a long-term memory that has been treasured throughout the life of Woolf's female protagonist in *Mrs Dalloway*.

Yet Clarissa also admits that she seeks Walsh's 'good opinion', which Emre (in her *Mrs Dalloway* annotations) relates back to the hypocritical nature that Woolf and her siblings experienced with their father

Leslie Stephen (Woolf, 2000, p. 36). Emre writes that, in Stephen's *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century,* it is apparent that Stephen 'reviled sentimentalism as "a kind of mildew which spreads over the surface of literature"', whilst 'he frequently proved the greatest offender of his own sensibilities' (Emre, 2021, p. 59). Woolf therefore highlights, with her references to sentimentality, Clarissa's sense of conflict about where to position herself socially. The interwoven memories of Bourton, of Peter and especially Sally, show Clarissa to be torn. She appears to be trapped between drawing closer to her truer feelings, in nature spaces that reject dominant modes (bringing brief interludes of interconnected peace), or floating on the superficial layers of a more patriarchal and human-centric performance in anthropogenic spaces.

In *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf deliberately subverts orthodox, flower associations to form her own domesticated, floral imagery. Woolf sets up a new means of examining the hidden complexities of her characters' less-obviously emotional dialogues, such as with the youthful romance that exists between Clarissa and Sally. We know that during a Summer at Bourton Woolf describes how Clarissa experienced 'the most exquisite moment of her whole life,' when 'passing a stone urn with flowers in it' (2000, p. 35). The moment after this feeling of elation goes on to detail how 'Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips' (Woolf, 2000, p. 35). It is significant that Clarissa distinctly recalls this memory of intimacy, following their passing of 'a stone urn with flowers in it' (2000, p. 35). Woolf implies that the reference to formal design is the most important aspect of the scene, because it forms a nature space where Clarissa and Sally are able to feel honestly connected to one another. One explanation for the degree of power that Woolf grants to images of domesticated flora is that she uses her formal design nature form to stimulate action and authentic expressions of emotions. In contrast to the overtly symbolic linking of flowers to social mores in traditional Victorian literature, Woolf often undermines expected representations of floristry in *Mrs Dalloway*. With the presence of the lone flower that captures Sally's attention during a heightened sense of sensual experience with Clarissa, Woolf energises, empowers and animates both the non-human beings and the female characters whose voices would previously have been repressed by the attaching of habitual attitudes to depictions of flowering plant species. In the case of *Mrs Dalloway*, this shifting of meaning adds unexpected, but frequently addressed, layers of psychological observation in relation to her central characters' honest opinions, desires and individualities. The non-traditional floral scenes at Bourton, which provide a stage for escapist interactions, demonstrate a gentler and

yet freer side to Clarissa which ‘temporarily interrupts her inevitable movement towards marriage and reproduction’ (Haffey, 2010, p. 137). Despite the obvious moments of escapism that Clarissa finds during the multi-layered interactions that occur when she is amongst the formal design nature form, Woolf’s detailing of the ‘urn’ holding the flowers highlights the subtly repressive presence of the anthropocentric view. The hollow, stationary, encasing and death-worshipping purpose of the human-made urn seems to act as a prominent reminder of society’s habitual control over the passionate moment of the individual and the wider cultural narrative around roles and rituals. David Bradshaw, in his article "Vanished, Like Leaves": The Military, Elegy and Italy in *Mrs Dalloway,* for Volume 8 of the *Woolf Studies Annual,* draws our attention to Woolf’s undermining of the domineering message attached to architectural, or sculptural, structures that are often commissioned by those in positions of power to form war memorials. Bradshaw asserts that:

> by the early 1920s two distinct responses to the War had emerged. At the same time as statues, crosses and memorials in stone, bronze and brick went up in villages, towns and cities throughout the Mother Country and her dominions, Woolf was one of many intellectuals on the left who reacted with cynicism to the state's orchestration of the nation's grief and joy, and it is obvious that *Jacob's Room, Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* are primarily "anti-monument[al]”
> in tone and design
> (Bradshaw, 2002, p. 108).

For Bradshaw, Woolf’s writing placed her amongst others ‘on the left who reacted with cynicism’ towards hyperbolic demonstrations of war-worship. There is a moral tone in her novels that dares to remember the violence of war, without glorifying the experience in retrospect. The particular placing of the ‘urn’ in the secret, kissing-scene between Clarissa and Sally in *Mrs Dalloway* illustrates her awareness of how even intimate moments are framed with the habitual weight of societal pressures and mainstream narratives.

Nevertheless, these fleetingly whimsical scenes hold a sense of animation that is not reflected in Clarissa’s human-centred experience of city life. Modern, Woolfian, scholarship on *Mrs Dalloway* has moved on from dismissing Sally and Clarissa’s relationship, but has only recently begun to examine the complex,

psychological nuances that the correlation of nature scenes provide for Woolf's characters.[12] Clarissa is jolted through this 'revelation' of feeling, from her day to day persona, before the moment is interrupted and all the other domestic responsibilities in her life return (Woolf, 2000, p. 35). Woolf increases the Modernist slant on this specific moment, by introducing the scene via a memory. The experience is wrapped in the past, and yet for the reader this is perhaps the most energised we have ever seen Clarissa. By playing with the presence of recollection within a temporal timeline, and showing how nature scenes seem to allow Clarissa to easily conjure up the vividness of past experiences, Woolf breaks tradition in reforming a narrative space that exists outside of linear structuring. The nature scenes that Clarissa experienced, and now remembers, offer a freeing, psychic space for her to escape. Just outside of the grand house at Bourton, in Woolf's formal design nature form, Clarissa's truer interior landscape momentarily aligns with her exterior landscape. This is because the momentum that she finds when also connecting with nature in the wider ecosystem – the 'stone urn with flowers in it' – allows her to engage deeply and more authentically with Sally.

We see Woolf's life philosophy of universal flow – that she gathers from her experiences of rhythms sounding in the natural world, even with the much more urban and domestic scene in Miss Pym's floristry shop in London. Woolf's formal design nature form emphasises how Clarissa Dalloway quickly tunes in with the flowers on display. The scene reads as if she has suddenly joined the floral blooms in a repetitious and spiritual dance:

> And as she began to go with Miss Pym from jar to jar, choosing, nonsense, nonsense, she said to herself, more and more gently, as if this beauty, this scent, this colour, and Miss Pym liking her, trusting her, were a wave which she let flow over her and surmount that hatred, that monster, surmount it all; and it lifted her up and up when--oh! a pistol shot in the street outside!
>
> "Dear, those motor cars," said Miss Pym, going to the window to look, and coming back and

[12] '[Woolf] invites an analysis of the relationship between the human and the nonhuman beyond the scope of merely considering her characters' relationships to the natural world'. Leanna Lostoski, "Imaginations of the Strangest Kind": The Vital Materialism of Virginia Woolf Author(s): Source: The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association, SPRING 2016, Vol. 49, No. 1 (SPRING 2016), pp. 53-74 Published by: Midwest Modern Language Association Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/44134676, JSTOR

> smiling apologetically with her hands full of sweet peas, as if those motor cars, those tyres of motor cars, were all *her* fault.
>
> The violent explosion which made Mrs. Dalloway jump and Miss Pym go to the window and apologise came from a motor car which had drawn to the side of the pavement precisely opposite Mulberry's shop window. Passers-by who, of course, stopped and stared, had just time to see a face of the very greatest importance against the dove-grey upholstery, before a male hand drew the blind and there was nothing to be seen except a square of dove grey.
>
> Yet rumours were at once in circulation from the middle of Bond Street to Oxford Street on one side, to Atkinson's scent shop on the other, passing invisibly, inaudibly, like a cloud, swift, veil-like upon hills, falling indeed with something of a cloud's sudden sobriety and stillness upon faces which a second before had been utterly disorderly
>
> (2000, pp. 13-14).

Clarissa happily moves 'from jar to jar', revelling in her current lack of concern for social inhibitions, reminding herself that bouquet shopping was a brief respite from all of the 'nonsense, nonsense' (Woolf, 2000, p. 13). Yet, she speaks to herself 'more gently' and we note how the flowers seem to reiterate Clarissa's elation with their show of 'beauty', 'scent' and 'colour' (Woolf, 2000, p. 13). The reverie, that Woolf's formal design nature form conjures up, is then momentarily broken by the human-centric sound of a car tyre bursting and mimicking gunshot noises. Despite the isolated appearance of this mechanical interruption, Woolf uses her characters to represent the continuity of interconnected rhythms that have been set in motion. Emre establishes that part of Miss Pym's side-role in *Mrs Dalloway* is to add to our understanding of Clarissa's overall state. For example, Woolf's reader feels a twinge of sympathy for Clarissa when, 'through Miss Pym's eyes', we hear that 'she looked older' (Emre, 2021, p. 24). Yet, the subtle contribution that Miss Pym makes to this scene is important, because she is able to quickly draw Clarissa (and Woolf's readers) back into the floral reverie. Clarissa's connection with nature – even nature in this very domestic form – allows her to adapt her present atmosphere to absorb the disruption caused by the commotion out of the street. Woolf's formal design nature form reassembles around the 'pistol shot' as Miss Pym reapproaches Clarissa with 'her hands full of

sweet peas' (2000, p. 13). The floral blooms, Miss Pym and Clarissa (as a smaller, habitat-collective) exist in a vibration that gathers despite the further vibrational activity occurring around them. This sense, in the flower shop scene, of Woolf portraying an inner and an outer experience, adds a further environmental tone. This is because the formal design nature form that Woolf uses to identify nature's role in *Mrs Dalloway*, continuously contributes towards and responds to the reverberations of communication that surround and engage with her central character of Clarissa. By following William Howarth's outline of the ecocritic as 'a person who judges the merits and faults of writings that depict the effects of culture upon nature', this thesis repeatedly examines Woolf's perceptions of human and nonhuman lives jostling together in a universal flow of energy in smaller and larger habitat ecosystems (1996, p. 69). Clarissa seems to merge with the enclosed habitat that the flower shop provides. The style and tone of Mulberry's floral habitat – 'this beauty, this scent, this colour' – contrasts with the mechanical aesthetics, sounds and smells of the explosive-sounding 'motor car which had drawn to the side of the pavement precisely opposite' the window of the flower shop (2000, pp. 13-14). Woolf shows how Clarissa seems to soothe her fractious mood, because her interaction with the flowers calms her like 'a wave which she let flow over her and surmount that hatred, that monster, surmount it all' (2000, pp. 13-14). The anxiety and frustration that develops in her mind after ruminating on conversations with people, lessens when her focus is on the non-human floral displays. Nevertheless, Woolf suggests that the lingering impact of the experience of war on the general psyche of most people (including Clarissa's) is powerful enough to break through any floral reverie. As the atmosphere in the floristry eases Clarissa's emotional regulation, Woolf plunges her character and readers into the simultaneous terror of 'a pistol shot in the street outside!' (2000, pp. 13-14). A double dash links Clarissa's meditative state, where she is 'lifted […] up and up when—oh!', to the exclamation over the sound of 'a pistol shot' and this decision highlights Woolf's awareness of how quickly the traumatic fear of war-time violence could be re-triggered. The interaction of Woolf's human and nonhuman energies in *Mrs Dalloway* illustrates the ongoing influence that both groups have on each other. The novel – when identified as adopting aspects of the nature writing style – also shows how interwar fiction writing was slowly beginning to lean towards the support of changes in attitudes towards nature, anthropogenic hierarchies and conservation.

This scene in the florist's shows Woolf using her formal design nature form to develop her ideas around human and nonhuman vibrations coexisting. She does not herald 'nature' as a counter-solution to anthropogenic or mechanical disarray, but rather explores how any ecosystem of living beings is made up of various sounds, or vibrations. Clarissa's sensory experience with the cut flowers functions as a part of a greater whole and informs the functioning of her wider hinterland of communications and realisations. To an extent, Woolf's focus on Clarissa's fascination with 'cut flowers' (and the presence of the formal design nature form) is important as it emphasises the image of floristry flowers having become vulnerable to human manipulation. The flowers have been pulled from the mother plant and the nutrient systems in the soil, trimmed down to size and transplanted into the more sterile environment of a shop. The closeness of the formal design nature form to a hegemonic and human-controlled ecosystem – and then the even more corrupting presence of 'a pistol shot' – also relates to Woolf's depiction of the war time experience as an ongoing state of people being uprooted from their own sense of home in a certain landscape – both physically and psychologically – and cut down when they are in full bloom.

This scene is further brought to the attention of the reader through Woolf's decision to place a spatial gap in the text, between '*her* fault' and 'The violent explosion' of the following paragraph (2000, p. 13). The gap breaks away from Woolf's examination of Clarissa's interior experience – and the individual's war guilt that is shown by Woolf italicising the '*her*' in the '*her* fault' at the end of the preceding paragraph (in relation to Miss Pym) – expanding outwards to involve the exterior perspective of a communal war-related apprehension: 'Passers-by who, of course, stopped and stared' (2000, p. 13). It is significant that Woolf shows an awareness of how war-anxiety continued to be a part of everyday life following the First World War – people on the streets were not immune to reacting with fear towards mechanical noises that sounded like gunfire. Paul K. Saint-Amour, in his article named 'Air War Prophecy and Interwar Modernism', remarks that *Mrs Dalloway* is unique in how

> Both its memory and its anticipation of the civilian-as-target are more attenuated, etched not in descriptions of realized violence but in scenes of imperiled aerial reading and in the alertness of its war-survivor characters, whose nerves have not yet heard the "All Clear"

(Saint-Amour, 2005, p. 144).

The formal design nature form of the floristry shop and then Regent's Park also traverses the gap and connects Clarissa and Septimus; who are shaken by the backfiring of the motor car and the reminders of war. For both characters, the formal design nature form stretches their consciousnesses into the ecosystem that surrounds them and allows them to appreciate the existence of the non-human beings that they share their habitat with. After the textual gap; and a brief expansion into the war shock felt by the 'crowd' in general, Woolf hones back into an interior perspective (2000, p. 15). She concentrates on the individual turmoil felt by Rezia and Septimus. Rezia's inner concern about Septimus's suicidal statements makes her feel as though 'she wanted to cry out to butchers' boys and women. Help!' and Septimus himself – triggered to an even higher state of terror, than some of the others present in the 'crowd' – quickly envisions the 'gradual drawing together of everything to one centre before his eyes, as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was about to burst into flames' (2000, p. 15). With this tense situation on the streets of London, and Septimus's powerful reaction towards it, Woolf shows Rezia's desperation as she inwardly states that 'She must take him away to some park' (2000, p. 15). Woolf's focus on how Clarissa and Septimus are able to quite easily tune into the interconnected vibrations of energy that exist between all beings, highlights their attempts to seek out a universality in life that momentarily loosens the restrictive social mores that bind them.

The aesthetic symbolism of the cut flowers, as well as Woolf's positioning of the floristry shop in a scene that triggers a traumatic reaction due to the sudden sound of the motor car, relates to the blaze of fire in the sky that occurred when zeppelins began to be shot down as the First World War progressed. Woolf's 1915 diary notations – the inspiration for the pistol shot scene in *Mrs Dalloway,* discuss how (for 'most people') 'any sudden noise' would be quickly translated 'into an explosion' (Woolf, 1977, p. 32). Each animate component creates a note in *Mrs Dalloway*, that functions separately and then universally as part of the symphony that exists as Woolf's nature forms expand. Therefore the responses of the 'passers-by', as the sound of the 'motor car' is replaced by the voicing of 'rumours', merges with Miss Pym's floral space and 'apologetic smile' (Woolf, 2000, pp. 13-14). We note that these vibrations move through Woolf's formal design nature form, as she describes how the 'rumours' appear to be 'veil-like' and float like 'clouds' (2000, p. 14). The vibrations

travel from person to person, quickly quieting the 'utterly disorderly' looks on faces (Woolf, 2000, p. 14). Woolf's ecological mapping of forms of intertwined communication is seen in how the closed system of 'Mulberry's the florists' (and then beyond the shop and into the street) is impacted by the 'pistol shot' sound, but then the reverberations appear to soften and become submerged (2000, p. 12). Woolf, in her attempt to include often-superseded voices in her narratives, traces this sense of a collaborative formation of social meanings in *Mrs Dalloway*. Jane Goldman describes Woolf's aspirations towards fairer expressiveness in her novels as 'a collective and multiple sense of creative subjectivity', and she identifies this approach in *Mrs Dalloway* with the ways in which the storyline '[circles] between the subjective experiences of numerous characters and negotiating the detailed, material fabric of the streets too' (2010, p. 57). The thesis asserts that Woolf's use of the formal design nature form in *Mrs Dalloway* aids her expression of marginalised voices, by empowering the animated presence of non-human beings in her poetic-prose.

Woolf's repeated use of domesticated floral scenes in *Mrs Dalloway*, also reflects her determination to work with the form as a template for drawing attention to the emotions that are being repressed in post-war society. A surprisingly evocative scene occurs at the florist's with 'all the sweet peas spreading in their bowls, tinged violet, snow white' whilst Clarissa, Woolf's flawed protagonist, stands revelling amongst them (2000, p. 13). This depiction of Clarissa's floral ecstasy is particularly poignant because a few minutes later Woolf shatters the sense of safety with 'a pistol shot in the street outside!' (2000, p. 13). The suddenness of the car backfiring – reminding humans of the noises of warfare, directly refers to the unspoken traumas of conflict often still played out on the streets of London five years after the end of the First World War. *Mrs Dalloway* has often been contemporarily analysed through a trauma lens.[13] This is frequently seen in regards to the 'pistol shot' passage, which introduces the reader to Septimus and 'his inability "to pass" which 'distinguishes him from the "[p]assers-by" and identifies him as suffering from PTSD (Joyes, 2008, p. 72). Yet, little focus has been attributed to the tandem relationship that takes place between Woolf's use of nature forms and heightened emotions. Mulberry's the florists and Clarissa's interactions with the cut flowers frames the emotional introduction of Septimus to both the scene that encompasses the temporarily disarming situation of the

[13] see Czarnecki, 2015; Emre, 2021; Joyes, 2008; Lilienfeld, 2011

motorcar backfiring in the street and to the readers of *Mrs Dalloway.* Clarissa feels a sense of exaltation moving 'from jar to jar', letting the experience of choosing bunches of flowers (with Miss Pym 'trusting her') wash over her as a 'wave' would (2000, pp. 13-14). Woolf's formal design nature form captures Clarissa's 'lifted' mood as Miss Pym follows her around the shop with 'her hands full of sweet peas' (2000, pp. 13-14). At the close of the flower shop sequence, the formal design nature form (by returning to the floral image of the 'sweetpeas' that Clarissa now hold in 'her arms') momentarily links Woolf's two protagonists (2000, pp. 13-14). Clarissa and Septimus both 'looked', as the collective of people looked, whilst the motor car that had broken the flow of hubbub 'stopped' and caused 'everything [to] come to a standstill' (2000, pp. 13-14). But, significantly, although the animating presence of the formal design nature form also initiates a release of emotions for Septimus, he does not feel uplifted. In contrast to Clarissa's pleasurable and out-of-time 'wave', when Septimus senses that 'the world wavered and quivered' and he notes 'a curious pattern like a tree' – associating this with the universality of all living things coming 'to one centre' – he feels 'terrified' (2000, pp. 13-14). Throughout *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf's formal design nature form provides moments of ecosystem spaces that link Clarissa and Septimus, so that their emotional responses to both personal and collective traumas might be compared and contrasted.

Mrs Dalloway relies on Woolf's formal design nature form to highlight the atmosphere of the post-war denial of shell shock, at a time when few writers were reflecting on the psychological impact of war. Woolf allows Regents Park to hold moments of truthful recognition for her other central protagonist: Septimus, who suffers from severe symptoms of trauma. The detailing of Septimus' visions of his soldier friend Evans are layered within his experience of walking in the park. This is because he becomes entirely absorbed by the 'trees rising and falling, rising and falling with all their leaves alight and the colour thinning and thickening from blue to the green of a hollow wave' (Woolf, 2000, p. 22). The sensory aspect of the parkland trees appears to conjure up ghosts of dead soldiers for Septimus, as he felt that 'white things were assembling behind the railings opposite' (Woolf, 2000, p. 24). Woolf manipulates domesticated nature scenes in *Mrs Dalloway* to set up a vegetative space for the release of heightened emotions. As these two concepts of nature and emotion become more entwined in each of the interwar novels analysed in this thesis, certain characters also become, as Rachel Zlatkin proposes for Septimus in Czarnecki's "Melted Flesh and Tangled Threads: War Trauma and Modes of

Healing in Virginia Woolf's "Mrs. Dalloway" and Leslie Marmon Silko's "Ceremony"", 'inextricably bound' with the nature form that exists around them (Czarnecki, 2015, p. 54). Similarly to Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* and Louis in *The Waves*, Woolf show Septimus extending his traumatised self to join with the park's 'elm trees rising and falling' as the whole scene ascends into a trance-like state of immersive thought-patterns. In relation to *Mrs Dalloway,* Kostkowska writes that Woolf 'believes that the environmental wholeness she has felt in nature also encompasses the human sphere' (2013, p. 29). For Septimus, linking with the sensory experience that the trees evoke for him, there is a greater meaning to be found in unifying with the ecosystem. In avoiding the reduction that takes place in the human-centric sphere of understanding and widening his perspective to include the lives of his non-human companions, Septimus finds a brief solace, or at least an undiluted truthfulness, in Woolf's 'environmental wholeness'. The analysis of Woolf's ecological layering in *Mrs Dalloway* and the other novels examined in this thesis becomes more prevalent when nature forms are considered as part of her liminal and environmentally-informed Naturalism.

1.5 Naturalism in Mrs Dalloway and the Formal Design Nature Form

By noting Woolf's narrative strategy, especially through an eco-critical lens, readers can begin to acknowledge the ebb and flow that Woolf creates between natural scenes and the emotional revelations of her main characters. In her 1925 art essay, 'Pictures', Woolf faults certain writers who have come before her for their simplistic and unguided depictions that lack 'accuracy and a subtlety' – attributed to 'Proust, Hardy, Flaubert, or Conrad' – when describing a scene (2021, p. 36). She praises the above-mentioned writers, in terms of their diligent observational-techniques. For Woolf, their ability 'to use their eyes' enhances the process of developing a complex, but determined, perspective that conjures up 'the whole scene' and allows the reader to follow the way in which that scene 'is always dominated by an emotion' (2021, p. 36). Woolf states that 'Proust, Hardy, Flaubert, or Conrad' expand the boundaries of nature writing by honing in on the combined details of 'Moors and woods, tropical seas, ships, harbours, streets, drawing-rooms, flowers, clothes, attitudes, effects of light and shade' (2021, p. 36). With these creative, but observational, scenes that speak of the nuance of how humans and non-human beings share habitats, Woolf remarks that 'it is the eye that has fertilised their thought […] that has come to the help of the other senses, combined with them, and produced

effects of extreme beauty, and of a subtlety hitherto unknown' (2021, p. 36). Her criticism of writing styles searches for both a naturalist's attention to detail, as well as a hidden addition of painterly and sensory-led artistry. In a similar vein, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Virginia Woolf: Mrs Dalloway* guides readers (in the Appendix) to a 1928 Introduction to the Second American edition of *Mrs Dalloway* written by Woolf:

> But if one has too much respect for the reader pure and simple to point out to him what he has missed, or to suggest to him what he should seek, one may speak more explicitly to the reader who has put off his innocence and become a critic. For though criticism, whether praise or blame, should be accepted in silence as legitimate comment which the act of publication invites, now and again a statement is made without bearing on the book's merits or demerits which the writer happens to know to be mistaken. One such statement has been made sufficiently often about Mrs. Dalloway to be worth perhaps a word of contradiction. The book, it was said, was the deliberate offspring of a method. The author, it was said, dissatisfied with the form of fiction then in vogue, was determined to beg, borrow, steal or even create another of her own. But, as far as it is possible to be honest about the mysterious process of the mind, the facts are otherwise. Dissatisfied the writer may have been; but her dissatisfaction was primarily with nature for giving an idea, without providing a house for it to live in. The novelists of the preceding generation had done little – after all why should they? – to help. The novel was the obvious lodging, but the novel it seemed was built on the wrong plan. Thus rebuked the idea started as the oyster starts or the snail to secrete a house for itself. And this it did without any conscious direction. The little notebook in which an attempt was made to forecast a plan was soon abandoned, and the book grew day by day, week by week, without any plan at all, except that which was dictated each morning in the act of writing. The other way, to make a house and then inhabit it, to develop a theory and then apply it, as Wordsworth did and Coleridge, is, it need not be said, equally good and much more philosophic. But in the present case it was necessary to write the book first and to invent a theory afterwards
>
> (Woolf, 2015, p. 357).

Woolf, to some extent, addresses a criticism of *Mrs Dalloway* in this 1928 Introduction. Her novel is accused of being 'the deliberate offspring of a method' and the statements made describe Woolf as a writer who was 'dissatisfied with the form of fiction then in vogue' and so 'determined to beg, borrow, steal or even create another of her own' (Woolf, 2015, p. 357). Woolf refutes these assumptions and the criticism surrounding a suggested frustration with inherited literary forms is undermined when we know that her own creative 'dissatisfaction was primarily with nature for giving an idea, without providing a house for it to live in' (Woolf, 2015, p. 357). The stimulation that Woolf finds in observing and analysing the social ecosystems around her and creating literary scenes to experiment with her conclusions, plus the hybridity of Woolf's poetic-prose, calls for a form to be developed after the process of conveying the ideas in words. Woolf's prioritising of her 'scene-making' process and ability to draw on the sensory stimulus of the nature form habitats that she engages with, enables her to find a greater sense of flow during the writing process. She explains the transformative ease that she finds when following an idea, without the limitation of an established literary form to initially frame the expressions, in terms of producing *Mrs Dalloway*: 'the book grew day by day, week by week, without any plan at all' (Woolf, 2015, p. 357). In this regard Woolf goes against the critic's assessment of her writing method, by noting that – instead of solely critiquing the form of the novel – her key assertion would be that it suited her 'to write the book first and to invent a theory afterwards' (Woolf, 2015, p. 357). A sense of the inspirational potential in the natural world; and her preference for producing content before making a firm decision on the structural form of the work, is highlighted with Woolf noting that the creative 'idea started as the oyster starts or the snail' which then began 'to secrete a house for itself' (Woolf, 2015, p. 357). What Woolf required was a Modern freedom which allowed her to record her poetic and impressionistic expressions in the moment, but within the wider expanses of the novel. This literary combination of Modern prose and poetry shares similarities with the developing Expressionist movement in art, whereby emotional expression was prioritized over compositional shapes. Woolf's own philosophical approach to existence, and to creative research for her fictional writing, was shaped by her desire to represent 'what life *feels* like' when one is standing '*inside* the lived moment' (2000, pp. XII-XIII). Woolf's approach to writing *Mrs Dalloway*, which involves her 'scene making' process, allows the reader to firstly relate to the formal design nature form that she develops, before more actively engaging with the sense of her characters' intense, albeit often repressed, responses to life. In terms of the nature form of formal design being

represented in a Naturalistic style, we can firstly refer to the descriptions of formal planting in *Mrs Dalloway.* For example, floral displays are used to build up a setting in preparation for a segment of sudden emotions surrounding a change of events that deeply affect the main characters. Clarissa's recollections of her youth at Bourton are kept visceral for her phenomenological experience of the present, due to the vivid references to plants that she conjures up to form a backdrop to the physicality of her younger years:

> How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen; looking at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks rising, falling; standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, "Musing among the vegetables?"--was that it?--"I prefer men to cauliflowers"--was that it? He must have said it at breakfast one morning when she had gone out on to the terrace--Peter Walsh.
>
> (2000, p. 3).

Woolf's poetic-prose adapts her use of nature writing to include the sensory perceptions of her protagonists, alongside observational details that build up a picture of the nature form habitats that her characters interact with. *Mrs Dalloway* illustrates Woolf's hybridisation of Naturalistic writing, awareness of the post war context and openness to emotional expression. In the above extract from a scene at Bourton, Woolf highlights the vividness of Clarissa's memory: 'How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn' (2000, p. 3). The reader follows Clarissa as she recalls the moment by emphasising 'How fresh, how calm' it was – as if she were feeling the air on her face in present time (2000, p. 3). The distinction that Woolf makes between rural and city air – 'stiller than this of course' – and then 'early morning' air (as opposed to afternoon or evening air) aligns closely with the observational specifics that would be written in the diary of a naturalist (2000, p. 3). This style of recording then swoops into poetic language: 'like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave' (2000, p. 3). The undulating motion of the 'wave', alongside the depiction of a wave rising up to 'kiss' as it rises to the furthest point of the moving arc, as well as the references to the air

quality being ‘fresh’ and then ‘chill and sharp’ builds us an idea of Clarissa’s own sense of instinctive momentum, lightness of feeling, brisk energy and excitement in this scene. Yet, Woolf’s decision to use brackets in this sentence divides young Clarissa’s emotional response. At the beginning of the sentence Woolf takes us through the assumed exhilaration of ‘a girl of eighteen’, before the reader encounters the state of ‘solemnity’ that is positioned immediately after the brackets (2000, p. 3). There is a deeper honesty around voicing the spectrum of felt emotions in Woolf’s precise use of this singular word: ‘solemn’, after the hyperbole of the earlier sentences. Similarly, the image of Clarissa ‘standing’ before ‘the open window’ suggests at an initially freeing response to her felt experience as a young woman, but it is noticeable that she is not crossing the threshold. Furthermore, Woolf follows up this visual expression of physical trepidation with the worrying thought ‘that something awful was about to happen’ (2000, p. 3). Woolf captures those rapid changes in mood, that seem to send Clarissa soaring into ebullient musings before suddenly becoming lost in seriousness. It is significant that Clarissa remembers, in her older years, in London, how she was interrupted from a ‘solemn’ daze (just ‘standing and looking’) as she looked out into the garden at Bourton, because it shows that Woolf is discussing the powerful influence that key memories have on our human lives (2000, p. 3). To a certain extent, both Clarissa and Septimus allow themselves to be haunted by, and retreat to, past experiences in order to repeatedly consider their innermost thoughts on what it is to be alive. As a result of this, an undertone of war-time and post war-time psyche is threaded through the interplay between past and present for Woolf’s characters in *Mrs Dalloway.* Clarissa seems to always exist in suspense – she is anxiously prepared for any incident that might soon occur and this wariness is also apparent during her memories of their early years at Bourton. Clarissa’s fixation with staring out at ‘the flowers’ on the ‘terrace’ continued ‘until Peter Walsh said, "Musing among the vegetables?"--was that it?--"I prefer men to cauliflowers"--was that it?’ (2000, p. 3). The formal design nature form of the **‘**the flowers’ and ‘the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks rising, falling’ once again draws attention to the ecosystem that surrounds Woolf’s characters in *Mrs Dalloway,* when there is a need for both human and non-human connection (2000, p. 3). Clarissa’s reverie begins to develop into a hypnotic state as she follows the rhythm of ‘the rooks rising, falling’ and so it takes a slightly dismantling, and comedic, comment from Walsh to resituate Clarissa in the anthropocentric matters of the day (2000, p. 3). Woolf’s nature writing style, in this case in relation to the formal design nature form, is significant as it traces her relationship with Walsh and her initial depiction of

Bourton is the forerunner to an early and heightened interaction between Walsh and Clarissa in the same formal gardens. Woolf gradually lets the reader know that following this brief scene on the terrace at Bourton at the beginning of *Mrs Dalloway,* Walsh is faced with his realisation that his love for Clarissa cannot be fulfilled. Clarissa was to become engaged to Richard Dalloway, leaving Walsh to depart from England with her words ringing in his ears:

> He felt that he was grinding against something physically hard; she was unyielding. She was like iron, like flint, rigid up the backbone. And when she said, "It's no use. It's no use. This is the end"-- after he had spoken for hours, it seemed, with the tears running down his cheeks--it was as if she had hit him in the face. She turned, she left him, went away.
> (2000, pp. 63-64).

It is noticeable that Woolf offers a description of Clarissa, through Walsh's eyes – during her rejection of him – that goes against the fluidity and reciprocal energy exchange of her characters' interactions with the formal design nature form. In contrast Walsh felt that 'he was grinding against something physically hard' and in this isolated mode Clarissa resorts to transforming into a much more solid and unmoving being (2000, pp. 63-64). Clarissa's stubborn attempts to remain firm in her decisions about how her social life should progress, appear to briefly alter her elemental state. She is 'like iron, like flint' and mutated from a mammal into a rock that cannot feel and can be brutal towards another human's emotional responses (2000, pp. 63-64). This unnatural state that Clarissa often assumes when she is communicating with other humans in a social setting, differs from the animated behaviour that is seen during her interactions with botanical life. The public shield that she has created also results in a deep feeling of disconnection that threatens to consume her entire being – dulling her physical and psychological energy.

1.6 Woolf, Formal Design and a Modern Approach to the Natural Sciences in Mrs Dalloway

Woolf's own gathering of inspiration for her novels seemed to draw on the observation techniques that were being emphasised in modern natural science practices, such as the increased preference for fieldwork (as

opposed to collection) and the increasing division of the natural sciences into more individualised subjects (for example ecology, ethology and ethnobotany). Botanist and ecologist A. G. Tansley (1871 – 1955) emphasises the importance of observing the entirety of an ecosystem before relying on theoretical hypothesis, and by 'the whole *system*' he means 'not only the organism-complex, but also the whole complex of physical factors forming what we call the environment of the biome-the habitat factors in the widest sense' (Tansley, 1935, p. 299). The move away from natural science approaches being led by collection and taxidermy archiving seems to also have depended on the premise that

> 'It is now generally admitted by plant ecologists, not only that vegetation is constantly undergoing various kinds of change, but that the increasing habit of concentrating attention on these changes instead of studying plant communities as if they were static entities is leading to a far deeper insight into the nature of vegetation and the parts it plays in the world' (Tansley, 1935, p. 284).

Woolf was influenced by the changing trends in modern natural sciences that prioritised starting an investigation by making ethological and ecological records, in the field, through direct observation of an entire habitat (rather than an individual species). As a consequence, her writing process involved an ever-present awareness of the potential within her surroundings. Quentin Bell reminds us that for Sackville-West, who was offended at times by Woolf's cool manner, there was a feeling that Woolf very often regarded 'their affections as literary material' (Bell, 1996, p. 117). Sackville-West had also gone so far as to accuse Woolf of transforming all of her experiences into some form of preparatory 'copy […] human relationships included' (Bell, 1996, p. 117). In this regard, it makes sense that Woolf would also transform her more powerful interactions with non-human beings into literary nature form habitats that add a further energetic layer to her the emotional hinterland of her characters.

Woolf's writing style is adopted for her 'ethnobotanical' noting of her friends' personal and professional lives, and so she adapts the term to describe what she had seen frequently during the interwar years in the gardens of her family and close friends. In a diary entry from September 1919, Woolf gives an insight into how she was at times drawn away from her writing by the attractions of the garden and the act of gardening:

> I should have said a good deal about the garden only the temptation of being there instead of describing it from within has been too much even for my confirmed habits. The green of the turf with the bunch of purple Japanese anemones keeps getting in my eyes. We have been planting tiny grains of seed in the front bed, in the pious or religious belief that they will resurrect next spring as Clarkia, Calceolaria, Campanula, Larkspur & Scabious. I shan't recognise them if they do; we are planting at a venture, inspired by seedsmen's language: how they stand high & bear bright blue petals (Woolf, 2023, p. 522).

Woolf describes the allure of the garden being 'too much' and enough to break her away from her own perpetual habit of often choosing to set about 'describing it from within' (Woolf, 2023, p. 522). We also gain a glimpse of Woolf's scene making process here, because she briefly conjures up the beginning of a literary nature form composition by drawing on the colourful detail of how 'the green of the turf with the bunch of purple Japanese anemones keeps getting in [her] eyes' (Woolf, 2023, p. 522). The importance of colour capturing Woolf's attention is seen again with their choice of seeds to plant for Spring flowering: 'Clarkia, Calceolaria, Campanula, Larkspur & Scabious', because the gardening notes accompanying the seeds suggest that the plants will 'bear bright blue petals' (Woolf, 2023, p. 522). All of the species can be used as annuals – planted purposely to create a swathe of blue-purple tones. (Woolf, 2023, p. 522). There is an honesty, but also a refreshing sense of the novice's excitement ('inspired by seedsmen's language'), in Woolf's admittance that she 'shan't recognise them' if they do flower (Woolf, 2023, p. 522). Her tone is gently mocking of herself and Leonard, as she compare their act of gardening to the faith that carries a 'pious or religious belief', in the hope 'that they will resurrect' and bring some delight to the garden in the future (Woolf, 2023, p. 522). This short break away from her writing desk has granted Woolf a wealth of sensory ideas for creating her literary nature forms, and making notes about the quiet influence that their direct interaction with the garden has on their human moods, relationships, routines and ongoing sense of curiosity.

Hancock also appears to take an 'ethnobotanical' approach to her Woolfian research. She analyses the effect that a life lived in gardens had on Woolf's work. She traces Woolf's physical movements and sensory journeys

through the garden spaces at Monk's House in order to appreciate 'Woolf's daily rhythms' (Hancock, 2012, p. 168). The decision to examine Woolf and her oeuvre through the lens of Woolf's intimate garden and landscape spaces allows for an ethnobotanical and anthropological quest. The twofold nature of the analysis of nature's influence on Woolf's writing and family-life requires a study of the emotional experiences of Woolf's nature-immersed characters and the Stephens' repeated engagement with the flora and fauna that created the literary formal design nature form.

In *Mrs Dalloway* we see Woolf's awareness of the older approaches, the collection and classification systems, which were used in the field of natural science, via the formal design nature form. Woolf places her central characters, Clarissa and Septimus, in a climate where they are frequently seen to be circumnavigating the classification that everyone around them is trying to commit their identities to. Woolf takes the time to set up an atmosphere of tension around relationships encumbered by social mores, pressures and the dynamics that exist in wider groups. This emphasis adds to the apparent difficulty of Septimus and Clarissa's situations. Woolf uses the formal design nature form to illustrate Septimus's frequent shifting between powerful feelings – exacerbated by the increasingly limited nature of the medical diagnosis that his doctors are labelling him with. Septimus finds a moment of relief from his harrowing memories of the war when he visits Hampton Court Palace with Rezia. He concentrates on 'all the little red and yellow flowers' which spark his creative inspiration, because he visually perceives the flowers as 'floating lamps' (2000, p. 65). These colourful sights cause him to conjure up 'stories' to make them both laugh (2000, p. 65). This state of merriment changes as they stand 'by the river' at Hampton Court, because Septimus becomes momentarily absorbed in his fearful realisation about the cruelty in humans. These thoughts lead him to seeking a dramatic release for himself and Rezia – he 'suddenly' states: "Now we will kill ourselves" and Woolf plays with the idea of the mesmerising flow of the river encouraging this need to leave the daily experience of an anthropocentric life (2000, p. 65). The way in which the river 'fascinated him' allows Woolf to manipulate her formal design nature form to bridge between Septimus's darker and lighter musings (2000, p. 66). His 'fascination' relates to his desire for death to release him from his sense of earthly concerns, yet his hyperfocus on the motion of the river also leads to spiritual elation. By extending his viewpoint into the formal design nature form, symbolised by the gardens at Hampton Court and the boundary of the River Thames, Septimus begins to notice a feeling of

belonging as he psychically and physically interacts with the natural world around him. This state of mind seems to highlight his awareness of the shortcomings of humans, whilst also elevating him above them: 'He knew the meaning of the world' (2000, p. 66). Woolf's protagonists find moments of true feeling and self-escape when they concentrate on a present, small and gently stimulating aspect of nature. In *Mrs Dalloway,* the formal design nature form dominates the text and provides these psychological interludes for respite. In her writing, Woolf highlights the importance of nature observation and her support for modern research in natural science studies. We see this in the examples of Clarissa and Septimus finding honest versions of themselves, when it is easier to practically and visually engage with the formal design nature form.

We know that for Clarissa, flowers seem to envelope her in private escapism. She specifically finds this brief mental respite at Mulberry's, the florist's, because the luxurious, sensory, floral setting helps her to engage more with her imagination. The freshness of the roses suddenly evokes visual memories of 'frilled linen clean from a laundry' and she personifies the 'red carnations' by thinking that they looked as though they were 'holding their heads up' with confidence or obvious etiquette (2000, p. 13). In terms of Woolf's use of an ethnobotanical outlook, in relation to her central characters in *Mrs Dalloway,* both Clarissa and Septimus appear to gain more, overall, social presence when they are connected to flowers and thus the formal design nature form. This character construction highlights the significance of Woolf's formal design nature form in *Mrs Dalloway,* because Clarissa's interaction with the domestic floristry of roses extends Woolf's expression of Clarissa's nature (albeit the parts of her that are mostly formed by her need to fulfil a social role). Septimus is also presented vividly when Woolf describes his interactions with the formal design nature form, via new growth of leaves and flowers in city gardens parks. During these scenes he is momentarily able to function at less of a heightened emotional level in society, despite how the trauma of war has changed his outlook in several ways. The observational focus of the modern natural sciences seems to appear in the moments in *Mrs Dalloway* when we notice the presence of the formal design nature form. Amongst these animated nature habitats, Woolf's protagonists partially break away from their classical roles and so appear as torn between their social and private identities. Lambert, in her article 'Unsocial Impulses and Writhing Dinosaurs: Evolution as Fiction in Virginia Woolf's Novels', deliberately looks at Darwinian ideas of evolutionary theory in relation to Woolf's 'parody' of the tension between Victorian and Modern methods for investigating

scientific ideas (1995, p. 91). She argues that 'when Woolf's characters search for truth in "facts", their ability to respond creatively to circumstances is diminished, along with their capacity to express themselves and thus to control their lives' (Lambert, 1995, p. 91). The anthropocentric desire to classify species, types and styles is partly mocked by Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway*. Clarissa and Septimus appear to limit themselves when they engage in rigid and human-centric thinking. It is only when they alter their viewpoints in relation to Woolf's formal design nature form and the presence of the non-human beings that surround them, that their lives feel expanded, interconnected and spiritually meaningful. The constant social tension in *Mrs Dalloway* is represented as isolating for Woolf's characters, and yet it also offers her the chance to counter tradition with an appreciation of the modern approaches to scientific nature-observation. To a certain extent, the 'contrasting approaches' that Woolf witnessed in the research field of the natural sciences offered her a literary template that she could use for 'the representation of life in fiction' (Alt, 2010, p. 12). Not only does Woolf argue against some of the underlying structures that influenced how traditional scientific methods were conducted, because these structures were also used into the management of social, cultural and artistic institutions, but she could mimic modern science's newer absorption with less-intrusive, observational methods (and the associated branches of ecology, ethology and ethnobotany).

1.7 Environmentalism in Mrs Dalloway with the Formal Design Nature Form

In *Mrs Dalloway,* as we look through the lens of Woolf's dominant nature form of formal design, aspects of conservational concern or contemporary environmentalism emerge in relation to the undercurrent of her animistic life-philosophy. Woolf grants animism to natural forms and processes in *Mrs Dalloway*. This can be seen with her descriptions of how Elizabeth Dalloway experiences walking through the streets of London:

> It was not conscious. There was no recognition in it of one fortune, or fate, and for that very reason even to those dazed with watching for the last shivers of consciousness on the faces of the dying, consoling. Forgetfulness in people might wound, their ingratitude corrode, but this voice, pouring endlessly, year in year out, would take whatever it might be; this vow; this van; this life; this

> procession, would wrap them all about and carry them on, as in the rough stream of a glacier the ice holds a splinter of bone, a blue petal, some oak trees, and rolls them on
> (Woolf, 2000, p. 137).

Woolf's sense of the universal energy that connects all living beings is referred to as 'this voice, pouring endlessly, year in year out, would take whatever it might be; this vow; this van; this life; this procession, would wrap them all about and carry them on' (Woolf, 2000, p. 137). Moreover, this thread of energetic interconnectivity is likened to the way in which 'the rough stream of a glacier the ice' is driven by the forces acting on and simultaneously gathers up traces of the things that it passes as it moves. It is interesting that Woolf refers to the element of water, to further determine Elizabeth's notion of the interrelated 'voice' in *Mrs Dalloway,* due to the changeability and adaptability of its form. She notes that the 'ice' in a 'glacier' seems to reflect a similar animism to the idea of the 'voice' which is 'pouring endlessly' because it becomes a material that collects items, such as 'a splinter of bone, a blue petal', before glacial action continues to move everything onwards (2000, p. 137). The reassuring effect of Woolf's life-philosophy being focused on nature's ever-present cycles, is seen here with Elizabeth's comparison of a glacier to the ongoing 'voice' of people carrying out their days in London (2000, p. 137). She notes that even in moments of poignant loss, when we might be watching 'the last shivers of consciousness on the faces of the dying', the energy of city life appears as a continuous hubbub (2000, p. 137). This scene illustrates how Woolf's underlying respect for the cyclical patterns in nature stretches beyond the superficiality of human aspirations. Whilst finding humans to be deeply in denial, Woolf emphasises the importance of the connection that exists between human and non-human realms. In drawing her reader's attention to these nature relations, Woolf advocates that all life is one and the same. The underlying presence of Woolf's understanding of how the natural sciences observe the world as an ecological system, is highlighted in her novels during flashes of authentic character reflection. In the above extract from *Mrs Dalloway* there is a sense that Woolf is giving Elizabeth a moment of greater authenticity as she travels alone back to the house and experiences the flows of energy that generate an aliveness in the city. She appears to make up her own mind about the flaws of Miss Kilman and analyses how acts of duty and charity often depend on the value system that drives such actions. Woolf's use of the formal design nature form creates a backdrop of formal displays, municipal flowerbeds and tree-lined avenues and

this natural presence aids Elizabeth's contemplation on the London omnibus. By detailing the motion of 'ice', Elizabeth is able to widen her life-perspective to include all of nature and the knowledge of how environmental processes provide the essential foundations for the functioning of human societies. The desires of Miss Kilman and Clarissa Dalloway are shown to be inconsequential when juxtaposed with nature's water cycles, which provide hydration and nutrients for all of the planet's living organisms.

The notion of an interwoven and universal 'voice' is seen again if we look at the moment 'opposite Regent's Park Tube station' when both Walsh and Rezia hear the old woman singing, what sounded like an:

> ancient song […] the old bubbling burbling song soaking through the knotted roots of infinite ages, and skeletons and treasure, streamed away in rivulets over the pavement and all along the Marylebone Road, and down towards Euston, fertilising, leaving a damp stain.
>
> Still remembering how once in some primeval May she had walked with her lover, this rusty pump, this battered old woman with one hand exposed for coppers the other clutching her side, would still be there in ten million years, remembering how once she had walked in May, where the sea flows now, with whom it did not matter--he was a man, oh yes, a man who had loved her. But the passage of ages had blurred the clarity of that ancient May day; the bright petalled flowers were hoar and silver frosted; and she no longer saw, when she implored him (as she did now quite clearly) "look in my eyes with thy sweet eyes intently," she no longer saw brown eyes, black whiskers or sunburnt face but only a looming shape, a shadow shape, to which, with the bird-like freshness of the very aged she still twittered "give me your hand and let me press it gently" (Peter Walsh couldn't help giving the poor creature a coin as he stepped into his taxi), "and if some one should see, what matter they?" she demanded; and her fist clutched at her side, and she smiled, pocketing her shilling, and all peering inquisitive eyes seemed blotted out, and the passing generations--the pavement was crowded with bustling middle-class people--vanished, like leaves, to be trodden under, to be soaked and steeped and made mould of by that eternal spring—
>
> ee um fah um so

foo swee too eem oo

> "Poor old woman," said Rezia Warren Smith, waiting to cross.
>
> Oh poor old wretch!
>
> Suppose it was a wet night? Suppose one's father, or somebody who had known one in better days had happened to pass, and saw one standing there in the gutter? And where did she sleep at night?
>
> Cheerfully, almost gaily, the invincible thread of sound wound up into the air like the smoke from a cottage chimney, winding up clean beech trees and issuing in a tuft of blue smoke among the topmost leaves. "And if some one should see, what matter they?"
>
> (2000, pp. 80-82)

The ‘ancient song’ is briefly likened to the element of water, as Woolf describes how the sound of the song was carried in a ‘bubbling burbling’ way – passing easily through the more solid objects of ‘knotted roots of infinite ages, and skeletons and treasure’ – before it then ‘streamed away in rivulets’ (2000, pp. 80-81). The song momentarily contains the knowledge of historical experience and communicates with other ‘ancient’ parts of the habitat that it traverses out of the park and fades into the modern scene ‘along the Marylebone Road’, depositing past experiences that contribute to the ongoing ‘fertilising’ of the city (2000, pp. 80-81). The presence of the ‘old woman’ appears to act as a further conduit for Peter and Rezia’s momentary break from their everyday lives, as she exists as a liminal being who breaks from the societal norms fostered by anthropocentric viewpoints. She provides a more fluid link between themselves and the formal design nature form and so reawakens their awareness of the fact that they live within a much wider ecosystem that stretches far beyond the confines of their individual concerns.

We also note that this multi-character engagement with atmospheric sound produces a shared human appreciation as the tune continues ‘winding up clean beech trees’ until it looks like ‘a tuft of blue smoke among the topmost leaves’ (2000, p. 82). The woman’s own singing psychologically transports her to a gentler time in her life and just for a moment ‘she smiled, pocketing her shilling, and all peering inquisitive eyes

seemed blotted out' (2000, p. 81). The 'ancient song' and demeanour of 'this battered old woman' draws Peter Walsh's attention, meaning that he 'couldn't help giving the poor creature a coin as he stepped into his taxi' (2000, pp. 80-81). Yet there is commentary on the power-positioning of a British society that is subject to patriarchal attitudes, with the way in which Walsh's act of kindness is framed by his own virtue signalling: he 'couldn't help' himself from committing this act of benevolence (2000, pp. 80-81). It is also notable that Walsh gives a single 'coin' and is then transported mentally and physically elsewhere by the arrival of 'his taxi' (2000, pp. 80-81). In a similar way, Rezia – though it is assumed that she is currently living in more comfort than the other woman – is still subject to asking for help from certain men in society who are considered as holding a hierarchical role.

At the same time as this sound-influenced interaction between Walsh and the singing woman, Rezia is also struck by a surging feeling of empathy: '"Poor old woman"' she worries as she waits to cross the road (2000, pp. 80-82). With the sound of the 'ancient song' morphing and travelling 'up clean beech trees', Woolf's characters and readers are again guided by the description of a merging of an elemental substance: in this case 'smoke' from fire (2000, pp. 80-82). This elemental aspect of Woolf's scene making heightens awareness around the energy exchange that takes place between the intermingling beings – with the 'old woman', Walsh and Rezia mixing with the trees and parkland that encircle Regent's Park tube station and the memories of wilder nature spaces that are conjured up in the song: 'the old bubbling burbling song soaking through the knotted roots of infinite ages' (2000, pp. 80-82). In this sense there is an emphasis on how all living beings are intertwined in the nature form habitats that Woolf creates in her novels. We are further led, by tracing the smoke's movement, from the image of 'a cottage chimney' to the habitat of a woodland canopy (2000, p. 82). As reiterated above, with Elizabeth's solitary journey through the city, Woolf's use of the formal design nature form introduces an interlude of honest and independent expression from her characters. In hearing the words of the song, that declare, 'And if some one should see, what matter they?', Rezia resolves to lift herself from her unhappiness and think that 'everything was going to be right' with how people (significantly Dr Bradshaw) responded to Septimus's war trauma (2000, p. 82). Despite Woolf's cynicism towards the medical profession, and to some extent Clarissa and Septimus's legitimate fears, connection to the natural world offers Rezia a glimpse of how hope, kindness and understanding potentially remain as part of the universality of life.

In Neslihan Bilge's article on memory and duration in *Mrs Dalloway,* it is suggested that Woolf depicts 'characters that are deemed beyond the bounds of possibility' (2018, p. 2). In relation to the environmental lens of this chapter and the thesis' overall interest in nature's influence on Woolf's botanically-infused prose, Bilge's 'beyond the bounds' explain how key characters in *Mrs Dalloway* extend themselves and become an energetic part of the wider environment. By focusing on these brief reflections that Woolf grants her characters, we note how they individually draw associations with nature's processes to support the liminality, but also the authenticity, of the moment. To build on the nature form strategy that Woolf uses, to increase the energetic connections of her characters with their surrounding natural environment, it is also worth referring once more to Haraway's 'naturecultures' (Haraway, 2008, p. 16). We are reminded by Dubino that Haraway's ecological research takes into account 'the coevolutionary scene', just as Woolf works to show her human characters benefitting from engagements and interactions with – in the case of *Mrs Dalloway* – formal design (2014, p. 132). It is further reiterated by Dubino, in Haraway's words, that we humans are part of this 'bestiary of agencies' too' (2014, p. 132). Woolf's nature forms extend this understanding of the energy exchange that occurs when humans and animals interact, to consider the entirety of a functioning ecosystem that also include flora as vital and energetic beings. The singing of the 'old woman' in this scene interrupts Peter and Rezia's flow of separate actions, simultaneously situating them in the present moment outside of Regent's Park tube station and in a historical-time (before humans settled in London) when the 'pavement was grass, when it was swamp, through the age of tusk and mammoth' (2000, pp. 80-82). Here we see Woolf proposing that the 'old woman', Peter and Rezia are momentarily enlightened by the ecological and spiritual realisation that each life is existing amongst multiple moving energies – consisting of the human and the non-human.

The old woman triggers this heightened response in Peter and Rezia as Woolf relates her 'bubbling burbling song' to the notion of a rekindling of hope that the bucolic literary trope often ties to Spring: 'still the earth seemed green and flowery' (2000, pp. 80-81). Whereas the vessel that produces the 'burbling song' has, over the years of harsh experience, developed 'so rude a mouth, a mere hole in the earth, muddy too, matted with root fibres and tangled grasses' (2000, pp. 80-81). This depiction of the old woman's body evolving into the geographical physicality of a moving and changing ecological system pushes Buell's theory of popular ecocriticism even further. The formal design nature form in *Mrs Dalloway* highlights how an ecocritical text

conveys ‘refractions of physical environments and human interaction with those environments’, but it also transforms the character of the old woman into an aminate ecosystem which also alters the usual motions of Woolf’s other characters in the scene (Buell, 2006, p. 30). We gain the sense in this scene of the fresh life – represented by the ‘rivulets’ of water ‘over the pavement and all along the Marylebone Road’, finding a route through the Autumn-Winter terrain, because the song is ‘soaking through the knotted roots of infinite ages, and skeletons and treasure […] fertilising’ (2000, pp. 80-81). Woolf adds layers of meaning to this seasonal collage by presenting the old woman as a physical emblem of Spring and Autumn, before musing over her character’s youthful memories (associated with Spring) and her present reality. The body of the old woman is described as an earthy mesh of ‘root fibres’ and petals that have become ‘silver frosted’, and yet her singing reminds her of a love that she felt ‘in some primeval May’ (2000, pp. 80-81). The concept of the old woman containing representations of all of the seasons and therefore all of their traditional and modern emotional associations, illustrates the extent of Woolf’s deliberately questioning attitudes in *Mrs Dalloway* and her attempts to disrupt allegiances to societal norms. The old woman’s surprisingly vivid energy appears to be sourced from a deeper appreciation of nature’s perpetual cycles.

In the passage analysed above from *Mrs Dalloway* we see Woolf building up a back-and-forth rhythm of paradoxical nature images, with the use of her formal design nature form setting in Regent’s Park. In an intertextual nod to T. S. Eliot’s *Little Gidding* (1944), in which he causes his reader to engage further in order to decipher the meaning of ‘Midwinter spring’, we see Woolf playing with the contrasts between Spring and deep Autumn associations (Eliot, 2009, p. 38). When Eliot writes of ‘Midwinter spring’ being ‘suspended in time, between pole and tropic’, he forms ideas surrounding weather patterns that are noticeably different to the general state of a season (Eliot, 2009, p. 38). Woolf’s liminal seasonal atmosphere also includes the spiritual complexity of a whole – the presence of the old woman – being made of both Spring and Autumn elements. The ‘eternal spring’ from the old woman’s song and memories ‘soaked and steeped and made mould of [the leaves] who represent ‘bustling middle-class people’, her physical body and the passage of time (Woolf, 2000, pp. 80-81). This alternative and unusual transition from Spring back into late Autumn and Winter, as the old woman returns to her song (after receiving the coin from Peter Walsh) and feels as though people have ‘vanished, like leaves’, further breaks the rhythms of Peter Walsh and Rezia Warren-Smith’s usual trail of

thoughts (2000, pp. 80-81). Emre comments on the old woman's song in another spiritual way – she refers to J. Hillis Miller's reading of the tune as a resemblance to Richard Strauss's "All Souls' Day" (Emre, 2021, p. 116). In *Mrs Dalloway* the song momentarily refers to a lover's interaction: "look in my eyes with thy sweet eyes intently", and Miller asserts that in "All Soul's Day" spirits rise in search of 'the memory of a dead lover' (Emre, 2021, p. 116). In a similar way to how Elizabeth briefly sees the heavens interacting with life on the Earth, and Septimus finds sudden beauty in Nature's sensory impressions, the old woman's song disrupts the other characters' (and readers') categorising of states of being.

Chapter 1 examines the formal design nature form in relation to how Woolf uses her nature forms to expand our understanding of the interaction between the human and non-human beings in *Mrs Dalloway*. The analysis of the novel is centred around themes of Woolf's Naturalism, Woolf's adoption of the observational techniques in the modern Natural Sciences and Woolf's increasingly environmental standpoint. *Mrs Dalloway* shows undertones of what is now determined as a form of ecofeminism, because it dismantles the frequently linear design of patriarchal systems of social thought, analysis and power. Woolf's environmental stance is strengthened by this awareness of how all living organisms function as part of a wider ecological web of dependent variables. Chapter 1 evidences moments where Clarissa, Septimus, Peter, Rezia and Elizabeth tune into their surrounding ecosystems, via Woolf's formal design nature form. Clarissa's engagement with the formal design nature form, as she traverses through London's city parks, occupies herself with floral arrangements and remembers seeing flowers blooming from the terrace at Bourton, leads to her escaping into a sense of self that she links to the prime of youth and also to her private identity. For Septimus, a sensory relationship with the formal design nature form allows him to reach a philosophical and spiritual state that, at times, aids his psychological processing of the terrors that he has witnessed during the First World War. This is seen when he listens deeply to the trees beyond the walls of his house, or at the edges of parks, and when his attention momentarily hones in on the flowers in the formal gardens at Hampton Court Palace. Chapter 1 sets the scene for the following chapters in this thesis, because it focuses on the nature form habitat that tends to be physically closer to domestic human activity and the most overtly cultivated. The nature forms in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are wider in scale and 'wilder' in their designs. Chapter 2 looks at Woolf's naturalistic gardens nature form, with an emphasis on *To the Lighthouse*. Whilst the emphasis on naturalistic gardens in Chapter 2 shows

a movement towards a slightly wilder habitat type, all of the nature forms illustrate how Woolf's poetic prose expresses environmental undertones and a determination to question the hegemony of patriarchal and anthropocentric voices.

Chapter 2: Naturalistic Gardens in *To the Lighthouse*

Chapter 2 focuses on showing Woolf's use of her literary naturalistic gardens nature form in *To the Lighthouse.* In line with all of the chapters, Chapter 2 will illustrate Woolf's autobiographical and horticultural context and then expand the analysis to consider Woolf's naturalistic style, her natural science influences and environmental undertones. This chapter examines Woolf's naturalistic gardens nature form, by looking at how her more powerful depictions of naturalistic garden design trends in *To the Lighthouse* and parts of *Kew Gardens* represent the energy exchange and animism that she has observed in nature. The analysis in this chapter will continue to illustrate the way in which Woolf's novels present her philosophy of interconnectedness between all living beings in ecosystems. Chapter 2 specifically traces how the naturalistic gardens nature form in *To the Lighthouse* enlivens the intertwined relationships of the Ramsay family and their sphere of close connections. In contrast to Chapter 1, Chapter 2 evolves around how Woolf's human characters experience their interactions with a slightly freer nature form. The naturalistic gardens nature form of Chapter 2 is presented as a curated type of habitat, but it stretches further into a looser horticultural style than the formal design nature form of Chapter 1. In the analysis of *To the Lighthouse* in this chapter we begin to see Woolf exploring wilder types of habitats that also tend to share borders with more expansive ecosystem zones. The naturalistic gardens nature form is drawn from Woolf's own experiences of co-gardening with Leonard Woolf and Vanessa Bell, especially in their horticultural spaces in Sussex. The impressions that these artistic and horticultural influences made on Woolf would not have been so noticeable, had the Bloomsbury Group not lived outside of London during and after the First World War. But for the change that had been required for Woolf's health, and for the conscientious objection of Duncan Grant and David Garnett, the power that personal gardening schemes provoked would perhaps have been limited to city environments. Although it is not known whether the Woolfs followed Jekyll's garden designs with the fervour of their contemporaries, Scott contends that 'soon after the move to Monk's House' they 'began acquiring books and pamphlets of plant selection and cultivation and on garden design' (2012, p. 97). Even though Woolf may not have been as involved in collecting horticultural resources as Leonard Woolf, she 'would have [been]

surrounded' by planting manuals as she wrote (Scott, 2012, p. 97). Leonard's millstone terrace, described by Zoob as a 'a leitmotif in the garden paths, their pale ribbed circles like ammonites in rocks,' was 'an idea pioneered by Gertrude Jekyll in her gardens' (2013, p. 61). Woolf was surrounded by acts of gardening and horticultural design, often on a daily basis, and so it makes sense that this alternative creative outlet became pivotal to the development of her naturalistic gardens nature form.

In relation to the biographical links that are made between Woolf's personal life and her depiction of the Ramsay family's experiences in *To the Lighthouse*, Mark Hussey refers to Woolf's autobiographical records which show a series of startling bereavements. This tragic period began with the loss of Woolf's mother Julia Stephen, followed quickly by 'Woolf's half-sister Stella Duckworth [who had] died in July 1897, three months after her marriage' and then the typhoid illness that had killed her brother Thoby Stephen (Woolf, 2005, p. 230). In his own autobiographical writings, Leonard not only refers to the Bloomsbury Group's need for safer living spaces during the World Wars. He also feels strongly that their longer stints at Hogarth House, Asheham and Monk's House enabled Woolf to circumnavigate aspects of her grief. He believed that time in their shared gardens was 'crucial for the stabilizing of [Woolf's] mind and health and for her work' (Woolf, 1975, p. 16). Even if at times Woolf was rendered immobile, she could tune into Leonard's focus on 'pruning the apple trees, & tying plums to the wall' (Woolf, 1981, p. 4). To a great extent, Chapter 2 expresses how Woolf relies on these intimate interactions in naturalistic styled gardens to shape her naturalistic gardens nature form in *To the Lighthouse* – for the expression of her new articulation of Naturalism.

2.1 Nature Form: Naturalistic Gardens

Woolf uses her naturalistic gardens nature form to mediate the emotional reactions of the Ramsay family. For example, Woolf uses descriptions of Mrs Ramsay in relation to the natural world as a means of showing her repressed depth of character. Mrs Ramsay is depicted as a woman following socially-prescribed, limiting, gender stereotypes and so she feels as though she 'had the whole of the other sex under her protection, for reasons she could not explain, for their chivalry' (Woolf, 2000, p. 10). In assuming a subservient role that places people under the control of the patriarchal system, Woolf insinuates that Mrs Ramsay diminishes her

own opportunities for intellectual pursuits and in doing so limits her sense of identity. Woolf allows her readers to see Mrs Ramsay's covert wistfulness, as she quietly compares 'the green sand dunes with the wild flowing grasses on them' to a beautiful 'moon country, uninhabited by men' (2000, p. 17). *To the Lighthouse,* similarly to *Mrs Dalloway,* sees Woolf make use of bold floral references. Nevertheless, the thesis places greater significance on the fact that Mrs Ramsay is often seen in her naturalistic garden. She is positioned looking out through the 'gap between the two clumps of red-hot pokers' (2000, p. 75). Mrs Ramsay gazes on the horizon, in a similar way to Woolf's own sense at Monk's House of how 'the garden gate admits to the water meadows, where all nature is to be had in five minutes' (Lee, 1997, p. 423). Woolf creates a pattern of naturalistic scenes in *To the Lighthouse* that visually illustrate Mrs Ramsay's releasing of trapped emotions when she is able to widen her perceptions. In these scenes Mrs Ramsay stares out past the boundaries of the house, past the structure that leaves her feeling momentarily powerless. This motif of Woolf's characters looking out into the wilderness, beyond their garden gate, towards intellectual freedom, is a powerful theme that is adopted throughout her interwar novels.

To refer back to the cottage garden movement's naturalistic style of planting that was prevalent during Woolf's lifetime, the research considers how Gertrude Jekyll's portfolio of garden projects emboldened modern land design. Jekyll is so significant to Woolf's creative hinterland, because she designed a number of the garden spaces that the members of the Bloomsbury Group interacted with on a regular basis. We know that Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West followed Jekyll's approaches to garden design at Sissinghurst, because of specific remarks that she makes in her garden notes: 'I found some fine heads of polyanthus, entirely out of season, the blue Californian variety and some of the butter-and-cream Munstead, raised by Miss Gertrude Jekyll' (Raven & Sackville-West, 2014, p. 327). Sackville-West, by directly referring to a species of Polyanthus named after Jekyll's own garden at Munstead in Surrey, shows her sense of respect for the works of the veteran gardener.

Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant were helped by Roger Fry's designs in their garden at Charleston, and Fry himself commissioned Jekyll to help him develop his planting scheme at Durbins in Surrey. The naturalistic

style that these gardens share, still connects the Bloomsbury Group's homes together today as part of a series of artistic influences that hold merit even if the planting palettes alone were singled out as the unifying focus. Jekyll's plot of land at Munstead Wood was bought by herself in around 1885 and it is worth drawing attention to the fact that the site was not in particularly good condition. Triangular in shape, consisting of a 'pattern of fields', a 'chestnut copse' and a 'self-sown wood' that had replaced a 'plantation of Scots pine', the soil had been agriculturally overworked resulting in 'very poor quality land' (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, pp. 84-85). All of these factors of land degradation act to give greater credit to Jekyll's foresight, because she worked with the site to adopt a much more naturalistic setting that contributed to the pioneer habitat types that had emerged when human interference had diminished. Just as her many commissions had encouraged her clients to dramatically move away from the sterile planting schemes of their forbears, Munstead Wood became a layered tapestry of botanical habitat 'rooms'. Even more so than usual, Jekyll took the time to evolve her garden slowly and responded to plant areas as they changed. We can see Jekyll's naturalistic focus with the way in which she 'deliberately' planned 'to give the impression of a modest house set in a wood' at Munstead (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, p. 85). This was achieved by replacing the usual driveway up to the front of the house, with 'a simple hand gate and footpath leading from a sunken lane' and emphasising tree planting and understorey shade species. Whilst featuring 'a fine multi-stemmed beech' close to the gateway, Jekyll's design followed what we would now recognize as habitat creation as a key component of garden design. Under the beech, hollies were layered and supported underneath by 'masses of whortleberry' and then smaller ferns 'and drifts of woodrush' were planted at ground level to limit blank space and bind the soil (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, p. 86). Our growing contemporary adherence to adaptative planting combinations, is seen with Jekyll's method of starting a design with a site survey that considers existing ecological features and environmental structures: '"show me your spaces and I will tell you what plants to get for them" [from 1900]' (Kellaway, 2016, p. 97). In a similarly naturalistic way, Jekyll was aware that her planting designs needed to acknowledge seasonal change and longevity of interest beyond just the summer months. Her key rule was to ensure that she had included 'certain things that will follow in season of bloom and that can be trained to take each other's places' (Kellaway, 2016, p. 102). An example of this is mentioned in relation to her reliance on Gypsophila being planted with oriental poppies, because they will spread, bloom later and form autumnal interest when 'the seed-pods turn brown' and contrast with 'trailing Nasturtiums' (Kellaway, 2016, p. 102). Jekyll's

naturalistic planting style evolved around the building up of habitat-zones that considered the importance of developing structural layers and depths, alongside a harmonious richness of merging shades.

The thesis proposes that Woolf's appreciation of the naturalistic planting and literary Naturalism's emphasis on environmental observation led to a hybrid nature writing style in *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts* that pushed the boundaries of early, environmentally aware thoughts. Through her botanically-infused prose Woolf contributed to cultural ideas that supported a prolonged drive for biodiverse planting, habitat conservation and restoration of botanical corridors linking together wider ecosystem functioning. Horticulturalists identifying with the contemporary context of the naturalistic gardening movement, alongside environmental activists and rewilding programmes, search for examples of larger habitats that were perhaps still existing in some of our childhoods. As Kelly D Norris writes about new Naturalism, in relation to garden design, she mentions the 'prairie' of her youth as her original 'harbinger of heritage and hope' for the environment (2021, p. 7). She also acknowledges that these past, wider and wilder habitats grew and matured over many years. Her contemporary approach to developing ecological gardens, therefore factors in the need for time and 'a slower sort of gardening that's both pleasureful and powerful' (Norris, 2021, p. 113). In aiming for greater wildness, Norris (like Gertrude Jekyll before her) perseveres 'to embrace the nature of the garden itself' (2021, p. 113). The existing factors of the garden are key: the soil type and pH, the aspect, the climate, the native or pioneer species of plants and animals, the composition of the land connected to, but beyond, the borders of the garden. In this sense Norris highlights how the naturalistic style 'flipped the script' on traditional methods of planting, that tended to put aesthetic design before ecological functioning (2021, p. 114). She prefers to develop a garden that builds on a 'site-appropriate foundation', and then considers the freedom of 'boundless creative thought' being layered on top of the initial structure (Norris, 2021, p. 114). New naturalistic gardening also values flexibility in the design. This way the gardener follows changes that occur in the site, rather than leading directly. Just as naturalistic approaches to gardening influenced the creative spaces of the Bloomsbury group, new naturalistic gardening seeks to balance ecological design and aesthetic features in gardens. Norris appreciates a garden that is free to 'remake itself' over time, and Woolf too was inspired by the continuous cycles in energetic ecosystems in all of the nature forms (2021, p. 114). Virginia and Leonard Woolf allowed themselves to be led by their observations of

the water meadows in Sussex and they produced a garden that drew from and connected with these wilder habitats.

The nature form of naturalistic gardens is crucial in Woolf's interwar novels, because it represents a means of escapism for her characters. In *To the Lighthouse* Lily and William deliberately take strolls around the garden, as they are 'drawn by some need' to relax and examine the day (2000, p. 24). Mr and Mrs Ramsay seek out privacy together in the garden because it provides a space that lies outside of the rigidity of their usual routine. Nevertheless, although the Ramsays are more able to communicate honestly with one another when in the garden, they are presented as reaching an 'uncomfortable' point where 'they did not know whether to go on or go back' (2000, p. 75). Woolf positions this complicated dialogue to coincide with the couple walking up to a physical boundary, where the lighthouse could be seen beyond the perimeter. This combined psychological and physical hesitancy relates well to Lee's biographical emphasis on 'the image of the four young Stephens standing outside the hedge in the dusk' just beyond the garden of their childhood holiday-home at Talland House (1997, p. 22). Woolf herself comments on how she wrote *To the Lighthouse* 'in a great, apparently involuntary, rush,' which indicates that by visualising the garden scenes in her memories she could vividly recall the personalities of her mother and father. (2002, p. 92). Woolf's parents appear to be immortalised by her portrayal of Mr and Mrs Ramsay in what has been called 'the novel of her family' (Lee, 1997, p. 50). This overt intermingling of autobiography and fiction in *To the Lighthouse* is further referred to by Swanson in regards to 'Woolf's lifelong, evolving interaction with "nature" (2012, p. 2). Woolf partly viewed nature like her Romantic forbears, in terms of its forces creating something 'violent' or 'peaceful' (Swanson, 2012, p. 2). Her writing process converted these mood-related paradoxes into a tempered version of an expression of joy and fear, set in a contemporary garden.

2.2 Biographical Impact on the Naturalistic Gardens Nature Form in *To the Lighthouse*:

> ‘For one had settings for these scenes; trees that grew there; flowers; a certain light; a few figures’
>
> (Woolf, 2000, p. 201).

This section refers to Woolf’s autobiographical and biographical details, in order to contextualise her personal background and developing worldview in relation to a phenomenological appreciation of natural habitats and therefore the inspiration for her literary nature forms. Woolf’s self-termed ‘scene making’ draws on both Woolf’s nature observations and her emotional memories (Lee, 1997, p. 20). In *To the Lighthouse*, we gain a sense of this through the way in which Woolf creates a link in the other characters’ minds between Mrs Ramsay and nature. James evokes the reverence that his mother gave to scenery, saying: ‘For one had settings for these scenes; trees that grew there; flowers; a certain light; a few figures’ (2000, p. 201). In remembering his mother after her death, when they return to the family holiday-home on Skye, he instinctively begins to collate these naturalistic and impressionistic images of the landscape. Lily Briscoe, family friend to the Ramsays, also conjures up the protective spectre of Mrs Ramsay ‘raising to her forehead a wreath of white flowers’ (p. 196). Here we see that Woolf’s often two-dimensional characters, via their interactions with nature, function as conduits for her resonating past experiences. This method allows the reader, and Woolf, to view the emotional outpourings of these constructed scenes from behind the barrier of her human forms. It is notable that Woolf refers to the haunting qualities that memories of her own mother held: for years she could not distance herself from her mother’s death. In her book of autobiographical flashbacks, *Moments of Being,* she states, ‘Until I was in my forties – I could settle the date by seeing when I wrote *To the Lighthouse* […] the presence of my mother obsessed me’ (Woolf, 2002, p. 92). Woolf also links evocative scenes in her writing to the ‘great Cathedral space’ of childhood and expresses how ‘Talland House was full of her’ mother (2002, pp. 93-94). Woolf seems to play out these memories and her loss of Talland House in *To the Lighthouse.* Scott astutely reminds us that ‘though it is modeled on the beloved garden at St. Ives, the garden of *To the Lighthouse* is far from idyllic’ (2012, p. 102). A pervasive ‘anxiety’ endures beyond any recognition over the beauty of the garden and Mrs Ramsay reads this feeling by remarking that there was ‘something grey in the

leaves' (2000, p. 68). Woolf creates a feeling of subtle confusion in her reader. Is Mrs Ramsay influencing nature, the garden and the weather – or vice versa? Woolf produces an intense aura of historical grief with the desolate depictions of the house on Skye after the deaths of Mrs Ramsay, Prue and Andrew. The only witnesses to the downfall of the house, where 'the plaster fell in shovelfuls', are Mrs McNab, the old housekeeper, and nature itself (2000, p. 150). Woolf develops this most poignant of scenes, with a visual projection of nature recapturing a site that has become endowed with human sadness. Despite the 'deserted' house, there was regrowth in the 'drumming from sturdy trees and thorned briars which made the whole room green in summer' (2000, p. 150). Woolf uses the concept of the organic cycle of growth to add motion to the static house and emotional energy to her bridging chapter. It is suggested by Lee that Woolf's entire foundation for writing involved a simultaneous autobiographical focus, because 'she masters her memories by structuring them like fictions' (1997, p. 157). The thesis explores how Woolf's scene making draws on observations of natural scenes, which are then used to encase powerful recollections.

2.3 Horticultural References and Naturalistic Gardens in *To the Lighthouse*

Naturalistic gardens, which grew out of the interwar years in Britain, encouraged a diversity of planting forms, types and sections of wilder habitat that would suit wildlife. Leonard was drawn to Monk's House because of the layout of the garden and the opportunity it offered for naturalistic planting that would lead into the surrounding Sussex water-meadows. He was keen to improve 'the orchard' and could see potential in how the garden itself had been 'much subdivided into a kind of patchwork quilt of trees, shrubs, flowers, vegetables, fruit, roses and crocus' (Woolf, 1964, p. 62). Woolf would have been aware of the cottage garden design style – often associated with Jekyll – due to Leonard's enthusiasm for gardens that were divided into 'defined 'rooms' (Rutherford, 2013, p. 32). Leonard favoured garden designs which enabled the land that surrounded the house to become occupied with a multitude of planted spaces that focused on different, horticultural themes. The defined edges of these areas then 'framed vistas in and beyond the garden' in the style of a Modern Arts and Crafts Garden (Rutherford, 2013, p. 32). The Naturalistic Gardening strand of the Arts and Crafts Movement, pioneered by Jekyll, valued planting designs that illustrated 'the Arts and Crafts garden style' and so to some extent the aesthetic movement determined gardeners' planting combinations. Just as

Leonard created a series of zones within his brick pathways to the back of Monk's House, Arts and Crafts gardening set out to ensure that architectural forms were 'softened by billowing planting of bulbs, herbaceous plants, shrubs, climbers and annuals' (Rutherford, 2013, p. 26). In a letter to Janet Case (friend and inspirational classics teacher) in 1919, Woolf writes to mockingly warn her that the garden at Monk's House will 'be the pride of [their] hearts' (Cook, 2019, p. 441). She further persuades Janet to visit them, by suggesting that they might 'stroll in the apple orchard, or pick – there are cherries, plums, pears, figs' (Cook, 2019, p. 441). It is also recorded by Cook that Leonard took the time to 'graft his own fruit trees' and he learnt to 'train his sweet peas in the way his sister-in-law, Vanessa Bell, did at Charleston' (2019, pp. 447- 448). Consequently, Woolf would have seen just how personal a vegetable garden can become for people. The Bloomsbury Group's First World War vegetable growing, fruit picking and foraging would also have provided family and friends with a surplus of food during a time when rationing was strict and trade was difficult. We know from Martell's extensive study that a domestic food-crisis was threatened during the early part of the First World War, because she evidences a 1914 story from *The Strand* magazine. Written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle '"Danger!" was intended to "direct public attention to the great danger which threatened this country" – the threat that submarine warfare posed to England's very existence' (Martell, 2020, p. 83). Conan Doyle's story alerts the public to the national vulnerability that had been brought about during wartime, as a consequence of political decisions which led to a 'nearly total dependence upon agricultural imports' (Martell, 2020, p. 83). For Leonard Woolf, Vanessa Bell and countless other British families, growing vegetables was new and each year involved experimentation, adaptation and development. The domestic infrastructure of farming procedures had to rapidly be reorganised, in the hope of providing for a country that may potentially be cut off from outside food resources.

Angelica Garnett, whilst remembering her childhood at Charleston, recalls 'a secret garden enclosed by a wall […] with some old apple trees in the centre to which no one ever went' (1994, p. 63). The thrill of this secluded section of the family garden is remembered by Garnett, who claims that she felt as though she could temporarily take sole 'possession' over it and reign there as if she were the 'queen of an unknown country' (1994, p. 63). Just as her niece discovered later on, Woolf would have been aware of the way in which the kitchen gardens and orchards had been purposefully cornered off into separate zones in the wider boundaries

of the garden. These areas would also have been especially practical in their layout and design, and so not necessarily somewhere where you would expect to find other members of the invited Bloomsbury Group to be sitting together and discussing their ideas and opinions. Another horticultural design change adopted by members of the Bloomsbury group, which was influenced by the modern design of vegetable gardens, was the naturalistic combination of diverse types of planting. Vegetables, non-flowering plants and wildflowers had been elevated in popular opinion once more and Jekyll herself had 'a large and profitable Kitchen Garden' at Munstead Wood (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, p. 105). The dramatic impact that the Arts and Crafts Movement had on modern garden-design, meant that gardeners embraced the variation of the 'cottage garden' (Rutherford, 2013, p. 30). Much like Woolf's adapted and liminal prose, the new challenge was to harmoniously mix 'old-fashioned flowers, traditional trees, and vegetable gardens' with plants from 'the herbaceous border' and the 'rose and shrub gardens' (Rutherford, 2013, p. 30). Woolf's concept of nature as an energetic resource is seen predominantly with the poetic 'feeling tone of gardens' expressed at Charleston (Hancock, 2012, p. 91). Bell herself notes how she figured the transformation of the garden at Charleston into 'a studio en plein air' which presented herself and the painter Duncan Grant with endless colour palettes (Hancock, 2012, p. 99). She also describes the monthly shifts in the atmosphere of the garden, as she writes to her son Julian in the Summer of 1936, mentioning how 'The house seems full of young people in very high spirits […] lying about in the garden which is simply a dithering blaze of flowers' (Bell, 1993, p. 420). The forging of artistic and intimate relationships was particularly important to the Bloomsbury Group and 'Bell's approach to garden-making developed not only in collaboration with Duncan Grant, but also as part of her aesthetic exchange with Roger Fry' (Hancock, 2012, p. 99). In tandem with the development of these Bloomsbury Group gardens came a unique phase in history. These British, shifting, interwar, cultural explorations could then be examined and played with in spaces especially created for that purpose. When looking at evidence of Woolf's naturalistic gardens nature form inspired by Jekyll's preference towards 'natural wild growth', we see her horticultural references expand slightly (Jekyll, 2015, p. 61). Woolf moves from details about individual species, that she uses frequently in her writing, to observations of the interconnectivity of plants in a garden as a whole. As we turn to comparisons of Woolf and Jekyll's artistic approaches, similarities rise in terms of their belief that the natural world creates interconnectivity between species. In relation to their artistic mediums, Jekyll with her gardens and Woolf with her literary pieces, both

women also look to nature for their design templates. They both seem to find this early research stage of a creative project to be deeply stimulating and rely on nature's forms to achieve their desired effects. Jekyll's garden designs are described as being able to encompass 'the balance of harmonious background and dramatic focal point – of gypsophila and gladiolus, London Pride and anthericum, cooing doves and biting midges' (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, p. 150). The way in which the land at Munstead combined ploughed arable fields, heath and Scots pine plantations that had rewilded themselves as wilder copses, inspired Jekyll to experiment even further with the softening of contrasts in her designs. As Jekyll shaped her garden at Munstead Wood, she embraced both flowerbeds and woodland planting. Her adopted planting combinations tested how harmony would work, such as when 'the soft cloudlike mist of gypsophila' was compared with 'shooting gladiolus' (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, p. 150). Woolf, too, describes the garden at Monk's House and the sense of the river and hills beyond, how 'there were the trees in the garden; and the reflected light: our hot pokers burning on the edge of the steep' (2017, p. 264). The frequent act of building up a picture of the whole scene reveals Woolf's deep sense of how nature's contributions were adding to the feel of their garden at Monk's House.

The naturalistic garden imagery in *To the Lighthouse* represents seasonal or temporal change and Mrs Ramsay experiences the garden as an emotionally expressive and unifying atmosphere, because of these natural cycles. For example, we gain a sense of the Ramsays witnessing the late heat of a long Summer, when Woolf notes that 'the grass [was] still a soft deep green' (2000, p. 24). Later on, however, despite the enduring heat, we are shown that Mrs Ramsay was feeling apprehensive at the sight of 'the whitening of the flowers' as if 'the leaves conspired together' as the light in the evenings altered (2000, p. 68). The reader absorbs underlying feelings of tension, created by Mrs Ramsay's complex relationship with the natural world. The naturalistic garden that the Ramsays visit in summer acts as a space which allows for the expression of both tragic conflict and uplifting harmony.

Woolf's nature form of naturalistic gardens is especially significant in relation to autobiographical experience because of the renewed, interwar rise in the popularity of Gertrude Jekyll's style of garden design. Woolf would have been aware of the naturalistic designs used in gardens owned by her contemporaries and this is

reflected in the garden atmosphere that she constructs in *To the Lighthouse.* Lily remembers the garden, landscape and Mrs Ramsay as forever entwined in a painterly mirage. She recalls the Scottish garden's meadow-effect, where grasses looked like 'folds, purplish and soft' (2000, p. 197). Like Jekyll's declaration that she preferred 'to use colour as a general rule in harmonies rather than contrasts,' Lily depicts Mrs Ramsay's favouring of colour swathes that blend into the fields, seas and sky on the horizon (Kellaway, 2016, p. 105). Jekyll's 'generosity and substance of planting' had begun to cause garden fashion to move away from Victorian, formal planting (Anderton, 2016, p. 228). Instead, blurred, vegetative spaces between individual plants were favoured. Woolf's awareness of naturalistic garden design would probably have been greatly expanded by her correspondence with Vita Sackville-West and her visits to Long Barn and Sissinghurst. It was Sackville-West who felt that Jekyll was 'that grand gardener to whom we owe so much' (2014, p. 327). We know that Woolf was aware of Jekyll's work, due to some brief references that she has in her letters. Woolf [quoted in Zoob's *Virginia Woolf's Garden*], in a letter of 1927, responds in a deliberately lackadaisical tone: 'if only I could remember the names of flowers […] it would be like one of old Miss Jekyll's letters, minus the common sense' (Zoob, 2013, p. 92). Here, Zoob highlights that Woolf attempted to remain unperturbed by the criticism that she received about her lack of accurate horticultural knowledge in *To the Lighthouse.* This also suggests that Woolf was sometimes more interested in the visual or painterly effect of gardens, rather than the technicality of the design details. Woolf admired the way in which the garden formed a greater sensory atmosphere when nature, the seasons, the weather and human emotions took advantage of the space. This seems to be the template that Woolf transferred to her novels. She formed natural scenes that provided a backdrop to her characters' expressions of the phenomenological experience of being human.

Figures 4 & 5. Sissinghurst photographs, A. B. Clarke

In *To the Lighthouse* Woolf conveys how Lily visualises the ghost of Mrs Ramsay amongst the naturalistic gardens nature form. Woolf hints at her characters' desires through naturalistic imagery and Lily sees a vision of Mrs Ramsay's spirit engaged with rituals more closely associated with non-human beings and the natural world: 'For days after she had heard of her death she had seen her thus, putting her wreath to her forehead and going unquestioningly with her companion, a shadow, across the fields' (2000, p. 197). These sensory experiences relate to the poetic-stimulation that Woolf finds in the gardens of her contemporaries. Whilst all nature seemed to play a prominent role in Woolf's creation of literary stages for the expression of emotions,

her niece Angelica Garnett mentions how Woolf 'seemed more subdued, more observant at Charleston than at Monks House' (Noble, (1972) 2017, p. 1190). Woolf gathered stimulus amongst intimate company in the gardens of artists, as Garnett goes on to explain how she waved 'her cigarette with infectious excitement and embarked on fantasies which made us hilarious' (Noble, (1972) 2017, p. 1195). These biographical and autobiographical records show that all heightened emotions, whether joyful or fearful, entirely personal or closely witnessed, were analysed intensely by Woolf. Her writing, the result of time spent in nature with her contemporaries, allowed for a further means of examining emotional responses.

2.4 Naturalistic Gardens Nature Form in *To the Lighthouse* and *Kew Gardens*

2.4.1 To the Lighthouse

In *To the Lighthouse,* we see Woolf's naturalistic gardens nature form altering the mood between Mr and Mrs Ramsay. As their conversation takes flight and increases in complexity, both characters seem to challenge one another – albeit in different ways. There is a vying for authority. The reader feels embarrassingly close to the interwovenness of their frustrations in life:

> There wasn't the slightest possible chance that they could go to the Lighthouse tomorrow, Mr Ramsay snapped out irascibly. How did he know? she asked. The wind often changed. The extraordinary irrationality of her remark, the folly of women's minds enraged him. He had ridden through the valley of death, been shattered and shivered; and now, she flew in the face of facts, made his children hope what was utterly out of the question, in effect, told lies. He stamped his foot on the stone step. "Damn you," he said. But what had she said? Simply that it might be fine tomorrow. So it might. Not with the barometer falling and the wind due west. To pursue truth with such astonishing lack of consideration for other people's feelings, to rend the thin veils of civilization so wantonly, so brutally, was to her so horrible an outrage of human decency that, without replying, dazed and blinded, she bent her head as if to let the pelt of jagged hail, the drench of dirty water, bespatter her unrebuked. There was nothing to be said. He stood by her in silence. Very humbly, at length, he said that he would step over and ask

> the Coastguards if she liked. There was nobody whom she reverenced as she reverenced him. She was quite ready to take his word for it, she said. Only then they need not cut sandwiches—that was all. They came to her, naturally, since she was a woman, all day long with this and that; one wanting this, another that; the children were growing up; she often felt she was nothing but a sponge sopped full of human emotions. Then he said, Damn you. He said, It must rain. He said, It won't rain; and instantly a Heaven of security opened before her. There was nobody she reverenced more. She was not good enough to tie his shoe strings, she felt. Already ashamed of that petulance, of that gesticulation of the hands when charging at the head of his troops, Mr Ramsay rather sheepishly prodded his son's bare legs once more, and then, as if he had her leave for it, with a movement which oddly reminded his wife of the great sea lion at the Zoo tumbling backwards after swallowing his fish and walloping off so that the water in the tank washes from side to side, he dived into the evening air which, already thinner, was taking the substance from leaves and hedges but, as if in return, restoring to roses and pinks a lustre which they had not had by day. "Someone had blundered," he said again, striding off, up and down the terrace. But how extraordinarily his note had changed! It was like the cuckoo; "in June he gets out of tune"; as if he were trying over, tentatively seeking, some phrase for a new mood, and having only this at hand, used it, cracked though it was. But it sounded ridiculous— "Someone had blundered"—said like that, almost as a question, without any conviction, melodiously. Mrs Ramsay could not help smiling, and soon, sure enough, walking up and down, he hummed it, dropped it, fell silent
>
> (2000, pp. 37-38).

The naturalistic gardens nature form provides an energetic space for Woolf's highlighting of moments when Mr and Mrs Ramsay's triggered disappointments reach a peak – as they are both exaggerating the social aspects of their labelled roles of 'mother' and 'father'. Mr Ramsay, in his state of self-apprehension ('He shivered; he quivered') tries to stabilise himself through a sudden, pompous and bold statement: 'There wasn't the slightest possible chance that they could go to the Lighthouse tomorrow' (2000, pp. 36-37). The slightest sense of Mrs Ramsay rebuking his dramatic temperament is then shown to anger Mr Ramsay further, because he physically 'stamped his foot' and then uttered: 'Damn you' (2000, p. 37). In an attempt to reconfigure his

moodiness, Mr Ramsay seems to approach his family in the hope of reevoking a feeling of dominance. Yet, in reality, his combative stance results in the final flash of his temper. Mrs Ramsay's frustration, in response to her husband's outburst, is demonstrated more in the form of 'silence'; a melancholic 'bent head' (2000, p. 37). The tension between the couple plays out slowly inside the Ramsays' domestic realm of the house. This, however, appears to dissipate entirely once Mr Ramsay acknowledges his 'petulance' (leaving Mrs Ramsay momentarily in the position of power) and begins 'tumbling' into the garden (2000, p. 38). For the Ramsay family, the garden realm – beyond the domesticity of the holiday house – seems to sustain them with short periods of physical, emotional and socio-cultural freedom. There moods quickly transform or alleviate as they embrace the naturalistic gardens nature form, and as a result their behaviour towards one another is more accepting.

Mr Ramsay seems to use the repeated recital of quotes – significantly 'Someone had blundered', from Tennyson's war-commentary poem: *The Charge of the Light Brigade* – to soften and recover from a mistake that he has made in losing his temper around his family (2000, pp. 37-38). Just as Tennyson's poem asserts that figures of military authority made poor decisions, that put cavalry soldiers in even greater danger during the Battle of Balaclava – a British military engagement that took place in the Crimean War – Mr Ramsay's dysregulated emotional outburst and assumed sense of power: 'charging at the head of his troops', dramatically demotivates and negatively alters the mood of Mrs Ramsay and James (2000, p. 38). Woolf undermines the stereotypical and heterosexual roles of mother and father with Mr Ramsay's adopted position as head of the family and then the submissive, but reprimanding, tone of Mrs Ramsay who appears to signpost his arc of emotions and insist on a return to reasonableness. In seeking relief from the tense conversation that had occurred as a result of a mounting feeling of vulnerability, or failure, the naturalistic gardens nature form further aids Mr Ramsay. In *To the Lighthouse* we note how Woolf's naturalistic gardens nature form is slightly wider in scale and wilder in composition than her formal design nature form. Nevertheless, when Mr Ramsay 'dived into the evening air' he was submerged in the presence of the 'leaves and hedges' and 'roses and pinks' (2000, p. 38). Mr Ramsay suddenly appreciates how the change in temperature began 'restoring to roses and pinks a lustre which they had not had by day', having not fully noticed until this moment (2000, p. 38). We know that Mr Ramsay finds a degree of solace in the naturalistic gardens nature form because Woolf writes

that ‘his note had changed’ and relates Mr Ramsay’s sudden exuberance to ‘the cuckoo; “in June he gets out of tune” (2000, p. 38). In Mark Hussey’s annotated version of *To the Lighthouse* we are made further aware of Woolf’s popular cuckoo-song reference, as he notes that she draws on ‘an old rhyme [that] refers to the cuckoo’s time in Britain’ (2005, p. 219). The ‘lustre’ of the garden, when the air is ‘thinner’ in the evening, illuminates how the natural world functions more universally, diversely and continuously than most anthropogenic social systems. There is a cyclical rhythm to transformations in the garden, over the course of a day, and aligning with these patterns seems to also soften Mr Ramsay’s fractious mood and evoke greater tenderness towards all beings. This situational collaboration between Woolf’s human and non-human characters follows her own interest in the interconnectivity of the life energies that form individual beings. Goldman reminds us of the abstract and ‘mosaic’ effect that provides the interwoven interactions in *To the Lighthouse* (2015, p. 35). This is apparent in the layout of intersecting sections of ‘The Window,’ ‘Time Passes’ and ‘The Lighthouse’, but also in relation to the back-and-forth relationship that Woolf’s characters have with the naturalistic gardens nature form in the novel. The Ramsays are freed when they reflect on the changing state of their garden in Scotland, alongside the inspiration and learning that can be found by observing living ecosystems. As a consequence of the intermingling of beings in Woolf’s naturalistic gardens nature form in the novel, *To the Lighthouse* presents as an environmental text that values ‘other perspectives and other centers of consciousness (Kostkowska, 2013, pp. 17-19). Mr Ramsay, in frequently crossing over the domestic threshold throughout the day (as he seeks out his family, but also the flora and fauna in their coastal garden), uses the presence of the naturalistic gardens nature from as an alternative source of spiritual determination. The naturalistic nature form, in contrast to Mr Ramsay’s seeking, simply continues to follow the cycles of the microclimate of the Ramsays’ garden in Scotland. Woolf portrays Mr and Mrs Ramsay’s moods and actions as smaller rhythms within the more expansive transfers of energy in the habitat that the nature form represents.

In *To the Lighthouse* Woolf focuses on the garden space as the central nature form. She manipulates it as a framing device for the heightened expressions of the characters’ truer feelings. The garden provides a realm that exists between the cultivated formality of the house and the assumed wilderness of the coastal regions. This provides a unique place for Mr and Mrs Ramsay’s outpourings of socially-unacceptable behaviours. These frustrations are therefore processed more honestly, enabling a catharsis of sorts, whereby Mr Ramsay

acts as though he is ‘trying over, tentatively seeking, some phrase for a new mood’ (Woolf, 2000, p. 38). This reaction is seen with the descriptions of Mr Ramsay becoming aware of his ‘petulance’ towards his wife and children (2000, p. 38). Woolf shows her reader how Mr Ramsay manages to deflate his patriarchal frustration by ‘tumbling backwards’ into the garden (2000, p. 38). His concerns with what he views as the ‘extraordinary irrationality’ of Mrs Ramsay’s remark about the changeability of the weather, have been vanquished (2000, pp. 37-38). Hence, Woolf grants the nature form of naturalistic gardens in *To the Lighthouse* with the ability to intervene as an ‘all-nourishing’ sense of the mothering experience (Lilienfeld, 1977, p. 349). The garden tempers and diminishes Mr Ramsay’s energetic outpourings of frustration. He finds renewed calm just outside the windows of the house, in a liminal space on the terrace, where ‘the evening air which already thinner was taking substance from leaves and hedges’ (2000, p. 38). Woolf proposes that the four central characters that surround Mrs Ramsay – Mr Ramsay, Lily, James and Cam – repeatedly associate Mrs Ramsay with the garden. Both the ‘evening air’ on the terrace and Mrs Ramsay’s central family role as ‘a sponge sopped full of human emotions’ that belong to her husband, children and houseguests, coincide to keep up the appearance of a civilised air (2000, p. 37). The garden space in *To the Lighthouse* is granted a mood-altering authority, because it enables Mr Ramsay’s anger to follow an alleviating arc. The garden also absorbs Mrs Ramsay’s depression – unifying her identity, which makes up for the rigidity of her experience inside the house.

However, like the natural world, Mrs Ramsay remains to some extent an enigma. As opposed to the rest of the group of family and friends that circle around Mrs Ramsay’s social persona, and hesitate around her underlying aloofness, Lily looks for the deeper and darker side of her complex personality. Lily is able to intellectually understand how Mrs Ramsay’s social endeavours could simultaneously ‘inflict’ a sinister reassurance of cohesion and a heavy feeling of sharp judgement and pensive regret (2000, p. 219). Mrs Ramsay’s family depend on her shielding to maintain their own identities within the society that surrounds them, whilst failing to find the ‘elusive sources’ that make up the deeper being of Mrs Ramsay’s true self (Lilienfeld, 1977, p. 355). Lily, as an onlooker existing at the edges of the family circle, seems to eventually find the strength to question their dynamic. She challenges the idea that ‘Mr. Ramsay has no inner voice’ without his wife and finds a way to offer support ‘without undermining that person's self-motivation’ (Lilienfeld, 1977, pp. 369 - 370). Lily creates a change in the heaviness of the family dynamic and in her own

confidence regarding what it is to be a woman, whilst accepting the complexity of Mrs Ramsay's own circumstances and the great loss that was left behind when she passed on. Mr Ramsay, Cam and James learn to find their own access to the understanding that nature provides when they travel *To the Lighthouse*. In their search for Mrs Ramsay's wisdom on nature, they also manage to find embodiments of it that are individual to each of them.

To the Lighthouse shows Woolf situating the majority of her characters' most thoughtful moments against the backdrop of naturalistic garden scenery. Woolf reveals intimate aspects of Mr and Mrs Ramsays' personalities when they are either seeking solitude on the terrace, or walking out towards the coastal view. A disarming, honest understanding passes between the couple when they perambulate around the garden one evening. Both feel slightly saddened about their earlier disagreement and 'uncomfortable' with their repressed desires to share greater nuances with one another (2000, pp. 76-77). Mrs Ramsay guesses that her husband is thinking on how 'he would have written better books if he had not married', despite her knowledge of how his 'melancholy' moods, once voiced, dissipated into him being 'more cheerful than usual' (2000, pp. 76-77). And yet, suddenly sensing his wife's worries, Mr Ramsay 'seized her hand and raised it to his lips and kissed it with an intensity that brought the tears to her eyes,' reminding her of 'how untamed and optimistic' he could be (2000, p. 77). By the time the Ramsays 'turned away from the view', before walking back 'up the path where the silver-green spear-like plants grew', we sense that (regardless of their differences) they have both resolved to continue in peace for now (2000, p. 77). Following Woolf's method, the Ramsays' exchanges of difficult emotions are expressed whilst they immerse themselves in the naturalistic planting of their garden and the wider Scottish landscape. This pre-war garden scene in 'The Window' section of *To the Lighthouse*, though the Ramsays are yet to face an onslaught of family grief, carries an undertone of cautious expectation. There is an anxious rumination in Mrs Ramsay's concern over how distracted her husband is. At the same time, Woolf shows Mr Ramsay sadly 'looking at the land dwindling away' and remarking that 'the little island seemed pathetically small' and vulnerable enough to be 'swallowed up in the sea' (2000, p. 76). Mr Ramsay seems to mull on the potential disappearance of the British landscape that he has known and studied and yet at the same time Mrs Ramsay notes that he does not appear to appreciate the simple contentment that can be found in the present moment. She asks herself: 'But did he notice the flowers? No. Did he notice the view? No'

and seems to confirm her own disappointment over his lack of gratefulness for the idyll of their naturalistic garden in Scotland (2000, p. 77). In this way, both Mr and Mrs Ramsay are seen to experience a pre-emptive feeling of loss before the Great War invades their lives. Despite their belief that the other fails to capture a quintessential part of what matters about their relationship with the natural environment, both characters sense of a romanticized perception of the British landscape are equally threatened by the unease of increasing global conflict. There is a projected hope for harmony in the way in which Mr Ramsay exuberantly quotes Shelley's 'To Jane: The Invitation': 'Best and brightest come away!' – which speaks of going away to a pastoral realm where the elements exist in balance – and Mrs Ramsay's awareness of their moment of being 'arm in arm', one with the garden habitat and under 'the first pulse of the full-throbbing star' also suggests at an idyllic notion of their co-existence with nature (2000, p. 78). The steady pace of the alliteration and singular syllabled words, before the word 'throbbing', calms the scene and draws attention to how the Ramsays felt much more in tune with nature in their idyll in Scotland. Mrs Ramsay imagines herself instinctively following a time that was set by the sunshine in the morning and the stars at night. Woolf plays with these interspersed moments of harmony that exist amongst the Ramsay family, by using the naturalistic gardens nature form to illustrate all of her characters' emotional facets.

2.4.2 Kew Gardens

Kew Gardens offers an interesting point of comparison with *To the Lighthouse* because, whilst the dominant nature form is naturalistic gardens, the gardens at Kew are designed with a view to displaying individual plants as part of a botanical and scientific collection. The naturalistic gardens nature form is also prominent in *Kew Gardens*, because the design layout of botanical species at Kew is often adapted to show types of plants that (when curated together) form impressions of garden zones. This is because the decisions behind the situating of plant species at Kew primarily place an emphasis on grouping plants in regards to their origins and 'native' geographical continents and countries. In *Kew Gardens* and *To the Lighthouse,* Woolf's depiction of the naturalistic gardens nature form leads to a multitude of visual revelations. Like the Impressionists before her, Woolf initially follows the direction of sunlight to where it 'settled upon the flesh of a leaf' (2018, p. 21). The manner of Woolf's close detailing highlights her horticultural knowledge and mimics the

naturalists that inspired her nature writing. She zooms in on the microscopic features of 'the branching thread of fibre beneath the surface' that identified the leaf, before expanding her description to include creative responses (Woolf, 2018, p. 21). The recording of the overall experience of that precise moment, concentrates on movement and the visual effect that the 'illumination' had on 'the brown earth' and then 'the vast green spaces beneath the dome of the heart-shaped and tongue-shaped leaves' (2018, p. 21). The wind lifting the leaves upwards draws attention to the bright, new and fleshy undersides. This means that the light rays are momentarily hitting this hidden side of the leaves and so 'the colour was flashed into the air above, into the eyes' of the people promenading in Kew Gardens during the summer season (2018, p. 21). In the garden scenes of Woolf's short stories, although especially in *Kew Gardens*, we see evidence of Jekyll's garden-design ethos. Jekyll, in a similar way to how Woolf plays with technique and expression, had the ability to align the design detail of her 'English cottage garden' style and 'planting patterns' with an artistic desire for creating 'orchestrations of colour and form' (Harris, 2010, p. 272). In the horticultural lives of the Bloomsbury Group we see a coming together of new, interwar, ideas – in response to tragedy and friendship – via gardens, paintings and literature.

Woolf's descriptions in *Kew Gardens* reflect on the interactions of her human and nonhuman characters amongst these garden spaces, such as when the snail is interrupted in his attempts 'to circumnavigate the arched tent of a dead leaf' (2018, p. 22). We know this as Woolf points out in her narration that 'before' the snail 'had decided' how to approach movement through his surrounding habitat 'there came past the bed the feet of other human beings' (2018, p. 22). The sudden presence of human life appears to add another layer of difficulty for the snail as the being sets out on the daily challenge of finding routes through the plants. For Woolf, her non-human character – the snail – is seen 'to have a definite goal in front of it' (2018, p. 22). She suggests that the voices of her nonhuman and women characters, though frequently overlooked under the dominant patriarchal system, appear to hold a 'greater purpose' and ability to collaborate (2018, p. 21). In a similar way to how 'the woman [...] bore on', whilst remembering 'to see that the children were not too far behind', the snail seems to manoeuvre around a 'high stepping angular green insect' (2018, pp. 21-22). Interestingly, this insect seems to associate with the intentions of 'the man' who 'was about six inches in front of the woman, strolling carelessly' (2018, pp. 21-22). This is because Woolf describes how the insect moved

as a ‘singular’ being, oblivious to other creatures, as it ‘attempted to cross in front of’ the snail (2018, p. 22). In Woolf’s depiction both ‘man’ and ‘insect’ assert themselves without the extended consideration of other beings, whereas ‘woman’ and ‘snail’ are shown to be connected with the diversity of life that surrounds them. Justyna Kostkowska claims that ‘the anthropomorphic worldview was being dislodged’ in Woolf’s mind, significantly during her 1918 visits to the gardens at Kew, when she writes about feeling as if they had deliberately chosen to stay away from returning to their human home, only to note with surprise that the nonhuman world ‘seems to be going on without you’ and using human company as a ‘centre’ for their own actions of nesting (2013, p. 14). In relation to these observations at Kew and the ecocritical stance in *Kew Gardens*, the thesis reflects on how (in her literary interpretation of the naturalistic gardens) Woolf reinserts the presence of non-human characters that she sees as being collaborative in the wild, but portrayed as marginalised in classical cultural frameworks.

It is interesting that Woolf chooses to hone in on the snail – an invertebrate which is a hermaphrodite – because the presence of this creature offers an alternative to the deliberately surface-level, stereotypical and anthropocentric discussion of ‘the figures of these men and women’ and their often assumed gender roles. The hermaphroditic snail draws the reader’s attention to Woolf’s awareness of the ecosystem process that is also to be found in the habitats of the naturalistic gardens at Kew. As we see the light fall on what may be ‘the shell of a snail’ we are drawn deeper into the sensory wonder of what lies beneath the binary limitations of the hegemonic aspects of human society – the illuminating power also seemed to be ‘falling into a raindrop’ and creating a unique vision (2018, p. 21). The naturalistic gardens nature form habitat is in constant motion and there is a freedom in the way in which Woolf explores the micro-layer of the snail’s experience. When she follows the light, there is a visionary sense of how the object that it fell on (the snail’s shell, or ‘a raindrop’) ‘expanded with such intensity of red, blue and yellow the thin walls of water that one expected them to burst and disappear’ (2018, p. 21). This colourful sight also appears to suggest at an expansion of social ideas beyond ‘the thin walls of water’ and a sudden release from repressive or routine structures of thought: ‘Then the breeze stirred rather more briskly overhead and the colour was flashed’ (2018, p. 21). In comparison to the rigid movements and linear conversations that occur between the human characters in *Kew Gardens*, the observational journey that Woolf takes her reader on (as she traces the passage of light through the

undergrowth of the snail's hinterland) is stimulating because there is a greater awareness of the momentum and diversity of forces that are collaborating by acting on any given movement. Rather than the restrictive routes of the human walkers, the light moves from 'the flesh of a leaf' to 'the vast green spaces beneath the dome of the heart-shaped and tongue-shaped leaves' (2018, p. 21). We gain insights into how energy-exchange has produced 'the branching thread of fibre beneath the surface' and the sudden lift of the wind 'flashed' the colours of the undersides of the leaves 'into the eyes of the men and women' – briefly revealing the interconnectedness between all beings to an anthropogenic audience who tend to place themselves in a false position of isolation (2018, p. 21). Woolf's naturalistic gardens nature form, like all of the nature forms mentioned in this thesis, embodies an entire ecosystem that can exist as a 'parallel microcosm' with or without human engagement (Kostkowska, 2013, p. 15). This wider environmental appreciation in *Kew Gardens* becomes more focused once we evidence Woolf's creation of literary habitat types that situate her nonhuman characters within energetic spheres that she has known tangibly and experienced intensely through her own enhanced sensory reactions. Woolf's botanically-infused prose reflects her process of creatively converting the naturalistic spaces that she draws on in her personal life, for a sense of spiritual wholeness. The naturalistic gardens nature form in *Kew Gardens* mimics Woolf's moments of feeling both grounded and ethereal, when she is physically present within a naturalistic gardens habitat.

Mine Özyurt Kılıç also raises the symbolic strength of a collaborative nonhuman presence, via the snail's quiet and thoughtful progression in *Kew Gardens,* by placing emphasis on the spiralling pattern on the shell. The idea of the spiral relates to the continuance of energetic life systems and Kılıç initially adopts a biological approach by concentrating on how the shell's pattern 'grows in line with the growth of the snail' (2020, p. 21). She builds on this by then suggesting that the spiral represents Woolf's overall 'design' of *Kew Gardens,* as a short story that follows her life philosophy and therefore the 'sense of interconnectedness' that she finds in the energetic rhythms of the natural world (Kılıç, 2020, p. 21). Kılıç reads *Kew Gardens* as a twofold expression of the link between Woolf's spiritual belief system and the cyclical biological systems that are found in ecosystems of all sizes, because she follows both an ecocritical and a directly visual analysis of the snail's presence. We encounter humans and non-humans growing in Woolf's naturalistic gardens ecosystem, when a man and a woman 'in the prime of their youth' walk past as the snail 'finally' decides 'to creep beneath' the

leaf that stands in the way of his onwards trajectory (2018, p. 24). We gain a sense of Woolf understanding that both species are navigating decisions and the type of movement that they will need to adopt to reach their conclusions. In contrast to the cautious motions of the snail, the man is described as more aggressive in his forwards actions. We learn that 'he bore' the woman on, despite her own desire 'to go down there and then down there' (2018, pp. 24-25). The man is depicted as grasping for stable, linear and tangible thoughts. He is made uneasy by the liminality of their relationship and yet seems to think that he can steer them both into a situation where he will feel greater clarity and so repeats to himself: 'it was real, all real, he assured himself' (2018, p. 24). Perhaps in a similar way to the snail, the woman considers the different variables. She is affected by her memories of the textures that can be found in the gardens, where there are 'orchids and cranes among wild flowers' (2018, p. 25). These alternative perspectives of the garden, that differ from the straightforwardness of 'the grass path' that she is 'letting herself be drawn down', seem to further stimulate her swirl of thoughts and emotions about joining in companionship with the man and holding on to her own sense of freedom (2018, p. 25). Woolf's young woman in the gardens at Kew appears to have the ability to reflect on the way in which all of the species in the naturalistic gardens habitat, during that specific moment, are interconnected. She experiences this awareness in much the same way as the narrator presents it, via an intense visual array of moving colours and sensory reactions:

> one couple after another with much the same irregular and aimless movement passed the flower bed and were enveloped in layer after layer of green blue vapor, in which at first their bodies had substance and a dash of colour, but later both substance and colour dissolved in the green-blue […] in the drone of the airplane the voice of the summer sky murmured its fierce soul […] shapes of all these colours, men, women and children were spotted for a second upon the horizon, and then, seeing the breadth of yellow that lay upon the grass, they wavered and sought shade beneath the trees, dissolving like drops of water in the yellow and green atmosphere […] on the top of which the voices cried aloud and the petals of myriads of flowers flashed their colours into the air
>
> (2018, p. 25).

The narrator traces this openness to receiving sensory information, in the surrounding ‘atmosphere’ of the naturalistic gardens nature form. In the habitat energetic reactions appear to be in a continuous flow. These cycles of species interacting are seen as ‘all these colours’ with ‘men, women and children’ blurring into the landscape ‘horizon’, the ‘grass’ and the ‘trees’. Sunlight and shade capture the highlights and depths of the visual form of the living composition in the gardens at Kew. We gain a sense that Woolf and her narrator relish the ability that the woman has to make so many connections between human and non-human lives. This perceptive skill allows the woman to join in unity with the array of energetic beings and spirits by ‘dissolving’ in a moment of reflection, amongst the thriving network that is shown to exist in both Woolf’s physical experience of the naturalistic gardens and in her literary portrayal of them. In *Kew Gardens* Woolf guides her reader through her understanding of layers of stimulation in relation to the naturalistic gardens ecosystem. We are led to appreciate the depth of sensory perception that the narrator and the woman respond to, because it goes beyond the surface level of sounds, where ‘voices cried’ and the eyes were immediately met with the visual beauty of ‘myriads of flowers’. This idea of giving in to the greater energetic flow and perceptively engaging with the depths of sensory appreciation is threaded throughout Woolf’s autobiographical writings. In *A Sketch of the Past* Woolf writes of her attempts to explain a clear moment of revelation to her sister, whilst they were resting in the gardens at Kew. She explains that it was as if the poem that she had been reading, from *The Golden Treasury,* had ‘become altogether intelligible’ (Woolf, 2002, p. 103). Woolf describes how she ‘had a feeling of transparency in words when they cease to be words and become so intensified that one seems to experience them; to foretell them as if they developed from what one is already feeling’ (2002, p. 103). In correlation with how the bodies of people in the naturalistic gardens of Kew Gardens had gradually lost ‘substance’ in order to loosen the difference between human and non-human species and form a unifying interconnectivity, Woolf writes of how the meaning of a poem transcends the words that have been used to identify a feeling.

Jane Goldman brings this section from Woolf’s autobiographical works to our attention in her poetic response to and for the 2024 Virginia Woolf Conference at California State University in Fresno. In her own arrangements of responsive poetry, such as with ‘Pattern Of Falling Words: A Kew Gardens Diastic: (After Jackson Mac Low)’ in ‘“To The Tool House” Virginia Woolf & The Ancient Technology Of Poetry’, Goldman

also captures Woolf's 'life philosophy' that values a joining with the energetic flow of all life forms. This is notable with her flowing, but half-formed, phrases: 'petal spots raised summer staining of of fell back […]' which mimic Woolf's Free Indirect Discourse and take readers alongside her as she traces the effects of immediate sensory impressions (Goldman, 2024, p. 13). Woolf's belief in the greater power of interconnectedness, realised more consciously when humans relinquish their superficial sense of control, is shown in her atmospheric nature descriptions in *Kew Gardens.* We see this when Woolf notes that 'both substance and colour dissolved in the green-blue', as the narration shifts away from an isolated and anthropocentric point of view. In *To the Lighthouse* Mr Ramsay's interaction with the naturalistic gardens nature form releases him from his own imaginative, philosophical and academic thinking. He 'was taking the substance from leaves and hedges but, as if in return, restoring to roses and pinks a lustre which they had not had by day' and so a grounded sense of reality returns when Mr Ramsay focuses on the leaves and flowers in their surrounding garden (2000, pp. 37-38). Despite the difference in direction of movement between the ethereal and the tangible in these shifting scenes from *Kew Gardens* and *To the Lighthouse,* both narratives present a movement away from a human-centric perspective. In *Kew Gardens* the anthropocentric 'substance' begins to merge with the wider naturalistic gardens ecosystem and in *To the Lighthouse* Mr Ramsay finds expansion in the 'substance' of the same nature form. Woolf's philosophy concentrates on surrendering into the sensory experience in order that we may feel closer to the ecological networks of life flow. There is a suggestion to go deeper into a state of ecological and spiritual awareness, by pausing outside of society's daily motions. Woolf is able to view life through a wider, but more connected, lens by including the life cycles of non-humans and perceiving moments in a multi-sensory way.

2.5 Naturalism in *To the Lighthouse* and the Naturalistic Gardens Nature Form

The examination of Woolf's use of the naturalistic gardens nature form in *To the Lighthouse* also benefits from a discussion of her poetic-prose style – which grew partly from her liminal approach to Naturalism. Woolf's poetic-prose in *To the Lighthouse* aids her ability to position herself between the literary movements of her time. In *To the Lighthouse* Woolf gives the garden its own animated essence, as an extension of the character of Mrs Ramsay, and in doing so she reveals the sensory downfall of Naturalism. Woolf's characters in *To the*

Lighthouse, whilst being represented without long lines of exaggerated traits, often begin to merge with the naturalistic gardens nature form and their mental states change according to choices that they have made or emotions that have left an impression. For example Lily and Bankes' routine walks, whilst they stay with the Ramsay family at the end of summer, begin with Woolf's geographical detailing of the holiday home's surrounds. Their regular walks took them 'in the usual direction, past the tennis lawn […] to that break in the thick hedge' (2000, p. 24). We are given a mapped description of their route – which illustrates Woolf briefly adhering to the Naturalist style of providing close detailing of human activity. Woolf also builds up the naturalistic garden scene with more visual language, by setting the time 'in the middle of September, and past six in the evening' with the 'rooks dropping cool cries from the high blue' and the knowledge that 'something moved, flashed, turned a silver wing in the air' (2000, p. 24). There is a sense of change in the air, even though Mrs Ramsay recognised Summer in the way in which 'the house starred in its greenery with purple passion flowers' (2000, p. 24). Woolf further plays with the idea of a garden in summer, with the repeated image of the 'red hot pokers' (2000, p. 24). She relents to moments of poetically charged language with darts of literary techniques. We see this with the simile she uses when depicting the pokers as glowing 'like brasiers of clear burning coal, between which the blue waters of the bay looked bluer than ever' (2000, p. 24). To illustrate Lily's artistic and increasingly non-conformist attitude towards life, Woolf takes this scene further into spiritual and painterly language. She alters the feeling with an increase in energy as Lily and Bankes finish their walk. They rapidly experience an ecstatic rush when, during the early evenings, 'the pulse of colour flooded the bay with blue', which meant that 'the heart expanded' before their emotions were 'chilled' once more 'by the prickly blackness on the ruffled waves' (2000, p. 25). With this evocative relationship existing between nature and Woolf's characters in *To the Lighthouse,* we see nature being used as a structural system. Nature breaks up narrative insights and appears to encompass the emotional content, sometimes despite the psychological status, or situation, of the characters – who remain strikingly two-dimensional in comparison. In this way, we see that Woolf often feels the need to express unfiltered sensory experiences. Woolf places romantic notions alongside realistic descriptions and symbols of free will in contrast to a sense of determined events in *To the Lighthouse*. The evocative quality that nature brings to Woolf's scenes, creates a greater feeling of motion for the reader and subtly mocks what she views as the more static and individualized descriptions of her Victorian and literary heritage.

The parentheses in the 'Time Passes' part of *To the Lighthouse* also captures Woolf's reader's attention:

> '[Mr Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his arms out, but Mrs Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, his arms, though stretched out, remained empty.] […]
>
> (2000, p. 140).
>
> [Prue Ramsay died that summer in some illness connected with childbirth, which was indeed a tragedy, people said, everything, they said, had promised so well.] […]
>
> (2000, p. 144).
>
> [A shell exploded. Twenty or thirty young men were blown up in France, among them Andrew Ramsay, whose death, mercifully, was instantaneous.]'
>
> (2000, p. 145).

This is because of the contrast between the subtlety of the chosen literary technique and the poignancy of the content. We are told during these human-related announcements that Mrs Ramsay, Prue and Andrew had all died suddenly and Hussey, in his annotations for *To the Lighthouse*, remarks that this is 'perhaps an indication of the profound trauma in Woolf's life' (2005, p. 230). In her intertextual reading of the parenthesis that alerts Woolf's reader to Mrs Ramsay's death, Goldman goes on to compare *To the Lighthouse* to the tale of 'Orpheus and Eurydice: a husband losing his wife at the gates of hell' (2015, p. 40). Mr Ramsay in a pictorially described physicality 'stretched his arms out' in search of his wife in the 'empty' passage – illustrating one of the many facets of grief that Goldman also identifies in the depiction of Eurydice disappearing as Orpheus looks back (2000, pp. 140-150). Scott offers us another, relatable allusion as she likens Mrs Ramsay and Prue Ramsay to 'the mother goddess Demeter and her daughter Persephone' (2012, pp. 250-251). Woolf's references to 'goddesses' continues to offer Woolfian ecofeminist critics readings of her female characters seeking escapism in the natural world (2012, pp. 250-251). Yet, the present analysis is most interested in the spiritual 'association of woman with nature' (2012, pp. 250-251). Mrs Ramsay's emblematic presence is recalled more vividly when the other characters and indeed we as readers picture her as a part of

Woolf's naturalistic nature form. The naturalistic nature form in *To the Lighthouse* shows Woolf highlighting the way in which the non-human beings create a source of cyclical rhythms. Woolf's human spirits and the family and friends who are still living find reserves of strength and ongoing identity in the awareness that they are all intricately connected in an energetic ecosystem, via a relationship with the naturalistic nature form – which is vividly displayed in the descriptions that dominate 'Time Passes'.

The use of the parenthesis, in 'Time Passes', in amongst Woolf's most animistic descriptions of nature and the wilder sense of the naturalistic garden nature form in a state of growth that is largely unaffected by human activity, briefly sobers the reader. The brackets read like a list: devoid of emotional flare in their style, but humming with unspoken grief. We are surprised by the contrasting effect that the parenthesis have, but Woolf seems to direct us back into her swirling ecosystem in 'Time Passes' as soon as we have read the words in her pauses. There is a sense of delayed registering in regards to the passing of Mrs Ramsay, Prue and Andrew. Even Woolf's sudden reference to the power of poetry; for expressing a collective experience, is placed in brackets: '[The war, people said, had revived their interest in poetry]' (2000, pp. 140-150). These anthropogenic messages are given to the reader with a deliberate tone of ambivalence mixed with importance. Lee reminds us, in her tracing of biographical losses, that Woolf's letters were also written with a similarly nonchalant tone during the time when Vanessa, Thoby and Violet Dickinson were gravely ill in 1906. Lee states that, 'in her daily bulletins to' Dickinson, Woolf wrote: 'I begin now by saying my brother has typhoid, my sister appendicitis – don't laugh' (1997, p. 230). Woolf both absorbs and passes on information relating to the graveness of their situation, by using a comic bluntness to alleviate the impact of the statement.

At the same time, in the 'Time Passes' section, Woolf immerses us in her naturalistic gardens nature form. She describes how objects had 'rusted', but 'toads had nosed their way in' and so we feel as if nature has benefited from human absence – the Ramsays' holiday house is described as having been 'left like a shell' (2000, pp. 149-150). Their living presence is no longer tangible and Mrs Ramsay's spirit intermingles with the animism of the genius loci that the natural ecosystem creates. Her soul that is remembered at this location, is now an element of 'the trifling airs, nibbling, the clammy breaths, fumbling' (2000, pp. 149-150). Meanwhile, Woolf's naturalistic gardens nature form emerges in a wilder sense with an increase in the biodiversity of the habitat.

We know this because Woolf lists how ‘poppies sowed themselves among the dahlias; the lawn waved with long grass; giant artichokes towered among roses; a fringed carnation flowered among the cabbages’ (2000, p. 150). There is a sense of the natural world continuing to grow. emerge and follow the rhythms that the anthropogenic world often chooses to ignore. The energy of these vibrant cycles of natural growth are represented through sound. We are told that a unified ‘drumming’ developed from the movement of 'sturdy trees and thorned briars’, as the presence of nonhuman beings at the location of the Ramsays’ holiday home reached a peak, turning a ‘whole room green in summer’ (2000, p. 150). Woolf’s showcasing of ‘Time Passes’ as a realm of nonhuman characters, illustrates how her nature writing is apt for analysing through an ecofeminist lens. This is because her structuring of this middle section of the novel aspires to begin ‘from the premise of a correlation between the history of institutionalized patriarchy and human domination of the non-human’, by purposely focusing on the voices of nonhuman beings (Buell, 2006, p. 19). As we also know from Woolf’s autobiographical material, she placed emphasis on the interconnectivity of all beings and her ‘philosophy’ centred around a belief ‘that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art’ (2002, p. 85). Therefore the ecocritical stance put forward by Slovic (in Glotfelty’s words), which claims that ‘nature writers […] go to nature in order to induce elevated states of consciousness within themselves’, links Woolf’s own philosophical musings with the ways in which her novels value the expression of non-human beings as well as human beings (Glotfelty, 1996, p. xxxii). In this manner, Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* contains multilayers of meanings. This extended perspective, which considers the functioning of the entire earthly ecosystem, enables Woolf to value the contribution of nature-inspired creativity by situating the nature forms in her novels as part of the interacting energies that shape her characters’ lives.

‘Time Passes’ reports the human characters’ passings through the years as a series of linear segments of parenthesis. The reader is told in a relatively short space of time and with much brevity that the Ramsays’ eldest daughter Prue, was firstly ‘given in marriage that May’ (2000, p. 143). Then we find out that she ‘died that summer in some illness connected with childbirth’, before her brother Andrew who was ‘among’ the ‘twenty or thirty young men’ who ‘were blown up in France’ (2000, p. 145). This series of facts about the lives of the Ramsay family follows a fairly detached and conventional list of what are often considered to be key events. And yet Woolf breaks up this formal description in the bridging passage of *To the Lighthouse*, by

showing how nature responds differently to the notions of beginnings and endings that seem to occupy human considerations. Nature continues to grow with the undulating ebb and flow of the weather, for 'a thistle thrust itself between the tiles' and before too long 'a drumming from sturdy trees and thorned briars […] made the whole room green in summer' (2000, p. 150). By choosing to highlight the contrast between humans and 'cyclical, absolute nature', Woolf reveals the greater presence of the naturalistic garden at the holiday-home on the Isle of Skye (Wilson, 2017, p. 34). Whilst traditional Naturalism would often focus on the miniscule appearances of natural scenery, human social systems were inspected in relation to degrees of social morality. Woolf, however, provides 'an excess of natural language' in this passage (Wilson, 2017, p. 35). She draws attention to the aliveness of the garden itself, which seemed to enter the abandoned house on 'certain airs, detached from the body of the wind' to contribute 'an aimless gust of lamentation' into the human silence (2000, pp. 138-139). Woolf questions Naturalistic approaches to writing, by concentrating on the sensory qualities of nature. For her reader, the energetic impact of her human characters is reduced, especially when compared to the sense of motion that her nature forms create. The Naturalism of the Modernists, which Woolf is an essential part of, therefore 'deviates from the classic naturalist tradition' in an attempt to forge what S. C. Wilson terms as a state of new 'unnaturalism' (2017, p. Abstract ii). In this sense, Woolf was contributing to the political outlook of her Modernist contemporaries as they aimed to both 'expose' the rigid state of a society that was fraught with 'deep inequalities' (Wilson, 2017, p. Abstract ii). Woolf's creative approach to a Modernist form of Naturalism in *To the Lighthouse* is demonstrated with the relationship that she establishes between natural and human time.

2.6 Woolf, Naturalistic Gardens and a Modern Approach to the Natural Sciences in *To the Lighthouse*

Woolf takes care to draw on her knowledge of natural science practices which focus on observing changes in the natural world, when producing scenes that use natural forms. In *To the Lighthouse* we see this with Woolf paying attention to the detailing of how, after the death of Mrs Ramsay, nature begins to grow unrestrained by human activity. The narrator describes how 'poppies sowed themselves among the dahlias' before 'thorned briars' banged against the house windows in the wind (2000, p. 150). Unlike Alfred Lord Tennyson's use of

metaphors which align with classically inspired and heavily codified constructs of gardenscapes, Woolf often keeps her writing based in descriptions of natural scenes. Woolf's narrative landscapes provide a new space for the discussion of emotions, presented by much less actively emotive characters. In contrast, Tennyson evokes Romantic notions with his frequent use of flora as part of the English, Victorian, set of cultural codes:

> 'Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,
> And slips into the bosom of the lake'
> (Tennyson, 1973, p. 648).

Tennyson uses known floral symbols to present his reader with traditional, societal evocations that encourage women to be sensuous and men to be heroic. In this extract above from 'Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal' he likens the lily to a woman who he is commanding as he goes on to write:

> 'So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip
> Into my bosom and be lost in me'
> (Tennyson, 1973, p. 648).

Conversely, Woolf tends to subvert typical literary floral references. She favours describing nature to create a scene which then provides a backdrop to a separate anthropomorphic explanation of an emotional response. She reduces the experience of hyperbole and drama down to observation, whereby the reader is more aware of the writing itself. Meanwhile, herself and her characters remain more anonymous. In the middle section of *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf mostly describes how the abandoned holiday-home begins to disintegrate as 'weeds that had grown close to the glass in the night tapped methodically at the window pane' (2000, p. 144). This description is only briefly broken with a parenthesis that states that Andrew Ramsay has been killed during the War – such a poignant moment is reduced down to a captioned sentence. Despite the contrast in styles, approach and use of the nature trope, Woolf achieves an emotional appreciation that is no less powerful than Tennyson's.

Evidence of Woolf's rejection of older scientific approaches and interest in the natural sciences and modern methods of biological observation are made apparent in *To the Lighthouse*, with the dichotomy that is set up between Mr Ramsay and William Bankes. Here, again, Woolf plays with an ethological examination of two characters and their private and public displays of personality traits. Bankes himself muses on how they both reached points in their careers and lives which resulted in 'their paths lying different ways' (2000, p. 26). Just as Mrs Ramsay represents the figure of a Victorian woman and Lily represents the next generation, Mr Ramsay's academic approach is traditionalist and the character of Bankes portrays the newer approaches of a natural scientist. Although Bankes (who is of a similar age and seniority to Mr Ramsay) uses some Darwinian references, his experience of researching the biology of plants in laboratories places him in the new era of scientific observation. Woolf implies that forward-thinking approaches (to both the sciences and the arts) led to the reciprocal friendship that the reader witnesses between Bankes and Lily. It is noted in the narration that when Lily hears 'someone coming out of the house, coming towards her', she recognises the 'footfall' of Mr Bankes (2000, p. 22). Lily then reacts differently to how she would have reacted if any of the other members of the current Ramsay household approached her. Instead of deciding to 'turn her canvas upon the grass', she chose to 'let it stand' so that Bankes could potentially see her painting (2000, p. 22). Alt further examines how Woolf insinuates that Lily will benefit from Bankes' understanding of modern science, by suggesting that he has adopted the newer 'process of continual reassessment of past assumptions' (2019, p. 254). Through his engagement with training in modern scientific theories, Bankes is able to be open-minded about the abstract forms of art that Lily paints. By keeping up with the changing technologies involved with modern approaches to the sciences, he has maintained an ability to be flexible in his assumptions. The narration in *To the Lighthouse* supports Bankes' character portrayal as a composed, objective and loyal friend to Lily and the Ramsays. Woolf describes how he approaches art with an openness to learning. He also questions his own prejudices about social decisions pertaining to career and family. All of this emphasises Woolf's tendency to believe 'that a mind trained in the study of function will be more inclined to seek to understand the purpose of a work of art than to judge it' (Alt, 2010, p. 12). Woolf's personal responsiveness to changes in the natural sciences becomes obvious in *To the Lighthouse*, via her structuring of this ongoing scientific and artistic dialogue that is made present by Lily and Bankes and their connection to the naturalistic gardens nature form. *To the Lighthouse* is therefore revolutionary in its use of nature forms to comment on modern perspectives on

two levels – the artistic (and literary) and the scientific. By concentrating on the naturalistic gardens nature form, *To the Lighthouse* emphasises nature's influence (in this case through modern natural sciences) on Woolf's life and her writing.

In *To the Lighthouse,* evidence of Woolf's scientific nature observation and interest in ethological research is often seen when characters are expressing themselves amongst the context of the naturalistic gardens nature form. Following on from the paradox that Woolf sets up between Mr Ramsay and William Bankes, we can refer specifically to the scene on the edge of the Ramsays' garden:

> After that, what with one thing and another, the pulp had gone out of their friendship. Whose fault it was he could not say, only, after a time, repetition had taken the place of newness. It was to repeat that they met. But in this dumb colloquy with the sand dunes he maintained that his affection for Ramsay had in no way diminished; but there, like the body of a young man laid up in peat for a century, with the red fresh on his lips, was his friendship, in its acuteness and reality, laid up across the bay among the sandhills. He was anxious for the sake of this friendship and perhaps too in order to clear himself in his own mind from the imputation of having dried and shrunk—for Ramsay lived in a welter of children, whereas Bankes was childless and a widower—he was anxious that Lily Briscoe should not disparage Ramsay (a great man in his own way) yet should understand how things stood between them. Begun long years ago, their friendship had petered out on a Westmorland road, where the hen spread her wings before her chicks; after which Ramsay had married, and their paths lying different ways, there had been, certainly for no one's fault, some tendency, when they met, to repeat. Yes. That was it. He finished. He turned from the view. And, turning to walk back the other way, up the drive, Mr Bankes was alive to things which would not have struck him had not those sandhills revealed to him the body of his friendship lying with the red on its lips laid up in peat—for instance, Cam, the little girl, Ramsay's youngest daughter. She was picking Sweet Alice on the bank. She was wild and fierce. She would not "give a flower to the gentleman" as the nursemaid told her. No! no! no! she would not! She clenched her fist. She stamped. And Mr Bankes felt aged and saddened and somehow put into the wrong by her about his friendship. He must have dried and shrunk

(2000, p. 26).

Woolf encourages her readers to listen to how Bankes tries to understand his old friend's approach to navigating ongoing research, alongside a large family. By sending out his thoughts towards 'the sand dunes', Bankes is then able to decide that 'his affection for Ramsay had in no way diminished' (2000, p. 26). This utterance shows Bankes' aptitude for genuine feeling and we gain a sense of his ability to rely on a psychologically complex understanding of friendships. As Lily and Bankes stand at 'that break in the thick hedge', on the edge of the garden, and look out onto the sea below, he is able to bring together an analogy for his thoughts on Mr Ramsay (2000, p. 24). With the help of the expansive feelings that the reality of Woolf's naturalistic nature form provides, he envisions his friendship salvaged 'like the body of a young man laid up in peat for a century' (2000, p. 26). Bankes' nature simile acknowledges the passage of time and the concepts of old and new ways of establishing meaning, but it also remains hopeful on a personal level as he wants their initial connection to endure. His use of the simile suggests that he wishes to be treated with a reciprocal leniency and respect, because there is a sense of Bankes comparing his affection for Ramsay to historical remains that have been kept the same way by being buried in a substance that has been known to occasionally keep artefacts intact. He has captured and maintained a warmth for his friend, from a phase in their lives when they were both younger. The significance of nature's influence on Bankes' truthful expression of feeling and articulation of multi-layered thoughts is emphasised by Woolf's narration of the moment. We know this because at the end of his sequence of analysis she states: 'Mr Bankes was alive to things which would not have struck him had not those sandhills revealed to him the body of his friendship' (2000, p. 26). The present physicality of the terrain appears to trigger an understanding of the extent to which Bankes' relationship with Ramsay, though flawed, had the capacity to reach further and contain more compassion that he had previously contemplated. Mr Ramsay and Bankes' contrasting pursuits in academia are likened to the changes occurring in the field of biology during the twentieth century. The fact that Bankes is prepared to consider Mr Ramsay's point of view, further highlights Woolf's sense of the modern biologist being able to view academic research with a greater flexibility and neutrality.

The freeing state of mind that Bankes and Lily find when they are absorbed with contemplation, whilst being within the naturalistic nature form of the garden at the Ramsays' holiday house in Scotland, is seen with the balance of both their conscious and unconscious sharing of thoughts. It is noteworthy that Bankes experienced this revelatory understanding when he was walking with Lily in the garden. He also quietly 'liked her for bidding him [to] 'think of [Mr Ramsay's] work', for her fairness influenced the harshness of his own judgement towards his friend and revealed where his respect still remained (2000, p. 28). Lily, too, is able to consolidate her ideas on Mr Ramsay when they stroll into the 'orchard' section of the garden (2000, p. 28). As she stood in front of 'the silver-bossed bark of the tree […] its fish-shaped leaves' she 'focused' on what Andrew had told her about his father's work, that it was concerned with 'Subject and object and the nature of reality […] a kitchen table […] when you're not there' (2000, p. 28). In the setting of the naturalistic garden, Lily is able to think on Andrew's summary of Mr Ramsay's philosophical interests. She can picture the 'phantom kitchen table, one of those scrubbed board tables, grained and knotted, whose virtue seems to have been laid bare by years of muscular integrity, which stuck there, its four legs in air' and ruminate on whether her ability to imaginatively conjure it up in 'the branches of the pear tree' meant that as an object it still remained wholly real (2000, pp. 28-30). Lily, despite her distrust of Mr Ramsay's temper – especially when indoors – ultimately holds a 'profound respect for [his] mind' (2000, p. 30). Woolf's characters in *To the Lighthouse* are given greater depth, complexity and truthfulness when they interact with nature in the Ramsays' naturalistic garden. A succinct version of the contrasts that can be found between Woolf's characters' natural and artificial personality traits; and her representations of old and new methods of natural science methodologies, is noted by Alt in her analysis of 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass'. In this short story from Woolf's collection, Isabella Tyson suddenly becomes a much more intriguing character when she is known to have wandered into the garden that her guests can see through an open looking glass. In this regard, the narrator and Woolf's readers gain two perspectives. The first perspective notices that 'the house was empty, and one felt, since one was the only person in the drawing-room, like one of those naturalists who, covered with grass and leaves, lie watching the shyest animals' (Woolf, 2018, p. 55). The viewer then identifies (by looking at the scene in an unfiltered manner) that there is a stimulating atmosphere which also evokes anxiety, a feeling of melancholy and an awareness of hidden desires:

> And there were obscure flushes and darkenings too, as if a cuttlefish had suddenly suffused the air with purple; and the room had its passions and rages and envies and sorrows coming over it and clouding it, like a human being
> (Woolf, 2018, p. 55).

The simile which continues to place the narrator in the role of a wildlife researcher, allows Woolf to build layers of tension to the complex atmosphere that the room – when given these animated traits – emits. The sense that the space is a receptacle for the extremes of human feelings is emphasised by the way in which the mood is given further dramatic energy via a comparison with the actions of a cuttlefish. These sea-dwelling predators can rapidly camouflage to blend in with their surroundings and the eggs that they lay are covered in a black ink that the cuttlefish produce. These merging qualities are apt for describing the speed of powerful emotions and the idea that the room had been witness to, hidden and to some extent absorbed histories of changeable and interrelated emotional experiences. Alt argues that Woolf shows how direct observation – which was taken up as the new and popular method for researching into the natural world in modern science – allows for a greater experience of motion, sensory feedback and aliveness. As a consequence of this more present experience, the sounds that the viewer heard through the open doorways made it seem as though the house was 'perpetually sighing' over the 'changes' in human life (Woolf, 2018, p. 55). Whereas the viewer's other perception – of the garden, seen through the mirror, reflected back a sense of unreal 'stillness' (Woolf, 2018, p. 55). For Alt the 'static' state of the garden, as perceived by the narrator, illustrates Woolf's awareness of how traditionalist natural science studies tended to focus on the repetitive viewing 'of a preserved specimen' existing in classified 'permanence' (Alt, 2010, p. 12). Whereas modern science's multifaceted viewing offers a greater opportunity for the complex analysis of individuals; or species, and their presence within a wider interrelated society or ecosystem.

2.7 Environmentalism in *To the Lighthouse* with the Naturalistic Gardens Nature Form

When considering *To the Lighthouse* in terms of Woolf's use of the naturalistic gardens nature form, early environmental awareness appears during passages where there is a sense of the characters looking out 'across

the bay' from their garden (2000, p. 76). During moments when this form of viewing is emphasised, Woolf often develops an underlying nature writing dialogue that considers the history of land features: 'those sandhills dwindling away into darkness' (2000, p. 76). For example, as Mr Ramsay contemplates the passage of time and his own ageing, he also appears to muse on how he used to find 'little sandy beaches where no one had been since the beginning of time' (2000, p. 76). He recalls that when he was a younger man (and could walk further along the coast) 'one could walk all day without meeting a soul' and 'worry things out alone' (2000, p. 76). The Scottish beaches were so rarely disturbed by human activity that 'there was not a house scarcely, not a single village for miles on end', only the seals that 'sat up and looked at you' (2000, p. 76). In this sense the reader is not only reminded of the fact that Woolf is knowledgeable about coastal locations, but that she thinks of how they are vulnerable to human disturbances and changes over time. In alluding to how the condition of the beaches in Scotland seemed to show evidence of little human impact, we note that Woolf was not naïve to how humans encroached on natural ecosystems. The places that Woolf lived in and visited during her lifetime gave her an overview of the contrast between congested and remote areas. Mr Ramsay's musing over the 'sandhills' reflects on how Woolf experienced the wider geographical atmosphere of the Stephen family's Cornish holidays (2000, p. 76). We also know that the family's activities in Cornwall regularly centred around an engagement with nature. Whybrow records that Leslie Stephen supervised 'improvements' in the garden at Talland House, by ensuring that 'heather and gorse were planted' and 'a pond was being dug' (2018, p. 47). Woolf captures aspects of her father, via Mr Ramsay's interest in the interconnectedness of different habitats; and therefore different species, in *To the Lighthouse*. Mr Ramsay (in his similarity to Leslie Stephen) regrets that 'he was too old now to walk all day long with a biscuit in his pocket' (2000, p. 76). With this knowledge of Mr Ramsay's situation, Woolf increases the poignancy of the boundary that the Ramsays walk to. The end point of their walk represents a liminal space; and a thinking space, which exists between the naturalistic gardens and the rurality of the coastal countryside beyond. In addition to this, the way in which Mr Ramsay mutters 'poor little place' as he scans the horizon suggests that he wonders about its position amongst the greater extent of the biosphere and 'universe' (2000, p. 76). Woolf gives Mr Ramsay a reflective attitude towards environmentalism, as she places him on the edge of the garden's surrounds.

The notion of a geographical blurring in *To the Lighthouse*, that exists between the naturalistic gardens and the coastline, is also felt by Lily. In the latter part of the novel, which is labelled 'The Lighthouse', we gain a sense of Lily comparing pre and post war impacts on the natural environment. Her memories of their holidays before the war (in a similar way to Mr Ramsay's), highlight the previously quiet expanses of sand. There was nobody around, apart from their small group. She remembers the 'simplicity' of knowing that, as herself and Charles were 'throwing stones [into the sea] and getting on very well all of a sudden', Mrs Ramsay was writing letters whilst 'sitting under the rock with a pad on her knee' (2000, p. 174). Before the war, Lily recalls that (amongst the notion of simplicity) she held a deep and specific frustration towards the assumptions made by those she viewed as tribal members of the dominant patriarchy. For example, the misogynistic assertions that women could not create art: 'Charles Tansley used to say that, she remembered, women can't paint, can't write. Coming up behind her, he had stood close beside her, a thing she hated, as she painted here' (2000, p. 174). Lily remarks that 'the war had drawn the sting of her femininity' from her, because human havoc had caused frightful consequences for 'both sexes' (2000, p. 174). Woolf suggests that, after the war, Lily's rapid anger towards habitual social norms had transformed into a deeper and more consciously philosophical questioning:

> The great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead there were little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark; here was one. This, that, and the other; herself and Charles Tansley and the breaking wave; Mrs Ramsay bringing them together; Mrs Ramsay saying, "Life stand still here"; Mrs Ramsay making of the moment something permanent (as in another sphere Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent)—this was of the nature of a revelation. In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and flowing (she looked at the clouds going and the leaves shaking) was struck into stability. Life stand still here, Mrs Ramsay said. "Mrs Ramsay! Mrs Ramsay!" she repeated. She owed it all to her. All was silence
> (2000, p. 174).

Lily's 'great revelation', in this 'moment', paradoxically recognises that 'stability', 'daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark' and 'something permanent' is found in the cycles and reactions that nature already provides (2000, p. 174). Amidst human-experienced 'chaos' we are told in parenthesis that Lily sees 'the clouds going and the leaves shaking' to a natural rhythm that continues outside of the anthropogenic viewpoint – providing a backdrop to the lives of human and non-human beings (2000, p. 174). These scenes where Woolf's characters in *To the Lighthouse* are looking out at the wilder landscape from a boundary, between the garden and the rurality whilst remembering the historical wildness of the location are environmentally significant. They imply that Woolf's own perspective includes all natural processes and a wider understanding of the vulnerability of nature on Earth.

This chapter has delved into how Woolf manipulates her naturalistic gardens nature form to observe the dynamics that occur between both her non-human and human characters in *To the Lighthouse*. The text is analysed in relation to the themes of Woolf's Naturalism, her adoption of modern approaches to the Natural Sciences and her environmental leanings. In *To the Lighthouse* we see Woolf's ecofeminist principles with her interweaving of prominent female voices with the increased animation that is present with the naturalistic gardens nature form that surrounds Lily and Mrs Ramsay. For Mrs Ramsay, the naturalistic style of planting at their holiday home offers a contrast to city life. She appreciates the momentary sense of freedom that the liminal spaces in the garden provide – where the planting begins to blur with the wilder flowers that intermingle on the dunes below. Woolf uses the naturalistic gardens nature form to express the complexity of Mrs Ramsay's personality – which has become fractured by the insistence of habitual social pressures. She is apprehensive of the encroaching wildness of the naturalistic style of planting that encompasses them in Scotland, but she also plays with a tendency to embrace the escapism that the nature form represents for her. The naturalistic gardens nature form in *To the Lighthouse* helps to highlight the half-hidden emotions that are released as a result of Mr and Mrs Ramsay's relationship. The melancholic aspect of their relationship is perceived by the reader, when we notice gaps in their communication which have been perpetuated by how repressive they find the late Victorian social mores to be. Yet Mr Ramsay believes that he sees 'the way of genius' in the geranium flowers, as they and the idea he is battling with suddenly become 'startlingly visible'

(2000, p. 40). Mr Ramsay imagines the geraniums to be spurring him on in his research and even credits the flora as being the source of his academic work. In this sense Woolf posits that despite human interaction appearing fraught with complex misunderstandings, systems in the natural world produce a greater overall interconnectivity. In *To the Lighthouse* nature appears to find solutions and momentum for the Ramsays, even though they often struggle to feel honestly connected with one another. In this way we are made aware of the extent to which Woolf's respect for nature seems to have grown from her belief in the spiritual animism that exists between the ecological processes that make up natural ecosystems. By focusing on the naturalistic nature form in Chapter 2, the thesis follows the underlying emphasis on structuring analysis via an appreciation of a garden design spectrum which ranges from formal to wild. After pinpointing the formal design nature form in *Mrs Dalloway,* for Chapter 1, the next step is to incrementally increase a sense of wildness – resulting in the naturalistic gardens nature from being mapped out in *To the Lighthouse.* Chapter 3 goes on to look at the dominance of Woolf's rurality nature form in *The Waves.*

Chapter 3: Rurality in *The Waves*

Chapter 3 examines Woolf's use of her literary rurality nature form and the dominance of this habitat type in *The Waves*. The chapter initially details the contextual themes of Woolf's autobiography and the influence of her horticultural experiences. The focal points for the analysis in Chapter 3 include Woolf's naturalistic writing style, her interest in changes to modern natural science approaches, and environmental attitudes. Chapter 3 follows Woolf's use of her rurality nature form in *The Waves,* by mapping how the habitat (which has subtly increased in 'wildness', in comparison to the naturalistic gardens nature form of Chapter 2) shapes the moods and relations that are experienced by the group of friends as they traverse through stages of their lives. The rurality that surrounds the friends during their younger years, the woodlands and fields that exist just beyond the more formal territory of the gardens, becomes a source of connection for them all as a community. It is within both the actual and the memory of the rurality nature form that the friends are able to analyse their feelings of being simultaneously alone and together. They appear to process some of their greatest challenges and emotional upheavals in the context of a return to their habitually known ecosystem – that expands their day-to-day interaction by taking in the breadth of human and non-human interconnectivity.

3.1 Nature Form: Rurality

Woolf's *The Waves* relies on the rurality nature form to address ideas around the universality of all living organisms in the natural world. For example, this sense of broadened interconnectivity is shown powerfully as the group of friends leave a scheduled dinner at Hampton Court Palace. Having left the restaurant, they can briefly relax – away from formality – by walking along the avenue and through the gardens. They keep 'walking six abreast' until it seems as though they have entered the wilder countryside of their childhoods and are questioning: 'What song do we hear – the owl's, the nightingale's, the wren's?' (Woolf, 1981, pp. 153-155). Bernard discerns a sense of time, which a few minutes ago had been so important, being left alone to 'stream away' (1981, p. 153). Woolf paints this shared feeling of escapism into countryside ecosystems, 'among the

ferns', with an image of the six friends emerging as 'ambiguous draperies' rather than as defined individuals (1981, p. 156). This repeated merging of human and non-human characters appears as an early environmentally aware philosophy for Woolf.

The rurality nature form in *The Waves*, in terms of a habitat type that is wilder than that of the domestic garden, is identifiable in Woolf's interludes (which are dominated by the presence of non-human beings) and in her scenes that are often described through the perspectives of her human characters. The words in Woolf's first interlude shows the encroaching light of morning being observed on the line of '*the horizon*', '*the shore*' and then through the leaves on '*the trees in the garden*' (1981, p. 5). Following on from this steady depiction of the daily movement of sunlight across the waves there is a quickening of pace. Woolf's human characters express their individual and artistic opinions. For Susan, the sun was 'a slab of pale yellow […] spreading away until it meets a purple stripe' (1981, p. 6). In this manner, the young group of friends respond to the natural world that surrounds them. Woolf locates her young characters on the edge of the garden space, as they stand just beyond the initial domesticity of the display flowers in the garden. We know this because Louis is 'on the other side of the hedge' (1981, p. 8). He looks back at the house, prays: 'Oh Lord, let them pass. Lord, let them lay their butterflies on a pocket-handkerchief on the gravel. Let them count out their tortoise-shells, their red admirals and cabbage whites. But let me be unseen' and proceeds to mimic as 'a yew tree in the shade of the hedge' (1981, p. 8). The prospect of their butterfly-catching – to some extent representing an anthropocentric activity that places humankind above other living beings – seems to fill Louis with a sense of overwhelm and a desire to become unattached from his human counterparts. He appears to seek reassurance by looking for similarities between himself and the plants in the immediate natural world. When Louis is briefly left to his own thoughts, standing near the garden hedgerows that lead out into the countryside, he feels as though he is 'all fibre' and a part of the rural ecosystem (1981, p. 8). Louis imagines himself as being rooted 'to the depths of the world', just like the flora that makes up their habitat, but it is also as if his 'eyes are green leaves, unseeing' and therefore able to momentarily stretch towards psychologically embracing the neutral perspective of the non-human experience (1981, p. 8). Woolf's references to these moments of connection with nature appear to be simultaneously expansive and overwhelming. In *The Waves* the rurality nature form creates realms where the friends are repeatedly able to grieve for the passing of their childhood,

both individually and 'communally' (Utell, 2008, p. 2). Leonard Woolf knowingly writes about both Woolf's 'hypersensitivity' towards the reviews and opinions of critics and those around her, and in regards to the stimulus that she found in the ecosystems that surrounded her – the way that she felt 'the kaleidoscopic of fields, downs, river, birds […] with intensity' (1975, p. 149). Although professionally adept at gleaning inspiration from a myriad of situations, she maintained a sense of 'the raw material of her art' (1975, p. 150). Virginia Woolf links attention to detail with the 'raw', intuitive ability to tune into her sensory responses. This experiential and observational strategy also allows her to follow a belief in the universal concept of connecting to the vastness of ecosystems that are in a constant cycle of energy exchange. Woolf therefore uses her nature forms like a telescopic scale, which also plays with the high and low tuning of her characters' emotional vibrations.

3.2 Biographical Impact on the Rurality Nature Form in *The Waves*:

> 'I shall lie, too, in the fields among the tickling grasses. I shall lie with my friends under the towering elm trees'
>
> (Woolf, 1981, p. 21).

Woolf's experiences of living in rurality, especially during the war years and when in Rodmell, gave her the opportunity to describe in her diaries the effect of the light on the 'winter down & meadow – the recording of what takes my breath away at every turn. Heres the sun out for example & all the upper twigs of the trees as if dipped in fire' (1981, p. 3). Whilst Woolf held a complicated attitude towards her time in rural locations, in Sussex and Cornwall especially, she also expresses a feeling of gratitude for the 'total seclusion' that it could provide (Marcus, 2004, p. 177). More often than not, Woolf transformed the countryside that surrounded their house at Rodmell into her literary nature scenes. For example, in relation to Lucy Swithin's concern with the loss of geographical formations in *Between the Acts,* 'a flood in the fields' and the water meadows became 'an image from genesis or pre-history' (Marcus, 2004, p. 178). Woolf gained further knowledge on both the land management of large estates and the context of the wider, English countryside from her friendships with the Sackville-Wests and the Morrells. In 1930, Woolf had written to Ottoline Morrell to 'ask her the name of the

little man who protects downs' as she and Leonard were concerned about the construction of several houses on Rodmell Hill (1980, p. 274). This reference also gives us a strong piece of evidence that supports the idea that Woolf was concerned for the health of the Sussex meadows, heaths and woodlands.

Woolf's daily life was often subject to the recommendations of doctors, especially following a severe breakdown that she experienced between 1913 and 1915. Woolf was prescribed an extended period of rural rest, and throughout much of the build up to and the beginning of the First World War she lived with Vanessa and then later with Leonard in the Sussex countryside. After her failed suicide attempt in 1913, Woolf's countryside recuperation with Leonard started initially with nurse-monitored rest at George Duckworth's home at Dalingridge Place, East Grinstead: 'I took mental nurses with us and Ka came and stayed for a few days. For the next two months – until November 18 – we lived at Dalingridge' (1964, p. 159). Eventually she was able to take intermittent rest at her own properties in Asheham and at Monk's House. As a consequence, although Woolf felt herself to be engaged with several pursuits that involved observing the natural world, her experiences of medical treatment meant that she also built up an 'association of flowers with the enforced serenity of bucolic therapy' (Sparks, 2011, p. 44). Woolf displays *Mrs Dalloway* with a similar sort of weakening malady – the other characters were aware that sometimes 'Clarissa [was] in bed with headaches' (2011, p. 63). Though *Mrs Dalloway*'s depressions are less overtly related to post-traumatic stress, Woolf makes an interesting link between Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith's symptoms. Both characters find a more truthful expression of how they feel when amongst vegetation. The countryside at Bourton, as Walsh remembered it, always seemed to revive Clarissa and he would see her as a young woman who 'never tired of walking for all her delicacy' (Woolf, 2011, p. 152). Clarissa's relationship with the country estate at Bourton shares similarities with Woolf's various retreats to the countryside for her psychological and physical health.

The biographical writings about Woolf's own nature-centred recovery plans suggest that a holiday in Cornwall in 1914 'soothed her overwrought nerves' (Bell, 1996, p. 19). As well as her Cornish romanticism, we know that Woolf praises the South Downs. In her recovery diaries at Asheham, we gain a sense of how Woolf takes the time to pause and engage with the countryside that she sees. For example, she pays close attention to the

detailing of butterflies in August 1917, when she notices 'peacock butterflies, silver washed fritillary; besides innumerable blues' (Woolf, 1977, p. 40). The focus with which Woolf records her sightings of nature, during this period of calmer, but still medically monitored existence, highlights her determination to recover from this painful bout of mental instability.

Woolf's autobiographical writings allow us to see the distracting power that nature holds for her. Woolf attempts to explain her process of walking in nature to gather inspiration for her writing by saying: 'Every day or nearly I've walked towards a different point & come back with a string of these matchings and marvels' (1981, p. 4). The renewed intrigue that Woolf finds in the natural world can be stimulated by simply seeing the effect of the sun creating a glow that turns the tree 'trunks emerald green' (1981, p. 3). Woolf thus writes of how she would actively pursue naturalist hobbies, as they had the ability to reignite both her keen eye for sourcing literary material and her regime for regular writing. As well as supporting her mental health, time in nature came to act as an established backdrop to the rest periods between writing projects. When nearing completion of *To the Lighthouse,* Woolf herself describes how it felt 'like some prolonged rather painful & yet exciting process of nature, which one desires inexpressibly to have over' (Woolf, 1980, p. 109). Woolf's depiction of exhaustion during the final stages of a project is contextualised by Rubenstein, who states that it 'resembles language that might describe not only a difficult childbirth but emergence from depression' (2008, p. 48). Rest periods in nature became important for managing Woolf's energy for creating and maintaining the discipline required for writing a book. As Woolf progresses as an author, she develops an essential cycle of walking and monitoring the nature around her. These notes and impressions are then seemingly transformed into her next novel.

As well as Leonard Woolf and Vita Sackville-West, other close members of the Bloomsbury Group turned to rural farming and gardening during the interwar years.[14] Vanessa, as shown by her designs at Charleston, 'was

[14] Evidence of the Bloomsbury Group's interwar farming methods is focused on in contemporary Woolf studies, in relation to the need to develop more sustainable forms of agriculture. For example, Jessica Martell notes how 'Woolf's writing also reveals scarcity to be a defining feature of the twentieth-century metropolitan state of emergency' (Martell, 2020, p. 85). In *Farm to Form,* published in 2020, Martell emphasises the Bloomsbury Group's adoption of 'wartime self-sufficiency schemes […] initially as a form of conscientious objection to military conflict, and later as an integral part of their food security' (Martell, 2020, p. 85).

indeed a garden maker' (Fox, 2013). Quentin Bell and his daughter: Virginia Nicholson, describe Bell's early garden-making as an anxious and necessary response to war-time Britain: 'Life in wartime Sussex seemed to Vanessa principally a matter of survival' (Bell & Nicholson, 2018, p. 148). Therefore, Quentin advises that his mother's pragmatism was partly developed because of the circumstances. She moved to Charleston in 1916 with Duncan Grant and David Garnett, when they were both seeking farm labour as conscientious objectors. Quentin reiterates the increased austerity of the times by quoting Vanessa saying: 'I'm making great efforts to get hold of a pig, rabbits etc, and get the garden dug' from a letter that she wrote to her friend Roger Fry, in 1917 (Bell & Nicholson, 2018, p. 148). The straightforwardness of Vanessa's approach to managing a small, rural, farmstead presents the extent to which an upper middle-class woman was now in a situation where she must learn new skills. It was necessary for Vanessa to adapt to living in the countryside. She had to face the challenging circumstances of finding adequate food and shelter for her family during the period of the First World War. This sense of a contemporary 'ecological goal of eating locally grown products,' shown by Bell's direct involvement in the planting of her garden, is highlighted by Scott as another example of how Woolf's family embraced gardening as a way of life (Scott, 2012, p. 88). The horticultural pursuits of her sister provided a diversion and a source of intrigue for Woolf. She could focus her attention on the discussion surrounding 'a long, low, wooden hut […] reassembled beyond the walled garden' at Charleston, that Vanessa and Duncan were going to use as their new outdoor painting studio (Woolf, 1981, p. 58). The shift between abstract thinking and practical decision-making seemed to refresh Woolf's cognitive powers – enabling her to give more energy to both pursuits.

The Waves explores the richness of the rurality nature form. All the central characters in the childhood friendship group share their young memories of living away from urban life. They return in their thoughts to the notion that the land holds their identity and central connection to life. This is highlighted in a pivotal experience that occurs when the children must be sent away from home to schools, with the boys and girls being separated. Neville appears to use his clear understanding of what nature held for them as children to reduce his anxiety during this new phase. He relies on what he is familiar with, declaring: 'I shall lie, too, in the fields among the tickling grasses. I shall lie with my friends under the towering elm trees' (Woolf, 1981, p. 21). *The Waves* is the novel that relates the most to Woolf's experience of the friendship, competition and

intimacy that she found in her involvement with the Bloomsbury Group. Woolf's awareness of the South Downs helped her to manage the flurry of artistic debate that often took place at Charleston and Monk's House during the war and interwar years in England. It was Woolf 'who, seeking quiet, discovered the possibilities of Sussex and found refuge in Firle' and went even further to encourage her sister to move to Charleston (Bell & Nicholson, 2018, p. 17). Woolf, in her letter to Vanessa in May 1916, cites the advantage of 'that little path which leads under the downs', convincing her sister to set up the core of the Bloomsbury Group's rural retreat in Sussex (Bell & Nicholson, 2018, p. 17). In relation to this biographical material and *The Waves,* Rohman focuses on Woolf's theories of humans each tuning in to 'a kind of vibration' (Woolf, 1984, p. 172).Vibrations are then described as existing in the wider context of the 'most elementary cosmic forces' (Rohman, 2010, p. 14). Rohman points out that this idea is stronger at the beginning of the novel, when the friends are still in childhood and so seem to openly accept 'the oscillations of the natural world' around them (2010, p. 15). *The Waves* is a sensory celebration of Woolf's nature philosophy, shown through the expansive nature of the rurality.

In *The Waves*, the friends personify aspects of the rurality. This is seen when Bernard evokes the idea that 'the world has hailed us back to it. I heard for one moment the howling winds of darkness', as the group muses on the potential realms that stretch out beyond human existence on the Earth (Woolf, 1981, p. 152). Yet, Woolf also maintains a line of description that adheres to the realism of nature's seasonal cycles. Her poetic-prose is tempered by her interest in the objectivity of natural science. Woolf seems to acknowledge the end of Springtime in the natural world, with her italicized observations of how '*a whitened and hollow straw was blown from an old nest*' (1981, p. 159). The reader can then surmise that the young birds have flown away. In *The Waves* especially, Woolf's 'human characters' are simultaneously 'engaged directly and profoundly with nonhuman characters' (Swanson, 2012, p. 58). We see Woolf experimenting with a formula that values an '"ecological" dialogue', which sets up a 'non-objectifying' stance towards our human 'recognition of the otherness of the nonhuman world' (Swanson, 2012, p. 58). In Swanson's words, we see an aspect of Woolf's writing process that attempted to take an environmentally aware stance, that called for a practiced, human-neutrality.

Following on from *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts* express more of the expansive nature forms: rurality and estate grounds. *The Waves* highlights how the young friends seem to feel confident amongst the wider countryside scenes 'down the field, through the long grass, to where the great elm trees stand' (1981, p. 25). This is shown with Woolf's depiction of how they respond to the elusive character of Percival. This mythical character is the mysterious friend who they all look up to as he appears like 'some mediaeval commander,' when he is seen with 'a wake of light' lying 'on the grass behind him' (1981, p. 25). Woolf reflects in *The Waves* on how a childhood spent amongst nature can both shape and uphold an individual's sense of identity. We see this with the way in which she builds up her young characters via their relationships with the rurality. An early moment of decisive immersion in nature takes place for Woolf when she considers 'a plant with a spread of leaves; and it seemed suddenly plain that the flower itself was a part of the earth' and connected to all organisms as a unifying 'ring enclosed what was the flower; and that was the real flower; part earth; part flower' (2002, p. 84). This visual memory seems to support Woolf's philosophical thinking, due to the way in which the authenticity of the individual flower becomes more established when viewed in relation to the context that surrounds it and the energies that interact with it in any particular moment. It is possible that Woolf's life-long belief in the interconnectivity and cyclical patterns of the natural world was able to form as the result of a short interlude in her childhood. The garden spaces around Woolf provided both a place for free expression and an introduction to the power of the senses. As a child, Woolf was granted time to act as a 'young explorer' with her siblings (Scott, 2012, p. 73). Due to her younger age and some of the changes in women's freedom that were occurring towards the end of the Victorian era, Woolf would have escaped some of the 'confining' that her father focused on her mother, when he used the gardens to 'frame his wife' in a certain role (Scott, 2012, p. 73). This part of her life aided the initial formation of Woolf's individual personality. Whereas her mother's personality had already begun to 'blur', due to the way in which idealisation from others had merged 'the boundaries between humans and the content of their gardens' (Scott, 2012, p. 99). Woolf's frequent return to the alleviating effect of nature-escapism and a focus on a shared energetic existence with all beings, on some of her more situationally repressed characters, reflects on her own acknowledgment of the stifling effects of social and gendered mores in British culture. She creates the nature spaces in her novels to analyse how people tend to search for

expressive freedom, via a feeling of universal connection that reaches across human boundaries and into the natural world.

3.3 Horticultural References and Rurality in *The Waves*

In terms of considering how Woolf's horticultural references shaped her rurality nature form, we can continue to place emphasis on the Bloomsbury Group's adoption of arable farming and landscape preservation during the interwar years. In this sense, though, we are looking out past the boundary walls of the gardens at Monk's House and Charleston and into the surrounding Sussex Wealds, water meadows and riverbanks. Leonard Woolf's records show that he viewed 'the Ouse valley' from many perspectives during his lifetime. He records that during their stay at George Duckworth's Dalingridge Place, as Woolf was tended to by nurses during the day and the night, he looked out onto 'a magnificent view over the Sussex weald to the downs' (1964, p. 165). Most importantly for the Woolfs, Leonard could make out 'the gap where Lewes lay' and so they knew that beyond this point their 'hollow below the hill under the elm trees' was situated – 'Asham' (1964, p. 165). This viewpoint became an encouraging focus for both of them and Leonard remembers that 'Virginia was anxious that [they] should leave Dalingridge and go and live at Asham' (1964, p. 165). It is clear that the spirit of place that was conjured up by living 'between water meadows and downs' consistently appealed to Leonard and Virginia Woolf (Woolf, 1980, p. 160). Woolf writes in her 1927 diary that they had found 'an astonishing forgotten lovely place' at Amberley in Sussex, towards Arundel (Woolf, 1980, p. 160). They were considering buying a house here, because there was something about these interconnected, habitat types that brought out an 'impulsive' desire in them both (Woolf, 1980, p. 160). The Sussex countryside became a natural inspiration for the evolving, garden-design styles of the Bloomsbury Group. Leonard and Virginia Woolf were both keen to capture something of the ecology that they favoured in the landscape that surrounded them at Monk's House. In this garden, just as they had experienced during their prolonged stay at Dalingridge, the Woolfs designed a new 'terrace' (Woolf, 1980, p. 138). This feature was placed further out from the original garden, where they could feel closer to the water meadows and river-path walkways that they had become accustomed to strolling along after the morning's reading and writing.

This growing appreciation for the importance of native plants and planting designs that sympathised with the surrounding countryside, depicted in Woolf's interwar novels, is also seen with Sackville-West's approach to gardening at Sissinghurst. Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson's collaborative achievements have often been overlooked. Sissinghurst shows that even though they approached gardening with different stylistic preferences, Harold Sackville-West 'was a steady influence on Vita' (Raven & Sackville-West, 2014, p. 85). His involvement in the layout of the garden became particularly apparent when it was decided that Sissinghurst would need 'to blend with the Kentish scene' (Raven & Sackville-West, 2014, p. 85). Harold, instead of mimicking the Victorian trend of collecting 'rhododendrons' – in line with Jekyll to some extent – 'suggested cobnuts for the space' and then a backdrop of 'holly' (Raven & Sackville-West, 2014, p. 85). It is likely that Sackville-West's alignment with her husband on this garden design strategy was influenced by Jekyll's fondness for the conservation of both indigenous tree species and healthy woodland ecosystems. Jekyll took care to build up her understory planting in the copses that she extended and designed. In her book, *Wood and Garden*, Jekyll describes how she considers height and canopy cover by layering her trees. She purposely planted 'a good stretch of birch and holly, then of Spanish chestnut, next of oak, and finally of Scotch fir' (Jekyll, 2015, p. 61). Each zone was then supported by 'an undergrowth of heath and whortleberry and bracken' and these plants were left to grow more wildly into their natural forms (Jekyll, 2015, p. 61). It is evident that Jekyll's appreciation of wilder planting areas began a trend towards gardens that consisted of a greater biodiversity.

In a comparable way to William Robinson's Gravetye Manor in Sussex, Talland House garden and surrounds seemed to stretch out towards the viewpoint. The land became wilder as it approached the sea. From the hilltop 'a stream [...] flowed down through the garden', before 'disappearing underground' and then remerging 'to splash among rock pools' (Dell, [2011-2025] Date accessed 2023). Talland House's liminal style of gardening – that remained romantic and cultivated and yet distinct from the formality and linearity of urban garden-design – began to illustrate ideas pioneered by gardens of the Arts and Crafts movement. Robinson, at his own house, Gravetye, for example, was led by a 'common-sensical approach to making a garden in countryside' (Anderton, 2016, p. 214). Following the existing terrace that fronted the higher level of land on which the stone house was positioned, Robinson chose to plant the lower levels with 'his meadow of wild and

cultivated flowers leading to a pond' (Anderton, 2016, p. 214). In this way, in alignment with several of the other Arts and Crafts' gardens of the time, the scheme at Gravetye created a softening effect as the garden reached further out towards the fringes of the site and into the countryside beyond. For Robinson, his 'Wild Garden' method embraced 'the varied beauty of hardy flowers […] by naturalising innumerable beautiful natives of many regions of the earth in our woods and copses' (Robinson, 1883, p. 20). As mentioned previously, this appreciation for rurality habitats was potentially the aspect that kept Jekyll's design modern.

Talland House functioned as a relief from the intense, work-centric environment of city life. This apparent change is also reiterated in terms of the geographical differences that the Stephen family noticed in Cornwall. The altered atmosphere is explained by comments that are made on how 'the lightness and space [of Talland House] contrasted strongly with the confined darkness of their London house and the foggy gloom of London winters' (Dell & Whybrow, 2004, p. 27). Woolf was aware that she would emotionally return to the rurality of Cornwall throughout her life – to renew her energy and rekindle inspiration for writing. In a diary entry from March of 1921 (as the Woolfs prepare for a trip to Cornwall), Woolf finds it easy to imagine the familiar coastline. She sees herself observing 'a spring day. Life so new. People so enchanting. The sound of the sea at night' (1981, p. 103). In contrast to this, a 1924 notation shows Woolf declaring that 'the effect of London on diaries is decidedly bad' as distractions are frequent and intense in nature (1981, p. 324). In contrast to the recording of the geography and sensory stimulus of natural habitats, as quoted above by Woolf, this London statement suggests that city life produced a different style of prose that limited the expressiveness in her diary-writing.

Woolf's ability to switch between agricultural and naturalistic plants that are typically found in countryside habitats implies that she had a basic knowledge of the related horticulture. This wilder, botanical memorising was arguably influenced by her father. Leslie Stephen 'could indulge his love of the Cornish countryside of West Penwith' when they stayed at Talland House (Dell & Whybrow, 2004, p. 48). Leslie Stephen had more of a natural 'affinity with the countryside, rural affairs and the common man', than he did with the 'town life' of his upbringing (Dell & Whybrow, 2004, p. 49). In her diary writing for 1940, Woolf comments that, on the Sussex Downs, 'the corn was glowing with poppies in it' (Woolf, 1984, p. 298). Woolf's fondness for the

rurality of the Downs also appears as an extension of a curiosity for manipulated flower-symbology, a personal experience of artistic gardens and an appreciation of the meaningfulness of estate grounds for some of her family and friends.

Horticultural references that show Woolf's own knowledge and experience of plants and gardening emerge in *The Waves* when the narration details memories that the friends have of being young together in countryside gardens. Moreso then the rest, Rhoda speaks of a visionary space which also existed nestled in rurality where (as the interlude mentions):

> *The hills, curved and controlled, seemed bound back by thongs, as a limb is laced by muscles; and the woods which bristled proudly on their flanks were like the curt, clipped mane on the neck of a horse. In the garden where the trees stood, thick over flowerbeds, ponds, and greenhouses the birds sang in the hot sunshine, each alone. One sang under the bedroom window; another on the topmost twig of the lilac bush; another on the edge of the wall. Each sang stridently, with passion, with vehemence, as if to let the song burst out of it, no matter if it shattered the song of another bird with harsh discord. Their round eyes bulged with brightness; their claws gripped the twig or rail. They sang, exposed without shelter, to the air and the sun, beautiful in their new plumage, shell-veined or brightly mailed, here barred with soft blues, here splashed with gold, or striped with one bright feather. They sang as if the song were urged out of them by the pressure of the morning. They sang as if the edge of being were sharpened*
> (1981, pp. 72-73).

Woolf's use of alliteration in the above extract, draws attention to the evocative quality that the interludes in *The Waves* contain: '*The hills, curved and controlled, seemed bound back by thongs, as a limb is laced by muscles'* (1981, p. 73). '*The hills'* are anthropomorphized and compared to the external and internal body parts of a human, whilst '*the woods'* are detailed as possessing emotions – the ability to 'bristle with pride' (1981, p. 73). The depiction of the land form features switches between being humanized and then animalized,

with Woolf's simile, because '*the woods'* on top of '*the hills'* are later seen to look '*like the curt, clipped mane on the neck of a horse'* (1981, p. 73). This shifting of plant, human and animal status is interesting as it endorses the ecological idea of the interludes representing the rurality nature form and an ecosystem that is in a cyclical state of transferring energy between different species. A greater sense of energetic flow is added to the interlude section, due to the way in which the prose also alternates between informative descriptions of, for example, the feather-colouring of the birds: '*with soft blues, here splashed with gold, or striped with one bright feather',* and poetic imagery that projects powerful emotions and human concerns over individuality – even a desire for purposeful expression – onto the birds: '*Each sang stridently, with passion, with vehemence, as if to let the song burst out of it, no matter if it shattered the song of another bird with harsh discord'* (1981, p. 73). The bird population seems to expand as we hear them singing and Woolf adds greater depth to the rurality nature form in *The Waves,* by building up an ecosystem in motion. There is a sense of the individual and the community combined in a dance of recognition, amongst the non-human characters in the interlude. Each bird strives to sing for their own appreciation of '*the air and the sun* […] *the pressure of the morning* […] *the edge of being*' (1981, p. 73). They briefly intermingle as '*now and again their songs ran together in swift scales like the interlacings of a mountain stream*', yet, as urgency is rekindled and the communication between the birds begins to '*hasten quicker and quicker down the same channel* […] *they sever*' (1981, p. 74). A '*lilac bush*' is brought into focus, when from '*the topmost twig*' a bird sings and this; alongside the high activity from the bird population, highlights Woolf's appreciation of seasonal attributes (1981, p. 73). For example, lilac trees are often found in full bloom during May as Spring temperatures mix with the heat of Summer. This scene also implies that Woolf was aware of the occurrence of early morning dew, which she describes as '*watery jewels*' (1981, pp. 72-73). Her mentioning of the droplets implies that she is conscious of how the water beads form more frequently during the warmer months – when most of the heavy frosts have passed. This busy, summery-season, natural imagery is highlighted in *The Waves* alongside Susan's mentioning of how the practical tasks of running the farm and caring for children seem to mean that she no longer has time to pause and observe the natural world around her. She misses seeing 'the purple drops in the cabbage leaves; the red drops in the roses' which evaporate after the morning temperatures rise (1981, p. 116). Woolf suggests that, although the blooming and fruiting of the summer season is perhaps Susan's favourite time of the growing year, she feels as though she has lost some of her early connection with nature's processes.

It is implied that this distancing from the changes in the natural world has been brought about due to her greater attachment to the daily tasks of an anthropogenic lifestyle.

This use of sensory and seasonally aware expressions repeatedly develops *The Waves*' more creative perspective on life. Woolf's knowledge of the countryside cycles that take place in response to the British climate enables her to build up nature's animism and her characters' revealing interactions with the natural world. In the photographic archive material from Leslie Stephen's album collection, we see several photos of Julia Stephen and their children against the garden backdrop of flowering roses, *Clematis* 'Jackmanii' and clumps of Japanese anemone. We can see from this photographic evidence that the countryside holidays at Talland House were Summer-time excursions. In Woolf's writings, fictional and autobiographical, the rurality scenes that she develops frequently contain a trace of these summer plants in bloom.

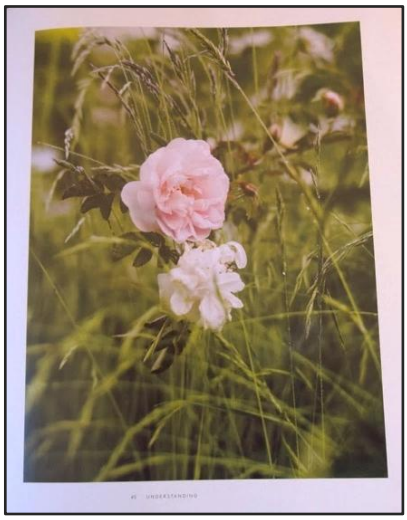

Figure 6. (left) Roses (Blom, 2017, p. 45)

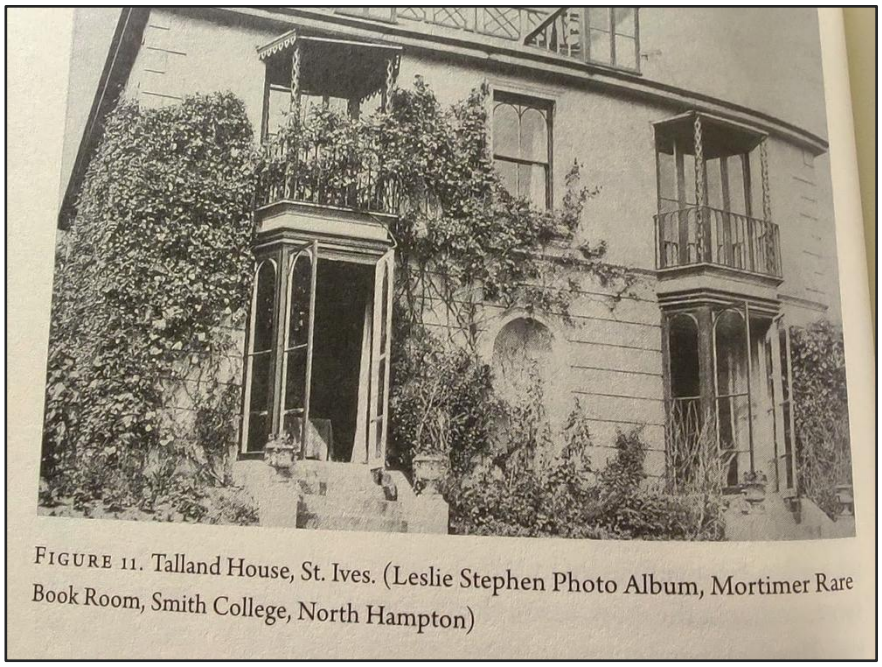

FIGURE 11. Talland House, St. Ives. (Leslie Stephen Photo Album, Mortimer Rare Book Room, Smith College, North Hampton)

Figure 7. (right) Talland House (Scott, 2012, p. 74)

Figure 8. (left) Anemone (RHS, 2011, p. 91)

Figure 9. (top right) Talland House (Whybrow, 2018, p. 15)

Figure 10. (bottom right) Clematis (Fisk, 1995, p. 49)

Susan is established as the central character in *The Waves* and she best represents Woolf's nature form of rurality. We sense how for Susan – even as a child – nature provided a spirited defence against outer society. When she feels overwhelmed by the sight of Jinny and Louis kissing, Susan claims that she will begin a life away from people and 'eat nuts and peer for eggs through the brambles' (1981, p. 9). She romanticizes experiencing, on returning home after school, the appearance of her 'father in his old hat' and the touch of 'the palms of […] her hands' when they have been 'printed with pine-needles' (1981, p. 36). In Scott's examination of Woolf's use of nature imagery, in relation to *The Waves,* she determines Susan to be 'the character most closely associated with female essentialism and with country origins' (2012, p. 148). This is due to the fact that she establishes an enduring 'bond with the flat farming land of Lincolnshire, where she cultivates her orchards and rears her cows and children' (Scott, 2012, p. 148). We have seen, however, that Woolf is able to adapt traditional constructs about the female in relation to nature. So, Susan's complexity is to some extent all the more apparent due to her grapples with conservative values alongside a longing for the escapism of youth.

Woolf's personal identity, unlike our first reading of Susan's, appears to be shaped by a complex relationship with the natural world. In reality, Woolf was too drawn to maintaining her awareness of events and shifts that were taking place in the city and she and Leonard had 'too many interests drawing them back to London' (Bell, 1996, p. 8). Albeit Woolf's experiences of visiting and sometimes living in the rurality widened her horticultural lexicon, botanical thinking and practical gardening skills. For example, Bell refers to the importance of Woolf's regular walks in the countryside. He mentions that she might be seen traipsing 'seven, eight or more miles every afternoon leaping over ditches, climbing up hills, negotiating barbed-wire or brambles' in aid of a more balanced constitution (Bell, 1996, p. 169). Woolf's personal memories of joining her father on his walks suggest that she felt as though they were going on naturalist expeditions. She remembers them viewing the changes in habitat landscapes. They followed hillside paths 'between heather and ling', before looking back down 'into a forest of oak trees' or bogs where 'the Osmunda grew; and the rare maiden-hair fern' (2002, p. 138). These specific records of seeing the coastline in Cornwall, highlight her alignment with the observational approaches of nature writing naturalists and thus the strength of the influence that these practices had on her young mind.

3.4 Rurality Nature Form in *The Waves*

The Waves sees a further increase in the size of Woolf's nature forms, as it focuses on scenes that are set in rural locations. This follows on from the incremental expansion of scale that occurs between the domesticated floristry in *Mrs Dalloway* and the naturalistic garden setting in *To the Lighthouse*. In *The Waves* Woolf makes the reader aware of the environmental backdrop with Susan, who is most at ease when she can 'see the swallow skim the grass' (1981, p. 36). Bernard effectively comforts Susan after she 'has spread her anguish out', following the kiss between Louis and Jinny, by reminding her of the consistency of village life in his vision of Elvedon (1981, p. 10). He creates visual prompts to soothe her, such as the idea of 'the close-clipped hedge of the ladies' garden' (1981, p. 10). Once Susan muses on Bernard's images and they 'touch earth […] tread ground', he manages to convince her that the 'long, unhappy, purple waves' of her gloom have lifted (1981, p. 11). As her emotions settle, Susan returns to observing the 'wood-pigeon breaking cover in the tops of the beech trees' and the way in which 'the pigeon beats the air; the pigeon beats the air with wooden wings' (1981, p. 12). This act of observing nature, consistently helps Susan to find a balance of feeling. In her 1917-1918 diaries, whilst residing at Asheham in Sussex, Woolf notes that she 'went mushrooming in the evening […] one of our great excitements has begun' (1990, p. 50). Lee suggests that Woolf's nature diaries seemed 'to calm an uncomfortable vibration in her mind' (1997, p. 379). This understanding of Woolf's personal experiences further emphasises the significance of the rural background in *The Waves.* This is because we see her using countryside activities as a strategy for releasing a build-up of her characters' emotions.

The Waves follows looping dialogues, relating to each of the characters' sensory perceptions. Their expressions appear to be rapid and multi-sensory. As they observe the sun rising, Rhoda hones in on the sound of birds 'cheep, chirp; cheep chirp; going up and down,' whereas Jinny is distracted by the look of 'a crimson tassel' (which presumably resembles the draping nature of *Amaranthus caudatus* – significantly a cultivar named 'Crimson Tassels' – frequently used as an ornamental plant in Britain during the Victorian era) (1981, p. 6). Following the descriptions of the natural world in the proceeding interlude, which respond to an increase in the presence of the sunlight, the friends trace their own experience of the effect of the growing warmth, light

and colour. Jinny seems to alight on the crimson tassel because of how the red hue of the *Amaranthus* glowed in the sun – making it look as though it was ‘twisted with gold threads’ (1981, p. 6). The sense of touch is conjured up as Jinny describes how she feels hot and cold sensations at the same time. Her ‘hand burns’, but then her ‘palm is clammy and damp with dew’ (1981, p. 7). The reader suddenly imagines the taste and smell of ‘mackerel in the bowl’, alongside Rhoda, as she notes that the morning activities seem to have begun in the household (1981, p. 7). Louis then also evokes the sense of vision, and suggests at the smell of coal burning, as he details that, as the smoke rises from the chimney, ‘sleep curls off the roof like a mist' (1981, p. 7). This sudden and shared voicing of perceptions, as a result of the friends’ interactions with the rurality nature form, also traces Woolf’s own ‘scene making’ process which is drawn from her openness to acknowledging the direct impressions that she experiences in her habitat hinterlands. The friends reach a crescendo of observations as they leave the solitary nature of ‘I’ exclamations (‘I hear a sound’), in favour of reaching out to one another: 'Look at the spider's web on the corner of the balcony,' said Bernard’ (1981, p. 6). Bernard is excited to express and even share his perceptions and this is evident with his use of a command word: ‘Look’, as he draws attention to the spider’s web before emphasising his interest with more detailed and aesthetic descriptions: 'It has beads of water on it, drops of white light' (1981, p. 6). The enthusiasm of Woolf’s human characters increases further as they travel deeper into this interconnected consciousness with the rural habitat. We notice this depth of connection with the natural world, because their accounts include microscopic detail. Jinny looks close enough to notice botanical identifiers (**'**The stalks are covered with harsh, short hairs'), and Susan classifies a caterpillar as ‘a green ring’ that is 'notched with blunt feet' (1981, p. 6). Woolf’s familiarity with the pursuits of the natural scientists becomes apparent with her characters’ intricate comments on the constituent parts of flora and fauna. The young friends’ overall appreciation of the interconnectivity of all of the species in their present ecosystem also illustrates Woolf’s environmental awareness in terms of the need for biodiversity in the functioning of habitats. In this sense, Woolf’s characters in *The Waves* are transformed from the feeling of being ‘separated’ to being part of a collective of ‘multiple embodied voices’ (Kostkowska, 2013, p. 42). Yet, her characters are also actively seeking this transformation and seem to be aware that they need to repeatedly be engaged in a dialogue with both human and non-human beings.

We see Woolf choosing Louis as the character who instinctively turns away from systematic responses that are a part of our human conceptualisation of time, structure and doctrine, when as readers we are made aware of the brief interludes from nature that also describe their childhood in the rurality. Louis recognises the power that is given to the clock in their tutor's, Miss Hudson's, classroom. He acknowledges that the others (but not Rhoda) have again accepted the constraints of social grouping. Woolf explains how they had proceeded to 'bind themselves into a thong', but Louis is wary of speaking and confirming his difference ('my Australian accent') in the presence of 'this great clock, yellow-faced, which ticks and ticks' (1981, p. 14). She goes further to demonstrate that for Bernard, Neville, Jinny and Susan their command of words and the English language is used as a device for social integration. In this moment in time Bernard can partially create action and change moods by deciding to form words that are 'in flocks, now this way, now that way, moving all together now dividing, now coming together', whereas Louis seeks the continuous but flexible motion of energy that flows through natural ecosystems and he imagines how his 'roots are threaded, like fibres in a flower-pot, round and round about the world' (1981, p. 14). We gain a sense of the distinct experience that Bernard is given by Woolf as her partial narrator-character, because he has more control over his decisions. Louis, on the other hand, sometimes feels vulnerable to life's forces and often tries to alter himself to align (though it may be constricting) with pre-existing modes of conduct that are accepted as the norm in his social realm.

Rhoda, too, appears to become entirely stifled by systematic responses to stimuli. She cannot connect with others when she is placed in an environment of linear or structured thinking. When she is confronted by Miss Hudson's mathematical questions, she 'cannot write' because all she can see are 'figures' with no resulting answer or 'understanding' (1981, p. 14). This fearful and numb reaction is only emphasised by the apparent ease with which the other children assimilate and complete the task: 'Louis writes; Susan writes; Neville writes; Jinny writes; even Bernard has now begun to write' (1981, p. 14). Trapped in the classroom environment, and then alone, it is even more difficult for Rhoda to function and process her experiences. We are reminded by Dubino that 'Woolf sees the interactions among species, and among species and their environments, as multidirectional' and Rhoda's need for an animated, three-dimensional, space illustrates this idea (2014, p. 133). Rhoda needs to be able to evoke her sensory understanding from the natural world that

surrounds them outside – in the rurality – to establish her own sense of meaning. Like Woolf, Rhoda requires a sense of universal connection that establishes when all of the Earth's life-forces are in relational motion. Without the movement of nature Rhoda struggles, but then when she loses any of the nearby links with her friends she ceases to operate entirely.

In the numb state that Rhoda exists within, when she is in the classroom, there is no chance for the numerical symbols to hold any resonance for her whatsoever. In this rigid situation 'the figures mean nothing now. Meaning has gone' for Rhoda and she feels as though she is trapped on the outside of the functioning human system: 'I begin to draw a figure and the world is looped in it, and I myself am outside the loop; which I now join – so – and seal up, and make entire' (1981, pp. 14-15). Woolf lets this awareness of Rhoda's processing of experience feel intense for her reader. We are told that despite Rhoda's inability to continue, the human construct of the clock still 'ticks' with a mechanical rhythm and 'the loop of the figure is beginning to fill with time; it holds the world in it' (1981, pp. 14-15). For all of Woolf's characters in *The Waves*, although on the surface this is especially noticeable for Rhoda and Louis, their memories and recognition of nature in the rurality of their childhoods enhances their ability to be creatively connected and 'freer' (Lambert, 1995, p. 91). Their behaviour, kindness and sense of self-esteem improves when Woolf describes their shared dialogue in a natural setting. It is argued by Lambert that 'when characters assume that their words do not always have to correspond to some commonly agreed-upon reality, they are freer to invent new "facts" (1995, p. 91). With this open attitude, Woolf's characters are able to notice more about each other's emotional aptitudes and they can begin to understand that their surrounding environments also function in a similar way to inter-related ecosystems.

In contrast to the sterility of habitual behaviour, which takes place in the classroom scenes in *The Waves*, we also see Woolf demonstrating the difference in her characters' responses when they are aware of their reactions. She defines this greater receptivity as a process which brings them closer to her own sense of how being connected to the natural world establishes self-identities and a relationship with the universality of life. Rhoda is often paralyzed by the rules of conservative society:

> And as she stares at the chalk figures, her mind lodges in those white circles, it steps through those white loops into emptiness, alone. They have no meaning for her. She has no answer for them. She has no body as the others have
> (1981, p. 15).

It is significant that Louis notices, when he looks back at the classroom, that Rhoda not only 'stares at the chalk figures' in a state of numbness (1981, p. 15). She also becomes entirely lost when they all leave her 'alone' (1981, p. 15). He seems to know that, for her, being left represents a final feeling of 'emptiness' and that without any link to the living animism of the natural world, she is bereft and does not have a strong enough sense of herself, in this situation, to find logical answers for the academic lessons that are placed in front of her (1981, p. 15). The degree to which Rhoda's interactions take place in an environment which is natural or mechanical is important and 'Woolf points to the contexts in which these encounters take place' (Dubino, 2014, p. 132). In this regard, Dubino argues that Woolf's focus on ecology aligns her with some of the methodology that would be used by a research 'scientist' (2014, p. 132). In both the literal and the broader sense of the word ecology, Woolf is intrigued by the interactions and relationships between people and the settings where they engage with one another. This curiosity is also found in Woolf's fascination with nature scenes and the pattern that plays out between her animated nature-backdrops and the complex emotions that are expressed by her figure-like characters.

Woolf shows us that Louis's empathic understanding gives him a wider perspective on the nature of emotions and perception, because he does not 'fear [Rhoda] as [he] fears the others' (1981, p. 15). Although the others are perhaps less overtly astute to the feelings of those around them, nature is still shown to trigger reciprocity in them and the desire to form 'our universe' (1981, p. 15). Bernard cries out, as they leave the classroom: 'Let us inhabit the underworld. Let us take possession of our secret territory' and they proceed to create a 'candelabra' from 'pendant currants […] shining red on one side, black on the other' (1981, p. 15). Dubino's introductory analysis of Woolf's underlying thoughts on identity and survival – through the connections between beings and between beings and their environments – (which she gleans from *Mrs Dalloway*) can also be translated onto the essential intra and interconnections that the friends in *The Waves* have between each

other and between their early sense of a relationship with the rurality. This is because, in her initial Chapter summary, Dubino writes that 'our identity is dependent on our relations with others […] whether they are edifices like barns or alive like trees' and so she demonstrates that Rhoda's struggle with engaging with her studies (her dysregulation of emotions and executive functioning) aligns with moments where she feels isolated from a present bond with the friendship group and alienated by the schoolroom environment (2014, p. 131). Dubino then remarks on the need for an identity to exist in play with a 'network' which, to follow her metaphor, works via a 'tree-like linkage – our branching out – to other people' (2014, p. 131). In order for Rhoda to feel secure in her own individuality, she is paradoxically dependent on forming reciprocal relationships that strengthen her solo identity as a result of being in an active context with other energetic beings and spaces. Dubino's reference to the 'lattice' or 'network' that exists between a tree's roots, via the mycelium for example, is significant – trees communicate via this intricate web-system in order to both transport vital nutrients between each other and warn or protect themselves from approaching threats to both a singular tree and an entire forest of trees (2014, p. 131). Here, again, Dubino turns to ecological language to refer to Woolf's creative philosophy. She reinforces the idea that Woolf's own reliance on the observation of and immersion in the natural world, causes her to set out strategies in her novel-writing that link all living organisms to the question of how we recognise the interconnectivity of our human lives with non-human beings. The survival of a woodland or forest ecosystem is reliant on the effective functioning of a symbiotic relationship – just as the friends in *The Waves* are ultimately stronger individually from within the myriad of relations that they share with the group and with the wider energetic transference that takes place in the rurality nature form.

3.5 Naturalism in *The Waves* and the Rurality Nature Form

We know from Woolf's essay of appreciation for Gilbert White that she respects his simple and naturalistic 'intention' of being able to recognise the characteristics of birds "on the ground as well as on the wing" (1981, p. 19). Alongside this, Woolf admires the eccentricity of the naturalist himself. She writes that the complexity of his character is intriguing, for 'when we try to discriminate the colour and shape of this very rare fowl, we are at a loss' (1981, p. 19). Woolf's reference to White as the 'fowl' in question also adds to the idea that she

observes the people around her as a naturalist would observe wildlife in their various habitats. Naturalism in the traditional, pastoral sense, occurs in Woolf's interwar novels with her use of the rurality as a nature form. In *The Waves*, the power of rurality imagery shines through with how the surrounding natural world seems to support Susan's life decisions. Woolf evidences a number of occasions where Susan is seen to value her memories of familiar, agricultural scenes. Susan seems to be designed by Woolf to portray a suspicion of the urban and the inside world: 'the carbolic smell of corridors and the chalky smell of classrooms', because she believes that in contrast 'the men in these fields are doing real things; they fill carts with real hay' (1981, p. 41). Susan aspired to live a life in the countryside, like her father. In the early part of *The Waves* she vehemently counts down her remaining days at school before summer arrives – longing to return home where 'the hay waves over the meadows' (1981, p. 27). Woolf also shows Susan remaining resolved in her loyalty to rural ideals once the group of friends reach early adulthood, because she declares 'I like to walk through the wet fields alone, or to stop at a gate and watch my setter nose in a circle, and to ask: Where is the hare?' (1981, p. 88). Susan accompanies recollections of experiences with her respect for countryside imagery. It is as if she feels that the conventionality of repeated plans for a settled future; in a rural location, may keep her protected from the rawness of life. Here, we see Woolf's Naturalism allowing for a brief balance between a main character and the natural world. It is possible to identify Susan's sense of tradition by the way in which she believes that a countryside lifestyle will result in a rhythmic process where her 'children will carry' her on through life's different stages. She believes that their coming and going will act like a wave ensuring that 'no day will be without movement' (1981, pp. 88-89). Susan presents the reassurance that she finds in the routine of an agricultural life when she notices routines. For example, she remarks on the back-and-forth of 'the horses going up to the fields' (1981, p. 98). Throughout *The Waves* Woolf makes sure that Susan's character remains fairly steadfast in terms of her preference to live in the rurality – even as her daily connection with nature appears to wane in her older years.

As domestic responsibilities increase, Susan now registers the changes in season 'by the steam on the window-pane, or the frost on the window-pane,' rather than by directly immersing herself in the woods and hedgerows (1981, p. 116). Whilst Susan says she is 'glutted with natural happiness', as she sits inside the house with her young children, the reader cannot fail to notice how Woolf adds an undertone of melancholy

(1981, p. 116). For, in feeling the different level of responsibility acquired by forming a young family, Susan would ‘wish sometimes that the fullness would pass’ or become lighter and then ‘the weight of the sleeping house rise, when we sit reading’ (1981, p. 116). Susan notices the contrast in lifestyles between herself and her friends as she gets a little older. This is because Woolf insinuates that whilst she sits happily in her house with her children, she simultaneously imagines ‘broken voices, and laughter, and Jinny who cries as the door opens, "Come! Come!"’ (1981, p. 117). Woolf thus illustrates how the rurality nature form becomes entwined with Susan’s phenomenological and emotional experience of her life – which again draws from some of the aims of Naturalism. There is also a sense that the nature form provides a backdrop for her relationships with the others (in her childhood, friendship group) as they all return (physically and psychologically) to the countryside of their youth.

This Naturalist linking of biological nature and psychological nature in *The Waves,* is shown when one of the friends attempts to describe the inner world of another. Whilst all of the group seem to be aware of Rhoda’s remoteness, early into the novel Louis senses that ‘as she stares at the chalk figures’ on the blackboard ‘her mind lodges in those white circles’ (1981, p. 15). With Louis’s imagining of Rhoda’s inner-processing, Woolf adopts the Naturalist genre to develop a ‘complex “modern” view’ of psychological life (Gorsky, 1972, p. 450). Woolf’s philosophical fascination with the ‘unity’ of life, is shown in *The Waves* with her repeated use of nature imagery (Gorsky, 1972, p. 450). The suggestion that an underlying connectivity exists between each of the friends and the world around them is often referred to as Woolf focuses on the meaning of ‘circles’ (1981, p. 151). Woolf reiterates that the bond between them always ‘closes in a ring’, even though each individual character has their own theme (1981, p. 97). Despite the friends having distinctive differences and frequent disruptions in the easy manner of their shared friendships, they continue to live in a related social sphere. We know that ‘Jinny and Rhoda remain in the city while Susan returns to her farm’ and ‘Louis and Neville desire order and precision while Susan hates both’ (Gorsky, 1972, pp. 450-454). In this manner, we see how Woolf concentrates, in *The Waves,* on a structure that illustrates her idea of the energy created through interactions resonating beyond the moment of contact or exchange. Woolf was aware of the opportunities that the Modernist literary movement provided, yet she also acknowledged that one of the results of an increasingly

global perspective was the loss of a sense of physical individuality when it came to character portrayal in Modernist novels.

3.6 Woolf, Rurality and a Modern Approach to the Natural Sciences in *The Waves*

We see evidence of Woolf's deep interest in the modernisation of nature writing as well as writing that catalogues new findings in the natural sciences, in her interwar novels. In *The Waves,* Woolf's mentioning of the contrasts between old and new scientific approaches is seen when the friends, and especially Bernard in his role as a voice for the group, seem to be torn between responding systematically or with a receptive awareness. The systematic response, in this context, aligns with traditional scientific approaches which had become habitual in the nineteenth century. We see this when, in their younger years, 'Bernard, Neville, Jinny and Susan (but not Rhoda) skim the flower-beds with their nets' (1981, p. 8). As they engage in this natural science pursuit which involved lightly knocking 'butterflies from the nodding tops of the flowers', just as the young Stephens did, we are reminded of how centred the biological sciences were on capture, collection and individual modes of nomenclature: 'Let them count out their tortoise-shells, their red admirals and cabbage whites' (1981, p. 8). From his position as the observer: 'But they cannot see me. I am on the other side of the hedge. There are only little eye-holes among the leaves' – and arguably the modern biologist – Louis offers an alternative perspective and gives Woolf the opportunity to compare the different approaches that were used to record nature (including the ethological analysis of humans) (1981, p. 8). In this sense, Louis's role in this scene is established to combine several questioning themes. The template of species collection is used to also suggest at the 'entrapment' of social mores (Alt, 2010, p. 11). Alt points out that Louis' action of hiding from the group; who are all uniting in this one activity, highlights his own fears of being 'scrutinized […] classified' (2010, p. 11). We can interpret Woolf's dislike of how 'taxonomy represents a narrow and reductive outlook' because, as Alt suggests, Louis' perspective as an onlooker 'relates the issue of identity-formation to taxonomy' (2010, p. 11). Whilst Louis faces a human instinct which craves acceptance from the group and an identity devised by his connection with them, he also senses the sacrifice of self that will take place and the hyper-focus that his differences will be subject to as he becomes vulnerable to social amalgamation. Woolf uses the discussion over contrasting methods of scientific nature observation to also evaluate social

interactions as individuals and group-identities. She does this in relation to her own life philosophy that believes in connection through shared and organic motion, rather than stationary cohesion.

Woolf's appreciation for modern, scientific nature observation is shown by comparing two different descriptions that Bernard makes in reference to the rurality nature form in *The Waves*. When Bernard is telling a story of the imaginary land of Elvedon to Susan in their youth, we can tell how he is already aware of how the rurality has often been divided up unfairly or kept away from people inside estate grounds. We know this because he mentions that 'there is a ring of wall round' the wood of Elvedon before saying: 'if the gardeners saw us they would shoot us' (1981, pp. 11-12). High walls were often used to designate that the land inside was the possession of a powerful and often wealthy family from the British upper class and the 'ring of wall' would be intended to keep other members of society on the outside – unless they had been invited inside. In this context the idea of the 'ring' is significant, because it is being used to establish an unbreachable societal boundary for people existing outside of the landed gentry; furthermore, the symbolism of the 'ring' form as a jewel further suggests at the sense of privilege, but also binding responsibility as part of an agreement or membership, associated with the rural spaces in estate grounds. There is a sense of urgency in the short syntax that Bernard uses to declare to Susan that 'no one has been here', and this is emphasised with his repeated insistence of the fact that 'nobody comes here' (1981, pp. 11-12). In this manner, the reader is given the impression of a rural space that has been hidden and kept aside for hegemonic demarcations of the elite or powerful in society. In this early scene, Woolf insinuates that Bernard knows that vast parts of the countryside have been owned by only a few families throughout history. Interestingly, this politicising of the landscape is highlighted further with how Heidi Stalla draws attention to the contextual reality of an actual site of an Elveden Estate on the Norfolk-Suffolk border. Stalla suggests that the fictional Elvedon 'represents the point in the book where history, biography, and legend intersect' and in doing so she offers a commentary (much like Bernard) on how hegemonic distribution of land often gathered allure when myth became mixed with real events (Stalla, 2003, p. 23). Elveden Estate was the home of Maharaja Duleep Singh who was exiled to England by the British army and therefore a symbol of the impact of colonial rule in India. For Stalla, Elveden's mystery – and the magical but uneasy descriptions of Elvedon in *The Waves* – is a consequence of the complicated way in which, 'like Bernard and Susan who are chased by the bearded gardener and flee from

Elvedon as from ‘a hostile country’, the deposed Maharaja, at the end of his life, tried desperately to escape from his adopted mother country’ (Stalla, 2003, p. 25). We gain a sense of Woolf’s undermining of patriarchal, colonial and anthropocentric attitudes with Bernard’s mentioning of how Elvedon (despite containing an ancient habitat of ferns, fungi, deciduous and coniferous trees) is diseased by the isolated adherence to tradition that also occurs within the high walls. Bernard describes the degradation (‘rotting’) of the long, entrenched, human-timeline of the wood at Elvedon, by noting how ‘red funguses’ are ‘growing beneath’, whilst they ‘tread on rotten oak apples’ and witness ‘the patter of some primeval fir-cone falling to rot among the ferns’ (1981, pp. 11-12). In this creative piece of dialogue, which is presented by a younger version of Bernard in response to his experience of the rurality, we gain a sense of the depth of his intellectual understanding of the world. He realises that the spheres of society that exist behind the high walls of Elvedon ostracize those without, but also (at times) trap those within, and Woolf adds drama to Bernard’s declaration with exclamations, repetition and alliteration: ‘The gardener with the black beard has seen us! We shall be shot! We shall be shot like jays and pinned to the wall!’ (1981, p. 12). There is an awareness that political landscapes form ‘hostile country’, where the notion of ‘escape to the beech wood’ offers a kind of dream of psychological freedom (1981, p. 12). Furthermore, merging with the flora and fauna (‘Bend as low as you can. Follow without looking back. They will think we are foxes’) reinstates a connection with the energies of the wider ecosystem and moves Bernard and Susan away from the corrupt sterility of constraints imposed by Elvedon’s association with hegemonic rule (1981, p. 12). In relation to the inspiration provided by Woolf’s rurality nature form and the underlying influence of modern approaches to investigations of the natural world, Bernard is responding more intuitively to his relationship with the environment, political controversies and the emotional status of his fellow human beings. In this regard, in *The Waves,* ‘creativity is decoupled from the verticality of the human “genius.” A kind of bioaesthetics emerges in these narratives through the becoming-animal of writing and through the becoming-artistic of one character’s creatural modes of living’ (Rohman, 2018, p. 64). As Woolf seeks out stimulus for her novel-writing, she immerses herself in the natural world and seems to delight in looking at the wider ecological processes that she sees from direct-viewing and an animalistic or immediate perspective. Woolf’s ‘artistic practice has its roots in the inhuman’ and we see this with her narrator-character Bernard (Rohman, 2018, p. 69). This is because he appears to act instinctively and

then artistically, rather than habitually. In this scene, he even adds animalistic details to his storytelling, by saying:

> We are in a hostile country. We must escape to the beech wood. We must hide under the trees. I turned a twig as we came. There is a secret path. Bend as low as you can. Follow without looking back. They will think we are foxes
> (1981, p. 12).

By witnessing Bernard's creative constructions, we can tell that he benefits from his ability to discern the complexity of situations when he feels himself to be a part of the rurality of their childhood. Rohman's research into animal studies is often influenced by the works of Elizabeth Grosz – philosopher and professor of feminist theory – who mapped out a bioaesthetic template for the discussion of art in the natural world. In respect of her theorizing, Rohman asserts that (in some ways similarly to Darwin) 'Grosz provides a mechanism for understanding the origins of the artistic within the strivings of life itself' (2018, p. 9). Grosz draws the attention of her readers back to Darwin's overall illustration of ecology's 'network of living organisms rather than a hierarchy of beings' (Rohman, 2018, p. 9). We are reminded by Rohman that 'Grosz maintains that art's "fundamental goal is to produce sensations" and "it's about feeling something intensely [while] there may be the by-product of a kind of understanding"' (2018, p. 9). In Rohman's remarks on Grosz's theorising, in relation to Woolf, we see Bernard's moments of nature-inspired, self-realisation. Woolf's readers are challenged with the intense emotions that she highlights. We note, for example, that Rhoda's trauma psychologically isolates her. Yet, it is only through acknowledging Rhoda's tremors and fear that we can intellectually recognise how her hypersensitivity and anxious-depressive cycles impact on her responses to stimulus. In further analysing Woolf's writing through a bioaesthetic lens in *The Waves*, Bernard's focused connection with the rurality nature form identifies a different behaviour, or ethology, which is not seen so overtly in an anthropogenic environment. Susan realises that Bernard's skill is enhanced when he is surrounded by nature. At the close of the Elvedon scene, she observes that he continues to make 'phrases' which seem to 'mount like an air-ball's string, higher and higher through the layers of the leaves, out of reach' (1981, p. 12). Woolf's characters in *The Waves* appear to be able to express themselves more truthfully when

they are either mimicking – by using biomimicry in their play-designs and adapted systems – or directly communing with nature in the rurality that surrounds them. Just as periods of time absorbed in nature evoke fresh inspiration for Woolf, her characters show courage and receptiveness when they engage with life that exists beyond their anthropogenic boundaries. An ecocritical consideration of Woolf's own philosophical and scientific belief in the interconnectedness of living ecosystems suggests that Woolf's characters becoming creatively enhanced when they divert from human-social responses.

3.7 Environmentalism in *The Waves* with the Rurality Nature Form

The Waves draws attention to an underlying concern for the environment, often via the rurality nature form, when Woolf's human characters are seen to expand life experiences to encompass a spiritual connection with the natural world that surrounds them. We know that Woolf's novels show nature and the anthropomorphic frequently switching places in order to suggest at the importance of realising that all life is connected in an ecological web of energy transference. Woolf uses Rhoda, as the character who is the most attuned to sensory changes, to highlight how the natural surroundings in *The Waves* share a dialogue with the friends during intense moments of felt recognition. Rhoda is consistently fearful of social mores and as she observes what she feels to be the act of coupling between Susan and Bernard and Jinny and Neville: 'the birch trees raise their branches' (1981, p. 156). She likens this action to the command of a 'bride' who 'had let her silken nightdress fall and come to the doorway saying "Open, open"' (1981, p. 156). Through this eerie image of a vulnerable 'bride' joining with the branches and asking to be allowed into the building, we gain a greater appreciation of Rhoda's fraught mentality and the sense that all of nature is being altered by the decisions of humans. Louis, wandering behind the two groups with Rhoda, also feels that their entire hinterland 'seems alive' (1981, p. 156). It is as if the land is listening to a spiritual continuum in rhythm with themselves. Woolf introduces an ecocritical way of thinking as a result of her ability to view flora and fauna 'just as she imagines the human self,' with alert senses and responses to stimuli (Nakazawa, 2012, p. 10). Woolf's sensory descriptions are circular. Her prose narratives pass between the phenomenological experiences of both the human characters and the trees and flowers that are central to the establishment of poignant moments in her novels. It is further argued by Nakazawa that the environmentalism that Woolf adopts is not only associated

with forming an active natural scene, but with considering the 'inner life of characters in relation to the outer world' (2012, p. 10). In this way Woolf seems to be partially drawn to an environmentally conscious approach, as a result of her consideration of both non-human and human interactions. There is a sense that she uses ecological structuring and the threat to ecosystems that is posed by monocultures, to simultaneously reflect on the problems that humans experience in societies that are expected to value controlled conformity.

Woolf's rurality nature form presents an expanded perspective of the animistic vision in *The Waves*. Woolf's reader is informed that she appreciates the importance of the natural world - which exists outside of anthropomorphic aspirations. She notices how swathes of similar colours suggest at gaps in biodiversity, such as when the narration describes how the sunlight on groups of trees or blades of grass '*dissolved the separate foliation into one green mound*' (1981, p. 100). With the dissolving of the singular into a '*green mound*' Woolf is drawing attention to areas of the rurality that are less biologically diverse, because only a few species are found to be growing in that location. We can see that Woolf's recognition of how complacent the majority of humans are towards nature processes, becomes more overt when she strives to create a biodiverse narrative voice which involves the energetic responses of flora and fauna. Woolf is also astute in her depictions of how changes in climate and weather in *The Waves* causes her reader to notice the liveliness of the natural world. For example, the action of the sun beating down on an orchard wall causes '*every pit and grain of the brick*' to '*melt into hot-baked grains of dust*' (1981, p. 100). The individual components that make up the wall are melded together under the pressure of heat from the Sun. These depictions of isolated elements coming together repeatedly reminds us that notions of energetic universality in nature, greatly influenced Woolf's experience of life. To follow Woolf's belief in the importance of a diverse ecosystem, the interconnectedness of nature in *The Waves* is continually highlighted. In Woolf's descriptions we see how thousands of individual plant organisms, such as grass species, '*run together in one fluent green blaze*' forming a stimulating performance (1981, p. 100). Nakazawa, when translating Woolf's environmentally aware descriptions back into the realm of human cognitions, shows that 'leaves stand for the countless "atoms" or impressions accumulated in consciousness' (2012, p. 10). Woolf's life philosophy is therefore adapted from a natural science understanding of ecological processes. Woolf attaches her ideas – surrounding the nature of creative dialogues – to the functioning of organisms in a natural habitat.

Woolf's intuitive recognition of shifts in the environment seems to have developed from her own life-philosophy. In *The Waves* especially, Woolf's depiction of time seems to be neither entirely linear nor entirely cyclical. She represents time through a series of conversational themes: 'He has not come,' said Neville. 'The door opens and he does not come […] But without Percival there is no solidity' (1981, p. 82). Just as the loss of Percival leaves Neville feeling that, as a group of friends in grief, they are left as 'silhouettes, hollow phantoms moving mistily without a background,' Woolf's own ethereal style illuminates connections between abstract ideas but without an easy fluidity of prose (1981, p. 82). Mattison likens Woolf's understanding of time with Bergson's durée, in so far as they both tend to reach a point of rejection when it comes to their faith in the phenomenology of 'that other clock': the human construction of time (2010, p. 72). In Mattison's explanation we see that Woolf's translation of time in her novels reiterates the idea that her experience of time cannot be linear, locational or particularly humancentric. This is because, the past and present exist in a state of 'continual comingling' with memories flowing into current thoughts (2010, p. 72). For Woolf, time and felt experience appear to be associated with the various cyclical processes that occur in nature. Her novels illustrate this chosen temporal structuring, by frequently combining the sensory expressions of the human and non-human characters. Her human protagonists and animated nature forms create energetic responses to the experience of life.

In relation to Bernard's sense of both his individuality and his positioning amongst a timeline of fellow artists in *The Waves*, Woolf depicts the feeling of a 'fall' in terms of a sudden realisation. Bernard (Woolf's narrator-character) also notes how he 'fell', when he 'looked at the tree' (1981, p. 171). Woolf is reversing an anthropomorphic structuring of power dynamics, because here the 'tree' is wiser than Bernard – it causes him to break from the regularity of established thoughts. The cycle of Bernard's realisation is mapped with how he is 'formed' in being, when he falls and this results in a new action: 'I rose and walked away' (1981, p. 171). The evidence of Woolf's environmentally aware stance is recognisable, due to how Bernard's interaction with the rurality nature form causes his collaborative sense of being himself. By embracing 'autumn' and 'the fiery and yellow branches', he appreciates that nature 'forms' through cycles of ecological processes (1981, p. 171). But, in that moment of interconnection with natural reactions, he also 'forms' through the 'completed

experience' of that interaction (1981, p. 171). As the reader, when Woolf traces her life-philosophy of ecosystems encompassing the spiritual involvement of non-human and human species, we feel a weight being lifted from Bernard's analytical mind. Woolf emphasises her belief in the importance of tuning in with energetic vibrations of natural reactions, by following Bernard's ecological realisation with a direct reference to her literary and musical forbears: 'Byron, Shelley, Dostoevsky […] a picture of Beethoven in a silver frame' (1981, p. 171). Bernard is aware that as an energetic being, he is connected to all the other beings that have become a part of the wider biosphere on Earth. He feels a closer bond with artists over the ages of human time, such as Byron, because of their shared passion for developing their artistic pursuits. With Bernard's ability to muse on these interrelated systems, we gain a further insight into some of Woolf's attitudes towards the significance of ecological networking as an underlying system that the anthropocentric society often negates to consider. In *Ecology Without Nature,* Morton states that 'the very idea "nature" […] will have to wither away in an "ecological" state of human society' (2009, p. 1). Yet, as modern and contemporary nature writers and ecocritics seek 'to change our view from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism', Morton strives to disrupt easy acceptance of this new 'worldview' (2009, p. 2). He posits that the notion that a new perspective might 'change the world' derives from Romantic ideology and involves a reflective and ironic questioning of 'how humans experience their place in the world' (Morton, 2009, p. 2). The thesis partially agrees with Morton's determination of ecocriticism as a term that is biased towards humans, but specifically in relation to an analysis of how Woolf illustrates her human (and also non-human) characters interacting with and 'experiencing their place' in the energetic and living ecosystems that surround them.

Bernard feels that whilst they all changed as a group of young friends growing up, the trees that surrounded them in the rurality of their childhoods still hold greater wisdom. Bernard describes the symbolism of a specific willow tree – known to the friends – because it remained stable and stoic; it 'alone resisted' whilst the friends were moved by their own 'eternal flux' amongst the swathes of historical human time: 'For I changed and changed; was Hamlet, was Shelley, was the hero, whose name I now forget, of a novel by Dostoevsky; was for a whole term, incredibly, Napoleon; but was Byron chiefly' (1981, p. 168). For Rhoda, the shocking sense of existing within an anthropogenic time is experienced at a faster pace. Rhoda mentions how the others

usually ‘brush the surface of the world’ and spend most of their conscious time focused on human aspirations, rather than on their connection to the ‘fluttering wings’ that they have caught in ‘nets’ (1981, p. 8). She keenly feels that the human impact on the natural world has an ever-altering effect.

Bernard notices the entwined nature of experiential time. He reminds himself of this as he strides out in the present, because he appreciates that he also exists as part of a series of ‘long ranks of magnificent human beings’ (1981, p. 171). He therefore lives with the expectation that he must act as ‘the continuer […] the person miraculously appointed to carry it on’ (1981, p. 171). Bernard’s experience of the duration of time is, nevertheless, more typically linear than Rhoda’s and he follows society’s conditioned ideas on time. Yet his awareness of just how strange the human experience of time is hints at a hidden anxiety about the consequences of humans imposing time-constructs on the cyclical processes that occur in the natural world. Here again we see evidence of Woolf’s environmental tendencies. This is notable as she reiterates the fact that human society has moved away from the natural functioning of ecosystem rhythms. Human time and nature time have, at times, lost synchronicity and Woolf occasionally reiterates this fragmentation in *The Waves*.

Rhoda’s experience of time contrasts with that of her friends, because her recollections often appear more frequently in the form of repeated and ruminating thought-loops:

> I am above the earth now. I am no longer upright, to be knocked against and damaged. All is soft, and bending. Walls and cupboards whiten and bend their yellow squares on top of which a pale glass gleams. Out of me now my mind can pour. I can think of my Armadas sailing on the high waves. I am relieved of hard contacts and collisions
> (1981, p. 19).

For example, there is a moment when she immerses herself in a half-imagined memory of a nature-focused island living, where the sun shines and she sails on peacefully ‘alone under the white cliffs’ (1981, p. 19). This moment is then interrupted by a habitual jolt of fear and her harsh perception of reality causes her to psychologically ‘sink’ and then ‘fall’ (1981, p. 19). The reality of the very human and mundane ‘corner of the

cupboard,' represents entrapment and falseness (1981, p. 19). Rhoda feels that she can no longer freely exist as a unique being in this domestic space. With this depiction of the undulation of different moods, Woolf is able to show the complexity of the psychological states that Rhoda is struggling with. Rhoda's difficulty appears to arise due to both her own confusion around the tangibility of present-time and as a consequence of feeling unconnected to some of the more directly anthropogenic and superficial pursuits of her friends. With Rhoda as her exceptional character in *The Waves*, Woolf hints at the negative effects of ignoring the physicality of the natural world in favour of chasing rapid and human-focused developments.

Yet, Rhoda strives for a connection (that Woolf herself finds) via modern science's approach to studying nature. After Percival's death, amongst the noise of London, when Rhoda's fearful responses to life seem to be reflected in the rush of the 'trams' and the 'swarm' of people, she urges herself to move closer to the childhood familiarity of the rurality. The experience of death and grief, through Rhoda's eyes, conjures up an image where 'lightning has gashed the tree and the flowering branch has fallen' and nature is presented as vulnerable and transient (1981, p. 110). In this moment of heightened feeling, Rhoda maps her often-felt reality onto the existentialism of grief. But significantly, and briefly, she is also able to acknowledge the tactile present-time that humans have created in the city to actualize daily life. She momentarily sees the tangible reality of 'street markets', or 'pavements', or 'chimneys' and appreciates that humans have carved out a 'structure' and 'a dwelling place' (1981, p. 110). In her grief-stricken clarity Rhoda sees things as they are, but she still does not admire them. Woolf's early environmental thought seems to be made more present with Rhoda's disdain for how she sees humans have transformed to live a life without nature's processes in the city. For Rhoda, these people who have adapted are:

> the flowers that grow among the rough grasses of the field which the cows trample, wind-bitten, almost deformed, without fruit or blossom. These are what I bring, torn up by the roots from the pavement of Oxford Street, my penny bunch, my penny bunch of violets. Now from the window of the tram I see masts among chimneys; there is the river; there are ships that sail to India. I will walk by the river.
> (1981, p. 110).

Rhoda's 'penny bunch', or the idea of a bound garland, is referred to at points throughout *The Waves* and the imagery captures traces of Percy Bysshe Shelley's poetry – significantly the last two stanzas in his poem 'The Question':

> And nearer to the river's trembling edge
> There grew broad flag-flowers, purple pranked with white,
> And starry river buds among the sedge,
> And floating water-lilies, broad and bright,
> Which lit the oak that overhung the hedge
> With moonlight beams of their own watery light;
> And bulrushes, and reeds of such deep green
> As soothed the dazzled eye with sober sheen.
>
> Methought that of these visionary flowers
> I made a nosegay, bound in such a way
> That the same hues, which in their natural bowers
> Were mingled or opposed, the like array
> Kept these imprisoned children of the Hours
> Within my hand,—and then, elate and gay,
> I hastened to the spot whence I had come,
> That I might there present it!—Oh! to whom?
> (Shelley, 2025).

The exclamatory phrase 'Oh! to whom?', in Shelley's above poem, reminds readers of an earlier scene with Rhoda in *The Waves*. She is debating over who she should give her picked flowers to – repeating the phrase 'Oh! to whom?' (Woolf, 1981, p. 38). Following snatches of the rhyming lines of Shelley's 'The Question', Rhoda muses that she

> will sit by the river's trembling edge and look at the water-lilies, broad and bright, which lit the oak that overhung the hedge with moonlight beams of their own watery light. I will pick flowers; I will bind flowers on one garland and clasp them and present them – Oh! to whom?
> (Woolf, 1981, p. 38).

There is a sense that Rhoda keeps returning to the romanticism of the natural world in Shelley's poetry, with her mimicking, for example, of the alliterative 'broad and bright' in relation to the striking presence of the water lilies floating in the river, to remind herself of the reassuring energy in life and re-invigorate her desire to connect with others (Woolf, 1981, p. 38). We see this with the slower pace of the sentences, during the description of the rurality nature form: 'moonlight beams of their own watery light' (Woolf, 1981, p. 38). The emphasis on the natural world appears to momentarily distract Rhoda from her personal feelings. The actions she takes are slower and slightly less orderly – she will firstly 'sit' and then take the time to 'look at the water-lilies' (Woolf, 1981, p. 38). The giving of the garland – that she has gathered from the wildflowers in the rurality nature form habitats that surround her in micro and macro landscapes throughout her life – is an act of trying to spiritually bond with her friends. Yet, Woolf underlies Rhoda's hope for assimilation with a fear and confusion around how adapting to stereotypical social roles may lead to a further loss of identity. The image of the garland itself represents wildflowers picked and then both artificially bound together and made into a submissive performance of giving away energy and 'self'. In reading the passage there is a slight increase in the sense of urgency between the description of the waterlilies and the garland – this is noticeable with the loss of poetic description, the repetition of 'and' that adds to speed to the syntax and due to the rapidity of actionable instructions: 'and clasp them and present them' (Woolf, 1981, p. 38). The repetition of 'I will' also draws attention to Rhoda's shift in mood – she now seems to be issuing a command for herself and the slower pace associated with sitting by the river has dispersed (Woolf, 1981, p. 38). The swaying between descriptive and instructive tones of voice further shows how Rhoda appears to embody Woolf's wrestling with a persistent confusion over the ideas of identity, community and the dangers of conforming (or not conforming) to social power structures. Whilst this thesis primarily maintains an environmental focus, the above reference – to glimpses of Shelley's poetry in the expression of Rhoda's experiences – considers the important and

established nature of intertextual readings of Woolf's oeuvre. Rhoda's repeated use of Shelley's poetic verse, for example, illustrates how Woolf interweaves *The Waves* with snatches of her own readings (and inherited readings) to create a further rurality nature form layer that is immersed in a web of literary associations. An expansion of this intertextual lens, alongside the thesis' emphasis on the natural tangibility of Woolf's nature forms, could contribute towards future research that layers the reading of the nature forms with varying depths and forms of artistic and environmental context.

In a return to the later passage, where Rhoda is in London with her 'penny bunch of violets', we see how her noticing of the ways in which human 'structure is visible. We have made a dwelling place' only drives her inner conflict with greater ferocity back towards the 'river' and the way out, into the rurality and towards the 'sea', where she can 'throw [her] violets' and make her 'offering to Percival' (1981, pp. 110-111). Rhoda seems to be propelled by both a wish to fling herself into the suggested freedom of a wider ecosystem, and a need to reinstate her alliance with the anthropocentric, and frequently patriarchal and colonial society that demands certain demonstrations from her. *The Waves* shows humans as ignorantly destructive, and the natural world as a spiritual system that revolves cyclically for renewal. There is an understanding in *The Waves* that figures that the natural world is being subjected to the back-and-forth treatment of human exploration, manipulation and hegemonic control. Whilst maintaining an authorly distance in *The Waves*, Woolf's undertones of social commentary question the eco-politics of her era. Woolf's experiential notion of undulating time represents her absorption with the idea that every organism is 'part of the earth': the organism is both uniquely itself and linked to 'the whole' (2002, p. 84). The life-philosophy that Woolf associates with the functioning of a healthy, natural ecosystem is described by Mattison in terms of considering how a singular flower exists in an energetically-connected relationship 'with the universe' (2010, pp. 72-73). For Woolf, a poignant recognition of this ecological connectivity is made apparent for herself and her characters when 'moments of being' interrupt the usual flow of life's activities (Mattison, 2010, pp. 72-73). These 'being' moments, as opposed to 'non-being', correspond to a sudden recognition of the complex interweaving of natural processes and each individual's existence amongst them. These significant moments highlight how individuality might be appreciated more easily when we recognise how it contributes towards the functioning of a greater system – a system that simultaneously links all organisms together.

The investigation in Chapter 3 concentrates on Woolf's rurality nature form to highlight how she creates interconnected habitat spaces in *The Waves* that capture the universality of biodiverse, functioning ecosystems. In *The Waves,* this sense of a network of organisms, who hold a unique energy, although as a part of a collective, is often created through the animism of natural vegetation. In this analysis of *The Waves*, the examination of the rurality nature form is channelled through the themes of Woolf's own form of Naturalism, the inspiration that she finds in modern approaches to the Natural Sciences and her sense of a growing need to honour environmental protection by asserting our shared existence with non-human beings. This recognition of the state of being alive, or being energised by spiritual forces, is often present in Woolf's novels. Chapter 3 asserts this by analysing how Woolf observes 'living' qualities in all aspects of nature in *The Waves*. It draws attention to scenes that illustrate how the group of friends in *The Waves* – Bernard, Susan, Jinny, Rhoda, Neville and Louis – rely on a return to the tangible or remembered rural habitats of their shared experience of youth. Bernard interacts with the rurality nature form with a receptivity that convinces him of the poetic existence of moments that are out-of-time. During these liminal spaces of experience Bernard shifts to a metaphysical narrational voice – acknowledging that human time loses sway for the friends as they merge with the natural world. For Susan, in an overt sense, the rurality nature form is a conduit for her daily life (although it increasingly becomes more of a source of pragmatic activity, as she ages into adulthood). Jinny seems to receive sensory responses quickly and in contrast with Susan, in so far as she, Jinny, seeks out the stimulation of the rurality nature form whilst living in the city. The rurality nature form allows Woolf to express Rhoda's hidden turmoil. Her powerful waves of emotion freely emerge when Rhoda combines her sense of self with the rhythms of ecological movement. Neville's relationship with Woolf's rurality nature form offers him familiarity through the known experience of their shared childhoods coexisting with the natural world. He also seems to be able to lessen his anxiety over the chaotic reality of human emotions by returning to the wider context of their lives amongst nature. Louis connects with the rurality nature form, by extending his perception of his own identity to fuse with the physical qualities of the plant species that surround them. He seems to cognitively understand the inherent isolation of being and accepts and then solves this existential dilemma by finding the universal in existing as a being who is a part of a network of other living beings. Chapter 3 (with an emphasis on Woolf's rurality nature form in *The Waves*) demonstrates a

further increase in habitat ‘wildness’, in relation to the garden design scale that organises the ordering of Woolf’s nature forms in this thesis. The garden design structuring expands from an examination of the formal design nature form in *Mrs Dalloway* (Chapter 1) and then the naturalistic gardens nature form in *To the Lighthouse* (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 is also positioned before the analysis of Woolf’s ‘wildest’ nature form – estate grounds – in *Between the Acts*, which is discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Estate Grounds in *Between the Acts*

Chapter 4 investigates Woolf's use of her literary estate grounds nature form in *Between the Acts.* The chapter will begin with a discussion of the importance of tracing Woolf's autobiographical and horticultural contexts in relation to this. The following sections, in line with preceding chapters, will build on these contexts by examining Woolf's naturalistic style, her natural science influences and environmentalism. Chapter 4 maps how the estate grounds habitat in *Between the Acts* energises the spaces where the Oliver family at Pointz Hall interact with one another and with their neighbours, visitors, and actors who are putting on Miss la Trobe's play. The relationship between Woolf's estate grounds nature form and *Between the Acts* is intriguing, because – as the wildest of the four nature forms – the expanse of the habitat type absorbs her socio-environmental questioning about anthropocentric and patriarchal attitudes, land use and land accessibility during the interwar period.

4.1 Nature Form: Estate Grounds

In *Between the Acts* Woolf's most expansive and 'wild' nature form, estate grounds, reflects on the changing circumstances of the people who live and work on this landscape terrain. The estate grounds nature from, whilst only superficially less focused on the active distribution of farming methods found in Woolf's rurality nature form is, for the purpose of the thesis, identified as covering a greater area of land than the other nature forms. This sense of distance – in landscape design terms – is presented through a mimicry of the 'wilderness' that exists beyond the estate walls, alongside an imaginative state of non-human dominance. Woolf's use of the estate grounds nature form in *Between the Acts*, in relation to the gentrified land ownership at Pointz Hall, suggests that the dominating influence of Bart and Giles Oliver disrupts the more instinctive relationship that Swithin and Isa Oliver would otherwise have with the natural world. We know that Swithin 'always meant to set up a house of her own' (somewhere more sheltered, like Kensington or Kew), 'so that she could have the benefit of the gardens' (p. 309). Despite her brother's patriarchal attitude, Swithin appears concerned with natural environments and how they are altered over time. She does not want to witness the habitual ways in

which her brother's land management leaves a jarring relationship between the human and the non-human beings, when the conditions are harsher at Pointz Hall during Winter. Swithin seems to prefer thinking about the lives of the non-human beings in the estate grounds habitat at Pointz Hall, rather than only focusing on human development. She desires to exist as a small part of the entire ecosystem in the estate grounds habitat. Swithin's situating of herself amongst the natural world and questioning 'why' her ancestors placed themselves in a certain environmental location relates to Buell's attempts at finding a balanced ecocritical position. This is because Buell follows the line of argument that states that as humans we cannot experience life from the perspective of a non-human being. We can only expect to gain further sense of ecological interconnectivity by acknowledging that we are also 'environmentally embedded' (Buell, 2006, p. 8). In *Between the Acts*, this environmental awareness becomes present when Woolf's characters connect with the natural world via the estate grounds nature form. The Reverend in the audience astutely notes that Miss la Trobe's play – set on a stage outside in the estate grounds – reached out and directly made reference to themselves. The onlookers were made to feel that they too existed as 'part of the whole' (2012, p. 396). Woolf emphasises the truth behind the Reverend's revelation by showing that when he speaks of this higher sense of interwoven 'spirit', 'swallows were sweeping round him' who 'seemed cognizant of his meaning' (2012, p. 397). Woolf's underlying argument in *Between the Acts* concerns her own striving for a sense of 'wholeness' (Blodgett, 1983, p. 30). Woolf determinedly 'urges us to see the human being as the natural being', even whilst the Olivers chase the opposite in their anthropogenic world (Blodgett, 1983, p. 29). It is therefore stated by Blodgett that, in *Between the Acts,* Woolf challenges herself and her reader. This is because, rather than just focusing on anthropomorphising the flora and fauna, Woolf writes to convince us of the animalistic traits of humans and remind us of an alternative human desire which favours cohesion with non-human beings in ecosystems.

Whilst the estate grounds at Pointz Hall in Woolf's *Between the Acts* are the main focus for the novel's structure, *Mrs Dalloway* also explores the significance of land that surrounds British mansions in an episodic manner. Woolf highlights these estate references with Clarissa's escapist memories that refer to her younger, adult years. Woolf purposely returns to the admiration that Clarissa holds for Bourton, where each visit played out like some 'extraordinary summer' drama, with 'letters, scenes, telegrams' suggesting future possibilities

(2000, p. 62). Woolf asserts that although Clarissa has lived a very comfortable life in London, she would never forget the sheer excitement of how there would be 'one scene after another at Bourton' (2000, p. 152). As a consequence of her time at Bourton, for Peter Walsh especially, Clarissa could be 'ravishing, romantic, recalling some field or English harvest' in her own, often hidden, whimsical way (2000, p. 152). How Clarissa is at Bourton lies in opposition with her role as Mrs Dalloway in London, where she must 'submit to a kind of containment' within the mechanical movements of the post-war city (Zlatkin, 2010, p. 84).With Clarissa, we see Woolf appreciating the depth of a character who relaxes when engaged with the natural world. This dichotomy that Woolf observes between public and private faces – with a greater sense of freedom being associated with an engagement with the estate grounds nature form – also provides the underlying theme for Swithin's conflicted situation with the land at Pointz Hall in *Between the Acts.*

4.2 Biographical Impact on the Estate Grounds Nature Form in *Between the Acts*:

> 'From an aeroplane, he said, you could still see, plainly marked, the scars made by the Britons; by the Romans; by the Elizabethan manor house; and by the plough, when they ploughed the hill to grow wheat in the Napoleonic wars'
>
> (Woolf, 2012, p. 307).

Woolf would have been made more intimately aware of the complexities of estate management due to her relationship with Vita Sackville-West. Sackville-West grew up at Knole House in Kent but, as a consequence of the inheritance laws of the time, the property was passed on to her uncle and cousin. In January 1927, Woolf visited Knole and the letter exchange between the two women beforehand highlights Sackville-West's excitement. Woolf was aware that Sackville-West wanted to introduce her to Knole and so uses this knowledge to persuade her to take her travel vaccines as she writes: 'promise me to do it – or I won't come to Knole. It's absolutely necessary' (Woolf & Sackville-West, 1992, p. 175). Sackville-West's later reply is absorbed with her preparations for Woolf's visit, and she cannot resist romanticising the effect of 'a lovely full moon' on the 'court' and 'the battlements' (Woolf & Sackville-West, 1992, p. 177). Woolf and Sackville-West's relationship reached an artistic crescendo when their literary descriptions of the natural world added

another level of intimate understanding. It is clear that Sackville-West's absorption with Knole influenced Woolf's estate grounds nature form. They experienced their greatest sensuous intimacy when Woolf first stayed at Knole in December of 1925. For Sackville-West, too, her adoration for Knole – and the poignancy of her losing it when her father died in January 1928 – becomes entwined with her love for Woolf. Sackville-West writes to Woolf from Knole and emphasises the love she feels for the estate, describing 'the strange melancholy halloo by which the deer are called to be fed,' before using the next paragraph to express her 'wish to be with' Woolf (Woolf & Sackville-West, 1992, p. 94). These letters from Sackville-West to Woolf are personal and speak of infatuation. We know that the estate at Knole encompassed so much of Sackville-West's sense of identity and passion, and so it is significant that she speaks of the land alongside her desire to see Woolf. For Sackville-West, the physical act of managing an estate gives her time to think about what really matters to her. Woolf's observations of the estate grounds at Knole and Sissinghurst, alongside her understanding of what the land meant to Sackville-West, enable her to seek out and then present human feelings that are simpler and more condensed. Woolf's engagement with Sackville-West's passion for estate landscape allows her to further use 'nature philosophically to explore the self' (Royer, 2010, p. 180). This ability to transcend modern life and identify the essences of emotional reactions when immersed in nature, is a desire that Woolf shared with Thoreau. Woolf often aspired 'to see ordinary things in a truly new manner' and the capacity to do this was something she 'much admired in Henry James', but was ultimately inspired by Sackville-West (Royer, 2010, p. 180). Sackville-West's perspectives and her willingness to find ways to relate to Woolf's intuitive creativity allowed Woolf to explore her sensuosity and the further reaches of her thematic ideas surrounding the nature form of estate grounds.

In the opening descriptions of *Between the Acts*, Woolf shows Mr Oliver and Mrs Haines engaged in an obsessive conversation surrounding the estate grounds at Pointz Hall. Woolf portrays these two characters as exhibiting a superficial approach to life. Their discussion about the estate grounds at Pointz Hall is practically-minded, interested in history, but ultimately more concerned with their social situations, prestige and degree of dominance over the natural world. Mrs Haines is mockingly depicted as an opportunist 'with eyes protruding as if they saw something to gobble in the gutter' and she strives to inform the owner of Pointz Hall that 'her family […] had lived near Liskeard for many centuries. There were the graves in the churchyard to prove it'

(2012, pp. 307-308). Mr Oliver, 'of the Indian Civil Service, retired' has become accustomed to interrupting, returning to his field of interest and thinking that whenever he speaks everyone will be fascinated by what he has to say:

> The site they had chosen for the cesspool was, if he had heard aright, on the Roman road. From an aeroplane, he said, you could still see, plainly marked, the scars made by the Britons; by the Romans; by the Elizabethan manor house; and by the plough, when they ploughed the hill to grow wheat in the Napoleonic wars.
> (2012, pp. 307-308).

Woolf introduces Mr Oliver as he is doggedly telling his audience about the positioning of the cesspool on his estate; he is persistently depicted making people aware of his prominent role. In contrast, Woolf makes the reader aware of the approach of Mr Oliver's daughter-in-law, Isa, who longs for a deeper form of emotional communication. She feels that she shares more understanding with the quieter character of Mr Haines, 'the gentleman farmer', in whose 'ravaged face she always felt mystery; and in his silence, passion' (2012, p. 308). Isa seems to momentarily experience a sense of connection and freedom, as Mr Haines's personality aligns more with her own. Woolf highlights how Isa usually feels weighed down by the rigid structure of the aristocratic family traditions and experiences anxiety over the future of her role at Pointz Hall. Woolf deliberately sets up the 'rationalistic' Mr Oliver for a fall, as Isa is introduced (Blodgett, 1983, p. 30). Like Swithin, who Blodgett describes as 'unifying' due to her ability to recognise 'primitive man's accomplishments', Isa perceives reality more clearly than the patriarchs of the household (1983, p. 31). She seeks out topics of distraction, so that she can cope with the reality of the family dynamics that surround her – the estate grounds nature form is deeply important to both Swithin and Isa's expanded sense of self and freedom.

4.3 Horticultural References and Estate Grounds in *Between the Acts*

Evidence of Woolf's horticultural references, in relation to the estate grounds nature form, is made most apparent in scenes where she draws on recollections of her family and friends' gardens that stretch into parklands. As a foreground to Woolf's awareness of some of the feelings associated with her friends' estate grounds, we also know that Woolf cherished her mother's telling of children's stories during their holidays at Talland House. We are informed by Lee that Julia Stephen created 'a whole menagerie of invented creatures for themselves and their friends' (1997, p. 111). The scenic backdrops of the stories were inspired by their special 'part of the Tregenna Castle Estate' in Cornwall (Dell & Whybrow, 2004, p. 28). In Julia's *The Wandering Pigs,* the pigs' 'home near the sea' sounds similar to the Cornish coast (Dell & Whybrow, 2004, p. 77). There are instances in this story that depict how 'the cliffs which rose up from the beach' provided soil which suited the growth of 'short sweet grass' and occasional clumps of 'pale pink thrift' or 'harebells' during spring time (Dell & Whybrow, 2004, p. 77). Since childhood Woolf had been aware of how ecological habitats and specific flora and fauna make up a personal, but also biologically relevant, scenic backdrop to people's lives.

As previously discussed, Woolf's close relationship with Vita Sackville-West gave her a deeper insight into Sackville-West's complex feelings towards her ancestry and the estate at Knole. We know that Sackville-West's sense of loss over the expansive grounds that surrounded Knole – a 'beautiful rolling ancient park full of oak and walnut trees' – often caused her the greatest grief (Raven & Sackville-West, 2014, p. 40). It was in the grounds that Sackville-West could most easily 'imagine Queen Elizabeth and Philip Sidney pursuing the deer' (Raven & Sackville-West, 2014, p. 40). For Sackville-West, landscapes portrayed a greater sense of history in action. When Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson first bought Sissinghurst in 1930, it was not 'the remains' of the central 'manor' house that appealed to them, but the romanticism of the 'ancient moat and orchards at the centre of a small agricultural estate' (Anderton, 2016, p. 235). It is clear that Sackville-West was excited by the challenge of sculpting the wildness at Sissinghurst. In terms of her overall approach towards their horticultural collections at Sissinghurst, she was unafraid of going against Victorian traditionalism. Sackville-West was inspired by her observations of the Arts and Crafts strategy being used at Hidcote, as 'the first guidebook to the garden was written by Vita' and Johnston's design was seen to set a 'precedent' for the layout at Sissinghurst (Anderton, 2016, p. 109). Tree borders were established by the

Sackville-Wests to create different garden rooms. For example, there was ‘a lime walk […] underplanted with early spring bulbs’ and ‘a long nuttery carpeted with primulas’ (Anderton, 2016, p. 236). The Sackville-Wests’ dedicated development and management of the estate grounds at Sissinghurst created an escape for their friends and intimates, significantly Woolf, and at times the act of gardening also offered a medium through which they could conduct their relationship and find a shared source of collaboration.

The Morrells’ estate at Garsington Manor (which they moved to in 1914) also provided Woolf with a rich source of inspiration for her estate grounds nature form. It consisted of ‘200 acres of garden and farmland’ and though usually easily bored ‘Ottoline reserved her most ambitious plans for the grounds’, for the site seemed to trigger ‘her innate artistic sense’ (Darroch, 2017, pp. 212-213). Like Sackville-West, the state of the ‘crumbling farmhouse’ and zones of wild garden was found to be endearing, rather than overwhelming (Oxfordshire Gardens Trust, 2020). Days were spent walking around the grounds with her head gardener ‘discussing what needed to be done to the neglected garden’ (Darroch, 2017, p. 212). Following the theme of Woolf and Sackville-West’s interest in houses that were set within the aesthetic of a wider landscape, the ‘large garden’ at Garsington also provided a viewpoint which looked out ‘across the Berkshire Downs’ before it ‘sloped away’ (Darroch, 2017, p. 212). In a comparable way to Sissinghurst, Garsington was especially intriguing because of its history and historical features. The seventeenth-century house had been built on top of monastic buildings and it has been suggested that the ‘ponds were mentioned in the Doomsday Book’ and the land itself ‘had belonged to the son of the poet Geoffrey Chaucer’ (Darroch, 2017, p. 212). Ottoline Morrell was adopting garden-design templates from the past, but then dramatically breaking from conventional modes of style. Surprising herself, Ottoline quickly became so absorbed in the garden projects that her design style evolved into being both exciting and familiar. Formal, herbaceous, borders were ‘decked out with poppies, foxgloves, roses, and lilies; and a rambling rose climbed over a stone wall’, whilst Ottoline’s ‘new flower beds’ contained a vivid mix of ‘stocks, zinnias, sunflowers, phlox, and snapdragons’ (Darroch, 2017, p. 213). With Garsington acting as an artistic rural-retreat, the Bloomsbury group’s faith in the interwar horticultural movement was also being supported by different groups of people from their social circles.

The horticultural references in *Between the Acts,* which suggest Woolf was aware of the growing interest in wilder planting, are highlighted most often when the scale of the estate grounds at Pointz Hall is brought to our attention. An example of this is seen when Isa watches her children walking in the landscape that is seen beyond her bedroom window. This is because Woolf draws attention to this small but emotive scene with Isa by describing how (from above) she sees the contrast between the greens of the trees and grasses with the 'snowdrops' (2012, p. 312). Estate grounds consist of swathes of species and habitats, like grasses, trees and bulbs, rather than the smaller-scale floral beds that are found in gardens. In relation to the increased viewing distance (another key feature of Woolf's estate grounds nature form), the grounds (where Isa imagines 'the drone' of the leaves cancelling out her attempts to catch her children's attention by knocking on the window) appear like an 'isolated' realm (2012, p. 312). We know that Woolf was able to construct these window-viewing perspectives, in aid of the establishment of her estate grounds nature form, because of the experiences she had. Her view of estate grounds was influenced both by her ancestors' middle-to-upper class (academic and artistic) conceptualisation of the 'estate' and her time spent on the estates of gentrified friends, such as the Morrells and the Sackville-Wests. At Garsington, the views from the rear of the house were the most spectacular. The garden stretched out towards 'a group of ponds' and then 'an orchard, beyond which were open fields and an unobstructed view to Wittenham Clumps' (Darroch, 2017, p. 212). This depiction of the surrounds of Garsington by Darroch illustrates the relationship – that Woolf would have been aware of – that exists between the merging agricultural and environmental habitats within the gardens, grounds and wider countryside of estates. Just as the high bedroom windows at the Morrells' Garsington Manor would have offered a bird's-eye view of the patterned design of the estate's wider layout, Isa is seeing the grounds at Pointz Hall from a fundamentally different perspective from that which is experienced at ground level.

Considering the notion of height once more, Vita Sackville-West's writing tower at Sissinghurst, with its 'high latticed window', also became a deeply personal space (Strachey, 2018, p. 141). The act of climbing the steps to the Tower, would have allowed Sackville-West to remember her love for 'Knole's complex 17th-century roofline' and the panoramic view which could be seen from the top of the Gatehouse Tower (National Trust, 2023, p. n.p.). Sackville-West's childhood 'had been full of nutteries, apple and pear orchards and plenty of hop gardens' and her design plans for Sissinghurst were to follow a similar theme (Raven & Sackville-West,

2014, p. 47). Sackville-West planned to be surrounded by fruiting trees, which were eventually planted throughout her estate and in the gardens at Sissinghurst.

Furthermore, by paying attention to the Woolfs' window-gazing from Monk's House, we are made aware from diary entries that the upper-floor windows provided a vantage point for nature-watching. From her window, Woolf could see 'the waste of water which appeared to [her] over the marshes' (Woolf, 1983, p. 10). Much like Isa in *Between the Acts*, the window offers a visual overview of the Woolf's 'estate' at Monk's House. Different plants can be seen grouped in zones which appear more distinctly, beyond the 'parasols' of the chestnut tree, such as the 'churchyard grass running over the old tombstones like green water' (Woolf, 1981, p. 29). In the quote from Woolf's diary, we see her considering the diversity of plants and she also refers to their natural habitat of growth – the branches of the chestnut tree appear like 'parasols' and the massing of patches of grasses are described as 'running'. We notice Woolf's nature observations, whether they be in her diaries or in her novels, as there is always an underlying sense of the naturalist in her prose descriptions.

Carter, in his article exploring the site of Woolf's inspiration for *To the Lighthouse*, Talland House, focuses on how such a holiday realm appeared to have frequently 'lightened [Leslie] Stephen's mood' (2018, p. 5). Once again, the concept of estate grounds in Woolf's novels becomes apparent via the range of activities that took place on this wider expanse of land. Leslie Stephen and his family and friends indulged in lots of location-specific pursuits when they were staying in Cornwall. Stephen 'spent time on Porthminster Beach and in the sea; harvested produce from the Talland House garden' and then 'hunted and caught moths' in the vegetation that lay between the garden and the coastline (Carter, 2018, p. 4). Woolf's father's various acts of engagements with nature – on varying horticultural and biology-focused levels, showed the young Stephen siblings how – despite being in different forms – all flora and fauna are connected. His enthusiasm for interacting with and examining plants and animals, often as part of a therapeutic escape from the pressures of his academic and writerly work, appeared to give Woolf an initial template for her own consistent interest in the natural world.

In relation to Leonard and Virginia Woolfs' own 'estate', Hancock posits that Woolf's animism and deep interest in the inspiring qualities of the natural world also played a role in the wilder atmosphere of the land that they owned at Monk's House. She notices how the planting schemes kept a theme of flowing foliage. This idea reflected Vita Sackville-West's overarching desire to maintain 'a simple path of stone and then a sweep of green' at Sissinghurst, to highlight the 'wonderful scale' of the Top Courtyard (Raven & Sackville-West, 2014, p. 85). The planting at Monk's House also seems to move 'towards the Downs beyond', creating a timeless feeling of 'floating boundlessness' (Hancock, 2012, p. 105). Hancock contends that Vanessa Bell's Charleston landscape has more of an inwards flow of energy. The grounds are positioned as an individual centre which collaborates with, rather than necessarily exists within, the other rural estates by which it is surrounded by. Bell's garden therefore produces a 'profusion' of colour that is 'held within enclosing walls' (Hancock, 2012, p. 105). This key difference in Woolf and Bell's overall approaches to land formation accentuates their differing management of life experiences and creative processes. For Woolf, at Monk's House, there is a deep fascination with the further surroundings of the river and marshes beyond the limits of the garden walls. She is drawn to the expansive quality and habitat planting that estate grounds provide. Whereas Bell, when she is in the garden at Charleston, allows herself to become deeply focused on the scenes that herself and others create within the interiority of the garden walls.

4.4 Estate Grounds Nature Form in *Between the Acts*

In *Between the Acts,* Woolf quite quickly establishes a sense of how the Oliver siblings differ from one another. Lucy Swithin is questioning, whereas Bart Oliver is usually in the role of repeating habitual stories that may have been passed down for centuries. We know this because Swithin asks why their family manor at Pointz Hall was built 'in the hollow, facing north' and part of Bart's answer involves him returning to 'the famous story of the great eighteenth-century winter' (2012, p. 309). Swithin's question shows a direct awareness of the importance of topography in landscape and garden design. She appreciates that (in several cases) plants and humans would both benefit from a south-facing aspect and higher ground where the risk of flooding would be reduced. From a garden design point of view, a south-facing situation would allow the residents to plant and enjoy a greater number of horticultural species. Bart's response to his sister's question contradicts

his anthropocentric aspirations to keep a distance from the natural world. He supposes that his ancestors chose to build in a hollow in order 'to escape from nature'; however, the location places humans in an area that is likely to be influenced by the non-human forces in the estate grounds ecosystem (2012, p. 309). The hollow and north-facing aspect leaves the manor exposed to colder and damper conditions – with flooding being likely in the lower levels. Woolf shows Bart claiming that for past generations of their family 'four horses [were] needed' to aid them in living at Pointz Hall in Winter, which again suggests an increase in the presence of non-human beings and a failed escape from nature (2012, p. 309). A subtle and contextual reference to the brutality of war and how animals (significantly horses on the front line) suffer during human conflict underlies Bart's description of the horses having 'to drag the family coach through the mud', especially due to both the context of *Between the Acts* being set in June 1939 with the threat of impending war and as Woolf herself had lived through the First World War and part of the Second World War (2012, p. 309). This context aligns with how *Between the Acts* represents the period 'between' the great wars – a timeframe that Woolf herself experienced. In relation to this idiom it is plausible that Bart is associating his family's past ill decisions, around their interactions with the land, to losing political power and social reputation – as well as the overall downfall of the aristocracy and landowners that sped up following the First World War [reference to changes in land ownership introduced on p. 26].

Linked to Bart's telling of this family history, we are told by Woolf's narrator that Swithin 'retired to Hastings' every Winter to escape the hardship that the fable describes (2012, p. 309). Woolf's subtle distinguisher of how Swithin's value system differs slightly from her brother is revealed to the reader via the placing of the last description of the family tale: 'And the trees had fallen', with the knowledge of her wintering in Hastings and so avoiding seeing the trees go bare. (2012, p. 309). This ordering suggests that, for Swithin, the falling of the trees was the worst part of Bart's story of their family spending Winter at Pointz Hall. She wishes to open the curtains to see plant life growing and thriving.

The estate grounds is the most powerful nature form in *Between the Acts,* as it highlights Woolf's portrayal of the post-First World War management of gentrified land. *Between the Acts* takes a more modern perspective on land ownership and denounces the attitudes of the older generation. The older generation is represented by

the owner of the hall, Bart Oliver. Woolf gives the artist, Miss la Trobe, the task of representing the new. In contrast to Mr Oliver, la Trobe sees potential for an abundance of community endeavours at Pointz Hall. When observing the estate grounds that lead up to the hall, la Trobe feels that 'The terrace rising, made a natural stage. The trees barred the stage like pillars' (2012, p. 342). Miss la Trobe has her actors from the village performing a repetitive piece of choreographed movement with the surrounding nature at Pointz Hall, whereby they 'began passing in and out in single file behind her between the trees' (2012, p. 343). Woolf provides an underlying commentary on changes in the power structures of class systems in Britain. This is identified by the fact that though the upper-classes watching the play could appreciate that the villagers 'were singing,' the realisation was that 'not a word reached the audience' amongst the 'Chuff, chuff, chuff' of the music machine (2012, p. 343). The group of listeners could be summed up as rigid and narrow-minded, especially during the earlier stages of the play, and out of all of the performing singers it was 'Only Bond the cowman' who managed to look at all 'fluid and natural' (2012, p. 343). As readers we can see more of the words that the villager-actors are singing. Woolf emphasises the fact that the actors have a much greater active involvement with the natural landscape that surrounds them – both during the play and during their working lives. With an emphasis on the passages where the actors sing of how they 'dug' themselves 'in to the hill top', Jakubowicz analyses the performance in relation to its demonstration of human dominance as short-lived in comparison to the cycles of the natural world (2012, p. 343). All the characters at Pointz Hall, villagers and gentry alike, will be 'absorbed by the landscape' and thus Woolf highlights her view of 'the mutability of all things human' amidst her apparent belief in animism and a universal movement of energy (Jakubowicz, 2017, p. 199). There is a real sense in *Between the Acts* of Woolf presenting her interconnected life-philosophy. She ignores traditional social structures, which are played out in human-centric spaces and in the English literature in the libraries that she grew up with, in order to create a balance in her novel between human and non-human presences.

Between the Acts presents as a culmination of Woolf's artistic and scientific influences, because the novel offers up an awareness of the shifts in the land use of her time. Woolf is able to illustrate the tense, but curious, effect that changes in land management have on her characters via Miss la Trobe and her play. This situating of theatre and nature triggers discussions between Woolf's key characters, such as Swithin and Isa, who

criticize the state of environmental management, conservation, politics and equality. Despite la Trobe's fear that her experiments with highlighting, through nature, the audience's own 'present-time reality' have failed, she awakens questions in her audience (2012, p. 390). Miss la Trobe's play seems to refer to the co-existence of humans and non-humans on the estate at Pointz Hall, due to the way in which the audience is included alongside 'swallows, cows etc' (2012, p. 390). Woolf emphasises the need for an awareness of the fact that the estate ecosystem relies on a diversity of species, by using a player to state that 'we act different parts but are the same' (2012, p. 407). Swithin asks Isa whether she too had the impression that, just like the actors mentioned, all organisms exist as part of the 'same' life-system (2012, p. 407). Isa's reply seems to concede to Swithin's focus on the play's interest in the idea that many parts make up a whole ecosystem, because she also quotes from the play in her reply by mentioning that life is constructed of 'orts, scraps and fragments' (2012, p. 407). In this way Swithin and Isa begin to wonder why they adhere to the social and gender roles of traditional, estate life, if in reality all organisms share the equalizing oneness of existing in an ecological network. Like Woolf, Swithin and Isa consider the universality of nature and the growing environmental perspective that suggests that all life forms are significant due to their energetic links with the living web of natural processes. Miss la Trobe's choice of a natural setting represents 'England's landscape in all of its various guises' (Jakubowicz, 2017, p. 185). *Between the Acts*, through a series of symbolic nature-layers, therefore expands on the geography of the estate in order to consider how all wider-scale habitats are made up of ecological relationships.

In *Between the Acts*, the rural theme is expanded with the template of estate life at Pointz Hall. Woolf manipulates her knowledge of estate grounds to demonstrate the repressed feelings of her characters and highlight their inability to connect honestly with one another. Despite her intellectual curiosity, Swithin is portrayed as still being trapped by a social construct that expects her to be flattered when a patriarchal figure advances towards her. Woolf also uses depictions of life on the estate grounds to show how Swithin and Isa are limited by the way in which their role and agency in the environment is controlled – they are confined to 'plucking a leaf here and there from the hedge' (2012, p. 360). We see Woolf using the setting of country estates in *Between the Acts* to continue 'confronting ideas of Englishness' and this approach reflects both

Woolf's evolving feminism and her emerging environmentalism in relation to her drive to ask controversial questions (Scott, 2012, p. 124). Swithin is actively mocked when she attempts to assert herself. She diligently tasks herself with the duty of securing 'another placard on the Barn', and yet this is repeatedly met with failure (2012, p. 318). The wind or the 'village idiot […] always tore down what had been nailed up', resulting in the culprit 'chuckling over the placard under the shade of some hedge' and the estate workers 'laughing' in unison (2012, p. 318). Yet, Woolf reveals a freer and more independent version of Swithin's character through her interest in the ancient history of the estate grounds. Swithin is intrigued by origins and ecological beginnings, such as when we see her asking her brother, "Why, Bart, did they build the house in the hollow, facing north?" (2012, p. 309). Here we can also note Woolf's appreciation of the landscape design process and her awareness of the need for areas of greater sunlight for certain flowering plants and trees, because she draws attention to the shady site that was chosen for the positioning of Pointz Hall through Swithin's question. In highlighting her understanding of topographical and meteorological conditions, Woolf is suggesting that the aristocratic human founders of Pointz Hall acted in great ignorance towards both the land (as 'the trees had fallen') and the implications that their lack of harmony with nature would have on the lives of generations of their own heirs (as in Winter 'the house had been blocked by snow') (2012, p. 309).

4.5 Naturalism in *Between the Acts* and the Estate Grounds Nature Form

In *Between the Acts* Woolf's adoption of Naturalism allows for a much more obvious analysis of the human dynamics that occur between the non-human beings, members of the land-owning classes, and those who actively work on the estate grounds. We are shown the power of nature in *Between the Acts,* when Woolf describes how 'the wind blew away the connecting words' of the humans singing in Miss la Trobe's play (2012, p. 344). The energetic qualities of the natural world are used to set the scene, before Woolf begins her criticism of human society's hegemonic approach. Woolf makes it apparent that on the estate grounds at Pointz Hall, human activity is trespassing on the activity of resident non-human beings. Those villagers who are in charge of the set design for the next scene, who are busy laying out 'a sheet' to portray 'a lake', are interrupted when 'real sparrows darted across' the terraced stage (2012, p. 384). Woolf highlights changing attitudes towards land management and access to the countryside and estate grounds with la Trobe's play. The

piece follows a summarised historical timeline of England. A Victorian scene of ‘About 1860’ also emerges to form a subtle discussion on class issues (2012, p. 383). The policeman character called Budge seems to take on the task of guardian of estate grounds, as he proclaims ‘From where I stand, truncheon in hand, guarding respectability, and prosperity, and the purity of Victoria's land, I see before me— (he pointed: there was Pointz Hall; the rooks cawing; the smoke rising)’ (2012, p. 387). Woolf reveals how the actor physically points to the aristocratic house and then goes on to render it as an endearing example of a cosier, but less grand version of ‘Ome, Sweet ‘Ome’ (2012, p. 387). In doing so, Woolf hints that the status of the landed gentry was changing and diminishing. It is significant that the actor pretending to guard the mansion home – Pointz Hall – says: ‘It's time, gentlemen, time ladies, time to pack up and be gone’ as he seems to be speaking directly to the upper class in the audience (2012, p. 387). This is especially relevant because he is a member of the police addressing the upper class in an instructive manner. This decision implies that Woolf was aware that stately homes were gradually being governed by the public sector, as a result of the shift in society that occurred due to the change that was brought about after the First World War.

Woolf uses a description of Pointz Hall to present her observations of changing attitudes towards social hierarchies in England. There is a tone of ridicule in the mentioning of the Olivers’ home as ‘a middle-sized house’ as Woolf follows on with the idea that the community think that the family estate ‘did not rank’ socially with properties that were reviewed as worthy of visiting:

> Pointz Hall was seen in the light of an early summer morning to be a middle-sized house. It did not rank among the houses that are mentioned in guidebooks. It was too homely. But this whitish house with the grey roof, and the wing thrown out at right angles, lying unfortunately low on the meadow with a fringe of trees on the bank above it so that smoke curled up to the nests of the rooks, was a desirable house to live in. Driving past, people said to each other: ‘I wonder if that’ll ever come into the market?’ And to the chauffeur: ‘Who lives there?’
>
> The chauffeur didn’t know. The Olivers, who had bought the place something over a

> century ago, had no connection with the Warings, the Elveys, the Mannerings or the Burnets; the old families who had all intermarried, and lay in their deaths intertwisted, like the ivy roots, beneath the churchyard wall
> (2012, pp. 308-309).

Throughout *Between the Acts*, the Olivers perceived entitlement is ironically undermined by the narrator and the other characters who live on and around the estate grounds. Woolf links 'the old families' to the estate grounds nature form in a significant way (2012, p. 309). This is because, in reference to how aspects of Victorian tradition were increasingly experienced as repressive by Woolf and her contemporaries, she suggests that members of the nobility from previous generations were even in death adhering to strict and restrictive social codes as their bodies were placed in family tombs. Burial on the estate grounds was a further show of wealth and ruling control, especially as this option excluded the vast majority of the population. Woolf's use of a key botanical simile – 'the old families' were 'intertwisted, like the ivy roots, beneath the churchyard wall' – further gestures towards the dangers that exist in unchecked hegemonic structures in Britain (2012, p. 309). This sense of hidden toxicity amongst the long-standing gentry in the surrounding rurality of estate grounds is deepened by the fact that ivy is a poisonous plant. Ivy also has fast growing stems which can cover a space in a relatively short time, and the aerial roots that develop on the stems are adapted to attach onto walls and tree trunks – which intensifies the idea of the sacredness of the 'churchyard wall' quickly becoming vulnerable to the hidden threat of 'the ivy roots' that lie just 'beneath' (2012, p. 309). Woolf adds to this sense of a prevalent, initially disguised, power-grasping trait amongst the estate owners by commenting on the long-standing strategy of noble families being 'intermarried' amongst one another (2012, p. 309). The notion of deliberately marrying a member of a select group of people is also likened to the adaptive way in which the ivy plant grows in an 'intertwisted' manner and forms webs of interlocking stems (2012, p. 309). The way in which the ivy stems become strengthened and more difficult to remove, when woven together in several layers of older wood, is used by Woolf to comment on how people from the upper classes were intermarried to forge power-alliances between wealthy or high-status families.

Woolf creates a sense of the Oliver family not being accepted amongst 'the old families' who were considered to be established nobility, but the narrator in *Between the Acts* is also faintly mocking about the class systems. The narrator notes that the Olivers, despite buying historic estate land, 'had no connection' with the ancestral families of that region (2012, p. 308). Woolf's reader is also made aware of how the Olivers' family name lacked the fame of 'the old families', as when people – who were being driven past Pointz Hall – enquired about the owners 'the chauffeur didn't know' (2012, p. 308). Woolf's awareness of the narrow-minded attitude towards land ownership, due to her close relationship with figures such as the Sackville-Wests, allows her to position the Olivers as newly gentrified in comparison to the older families. She knows that there is an established hierarchy in terms of the age of lineage that can be recorded in noble families, and so uses this appreciation in *Between the Acts* to observe the changes in attitudes towards social structures during the interwar period.

Furthermore the close detail that we are given about Pointz Hall sets it within a history of 'old families', making the land itself both an observer and a victim of numerous human changes. Woolf creates further mischief by repeatedly noting how the mansion house was built 'unfortunately low on the meadow', leaving its human occupants living amongst the damp and cold of the lower water table (2012, p. 308). Nature, too, is hindered by the positioning of the mansion due to the fact that 'smoke curled up to the nests of the rooks' who had constructed shelter for themselves in the 'fringe of trees on the bank above' (2012, p. 308). Woolf's slightly discouraging and teasing narratorial tone, early on in the scenic development of *Between the Acts*, gives the reader the opportunity to follow Woolf's criticism of the gentrified Olivers who own Pointz Hall. Woolf seems to ridicule the Olivers' sense of their own importance by remarking that Pointz Hall was 'a middle-sized house', 'too homely' and not significant enough to 'rank among the houses that are mentioned in the guide books' (2012, p. 308). She suggests that both their choice to build in a hollow and their decision to remain there – whilst not caring for how they pollute the natural surrounds – implies that their intellectual and moral characters will be subject to further scrutiny as the novel proceeds.

Another very Naturalistic theme that runs throughout *Between the Acts* appears in the personal enthusiasm of Woolf's downtrodden, intelligent, character Swithin. The encyclopaedic references that Swithin is so fond of

seem to seep out of her book, 'An Outline of History', to act as a miraged layer that exists on top of her daily use of furniture and the familial conversations that occur at Pointz Hall (2012, p. 309). With Swithin's imagination, Woolf combines Naturalism's focus on detailed observations in a social setting with an appreciation for recording biological facts. The natural history that Swithin enjoys reading about, such as the mapping of 'rhododendron forests in Piccadilly' when Pangea allowed for 'barking monsters; the iguanodon, the mammoth, and the mastodon' to roam, transposes itself into her bedroom at Pointz Hall (2012, p. 309). Swithin's early-morning reading results in her struggling to mentally differentiate between the bustle of her maid Grace and the description of a 'leather-covered grunting monster', who, at that precise moment, seemed ready 'to demolish a whole tree in the green steaming undergrowth of the primeval forest' (2012, p. 310). Throughout *Between the Acts,* though other characters find her to be at times deeply eccentric, (from the readers' perspective) Swithin seems to use her fascination for the prehistoric world to deal with the social difficulties she experiences in the modern. Swithin, perhaps alone in *Between the Acts,* appreciates 'that humans are [the] descendants' of prehistoric animals (Jakubowicz, 2017, p. 197). Swithin's actions further Woolf's use of Naturalism – in a vivid sense – to question 'the complex tensions' that exist in present reality (Jakubowicz, 2017, p. 48). In this novel Woolf is beginning to extend her interest in the human and non-human dialogue. She also questions how each affects the other and how humans damage the land and landscapes that surround them. Woolf therefore points out how ignorant many humans are to the universality of their own lived experience, that is entirely dependent on and connected to nature.

In Melba Cuddy-Keane's annotated notes on *Between the Acts* Woolf's intertextual readings are brought to our attention. We are told that Swithin is avidly reading 'an Outline of History', which informs her of how the Earth's habitats were spread more widely when the land mass existed as an 'entire continent, not then, she understood, divided by a channel' (2012, p. 309). Cuddy-Keane points out that 'an Outline of History' likely related to Woolf's knowledge of *The Outline of History: Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind* by H. G. Wells, especially because due to his 'evolutionary' focus and the fact that 'six chapters are devoted to life before humankind' (Cuddy-Keane, 2008, p. 154). The reader notes how Woolf's tone softens slightly when she draws our attention to Swithin's growing need to be connected with non-human beings in their shared estate grounds ecosystem at Pointz Hall. As soon as Swithin is 'waked by the birds', she goes back to thinking

about the how humans ‘descend’ from the other species who ‘populated’ not just their land at Pointz Hall, but ‘the entire continent’ (2012, p. 309). Significantly, there is again a return to Swithin envisioning the falling of trees as a daily reality. Images of trees falling appear to be imprinted on her imagination. This effect seems to be the result of her reading and obsessive comparing of prehistoric and modern foliage density. To acknowledge another day and begin the morning, Swithin must admit that her visions of how the land was once filled with ‘primeval forest’ must be ‘demolished’ before she can continue to function in the present (2012, p. 308). The environmental stance comes to the fore in *Between the Acts* with the notion of the narrator valuing the human characters who understand that they are biologically interwoven with the land. Swithin is interested in the diversity of species that have shaped the energetic functioning of the habitat at Pointz Hall over years of historical transitions.

Woolf illustrates her heightened understanding of the problem of solitary, hegemonic, human power structures in *Between the Acts* by repeatedly demonstrating that the estate grounds ecosystem is made up of a diverse variety of living beings who are dependent on an effective co-existence in the natural world. Woolf’s use of Miss la Trobe’s aspirational directing, which aims to combine audience and actors in an awareness of their shared existence in nature and on the land at Pointz Hall, leads Scott to contend that she is highlighting that ‘nature can merge with [human] artifice’ (2012, p. 152). Woolf’s own context seems to feed into her writing of *Between the Acts*, because her increasingly environmental tone reflected on how ‘the years of Depression and World War II turned ecology even more strongly toward public narrative’ (Howarth, 1996, p. 74). Woolf’s presentation in *Between the Acts* of the conversations about land use that were taking place during her time also lead to a consideration of the assumed hegemony that surrounded conservation strategies. With greater public interest and a call to widen accessibility to land ownership, old conservation laws were being challenged with a growing sense of momentum during the latter end of the interwar period in the UK. In *Between the Acts* Woolf’s character portrayal deconstructs social and species hierarchies. Woolf achieves this by painting the Olivers as flawed beings who are weakened by their repeated striving for a separation between themselves and the natural ecosystem in the surrounding estate grounds.

4.6 Woolf, Estate Grounds and a Modern Approach to the Natural Sciences in *Between the Acts*

The influence that changing approaches to studying nature in the field of natural science had on Woolf's life and writing is evident when we see examples of her own nature observation in her interwar novels. For example, in *Between the Acts,* Mrs Swithin seems to find purpose when she compares her reading of past landscapes with the current state of the land at Pointz Hall. Woolf emphasises the intensity of her interest by describing how she irritated her brother (although he admires her intellectual curiosity when he admits it to himself) with her historical and environmental questioning. Bart is seen to be consistently diminishing his sister's fascination with prehistoric ecology, ethology and ethnobotany. During Miss la Trobe's play Woolf claims that Bart 'looked sardonically' at Swithin, before acknowledging that 'she belonged to the unifiers; he to the separatists' (2012, p. 362). It is especially interesting that Woolf makes a point of Bart recognising and summarising their different approaches, because to some extent Swithin's belief in unity suggests a compassion for nature's ecological systems, whereas he seems solely interested in matters of the anthropocene. *Between the Acts* provides an appropriate setting for the beginning of a creative experimentation, with these emerging scientific approaches, because of the direct use of the estate grounds as an extension of the characters' expressions of opinions and emotional reactions. Woolf's interwar novels therefore pay tribute to her increasing interest in the new naturalism of ethnobotanical and ecological research relating to the conservation of the British landscape.

The science of modern ecology becomes apparent in Woolf's *Between the Acts* with the intrigue that Lucy Swithin holds for any records that pertain to how the landscape around her has changed over time. Swithin's keenness for a discussion about human-nature relationships and their influences on the adaptations of habitats and ecosystem functioning, feels especially poignant. This awareness is increased once the reader appreciates that most of the other characters pay very little attention to the shifts that occur in the natural landscape, outside of their perception of how nature might further their anthropogenic aspirations. When Bart Oliver thinks of nature, he becomes interested in the practicalities of using natural resources for the purpose of agricultural processes, war, or construction. He mentions to Mrs Haines that on the estate at Pointz Hall 'they ploughed the hill to grow wheat in the Napoleonic wars' (2012, p. 307). Unlike his sister, Bart maintains a

stance that considers nature to be separate and either a provider of human resources, to be controlled, or a force that humans would want to distance themselves from. With the hindsight knowledge of human impact, Scott claims that such distant attitudes towards the lives of other organisms combined with the Linnaean 'system of identification', which was absorbed in 'European colonialism […] removed plants and animals from significant relationships on earth' (2012, p. 61). It is therefore arguable that Woolf's awareness of the energetic life to be found in non-human beings, and the inclusion of this flora and fauna energy in her novels, rejects traditional anthropogenic views. Instead, contemporary critics, including Peter Adkins (2022) and Derek Ryan (2023), are finding numerous ways in which her oeuvre aligns much more with the posthumanism that was to follow in the late twentieth century. *Between the Acts* consistently holds space for the voices of Woolf's non-human characters and the expressions of her human characters are heightened by their interactions with the estate grounds habitat.

Woolf appears to directly question the harmful impact that domineering anthropocentric perspectives have on the non-human species that share our ecosystems, with Swithin's planning to ask her brother about the fate of a dragonfly – likely a blue-coloured species of damselfly. Swithin had thought abruptly to ask him 'about the dragon-fly – couldn't the blue thread settle, if we destroyed it here, then there?' and there is a sense of her greater focus on how violent human interference was causing instability for the flora and fauna, whilst her male counterparts are concerned with the social and political tension influencing the human world (specifically *their* own individual existences) (2012, p. 403). Significantly, despite the quickness with which Swithin considers how humans effect other species, when her mind is once more focused on her studious passions as opposed to domestic duties, Bart 'had gone into the house' before she had the chance to question him (2012, p. 403). We know from diaries that Woolf too, from quite an early age, began to reconsider the ethical nature of animal capture for scientific purposes. Scott reminds us that whilst the Stephens were in the process of capturing 'a huge, rare, red underwing', Woolf recalls 'the whole procession felt some unprofessional regret when, with a last gleam of scarlet eye & scarlet wing, the grand old moth vanished' (2012, p. 56). Here we see Woolf shifting her attention towards modern considerations of species analysis for natural science research, because she pauses and considers the ethical impact of their capture and collection methods.

Bart's escapism from nature and retreat into the domestic realm is made obvious with Woolf's explanation that 'he would carry the torch of reason till it went out in the darkness of the cave', whereas his sister 'opened the window and looked at leaves against the sky' (2012, p. 403). Swithin's looking outwards into the natural world also represents her greater openness to new ideas; to combining evolutionary discussions with modern modes of scientific observation. Woolf shows that when Swithin speaks of their childhood 'house by the sea', Bart agrees with the 'fact' of her statement and yet he seems to dismiss any feelings of sentimentality (2012, p. 319). By attempting to distinguish his communication stance as unemotional, in comparison to his sister and Isa, Bart moves forwards with a strategy of control. Lambert reflects that moments like this, between Bart Oliver and Lucy Swithin in *Between the Acts,* illustrate how Woolf was reflecting on the agenda and 'values behind some of the most self-serving facts that patriarchal science has produced' (1995, p. 94). Bart's occupation with securing himself as 'the sum of rationality' is parodied by Woolf as she sets him up in a repeated and paradoxical dialogue with his sister, who remains on an equal intellectual level with him (Lambert, 1995, p. 94). Bart is therefore easy to mock, because whilst he laughs at 'the fantasies of his sister' he too adheres to 'his own fantasy language, the scientific-historical pursuit of fact as truth' (Lambert, 1995, p. 94). He maintains that there is no flexibility for new hypotheses, ecosystem appreciation or developing research. In this regard, Woolf favours Swithin's enquiring (if baffled) approach to the natural world. Woolf's view of the menacing nature of patriarchal standpoints is shown by the fact that 'the novel closes with a descent of man' (Scott, 2012, p. 61). There is the sense of a looming man-made war and the family seem bereft without the energy of the natural world, as they sit 'near a darkening window' (Scott, 2012, p. 61). *Between the Acts* signals Woolf's later confidence in combing the arts and the sciences to simultaneously question the hegemonic power of human patriarchy, over others in society and others in the living ecosystem on Earth.

In contrast to Bart, Woolf maintains that intermittently (between the demands of her social duties) throughout the day, Swithin's mental focus prefers to fixate on matters that relate to the natural sciences, including any developments taking place in this field of research. From the moment that she wakes up, Swithin seeks comfort within her observations of the ecology of different habitats and the ethological traits of the organisms

that live in them. Her method of nature observation is emphasised here, because of its associations with newer biological approaches as opposed to the specimen collection techniques of the past. Early in the novel, the reader is introduced to Swithin waking up in the morning to the sound of birdsong. We witness how she purposefully looks out of her window and then sees that ‘an obliging thrush hopped across the lawn; a coil of pinkish rubber twisted in its beak’ (2012, p. 310). This scene, quoted in greater length below, plays with environmental debates that were present in the pursuit of the natural sciences:

> "How those birds sing!" said Mrs. Swithin, at a venture. The window was open now; the birds certainly were singing. An obliging thrush hopped across the lawn; a coil of pinkish rubber twisted in its beak. Tempted by the sight to continue her imaginative reconstruction of the past, Mrs. Swithin paused; she was given to increasing the bounds of the moment by flights into past or future; or sidelong down corridors and alleys; but she remembered her mother—her mother in that very room rebuking her. "Don't stand gaping, Lucy, or the wind'll change … " How often her mother had rebuked her in that very room—"but in a very different world," as her brother would remind her. So she sat down to morning tea, like any other old lady with a high nose, thin cheeks, a ring on her finger and the usual trappings of rather shabby but gallant old age, which included in her case a cross gleaming gold on her breast
>
> (2012, p. 310).

Both during Woolf’s childhood and her adult experience of living through the First World War and the beginning of the Second World War, questions over the study, use and protection of the environment in England continued. We know from gathered autobiographical and biographical sources on Woolf’s life that her family knew the Darwin family on various levels. We also know from Woolf’s diaries that she favoured her collection of Darwin’s works and the record in Woolf’s library catalogue of the 1929 copy of his *The autobiography of Charles Darwin: with two appendices, comprising a chapter of reminiscences and a statement of Charles Darwin's religious views* further suggests her awareness of his wrestling with how evolutionary theory and Christian theology could simultaneously exist in scientific research concerned with identifying the origins and developments of life (Guerin, 2013). In Woolf’s characterisation of Swithin in *Between the Acts* we

see a woman whose inner and outer conflict relates to her experience of living with an awareness of past and present social traditions – that traverse from the cultural modes of the late Victorian era and into the Modern age. She is excited by the fluidity of her own intellectual curiosity and yet is hampered by memories of 'her mother in that very room rebuking her' for the very same attributes (2012, p. 310). Woolf makes it apparent that Swithin is fascinated by the idea of taking evolutionary 'flights into past and future', but with an emphasis on how the natural habitats around her have altered naturally through time and then also been manipulated by humankind (2012, p. 310). An irony emerges in relation to how Swithin steals any chance she can to transport herself into conjured mindscapes of 'the green steaming undergrowth of the primeval forest', whilst the human histories of her ancestry and habitual social modes leave her feeling trapped and 'like any other old lady with a high nose, thin cheeks, a ring on her finger and the usual trappings of rather shabby but gallant old age, which included in her case a cross gleaming gold on her breast' (2012, pp. 309-310). The individuality of Swithin's intellectual capability falters into a sense of ubiquitous capacity 'like any other old lady', when we see her confidence collapse with the memories of her mother's rebukes: 'How often her mother had rebuked her in that very room' (2012, p. 310). This is notable because of how 'rebuked' is repeated, before a short and heavy-sounding 'so' which seems to suggest that Swithin gives in (again): 'So she sat down to morning tea', to the weight she feels in her mother's words (2012, p. 310). With these ruminations on past opinions of her, Swithin appears to draw away from a way of life that would align closer with an authentic sense of her own happiness and abilities. By the end of the passage, which began with Swithin ebulliently saying: '"How those birds sing!"', Woolf implies that she feels as though the restrictive nature of her life seems to tighten once more, with references to the metal pieces of jewellery that she wears (2012, p. 310). Woolf alludes to 'a ring on [Swithin's] finger', representing the binding symbolism of matrimony, and 'a cross gleaming gold on her breast' (2012, p. 310). The 'cross' signals a dedication to the religious doctrine of Christianity and the vision of the cross 'gleaming gold' appears to draw attention to the cultural power behind the symbol (2012, p. 310). The reference to religion is also relevant due to conflicting narratives that surround evolutionary theory based on the development and adaption of species over time and creationist views on the origins of life on Earth. Swithin embodies the debate between these two perspectives. In a similar paradoxical fashion to Swithin's traditionalistic and modern ways of being, Woolf also draws our attention to how the presence of the 'thrush' is contrasted with the potential sterility of 'the lawn' set amongst the wilder and more biodiverse estate

grounds habitat (2012, p. 310). Swithin's sighting of the thrush sees Woolf playing with narrative perspectives via the blending of objective and subjective statements. After observing that 'The window was open now; the birds certainly were singing', the scene shifts to become emotionally charged: '"Don't stand gaping, Lucy, or the wind'll change …" How often her mother had rebuked her in that very room—' (2012, p. 310). The narrative trajectory moves from more factual details to descriptions of her character's felt experience, highlighting how Swithin's interest in the natural sciences acts as a counter-balance to her stressed mental state. It can be posed that Swithin's interactions with the natural world reflect Woolf's own enjoyment of naturalist observation practices and concern for ecological habitats. This stance is supported by the knowledge that the Woolfs' library included 19 books relating to birdwatching, with titles such as *An illustrated manual of British birds* by Howard Saunders, *Watching birds* by James Fisher and *How to attract and protect wild birds* by Martin Hiesemann (Guerin, 2013). Even more than this, the assumed worm 'twisted' in the thrush's 'beak' is described as 'a coil of pinkish rubber' and so the reader is torn between reading the scene as 'natural' or damaged by the presence of human waste materials (2012, p. 310). Here Woolf disrupts even the ecofeminist stance that Haraway describes as misleading in its assumptive and linear pattern, because the women in *Between the Acts* are not often able to protect and preserve the natural world from the ambitions of the dominating patriarchal system. Swithin, though she exists as the character who speaks out to learn more about the timelines relating to the age of the Anthropocene, seems to lose assertive powers when change would mean going beyond the research stages of her tentative environmentalism. Swithin sees that the thrush is potentially carrying 'rubber' in its 'beak – a material that is incongruously associated with the anthropocentric world – yet, instead of raising awareness or making a plan of action to work against human destruction of the natural world, she falls back on old habitats (2012, p. 310). She is too distracted by her own human dilemma and so returns to escapist 'flights into past or future' and the ruminating anxiety that recalls the ways in which her mother was often 'rebuking her' (2012, p. 310).

In relation to Haraway's 'naturecultures', as opposed to the frequent binary construction of nature/culture which has been set up and habitually turned to by the human species, Woolf's environmental stance and use of nature form habitats suggests a belief in living systems that consist of a multitude of voices (Haraway, 2008, p. 16). Swithin's failure to protect even the estate grounds at Pointz Hall (let alone the prehistoric forests of

Britain) from the patriarchal quests of her relatives, is reflective of Haraway's suspicions towards any structure that divides 'nature' and 'culture' into archetypal roles. Swithin's interest in the modern observational tactics of natural science research leads her to seek out the presence of birds, in relation to her own presence and with an intention to observe the behaviour of wildlife and immerse herself in experiencing seasonal changes in the shared ecosystem of the estate grounds at Pointz Hall. This multi-species awareness, however, speaks to Haraway's stretching of the term '"companion species"' (Haraway, 2008, p. 16). Swithin's engagement with the estate grounds nature form aligns to some extent with Haraway's reading of 'the category "companion species" [as] less shapely and more rambunctious', than a pairing with a select number of species (Haraway, 2008, p. 16). For Haraway, all species are 'companions' in so far as we live in a 'richer web' of multi-directional energetic relationships (Haraway, 2008, p. 16). Woolf's estate grounds nature form provides this multi-layered interaction for Swithin as she seeks to find a sense of self that goes beyond the confines of human society.

Later on in the day, during the discussion of the annual pageant, Woolf creates another nature-focused interlude for Swithin. Unbeknown to the other characters, when she again looks out onto the estate grounds at Pointz Hall from an interior window, she becomes fascinated by the 'blue, pure blue, black blue' of the Summer sky (2012, p. 316). Swithin, in a paradoxical stance to the dominant patriarchal system of classification that was apparent in Victorian science-research, is interested in the unobserved. Rather than focusing her entire attention on the effects of the sun, she wonders about the 'blue that had never filtered down; that had escaped registration' and the 'lack of symmetry and order in the clouds' (2012, p. 316). Swithin represents tentative progress into modern scientific approaches, versus Bart's insistence on respecting scientific traditionalism and rigidity. Woolf appears to associate Bart's entrenched mindset with how the British were initially approaching the Second World War in a way that was reminiscent of the First World War – leaving them unprepared for Germany's fast-moving strategies. In the early stages of the Second World War military tactics in Britain remained traditional, in so far as they focused on the role of the navy and infantry tanks, whilst advances in technology and the important presence of the air force were only looked at as the war progressed. In a rejection of the dominant anthropogenic perspective, Swithin's view of the natural world 'liberates images from these sources to create a timeless, pantheistic world populated as much by the "heaving,

surging, slowly writhing" dinosaurs she sees outside her window as by humans' (Lambert, 1995, p. 92). Following on from this character analysis, Lambert's assertion is also that Woolf's writing process 'has transformed "truly wonderful facts" by liberating them into other kinds of fictions' (1995, p. 94). Swithin represents modern science's hypothetical approaches, as opposed to the established taxidermic and labelling systems of species, by attempting to evaluate her surroundings from a wider hinterland that is not just limited to human-focused viewing. In turn, Woolf questions social constructs and attitudes towards the environment by giving her reader insights into a psyche that interprets experiences that are positioned outside of the hegemony of mainstream and patriarchal determinatives. In *Between the Acts* Woolf demonstrates, through the interests, behaviours and actions of her characters, how the modern era began to consider the importance of ethical standards in the field of natural science. A similar change in understanding must have occurred for Woolf in her personal life. Scott proposes that during her childhood, Woolf bonded with Thoby through their shared engagement with 'literary studies' and 'natural history' (2012, p. 53). An indication of an altered attitude occurs when Woolf subtly mocks the power-structure associations that she realises have become attached to the collection and capture of organisms for display. Scott shows us this awareness by referring to 'Woolf's 1899 "Warboys" diary', which takes its reader 'on a memorable moth-hunt' but simultaneously mocks 'the great white male hunter' (2012, p. 54). The 'Warboys diary', in its youthful experimentations, emphasises Woolf's lifelong consideration of our human interactions with the natural world.

In *Between the Acts* the estate grounds nature form exists as rurality designed for human activity – but Miss la Trobe's artistic methodology draws the Pointz Hall audiences' awareness to their position within the ecological processes of the natural world. Woolf suggests in *Between the Acts* that the ownership of estate grounds represents another attempt by human patriarchy to control nature and the use of nature. Her countering of this stance with la Trobe is seen with the character's enthusiasm for the way in which the topography at Pointz Hall could be used differently: for the running of her theatre shows. Woolf declares that la Trobe 'had exclaimed the first time she came to call and was shown the grounds' despite the fact that 'it was a winter's day' and even 'the trees were leafless then' (2012, p. 333). Miss la Trobe's approach towards nature is less controlling as she works with the pre-existing features that she finds in the landscape. William Dodge (the gentleman who unexpectedly arrives at Pointz Hall with Mrs Manresa) reinforces la Trobe's idea of the

play involving everyone and everything, during the moment when 'nothing whatsoever appeared on the stage' (2012, p. 345). He witnesses, in the quiet interlude, how unique and fascinating the circumstance of the layers of 'children; the pilgrims; behind the pilgrims the trees, and behind them the fields' is when looked at with awareness rather than in distraction (2012, p. 345). Miss la Trobe's ambitious, outdoor performance also highlights how vulnerable humans are when they leave their domestic domains. Here they are partly dependent on the weather for their performance – the connection to the surrounding habitat would be less apparent if it rained and they were forced indoors. Miss la Trobe questions 'Wet would it be, or fine?' before making her decision: 'Out came the sun; and, shading her eyes in the attitude proper to an admiral on his quarter-deck, she decided to risk the engagement out of doors' (2012, p. 335). Her assertive response: 'All stage properties, she commanded, must be moved from the barn to the bushes', causes the players to be 'dressed among the brambles', whilst their colourful clothes were 'strewn on the grass' (2012, p. 335). Another potentially uncontrollable effect of creating a show in the grounds is the fact that other animals respond to the costumes' stimuli. Woolf describes how the 'red and silver, blue and yellow gave off warmth and sweetness' which attracted 'Red Admirals' that had become 'absorbed' by the 'richness' and 'cabbage whites' that 'drank icy coolness from silver paper' (2012, p. 336). The excitement and vivid responses to colours evoked by the sensory descriptions of butterflies and human costumes in *Between the Acts* – prior to la Trobe's play, also shows that Woolf does not hesitate to include perspectives from the combined interactions of human and non-human beings in order to set the mood of any particular scene.

Miss la Trobe is led, in relation to Woolf's life-nature philosophy, by the continuous opportunity for a flow of creative ideas and actions. At Pointz Hall, during the play, 'the tick, tick, tick' of the 'gramophone needle' proceeded to 'hold them together' (2012, p. 345). For la Trobe, existing also in the reality outside of the play, her marvelling at the trees increases when the entire ecosystem seems alive and forms 'a place where the swallows darting seemed […] to make a pattern' (2012, p. 337). When the environmental setting, the actors and the audience interact in la Trobe's play, the sense of an 'intangible cultural heritage' is highlighted (Arizpe, 2015, p. 96). This is because it draws attention to the ethnobotanical aspects involved in the lives of humans. These moments of brief awareness that la Trobe's play brings to her audience might situate the theatre piece amongst a vegetative place of dwelling and living that must be safeguarded for future reference. In *Culture,*

Diversity and Heritage: Major Studies, Arizpe speaks about the elements involved 'in creating the Archive on Intangible Cultural Heritage at the Multidisciplinary Research Center (CRIM) of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) from 2004 onwards' (2015, p. 96). She describes 'intangible cultural heritage', which she considers to be 'a living cultural practice' and a central part 'of a community', in relation to Woolf's own 'moments of being' (Arizpe, 2015, p. 96). The actions that are played out by a social group, such as the rural neighbourhood that gathers each year for a pageant at Pointz Hall, when identified by Arizpe's research focus, are temporal and yet they exist as an essential 'moment' in 'a continuous flow of meaning and interaction' (2015, p. 96). Whilst Woolf's *Between the Acts* provides a mockery of British social structures, there is also an often-unspoken understanding of the human need to 'engage in order to make their lives worth living' (Arizpe, 2015, p. 96). Miss la Trobe's playful collaboration between non-humans and humans during her theatrical design at Pointz Hall illustrates how Woolf was creating scenarios that formed a return to ethnobotanical relationships and anthropological acts of community engagement.

4.7 Environmentalism in *Between the Acts* with the Estate Grounds Nature Form

Woolf's use of an observational method which was influenced by the natural sciences, for her gathering of literary information, offers ideas that may be analysed in terms of their bioaesthetic value. If we think of bioaesthetics as the combination of an ecological awareness and a knowledge of aesthetic mediums, then from an environmental perspective we are reminded 'that the world of art includes hordes of other creatural actors and living assemblages' (Rohman, 2018, p. 148). Woolf's appreciation of the non-human world and her following of a life-philosophy that believes in the ecological universality of life as part of a web of natural processes, allows Rohman to critique Woolf's works from a bioaesthetic and environmental standpoint. Rohman highlights how Woolf's environmentalism can also be seen as a product of her writing-process, because her creativity relies on the inspiration that she gathers from personal interactions with nature. By referring to the research of Grosz, Rohman quotes her 'posthumanist claim that "we're not the first artists […] we humans; we take our cues from the animal world"' (2018, p. 9). In *Between the Acts,* during the interval scene at the Barn in the estate grounds, Woolf provides an insight into the activities of non-human lifeforms. She asserts that nature's processes have always continued to function, prior to any human activity. During the

interval of Miss la Trobe's play, we follow Woolf's descriptions of Giles Oliver taking a 'short cut by the fields to the Barn' (2012, p. 353). Yet, nature emerges as the more central character. Woolf builds up a description of a 'dry summer' that extends out from the estate grounds and into the further reaches of the countryside: 'the path was hard as brick across the fields' (2012, p. 353). The pathway that Giles briskly walks along is 'strewn with stones' of 'a flinty yellow' colour and the reader again begins to sense the significance of the earthly presence of nature (2012, p. 353). We are asked to notice that the stone which Giles kicks looks sharply 'cut' like an 'arrow' (the human intervention involved with carving an arrowhead, perhaps?), before Woolf continues to alert us to the theme of maintaining a 'pre-historic' interest in the land of Britain (2012, p. 353). Woolf's narration of the history of the land in *Between the Acts* and her protagonists' fascinations with primordial habitats seems to draw on her memories of her father's biological research. We know that Leslie Stephen enjoyed being able to relax and 'walk into an ancient landscape' during his time spent in Cornwall (Dell & Whybrow, 2004, p. 48). Stephen writes from St Ives in a letter to his friend Charles Eliot Norton, dated 8th September 1889, declaring: 'This place attracts me more than ever. It is so quiet & so beautiful in its way' (Stephen, 1996, p. 369). He considered much of the area to be 'untouched by farming', and so covered with 'an abundance of wildflowers and untried sea cliffs' (Dell & Whybrow, 2004, p. 48). Alongside his family and close friends, he could revel in the discovery of 'prehistoric sites, burial chambers, Iron Age hut circles, ancient barrows [and] stone quoits' (Dell & Whybrow, 2004, p. 48). Woolf's inclusion of the estate grounds' flora and fauna in *Between the Acts,* as an equally animated and sense-evoking form, and Swithin's frequent questions about the ancient layout of Britain's vegetative growth, suggests a link with the Stephen family's foundational education in botanical investigation. Kosugi builds on this idea to note that Woolf respects the longevity of the natural world's cyclical processes, in comparison to the aspirational whims that are present during the lifespan of a human. It is remarked by Kosugi that evidence of Woolf's belief in the ancientness of natural processes and the way in which nature 'will go on even after humans disappear from the earth' is also noticeable in passages from *To the Lighthouse*: 'Tortoise-shell butterflies burst from the chrysalis and pattered their life out on the window-pane' (Woolf, 2000, p. 150), and *The Waves*: '[…] the fields sigh close to the door. The wind washes through the elm trees; a moth hits the lamp; a cow lows; a crack of sound starts in the rafter […]' (Woolf, 1981, p. 117), (2007, p. 88). The environmental ideas that are captured in Woolf's natural science interests and ecological understandings are further emphasised due to the

artistic and scientific periods in which she was writing. Again Woolf's writing about nature was adapted to allow her to selectively combine romantic notions of nature with a regard for scientific observations of species details, habits and ecosystem interactions. Woolf was therefore able to express thoughts about the importance of the environment and the general ignorance humans showed towards our dependence on a healthily functioning ecosystem.

Woolf paints Giles as a man prone to 'rage' and acts of disloyalty towards his wife, Isa, and the novel's female characters (2012, p. 331). Yet, another layer of subtle aggression is suggested in *Between the Acts* due to the hegemonic way in which he, alongside his father, treats nature. Woolf highlights this threat by contrasting Giles and Bart with Isa and Lucy. Isa and Lucy are shown to experience live interactions with nature and they possess a perspective that intuitively appreciates the coexistence of organisms:

> Here she rose, Isa followed her across the hall to the big room.
>
> They never pulled the curtains till it was too dark to see, nor shut the windows till it was too cold. Why shut out the day before it was over? The flowers were still bright; the birds chirped. You could see more in the evening often when nothing interrupted, when there was no fish to order, no telephone to answer
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> (2012, p. 407).

Whereas Bart and Giles often view other natural organisms as objects to be controlled and manipulated for the pursuit of their own power-focused aspirations. On his way to the Barn, Giles is seen to be 'stone-kicking' (2012, p. 353). Woolf implies that this motion indicates Giles' immaturity, because it is usually conducted as a community 'child's game' and yet 'he played it alone' and used it to release his frustration with others and then finally himself (2012, p. 353). Woolf then raises the level of her accusation towards Giles, by describing his lack of responsible and altruistic thought, because he is seen dramatically interfering with nature:

> He reached it in ten. There, couched in the grass, curled in an olive-green ring, was a snake. Dead? No, choked with a toad in its mouth. The snake was unable to swallow, the toad was unable to die. A

> spasm made the ribs contract; blood oozed. It was birth the wrong way round – a monstrous inversion. So, raising his foot, [Giles] stamped on them. The mass crushed and slithered. The white canvas on his tennis shoes was bloodstained and sticky. But it was action. Action relieved him. He strode to the barn, with blood on his shoes
>
> (2012, p. 353).

In noticing a snake with a toad in its mouth Giles immediately turned his own fury – frustration at what he seems to view as Miss la Trobe's unimportant and provincial play: '[Miss la Trobe] saw Giles Oliver with his back to the audience' – on them. He excuses his angry reaction towards the animals by leaning on a hegemonic attitude which considers that their lives are unnatural and far removed from his: 'a monstrous inversion', and does not appear to pause before he suddenly 'stamped on them' and in doing so actively destroyed both animals (2012, p. 353). By illustrating Giles's need for 'action' and control over his fellow creatures and the environment, Woolf is able to highlight humankind's damaging impact on the natural world (2012, p. 353). This small but significant scene, where Giles is paradoxically placed against the natural world, leaves Woolf's readers with a powerful image of shame. As Giles, either defiantly or ignorantly, carries on his way after committing an act of sudden violence towards nature, Woolf comments on how 'the white canvas on his tennis shoes was bloodstained and sticky' (2012, p. 353). She asserts that, despite Giles' status in society, the guilt of his repeatedly harsh and dominant actions remains as a stain on his character. Woolf's juxtaposing of the arrogant personalities of some characters with the empathic nature-interaction of others, highlights the development of an increasingly overt environmental tone in *Between the Acts.* Scott's critical work also appears to read *Between the Acts* as a novel which, by acknowledging the problematic influence of humans, looks to an optimistic future through a perceived upward trajectory in environmental awareness. In *In the Hollow of the Wave* Scott focuses her analysis on Haraway's adoption of Halberstam and Livingston's concept of the "posthuman body" (2012, p. 70). The stance that Scott takes, with relevance to the lens of this thesis which considers the frequent-emergence of non-human characters in *Between the Acts,* suggests that Woolf is outlining the hopeful notion of a 'time when "the human body itself is no longer part of 'the family of man' but a zoo of posthumanities"' (Scott, 2012, p. 70). There is a narrative tone in *Between the Acts* that condemns Giles' mistreatment of other species and other voices, and this raises socio-environmental questions. Woolf's

repeated consideration of the presence of non-human species, in the estate grounds nature form, crucially allows for a perspective that counters the anthropocentric myth of patriarchal dominance.

Following the scene of Giles in opposition to the natural world, we are quite quickly led into a scene that is entirely animated by non-human beings. Woolf, slightly mockingly due to the presence of lots of animals, begins the passage by mentioning that 'the barn was empty' (2012, p. 354). She then quickly launches into descriptions of the animals, who are active in this momentarily non-human space: 'Mice slid in and out of holes […] swallows were busy with straw […] countless beetles and insects of various sorts burrowed' (2012, p. 354). By waiting until there are few human characters present and then creating a menagerie of busy animals in the Barn, Woolf is implying that the natural world continues to function and grow with or without the interference of humans. Thanks to the harshness of Giles' response to seeing the snake and toad, we already have a sense that Woolf strongly feels that human action causes harm and disrupts the natural flow of cycles that take place in nature. From this suggestion of Woolf's empathy for the non-anthropogenic environment and her awareness of species cohabiting spaces; such as in 'the barn' at Pointz Hall, we can follow Westling's detailing of how Woolf possessed an ability to consider life from an ecophenomenological viewpoint. Westling reminds us that even early on in her writing career, Woolf 'was acutely attuned to the dynamic bodily fullness of the nonhuman world' (Autumn 1999, p. 858). In this way Woolf respects the realness of experiencing life in flux, just as natural processes continue to move. We gain a greater idea of Woolf's environmental favouring as Westling asserts that 'humans seem to her to have had no effect on the real shape of the place, and villages seem to have sunk into hollows between the wave' (Autumn 1999, p. 858). This establishment of a sense of place, via the sensory elements of a natural landscape, becomes particularly evident in *Between the Acts.* Miss la Trobe's play poignantly involves the audience's surrounds and the land that makes up her theatrical stage. She sets herself the 'challenge' of bringing the people at Pointz Hall to a psychic place where they have a 'greater awareness of themselves', existing amongst the 'primordial sounds and gestures' that have become part of the present (and the historical) natural world (Scott, 2012, p. 152). Scott proposes that Woolf is able to show that humans only notice their coexistence with the natural world when it is displayed to them through artistic expression. Miss la Trobe's situating of nature and the non-human forms a paradox, whereby her audience might remark on how 'nature can merge with artifice' as 'real

swallows are attracted to an artificial lake' (Scott, 2012, p. 152). Woolf's fellow nature writer, Forster, was also beginning to interweave discussions over environmental protection and effective land management into his novels. *Howards End* (1910) is a story that is ultimately intrigued by the connection between certain people and certain nature-dominant gardens and landscapes. It is proposed by Phyllis Richardson that Forster's novel centred around 'drawing person to person to the land, and the countryside to the house, which held something like a promise to endure' (2017, p. 272). Alongside Forster's increasingly overt compassion for the conservation of the rurality, Bell explains that Woolf is dealing with the encroachment of capitalistic development near Monk's House and at Asham. A letter to Ethel Smyth in 1932 illustrates Woolf's frustration at the "damnable" constructions (Bell, 1996, p. 169). Woolf states in her letter that her walks from Rodmell are 'ruined for ever', because 'factories are rising on the river bank' (1979, p. 10). Close to Leonard and Virginia Woolf at Monk's House, the coastline between Newhaven and Rottingdean, which they knew because of the 'very lovely and wild-looking stretch of downland' that made up its habitat, was being converted into a group of holiday buildings (Bell, 1996, p. 169). Then, slightly further away, their view of Asham from the garden, amidst the pastures of the South Downs, was being blocked by 'a cement-making Company' (Bell, 1996, p. 169). With these insights Bell appears to liken aspects of Woolf's nature writing approach to those of Gilbert White – who is mentioned previously in this thesis with regard to Woolf's admiration for his style. In *Modern British Nature Writing,* White is discussed in relation to whether (as Mabey proposes) he too struggled with the dichotomy that existed between '[his] love of nature' and 'the stimulation of urban life' (Abberley, et al., 2022, p. 1). It seems that White, and later Woolf, used their writing to reflect on strands of environmental concern. For example, 'the politics of landownership' were changing during both of their lifetimes (Abberley, et al., 2022, p. 2). It therefore makes sense that their nature writings provided an undercurrent of dialogue about the state of the natural world and the influence that humans were having on its ecological health and prosperity for future generations.

Between the Acts, through its engagement with the estate grounds as a nature form and the deliberate merging of the human and non-human characters, provides an apt context for considering the bioaesthetic and environmental qualities of Woolf's writing. To focus on *Between the Act's* interval scene once more, we see Woolf's observant descriptions of the remains of human activity: 'Festoons of paper roses, left over from the

Coronation, drooped from the rafters', before she also reveals the presence of 'a stray bitch' and her 'puppies' who are slowly learning to adjust to the light changes in the Barn (2012, p. 354). We read that the 'eyes' of the young animals are 'expanding and narrowing, some adapted to light, others to darkness' (2012, p. 354). As they look out into the world; from 'different angles and edges', there is a feeling that these experiences traverse across the human versus nonhuman binary (2012, p. 354). When Woolf is creating her nature-informed scenes in *Between the Acts*, her writing projects an empathetic tone alongside the diligence of scientific nature-observation. In contrast to these depictions of non-human activity, her human characters are seen as harsher creatures who are often isolated and lacking a connection with the flow of energy that is involved in an ecosystem. Woolf emphasises this point as Mrs Sands enters the Barn, because this human character breaks up the calm of the 'rustlings' of mice and the 'sunned' butterfly (2012, p. 354). Mrs Sands is ignorant of the 'butterflies she never saw' and for her 'mice were only black pellets in kitchen drawers' (2012, p. 354). Whilst Woolf maintains a vague neutrality as the narrator in *Between the Acts,* there is the sense (seen, for example, with how Woolf negatively introduces Mrs Sands as preoccupied by her human-centric way of life – as Sands is complacent towards the butterflies and shows disdain for the mice) that she follows what is now thought to be a bioaesthetical view. This critical examination asserts 'that human nature is neither whole nor one, but multiple and fractured across time and space' (Strathausen, 2017, p. 8). Woolf is aware of how ecologically important it is to maintain an interconnectivity between organisms. She involves the coexistence of species in her novels and frequently mocks or highlights human attempts to separate ourselves from both this ecological connectivity and our fundamental reliance on the natural world.

In summary, this chapter evaluates Woolf's use of her estate grounds nature form to evidence her environmental standpoint in *Between the Acts*. The analysis of *Between the Acts* concentrates on Woolf's Naturalism, her adoption of developing approaches in the modern Natural Sciences and early questions surrounding the need for conservation of the 'natural' landscape. In this chapter we see Woolf's growing support for more equal access to land in Britain, which in turn relates to ways in which ecological habitats could be conserved to limit human destruction by those who manipulate positions of power. Chapter 4 pinpoints key interactions in *Between the Acts* that illustrate how Lucy Swithin and Isa Oliver choose to merge themselves with the non-human beings in the estate grounds at Pointz Hall. Swithin is always learning of the

prehistoric layout of the land in Britain, and considers the entire topographical timeline at Pointz Hall – from the time when the land first came into existence up until their present time as the Oliver family. She is interested in the changes that have occurred in habitat formation and determinedly asks why humans decided to alter the land in the way that they did at Pointz Hall. Her growing belief in the 'oneness' of all living species is enhanced by her knowledge of species evolution – she knows that humans began as other species and adapted over the centuries. Contrasting her brother's anthropocentric worldview, Swithin is equally, if not more, observant of changes in the lives of non-human species. She appears to be concerned for the ecosystem as a whole. Swithin's desire for a 'house of her own' is driven by her need for 'the benefit of the gardens', where she could shirk her repressed role and escape from the ridicule that others attach to her identity as a woman constrained by a patriarchal system that also often asserts dominion over non-human beings. Woolf's portrayal of Isa in *Between the Acts* aligns with Swithin's frequent escapism into a more holistic relationship with the natural world. Isa longs for a deep and emotional connection with others. She identifies with those who are respectful of nature and so feels more attuned to her children and to the farmer character of Mr Haines. Isa finds a freedom in the natural world because the rhythms, movements, cycles and phases are less rigid than in the anthropocentric realm. Woolf's estate grounds nature form provides Isa with a location that creates some distance between herself and the restricting patriarchal society that subjugates her individual impetus. The connection to the natural world offers Isa a greater sense of clarity and an appreciation of the universality of energetic transference that occurs outside of human-centric and hegemonic constructs. Woolf's nature forms, as discussed in the three preceding chapters, incrementally increase in terms of the garden design scale of formal to wild habitat styles. The focus on the estate grounds nature form, in relation to *Between the Acts* in this chapter, is the final nature form lens and the 'wildest' of all four of the nature forms examined in the thesis. The estate grounds nature form leads the thesis towards the culmination of the close analysis of Woolf's nature forms in the selected novels of *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts.*

Conclusion

This thesis explores nature forms in four of Virginia Woolf's interwar novels [*Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *The Waves* (1931) and *Between the Acts* (1941)]. As the chapters progress, these forms become wilder. At the same time, the chapters trace the chronological publication of the chosen novels by Woolf. Whilst the thesis examines the various nature forms, by adopting the formal to wild landscape design scale, the chronological approach allows us to see developments in Woolf's attitude towards and engagement with environmentalism.

The research demonstrates that Woolf's tangible experience of planted habitats led to the development of her literary nature forms. The over-arching importance of nature for Woolf developed around the presence of a garden at, or near to, each of her homes. These horticultural encounters also led to her interest in the wider habitats of the British landscape. The thesis concentrates on references in Woolf's chosen novels, alongside extracts from some of her diary material, that relate to evidence of her direct or associative interactions with practical horticulture. A tangible relationship with nature is important for Woolf's experience of sensory inspiration, and thus the creation of her animated nature scenes. Horticulture became threaded as another layer of artistic connectivity that existed within the functioning of the Bloomsbury Group and throughout the lives of family and friends who remained close to the young Stephen siblings, even after their mother and father passed away.

The close analysis of Woolf's nature forms results in a greater understanding of her ecologically influenced life philosophy. The thesis details Woolf's inclusion of human and non-human beings as energetic forces in the chosen novels, the underlying narratives of which are concerned with how all beings share a complex relationship within the universality of nature's processes. The thesis aligns Woolf's philosophy with aspects of Haraway's assertion that living beings relate much more as 'companion species' in a diverse and 'richer web' of interaction, than hegemonic human narratives would claim (2008, p. 16). Woolf's use of – and emphasis on – the nature forms in the chosen novels are a reminder of how she appreciates the significance of species co-

existing and activating ecosystems with their combined communities of energy transfers. Woolf's botanically-infused prose and the presence in the novels of nature form habitats express a desire to extend beyond socially hegemonic voices into an awareness of the significance of marginalised human voices and non-human voices. The decision to include a wider sphere of voices on the experience of life speaks to Woolf's environmentalism – via an appreciation of connected energy in a habitat ecosystem and in terms of a philosophy that believes in the spiritual animism of a universal flow of shared energy.

Woolf developed her style of poetic-prose by building on the leaning of Naturalism towards the observational rigors of an evolving academic interest in the natural sciences, literary nature writing and the sensory quality that poetic verse brings to description. Woolf's own poetic-prose took on aspects of the Romantic styles of Alfred Tennyson, Dorothy and William Wordsworth and Christina Rossetti, whilst drawing on scientific endeavours initiated by Charles Darwin, Gilbert White and W. H. Hudson, in order to express her impression of modernity. There is an undercurrent of tension in these four interwar novels that ridicules the patriarchal, mechanical and human-centred obsession with war and rapid development. We also see a sympathy towards acts of conservation and the protection of habitats. This analysis of the ways in which Woolf's writing deals with environmental concerns reveals that, alongside other members of the Bloomsbury Group, her writing attempts to portray some of the ongoing enviro-political discussions that were present for their generation. As the thesis demonstrates, Woolf, and some of her chosen characters in *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves* and *Between the Acts*, adopt the modern pursuit of recording habitat change.

The biographical and historical context given by Woolf's experience of the naturalistic gardening style and early signs of conservation activism is important. This is because it highlights an increasing sense of awareness about the essential vitality and expansiveness of both the British landscape and the earth as an entire biosphere, as a result of the First World War forcing a change in perspective. Wider travel and increased accessibility to work on the land, alongside a growing trend in the natural sciences that focused on observing the interrelated links between species in habitats, was also shifting understandings towards the function of ecological systems, along with the positioning of humans in, and their impact on, these webs of universal life. The threat of completely destroying and losing an environmental 'sense of place' as well as the natural

resources that humans and animals rely on, encouraged a greater sense of urgency towards protection of the land.

The decision to structure this thesis through the specific lens of the nature forms on a scaled system that moves through horticultural and landscape styles from formal to 'wild', marks a significant new contribution to existing Woolf criticism with an emphasis on environmentalism and ecological networks. It also extends critical research into the impact that gardening and gardens had on Woolf's writing, by combining these thematic investigations and adopting an agenda that is itself based on horticultural terminologies and approaches that are used in landscape design field surveys. The thesis pushes current research forwards in its analysis of the chosen texts through the lens of the nature form habitats and illustrates Woolf's tangible engagement and interaction with the natural world – due to her translation of ecological habitats into literary forms. In this way, the thesis demonstrates Woolf's involvement with a move to conserve the functioning of non-anthropogenic ecosystems. In future research the scope of the nature forms analysis may benefit from investigation that expands the predominantly horticultural and botanical emphasis, to include a detailed identification of fauna in the habitats of the chosen novels in this thesis.

Alongside emphasising Woolf's ecological awareness, the research also concentrates on how her nature forms in *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts* represent a spiritual philosophy that embraces the idea of human and non-human beings interacting through a universal flow of energy. The sense that Woolf's nature forms create natural backdrops, that are alive and often pulsate with greater energy than her characters, is a theme that the thesis expands on throughout each chapter. This extension into the ecological vibrations of the natural world creates a diverse network for her characters to connect with – enabling them to gain a multifaceted perspective on their individual experiences of life's vicissitudes. These moments of recognition occur when Woolf's characters acknowledge their co-existence with non-human beings. This remembrance of ecosystems reveals that the chosen novels trace a spiritual relief, which rises when it is suggested that energy transfers in ecosystems align with a belief in the universality of an animating force that sparks transformation and momentum. Furthermore, Woolf's awareness of literary history affords her greater command in her use of nature writing. This is because she is able to move beyond romanticized

references of the natural world, to comment on heightened human emotions and the relational dynamics that exist, firstly, between humans, and also between humans and the universality that she perceives in nature's processes.

The thesis posits that Woolf's knowledge of naturalistic approaches to gardening, following the First World War, is also crucial. This horticultural insight led to her creation of literary nature forms which reflect on the growing appreciation for garden designs that offered greater biodiversity and the inclusion of ecosystem habitats supporting both human and non-human beings. In this regard, Woolf was supporting environmentally-focused change in landscape design and promoting these ideas in her novels of this period. Without this interwar expansion in land design theory and the adoption of environmentally-aware narratives amongst members of the Bloomsbury Group – significantly with Woolf's construction of her nature forms – the thesis proposes that our contemporary act of naturalistic gardening would not have further transformed to respond to climate change issues in Britain.

The thesis establishes several pathways for the future development of research. The central arguments might be developed to investigate how the literary, artistic and horticultural projects of Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group provide an initial contextual template for the present-day significance of sustainable horticulture. Secondly, Woolf's literary oeuvre offers a nature writing template that pre-empts the environmentally astute publications of today. Both the natural world and the industrial or anthropogenic, alongside the various responses they produce (whether contrasting or aligning), exist as part of the wider experience documented by Woolf in her novels. Future research concerned with how conservation strategies are recorded might build on the ways in which the early conservational context is observed in Woolf's literary oeuvre during the interwar years in Britain. This is because Woolf's nature writing also aids wider awareness about conservation actions that were implemented to preserve or adapt our natural landscapes and flora and fauna against the ongoing climate crisis. The further research pathways are relevant and important as they offer a way to examine how we best record the viability of our environmentally-led actions – particularly in regard to gardening practices that are adapted in the hope of slowing the negative impact of climate change and protecting natural ecosystems for future generations.

Ultimately, this thesis asserts that nature is used by Woolf as an ever-flowing presence which forms an essentially animated backdrop to her characters' expressions. The thesis also interprets aspects of Woolf's autobiographical writings, as supporting her philosophy surrounding the flow of energy between all living beings. Woolf's diary extract from Tuesday 20th September, 1938, shows her initially deliberating over the sequencing of paragraphs and timelines in her biography of Roger Fry:

> Pictures. Talk, about art. I look out of window. His persuasiveness – a certain density – wished to persuade you to like what he liked. Eagerness – absorption – stir – a kind of vibration like a hawkmoth round him. Or shall I make a scene here – at Otts?
> (Woolf, 1984, p. 172).

Woolf appears to leave a quick set of instructions, reminding herself of the next content to be included on Fry's life and career: 'Pictures. Talk, about art' (Woolf, 1984, p. 172). Whilst plotting when she should place 'a break' in the discussion, in Fry's biography, Woolf also jolts away from her present task by noting in her diary that she was propelled to 'look out of window' (Woolf, 1984, p. 172). There is an awareness in the diary extract – Woolf appreciates that she is stirred by both moments of restless concentration and restless distraction. Following on from this, as Woolf hones in on Fry's personality, there is a glimpse of the style of spiritual animism that is referred to throughout this thesis – defined earlier as 'an animating principle' which 'directs the energy that moves living beings and governs their growth and evolution' (OUP, July 2023, pp. "animism (n.), sense 1,"). This is because, alongside 'his persuasiveness', Woolf describes how Fry could 'stir' intrigue in those he met by producing 'a kind of vibration like a hawkmoth round him' (Woolf, 1984, p. 172). According to this reading of Woolf's words, the enthusiasm in Fry's character seemed to be driven by this energetic life force ('a kind of vibration' and propulsion to move) that was conjured both by him being inspired by interactions with the world – the habitats that he found himself immersed in – and by inspiring others with the 'eagerness' that he projected (Woolf, 1984, p. 172). Woolf's 'life-philosophy' and frequent return to the idea of humans and non-humans being part of a greater 'whole' – an ecosystem of energetic

relations – is evoked with Woolf's simile. This literary device suggests that Fry's life energy creates 'a kind of vibration like a hawkmoth round him', due to the comparison that she makes between his back-and-forth engagement with his environment and the beating of the hawkmoth's wings (Woolf, 1984, p. 172). Incidentally, hawkmoths are known to vibrate their wings as a means of warming muscles for flight (Dorsett, 1962). Woolf appears to compare the energetic creation of heat that the hawkmoths produce, to Fry's ability to emit an aura of enthusiasm for artistic research and dissemination. In the above diary extract, Woolf's syntax also supports this idea of energetic movement reaching beyond the confines of a human-centric perspective. This is because of the way in which sentences are either short in length ('Pictures. Talk, about art. I look out of window') or separated by long pauses ('Eagerness – absorption – stir – a kind of vibration'), and so the flow of reading becomes more jagged and broken-up (Woolf, 1984, p. 172). The pauses highlight Woolf's thinking process as she works to define the character of her friend. But they also create a kind of rhythm in motion, before any actual meaning is attached to the words. The short sentences are read quickly (for example 'Pictures'), but we are then forced to pause with the full stop and consider what 'Pictures' means. Woolf continues, ('Talk, about art'), and it becomes apparent that she is producing a writing plan for herself in that very moment. This instructive list is being put down in order that she might briefly plan an ongoing structure for the next paragraphs in Fry's biography. With this contrastingly fast and slow reading of Woolf's diary extract, there is a deeper awareness of her writing as a process. The act of writing is shown as a movement, and a form of vibrational energy, which can be compared to how the hawkmoth purposely vibrates its wings to become ready for flight and protect itself from surrounding threats.

Woolf recalls vibrations and sounds from immersive habitats and interrelated ecosystems as expressions of life, such as her remembering of the 'murmur of bees […] a complete rapture of pleasure' experienced during childhood (Woolf, 2002, p. 80). Even more than this, the idea of a low and continues hum captures Woolf's 'philosophy […] a constant idea […] that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern' and assertion 'that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art […] we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself' (2002, p. 85). Woolf captures, in her writing, the sense of spiritual animism that she experiences in the world, by using her nature forms to illustrate her belief in an underlying 'hidden pattern' – the '*animating principle*' – that creates momentum between energetic beings. By noting that 'the whole world

is a work of art' – a live system of creative engagements – and recognising that 'we are parts of the work of art' this thesis sees Woolf's appreciation of the way in which individuals are vitalised by their relationship with the wider animating connections that occur when species come together. This extract from *A Sketch of the Past* demonstrates how Woolf's use of nature forms in *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves* and *Between the Acts* supports this thesis focus on how her life 'philosophy' combines an environmental awareness with an identification with a belief in a spiritual animism. Furthermore, the spiritual belief being discussed concentrates on individual energy exchanges creating a 'whole' system of interconnections, whilst acknowledging that different critical perspectives would hone in on a more metaphysical and less ecologically tangible, or 'realistic', reading of Woolf's declaration that 'we are the words; we are the music' (2002, p. 85).

The thesis advances current paradigms in Woolfian research by connecting Woolf's use of her tangible experience of nature as inspiration, her creative process as a means of documenting a 'philosophy' around the interaction of all living things and her interest in modern approaches to ecological research. Significantly, the thesis examines these important insights through the lens of a horticultural and landscape design scale of planting styles. This habitat-focused structuring contributes to critical research by allowing us to explore Woolf's environmentalism from an ecocritical stance that is drawn from a system that involves humans observing, organising and managing non-human beings and habitats.

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Appendix

Horticulture notes:

Gertrude Jekyll and her Approach to Garden Design

Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932), is described as ‘an artist in [the fields] of horticulture and garden planning’ (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, p. 8). Jekyll was experienced in colour theory and the key characteristics of the Arts and Crafts Movement, such as a dedication to the authenticity of materials and inspiration that drew from direct observations and past artistic expressions of the natural world. These traits, combined with a renewed interwar passion for widely-accessible gardening in England, positioned Jekyll as a crucial influence on the Bloomsbury Group and Virginia Woolf.

Gertrude Jekyll and her Arts and Crafts style of gardening captured the artistic energy of the Bloomsbury Group’s time. Jekyll was able to create planting designs that were both nostalgic and revolutionary. As opposed to Victorian formalism and the pageant-like symbolism of individual plants, clashing in their emblematic colour combinations, she favoured swathes of plants and gradual changes in the temperature of hues. For example, in relation to the cooler colours in a planting palette, Jekyll notes that ‘it is not as if the right colour-words were wanting, for the language is rich in them—violet, lavender, lilac, mauve, purple’ (2019, p. 1751). She argues further that ‘the word blue should not be used at all in connexion with these flowers. There are no blue China Asters’ (2019, p. 1751). Jekyll’s training in fine art, alongside her own passion for harmonious flow, is expressed in both her descriptions of colours and her use of them in colour-plating design that value hue-blending over either forensic spacing or abstract shocks. In a similar way to Virginia Woolf, in some regards ‘Gertrude did not conform’ as her garden designs were dramatically different from Victorian formal planting and she forged an independent life as a working woman (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, p. 8). In their collaborative book Michael Arnander and Primrose Tooley (great great niece of Gertrude) view Jekyll and her portfolio as a stalwart creative force, during a time in British history that would ‘have seen vast social change and the almost complete destruction of the old ways of her upbringing’ (1995, p. 8).

The longevity of Jekyll's immediate and later impact is also impressive – her designs for naturalistic planting remained relevant throughout the First World War and into the 1930s.

In *The Virago Book of Women Gardeners,* evidence of Jekyll's naturalistic planting style is noted in relation to her 1900 instructions for planting wallflowers. Jekyll records that she sows the wallflowers in 'informal drifts', each kind having its share, though not an equal share, of wall and bank and level' (Kellaway, 2016, p. 262).When further discussing collective wallflower planting, Jekyll remarks that she would support 'the planting of white and purple colouring' by establishing a backdrop of 'plants or shrubs of dark foliage' (Kellaway, 2016, p. 263). As well as superficially mimicking the density and balance of colours found in wilder ecosystems, beyond the direct interferences of humans, Jekyll chooses to slow the impact of richer colour hues on the eye. She does this by making sure that on the approach to a border with bright blooms, there is a 'passing through a turn or a tunnelled arch of Yew or some other dusky growth' to immerse the walker in a wider sense of the overall habitat type that she has built up onto a whole (Kellaway, 2016, p. 263).

Key Gardens that Gertrude Jekyll Designed:

Munstead Wood

Munstead Wood, in Surrey, is a particularly significant garden design by Jekyll. She lived, worked on designs and gardened in this habitat herself. At Munstead Wood Jekyll created a planting scheme that associated well with 'an archetypical cottage garden' (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, p. 94). To add greater warmth to her working surroundings, Jekyll focused on summer interest and so there was an abundance of old rose varieties, accompanied by 'iris, lupins [and] peonies' (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, p. 94). These colourful displays of flowers could be found when a walker passed through 'a tunnel of yews' (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, p. 94). This partially enclosed entrance to the garden, that the Yew trees formed, slowed the viewer's delight by slightly concealing the composition of the floral beds. The National Trust acquired the site at Munstead Wood in 2023 and ongoing restorations are taking place. The garden restoration project is led by head gardener Annabel Watts (National Trust, 2026, p. n.p.).

Durbins

Munstead Wood was also used as a plant nursery to benefit Jekyll's garden design commissions. In May 1911 Roger Fry's garden at Durbins in Guildford was planted with 'some 600 plants from the Munstead Wood Nursery', including species such as '*Yucca filamentosa, Santolina* and *Nepeta'* (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, p. 123). Fry's daughter, Pamela, is recorded as taking delight in the garden. She described the dramatic impact of the garden, in 1917, by noting that there were 'great hedges of monthly roses in the midst of which native irises' were growing (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, p. 123). By supplying the majority of her own plants, from her own nursery at home, Jekyll was able to both ignite a feeling of greater authenticity in her clients and maintain a more effective control over the details of her planting schemes.

Lindisfarne [see Figure 11. p. 275]

Jekyll visited a site at Lindisfarne Castle, Holy Island, Northumberland, to help with the planting for the garden that she had designed. As an extension of her experiments with Sedum and the drifts that could be created with this species (as well as her interest in the 'chocolate-red' of the cultivar called *S. telephium* 'Munstaed Red' that she grew at Munstead Wood), '24 *Sedum telephium*' were sent to Lindisfarne in 1910 (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, p. 142). The idea was to place the Sedum in the central bed in order that the drifts could act as "undergrowth" planting texture, where taller 'gladioli grew in clumps' (Arnander & Tooley, 1995, p. 142). This Lindisfarne garden is typical of Jekyll's cottage garden style of planting, set in boundary beds and divided by stone pathways and trellis structures. Yet, the site is notably situated amongst the grassy and wind-swept humps of Holy Island. The experience of encountering the stone-walled seclusion of Jekyll's Arts and Crafts garden, in the exposed nature of the surrounding island landscape, highlights both the contrasts between the two habitats and the human drive to cultivate land.

Hestercombe

The 1903 commissioning of a formal garden at Hestercombe House near Taunton (Somerset) is a particularly favoured example of an early garden design collaboration between Jekyll and Edwin Lutyens.[15] According to The Gardens Trust, the formal gardens were centred by a sunken 'parterre' of geometric-shaped 'borders edged with stone and ringed with luxuriant bergenia' (Christian, 2021, p. n.p.). There is a sense of the garden stretching out into the wilder landscape of the Hestercombe estate, due to the way in which the design emphasises how the 'East and West Rills frame the cultivated space' (Christian, 2021, p. n.p.). At the centre of Jekyll and Lutyens' design was the sunken garden, or Great Plat, where the divided beds were 'planted with gladioli and delphiniums' (Historic England, 2025, p. n.p.). The water features supported 'three pairs of small circular pools planted around with white calla lilies' and each pool provided a site for a number of 'different water plant species' (Historic England, 2025, p. n.p.). Jekyll's influence is noticeable throughout the design as any hard surfaces are purposely softened. The tanks that collect the water from the rills are 'adorned with erigeron' and the pergola at the southern edge of the sunken garden is draped 'with roses and clematis' (Historic England, 2025, p. n.p.).

Upton Grey

The gardens at the manor house in Upton Grey, Hampshire, were designed by Jekyll in 1908. The property was owned by Charles Holme at the time and he was an influential member of the Arts and Crafts Movement due to his arts publication: *The Studio: An Illustrated Magazine of Fine and Applied Art*. In this garden we see typical examples of Jekyll's underlying structuring. The Formal Garden (situated close to the house) acts as a central space. Planting beds are reliant on herbaceous species and a dramatic, but shorter, season of display. A pergola feature hosts species such as 'roses, aristolochia, jasmine and virginia creeper' which provide interest for a longer period throughout the year (Wallinger, 2025, p. n.p.). This structure also leads the garden visitor on to drops in topographical levels as you encounter the Rose Gardens and Lawns below. In relation to the Formal Gardens, a Wild Garden was placed to the west of the manor house. This design is described as unique to Upton Grey, because it claims to be 'Jekyll's only surviving and faithfully restored Wild garden' (Wallinger,

[15] The 1903 date of the commission for the garden design is taken from the 'Gardens History' webpage on the Hestercombe House and Gardens website: https://www.hestercombe.com/history/gardens

2025, p. n.p.). Here we see evidence of an enthusiasm for William Robinson's style of wildflower planting, in meadows separated by walkable pathways. Wallinger details the wild garden consisting of a combination of planting swathes that resulted in a more biodiverse mix of different heights: 'longer grass, rambling roses, shrubs, bamboo and a small copse of Walnut trees' (Wallinger, 2025, p. n.p.).

Figure 11. Gertrude Jekyll walled garden, Lindisfarne photograph A. B. Clarke