
The Resistant Social/Sexual Subjectivity of Hall's *Ogilvy* and Woolf's *Rhoda*

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Between 1880 and 1920, sexologists, psychoanalysts, and other members of the medical community developed the modern Western conception of the “lesbian.”¹ While multiple writers provided various theories, two dominant “explanations” emerged, which formed the basic debate regarding the female sexual deviant² in the twentieth century.³ Sigmund Freud and his followers saw all humans as fundamentally bi-sexual beings, and claimed that homosexuals were simply prematurely arrested in their sexual development.⁴ Countering the Freudians, Havelock Ellis allowed that many women *thought* they were lesbians who really were not, but he concluded that there actually existed congenitally inverted females — women who were physically organized as females but biologically determined to be male through a chromosomal error.⁵ As Freud and Ellis sketched the parameters of the sexually “perverted”⁶ woman in opposition to what they felt were “normal” female subjects, Radclyffe Hall composed her literary manifestations of the ambiguously sexualized woman. In “Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself” (1926, 1934), a short story that critics consistently neglect,⁷ Hall carefully navigates both discourses of female homosexuality. This authorial strategy allows her to engage the discussions of deviancy and posit a vision of Ogilvy as a non-Cartesian human subject, glimpsing momentarily a multi-sexed self.⁸ Virginia Woolf’s affinity with Hall and other members of the lesbian community has been the subject of much critical commentary.⁹ Woolf, of course, did not achieve or want the public exposure that Hall experienced as a prominent queer woman;¹⁰ likewise, Woolf’s fictional female characters do not appear as overt “lesbians.”¹¹ Nevertheless, in *The Waves*, Woolf uses innovative narrative techniques to depict Rhoda as another ambiguously sexualized character¹² who maintains qualities of a non-Cartesian agent. Both Hall and Woolf negotiate and respond to the dominant discourses of female homosexuality to create fictional “feminine” figures who anticipate modes of sexual subjectivity rooted in multiplicity. Hall accomplishes this by rehearsing and (re)visioning the binary relationships between men and women, while Woolf develops a non-codified character who dismisses clear sexualized identification in

favor of a dynamic, non-stable ontological status. Ogilvy and Rhoda both die near the close of their respective tales, but these women also prefigure a fantastic image of a multi-sexualized individual, capable of ambiguously resisting society's demand that "people" inhabit separate and distinct social/sexual subject positions.

Western society began to make definitive demands upon the sexually "perverse" female near the turn of the century through scientific and medical discourses. There is no definitive indication that Hall consulted Freud's writings on female deviancy as background information for her fiction, but her biographers and critics make clear her knowledge of his theories;¹³ Woolf's knowledge of Freud, on the other hand, has been well documented.¹⁴ Freud's basic psychoanalytic thought, which conceives of all humans as simultaneously heterosexual and homosexual, views lesbians as underdeveloped "normal" women. In "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman," he demonstrates his hypothesis that lesbians' sexuality remains simply retarded and advocates psychotherapy as the proper means of reversing this "perversion" (135-38). Barbara Fassler notes that "Freudians tended to link homosexuality with other neuroses caused by early childhood sexual traumas." She concludes that "although one escaped the label of a genetic mistake, one was [under Freud] termed a neurotic" (247).¹⁵ Freud's theory ultimately regards lesbians as heterosexual women who need proper clinical attention; in other words, he presents them as broken subjects in need of psychoanalytic repair. Throughout the early years of the twentieth century, many read and critiqued Freud, but his thought still strongly influenced the notions of sexuality and sexual deviancy adopted throughout Western Europe.

Although we may not have decisive proof that Hall read Freud's work, critics have documented thoroughly both her and Woolf's familiarity with the work of Ellis.¹⁶ Indeed, Hall invited Ellis to provide a "Commentary" for her scandalous semi-autobiographical bildungsroman, *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), and Woolf had access to Ellis' work through her family library (Fassler 240).¹⁷ Ellis provided two categories of "lesbians." Like Freud, he believed that some women simply mentally misperceived themselves as homosexual. For these *treatable* individuals, Ellis advocated a strong dose of social integration and activity. However, he also discussed a distinct group of women whom he termed "congenitally inverted;" these women occupied a female body but possessed male chromosomes and behaved *like men* ("Sexual Inversion" 145). Carol Smith-Rosenberg indicates that Ellis understood female sexual inversion as "biological, hereditary, and irreversible. The 'invert' was powerless to change her inclination" (270-71). Ellis distinguished this type of lesbian from either the woman or the man, creating what Esther Newton terms "a third sex or trapped soul" which is devoid of socially sanc-

tioned sexuality (568). While Freud viewed the female homosexual as a belated heterosexual woman, Ellis described her as a mannish woman. These discourses influence the construction of Hall's and Woolf's fictional women, as well as the critical reception of the authors in the late twentieth century, by shaping the social perception of deviant women.

With the rise of second-wave feminism in the 1970s and 1980s, feminist critics began to reprimand Hall and Woolf.¹⁸ Many lesbian feminists derided Hall for her association with Ellis, claiming that her work only reproduces the oppressive sexual discourses of the early twentieth century. Catharine R. Stimpson, in her canonical essay, "Zero Degree Deviancy: The Lesbian Novel in English," outlines two basic plots for the female homosexual tale: social condemnation and individualistic escape. She argues that Hall's fiction consistently engages the "narrative of damnation, of the lesbian's suffering as a lonely outcast," leaving the hero(ine) with neither happiness nor hope (364). Stimpson concludes that "Hall represents the lesbian as scandal and the lesbian as woman-who-is-man" (367). Frustrated by Hall's apparent acceptance of Ellis' theories, Stimpson and others dismiss her as a preliminary and "premature" lesbian writer. However, we should not interpret Hall's decision to ask Ellis to provide a commentary for *The Well of Loneliness* as a clear endorsement of his thought. Rather, Hall's authorial strategy demonstrates her knowledge of various discourses of sexual deviancy. By aligning herself with Ellis, she counters Freud's notion of the lesbian as a broken heterosexual feminine being. Hall's characters are non-perverted under Ellis' umbrage; they are coded masculine entities in a woman's physical body. Hall ultimately negotiates both discourses of female homosexuality, creating what Michel Foucault denotes "a 'reverse' discourse."¹⁹ Foucault explains that "discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy" (101-02). Foucault's analysis allows us to view Hall's adoption of Ellis as strategic; she remains influenced by the discourses of sexuality, but she also maintains her role as a participant in the discourses. She revises both theories of female deviancy, acquires authorial authority for her work, and establishes momentarily a space for a new sexual/social subject.

Elaine Showalter, during the same period of feminist thought in which Stimpson critiqued Hall, levied a harsh attack on Woolf, charging that the novelist's depiction of sexually ambiguous characters was an escape from *true* feminine experience and a "flight into androgyny." In her attempt to establish a uniquely female tradition of novel writing, she felt obliged to dismiss, with some qualification, the importance of Woolf — a writer whose vision of "true androgyny

... is attractive, although ... like all utopian ideals ... lacks zest and energy” (263). She criticizes Woolf for not providing a clearly feminized version of her personal experience within an explicit politicized realm. Toril Moi points out that “Showalter thus implicitly defines effective feminist writing as [a] work that offers a powerful expression of personal experience in a social framework” (4). This limited conception of a “feminist” project allows for neither Woolf’s nor Hall’s “reverse discourse” — i.e., their navigation of, and participation in, powerful social discourses. Showalter’s comments reveal her desire to delineate clear sexualized identities. In her later work, *Sexual Anarchy* (1990), which maintains that the early twentieth century witnessed many crossings and blurrings of gendered boundaries, she assumes that these frames of sexed and gendered subjectivity are identifiable, and were at least once stable (9). Both Hall and Woolf challenge Showalter’s presuppositions by negotiating the dominant discourses of female deviancy and envisioning ambiguously sexualized women who resist static sexual subject positions.

Although second-wave feminists critiqued both Hall and Woolf for not providing effective and codified statements for the lesbian and feminist community, both of these writers offer politically powerful visions of a non-Cartesian subjectivity — embodying a multiplicity of sexes, genders, and sexualities. The theories of subject formation promoted by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari offer helpful insight into the dynamic characters of Hall and Woolf. Deleuze images all of human life as a three-dimensional continuum (see Figures 1 and 3), and suggests that as individuals, we fold over a part of the perpetuity, creating an illusion of roundedness (see Figures 2 and 4).



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

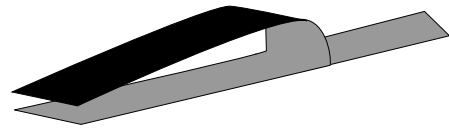


Figure 4

Working from Leibniz's theories, Deleuze terms this sense of self a fold.²⁰ He explains that "the world is enfolded in each soul, but differently because each illuminates only one little aspect of the overall folding" ("On Leibniz" 157). In Figure 2, we can see an image of the fold; note how the folded corner does not create a completely enclosed sphere. This is, perhaps, more noticeable in Figure 4, in which we see an enlarged graphic of the fold; the subject creates a feign of a rounded Cartesian ego, but it is only an illusion of completeness. Likewise, *Ogilvy* and *Rhoda* recognize the forces of society which attempt to coerce individuals into establishing an artificially distinct sexual and social identity, but they also resist this pressure.

The process of enclosure, imaged by Figure 4, is artificial, but it allows us to function in a capitalistic society that demands individual entities (*The Fold* 189). Deleuze indicates that "we have to manage to fold the line²¹ and establish an endurable zone in which to install ourselves, confront things, take hold, breath — in short, think" ("A Portrait of Foucault" 111). While neither Hall nor Woolf portray *Ogilvy* and *Rhoda* as complete or whole, these fictional characters must initially maintain an illusion of independent internal cohesiveness in order to operate in the social realm — i.e., the outside. Constantin V. Boundas points out that "it is the individual who causes the outside to fold, thereby endowing itself with subjectivity, as it bends and folds the outside" (114). As folded subjects, *Ogilvy* and *Rhoda* ultimately recognize their "selves" as multiple; their persons are more than the bodies, faces, sexes, genders, and sexualities they can enclose within their folds. Nevertheless, these sexually ambiguous women are often forced to fold a part of the outside world and its social discourses in order to affect an inside of subjectivity necessary to function in society. Both *Ogilvy* and *Rhoda* resist social pressure to fold over a "distinct" identity that is stable, permanent, and individualized, and both characters die failing to complete their resistances, but not before they offer marvelous visions of multiplicitous sexual and social subject positions.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that as subjects we strive to satisfy desires produced by social discourses and pressures which act as machines.²² They reconfigure desire as a mode of social construction and note how "society constructs its own delirium by recording the process of production" (*Anti-Oedipus* 10). Maintaining that discourses produce desires for society and its participants,²³ Deleuze and Guattari posit that the individual subject negotiates attractions and repulsions to various produced-desires. They explain that the "subject is produced" through "the opposition between attraction and repulsion" (*Anti-Oedipus* 17), and they indicate that "the opposition of the forces of attraction and repulsion produces an open

series of intensive elements ... that are never an expression of the final equilibrium of a system, but consist, rather, of an unlimited number of stationary, metastable states through which a subject passes" (*Anti-Oedipus* 15). Ogilvy and Rhoda reveal the influence of social discourses as well as various attractions and repulsions to the desires they produce. Ogilvy negotiates the sexual duality of Ellis' theory, and Rhoda often appears as a broken agent in need of Freud's psychoanalytic therapy. These characters, however, continually resist permanently static sites of identity, and they ultimately envision a subjectivity rooted in dynamic multiplicity. As Deleuze and Guattari note, "the subject itself is not at the center, which is occupied by the machine, but on the periphery, with no fixed identity, forever decentered, *defined* by the states through which it passes" (*Anti-Oedipus* 20). Neither Ogilvy nor Rhoda is ever centered or whole as a Cartesian subject. Their subjectivity remains a function of the produced desires of society — a society which defines deviant women as masculine, feminine, and ambiguous. Reminding us of Judith Butler's call to trouble stable gender identities (*Gender Trouble* vii), Ogilvy and Rhoda move amidst masculinity, femininity, and sexual equivocality, touring the "thousand tiny sexes" that Deleuze and Guattari find within the social machine (*A Thousand Plateaus* 213).²⁴ Deleuze and Guattari suggest that "we do not have units of measure, only multiplicities or varieties" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 8). They examine these multiplicities within the category of sexual identity and declare that "the two sexes imply a multiplicity of molecular combinations bringing into play not only the man in the woman and the woman in the man, but the relation of each to the animal, the plant, etc., a thousand tiny sexes" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 213). The ambiguous and multiple sex, gender, and sexuality of Rhoda and Ogilvy prefigure Deleuzian notions of human continuity and multiplicity — a vision which demonstrates both figures' attempts to resist society's desire for distinctly folded subjects, and which abruptly ends with the death of both characters.

Hall prefaces "Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself" by indicating that she has allowed herself "a brief excursion into the realms of the fantastic" in this tale — a narrative strategy which greatly facilitates her depiction of Deleuzian notions of subjectivity (ii). The author opens her tale by noting the "disbanding of [Ogilvy's] Unit" (3). Anticipatory of Deleuze's notions of multiplicity, this assemblage had encompassed many worlds folded within many individuals. Hall relates: "They had all been members of that glorious Unit" (4). However, with the dispersal of the group, each person must assume a separate identity to function in the socioeconomic world of post-war Britain. As the story shifts, so that Hall can provide important biographical information about Ogilvy, we learn of the protagonist's troubled

sexual identity. The narrator describes Ogilvy's "tall awkward body with its queer look of strength" (3), and the protagonist later recounts her memories of herself as "a queer little girl, aggressive and awkward because of her shyness; a queer little girl who loathed sisters and dolls, preferring the stable-boys as companions, preferring to play with footballs and tops, and occasional catapults" (6). In this brief remembrance, Ogilvy demonstrates qualities of Butler's and Deleuze and Guattari's thought: she remembers herself as a girl — as someone "known as feminine" — but also associates herself with contradictory masculine attributes and activities. Even her recollection displays her conflicted and ambiguous sexual subjectivity, although she remains imaged as a dual-sexed individual.²⁵ Furthermore, Hall presents an early example of her character's foldedness. The author indicates that "Miss Ogilvy had found as her life went on that in this world it is better to be one with the herd, that the world has no wish to understand those who cannot conform to its stereotyped pattern" (6-7). Ogilvy has experienced various binary struggles which urge her to fold her "self" over to create a socially functional persona and person.

Ultimately, Ogilvy's subject formation involves much more than a simple exercise in acquiring masculine traits for a feminine body; she negotiates a binary sexualized identity, but she also resists dualistic understandings of sex, sexuality, and gender. Indeed, Hall states that Ogilvy had previously blurred the gender borderlines. She lifted weights and "gloried in her strength ... but presently this had grown irksome to her; it had seemed to lead nowhere, she being a woman" (7). We do not see Hall confront completely the inversion theories of Ellis until the latter parts of the story, but she does offer a brief early strike at his biologically based thought. Ogilvy remains perfectly aware of her status as "one-known-as-woman," and dismisses efforts to become more masculine. She does more than cross gender borders, which would only reinscribe Ellis' thought; she is not simply a female body with male chromosomes and tendencies. When her father dies, she becomes a domestic manager for her mother and sisters. Hall notes that Ogilvy's sisters "looked upon her as a brother" (8). She performs the duties of husbandry, occupying a vacant male space with a female body. Following the death of her mother, she receives an inheritance from an unnamed aunt, enabling her to "move her protesting sisters to a little estate she had purchased in Surrey" (10). As a "deviantly" sexualized person, Ogilvy attempts to satisfy society's desires for women and men. She serves as a masculine guardian, but also receives the bitter criticism of her friends and family for not being feminine (8-10). In her attempt to negotiate these demands, she initially constructs an artificial and folded sub-

ject position by rehearsing, responding to, and enfolding society's desire for an efficient sexualized dichotomy.

With the news of the war, Ogilvy again confronts her sexual status. She declares: "My God! If only I were a man ... if only I had been born a man" (10). Hall reminds us that her hero(ine) was "not at all like other ladies;" she "wished to go up to the front-line trenches" (11). Dismissing her society's desire that she fuel the war effort by knitting socks, Ogilvy forms her own "admirable unit" and serves under the French in a front-line medical corps (11-12). After the war, she feels dissatisfied with the mundane activities of husbandry. She realizes: "This won't do at all ... life's not worth so much fuss, I must pull myself together" (15). The social machine of post-war capitalistic society has forced Ogilvy to affect a degree of individuality, but this feigned distinctness ultimately leaves her feeling fragmented. She misses the diversity within interdependence that she enjoyed in her recently disbanded unit, and the news that one of its members plans to marry leads Ogilvy to experience "a sense of complete desolation" (16). Claudia Franks Stillman speaks of this moment in psychoanalytic terms as a "crisis" that drives the hero(ine) to seek restorative treatment (126). However, Ogilvy does not seek corrective therapy. She takes a brief vacation and ultimately enters a fabulous world in which she images a form of Deleuzian sexual/subject formation rooted in multiplicity.

Hall emphasizes the mythic quality of the island to which Ogilvy retreats by indicating that it "is still very little known to the world" (17). After she encounters the mysterious cave and notes how the water undulates onto the land, she observes seagulls "grown fearless of man by reason of his absurd limitations" who "reared countless young who multiplied, in their turn, every season" (20). Her comments regarding the seagulls reveal Hall's critique of restrictive social constructions of individualized subjectivity. Ogilvy admires the continuous variety of the birds, who consistently re-create and re-fold life and its various manifestations. Moreover, she maintains a strange memory of the fabulous island and cave — a sensation which becomes stronger and sharper when the hotel proprietor, Nanceskivel, shows various ancient relics of the area to the hero(ine). Ogilvy becomes quite disturbed that her host has uncovered these bones; she "knew how such men had been buried, which made the outrage seem all the more shameful" (22). Her anger suggests a sense of affiliation with these earlier forms of life. Like Deleuze's belief that all human life is a continuum, Ogilvy is conscious of her relation to other people and time periods. Ogilvy has been forced to distinguish and fold her "self" in a post-War capitalistic world, but Hall offers a brief and incredible vision of trans-temporal relatedness. It is not a vision of Cartesian wholeness;

rather it demonstrates the radically interconnected human subjectivity theorized by Deleuze and imagined by Hall.

The author opens the penultimate section of her story with an interesting image of affected or folded subjectivity that *Ogilvy* uses to establish a feign of individualized enclosure along this human perpetuity. Hall describes *Ogilvy* digging into her pockets and notes how “she could feel small, familiar things in those pockets and she gripped them, glad of their presence” (23). This portrait of *Ogilvy* reaching inwards into her pockets for materiality reminds us of the de-centered status of a folded subject — society desires her to rely on the “things” in her pocket for a centered and rounded sense of self. The desire-producing machine dominates, forcing *Ogilvy* and others to affect a rounded, albeit false, individualized subject position which society needs to perform the distinct roles and functions a capitalistic community. Near the point of collapse, she closes her eyes and enters a pre-historic dream world. Hall immediately declares that “Miss *Ogilvy* knew that she was herself, that is to say she was conscious of her being, and yet she was not Miss *Ogilvy* at all, nor had she a memory of her” (24). Hall challenges the Cartesian understanding of stable identity by narrating her hero(ine)’s simultaneous association and disassociation with her “self.”

Hall now performs a permutation of sorts, as she blends *Ogilvy*’s character with two pre-historic figures — one coded masculine and the other coded feminine — negotiating a sexualized dichotomy to create a third equivocal gender identity. [The author’s language requires careful attention, meriting a lengthy quotation that I have marked for easy reference.] Hall narrates:

(1) Miss *Ogilvy* wanted to shout aloud from a glorious sense of physical well-being, but instead she picked up a heavy, round stone which she hurled with great force at some distant rocks.

(5) “Good! Strong!” she exclaimed. “See how far it goes!”
“Yes, strong. There is no one so strong as you. You are surely the strongest man in our tribe,” replied her little companion.

Miss *Ogilvy* glanced at this little companion and rejoiced
(10) that they two were alone together. The girl at her side had a smooth brownish skin, oblique black eyes and short, sturdy limbs. Miss *Ogilvy* marveled because of her beauty. She also was wearing a single garment of pelts, new pelts, she had made it that morning. She had stitched at it diligently for

- (15) hours with short lengths of gut and her best bone needle. A strand of black hair hung over her bosom, and this she was constantly stroking and fondling; then she lifted the strand and examined her hair.

“Pretty,” she remarked with childish complacency.

“Pretty,” echoed the young man at her side. (25-26)

Hall represents Ogilvy's thoughts and words through line 5 of this excerpt. At this point, the author introduces a new voice, whom we come to know as the female figure who identifies Ogilvy as a man in line 7. Hall returns to Ogilvy's character in lines 9-12, referring to her not as a man but as “Miss Ogilvy;” and, it is at “her” side that the “little” companion stands. However, at this point, the appropriate antecedents for various female pronouns become ambiguous. It is not clear between lines 12-18 who is wearing pelts or who examines whose black hair. While we may like to maintain that Ogilvy as a distinct entity admires the beauty of another, the language collapses into indeterminacy. In line 19, when Hall uses the same female pronoun to announce “Pretty,” we are again unclear about who speaks these words, Ogilvy or her little companion. Finally, Hall ushers in a male voice in line 20, which troubles further the association of characters with voices. Although critics neglect close readings of this tale, many have offered blanket statements about its confusing gendered persons. Stillman Franks argues that Hall posits an inverted image of Ogilvy as man (127), and Michael Baker maintains that we see a previous incarnation of the hero(ine) as a masculine cave dweller (187). While these critics acknowledge some of the story's complexity, they fail to view the tale as anything but a manifestation of Ellis' notions of lesbians as congenitally inverted women. Hall's brief narrative accomplishes far more than a mere reversal of Ogilvy's physical sex. Through the means of human language, the author auditions binary sexual and gender identities and provides an image of merged sexual subjects, similar to Deleuze and Guattari's conceptions of the perpetuity of human life and the multiplicity of sexes. This mingling of masculine and feminine pronouns, combined with Ogilvy's sexual equivocality, glimpses a multi-sexualized subject position.

As the narrative continues, Ogilvy as a subject becomes subsumed into a dialogue of masculine and feminine identities. The ensuing conversation between stereotypical male and female figures offers important clues to Hall's understanding of the multifaceted, multi-sexed subject. When the man stutters, “You ... woman,” the narrator indicates that “the word ... he spoke had a number of meanings.” Hall as author seems to admire the ambiguity of language, but she quickly narrates that because of the lovers' amorous reciprocity “she understood him” (27).

Similar to *Ogilvy's* participation in the medical unit, these lovers feel connected. With the coming of evening, "the lovers ... felt very much alone, yet withal more closely united to the other" (28). Hall stresses both the separateness and relatedness of the male and female figures. Like Deleuze's theory of disrupted human continuity, they share a sense of unity but are also forced to establish distinct identities. In their precarious status as particular yet mutual, the lovers struggle to negotiate sexual binaries and arrive at a synthesis. Hall reports that "they were conscious of a longing for something more vast than this earthly passion could compass." The narrator provides a glimpse of this connectedness in the image of the water's encounter of the land: "the sea and the marshes were become as one substance, merging, blending, folding together; and since they were lovers they also would be one, even as the sea and the marshes" (32). As the waves of the sea mix with the earth, the male and female lovers commingle, creating a brief vision of a new diversity by working through an old duality. Hall's rhetoric maintains the binary dialectic of male and female, but her vision provides momentary hints of a third ambiguously sexualized subject, which anticipates Deleuze and Guattari's postulation of "a thousand tiny sexes." Hall's image is brief and fabulous, but she does prefigure multiplicity as a model of subjectivity by collapsing a duality. Although *Ogilvy* seems to glimpse this vision, she cannot experience it in the social world. The narrator observes that a fisherman found the hero(ine) "at the mouth of the cave. She was dead, with her hands thrust deep into her pockets" (34). Like Hall herself, *Ogilvy* searches for a way to express her sexual variety and complexity, but her society desires her to create a subject position in response to the discourses of Freud, Ellis, and other social machines — machines which force her to maintain a stable and individualized sexual subjectivity that is more useful to and efficient for a capitalistic community. Her death marks the incomplete status of Hall's Deleuzian vision, but it does not erase this amazing image.

Rhoda also dies near the end of *The Waves*, the "novel" that Woolf termed "my first work in my own style!" (*Writer's Diary* 176).²⁶ Critical treatments of the narrative emphasize Woolf's formal experimentation and the non-Cartesian models of human identity developed through her characterization.²⁷ Although Woolf does image the human subject as multiple and communal by using six voiced speakers and one non-voiced entity, it is *Rhoda* who struggles to encompass this diversity despite social pressures that demand she remain an individualized agent.²⁸ *Rhoda* relates early in the story how this multiplicitous identity can deteriorate into particularized subjects. She observes how "the birds sang in chorus," but she immediately notes that they flew away; now "one sings by the bedroom window alone" (10-11). Her recognition of the loss of community in the natural world mirrors

her experience of isolation from the other five speakers in the beginning of the tale. She is notably excluded from the butterfly hunting expedition and the discussion of who saw Jinny kissing Louis (12-15). Frank D. McConnell speaks of Rhoda as the most ethereal character in Woolf's corpus (125). She is present in the story, but often absent as an integral agent from its plot.²⁹ Society forces her to maintain an affected sense of individualized self so that she can perform specific duties in her community, but she resists this by remaining part of others, and dependent on them. Mark Hussey argues that "Rhoda is trapped by her need for others, the need to replenish her dreams with figures from that world populated by those who are at home in their bodies" (17). McConnell and Hussey rightly point out Rhoda's lack of a distinct and complete ego; however, we need not view her as a disturbed individual in need of psychoanalytic therapy. Rather, Woolf displays Rhoda as a character who ambiguously resists society's demand that she assume a stable and particularized subject position, and hence, often seems absent from the activity of the narrative.

Woolf's depiction of Rhoda emphasizes the character's reliance on her community of friends as well as her isolation from this group. Rhoda is in many ways a loner because she resists society's desire that she fold over a unique and enclosed sexual identity sanctioned by society.³⁰ Louis reports that "Rhoda has no father," (20) and it is not coincidental that she can follow neither Freud's law of the Father nor Lacan's law of the Phallus.³¹ The absence of a paternal persona disrupts her supposed Oedipal crisis, and the early classroom scene demonstrates her alienation from patriarchal symbolic figures such as numbers and letters. She declares: "But I cannot write. I see only figures" (21). Rhoda must strive to join the world of figures and loops, but even her forced entry into the social realm of language leaves her crying and alienated from the world (21-22). Howard Harper claims that Rhoda is "unsure of every aspect of her being" and concludes that "she is afraid in ways which would never occur to most of us" (240).³² She "put[s] off [her] hopeless desire to be Susan, to be Jinny," but this rejection of the two socially accepted roles for the female — the fecund mother and the sensual seductress — leaves her without a recognized sexualized role. She now needs to "[assure] herself" by touching "something hard" (27), reminding us of Ogilvy's need to dig her hands into her pockets to affect an illusion of roundedness. Both Rhoda and Ogilvy revert at times to the safety and security of "hard," individualized subjectivity; their visions of unique multi-sexualized subject positions are dangerous and threatening. Indeed Rhoda engages a constant struggle against society's pressure that she become a Cartesian self, but she also realizes the world's demand that she participate in society as a distinct individual.

Rhoda's resistance to society's desire for her to develop her own permanent subject position facilitates her various existential crises. She explains: "I am nobody. I have no face" (33). Indeed, Rhoda's sexual ambiguity precludes a recognizable body or face; she cannot be captured in one physical being or one countenance. Nevertheless, she initially decides that she must "seek out a face, a composed, a monumental face, and ... endow it with omniscience, and wear it under my dress like a talisman" (33). Again, she is seemingly compelled to follow the machine's demand that she possess an identifiable face. She acquires one, which she can carry as a boarding pass that allows her to function in social life, but this "face" is really a function of her imitations of others. Susan observes how Rhoda follows herself and Jinny (40). Later, while she attempts to hide from the reflection of her "face," Rhoda repeats "I am not here. I have no face" (43), and she observes that "other people have faces; Susan and Jinny have faces; they are here. Their world is the real world (43). Rhoda feels that she must model and mimic Susan and Jinny to affect a countenance, a fold, and an identity that will prevent her obliteration in the social realm. She explains how she must "do what other people do when they have done it" (43). She attaches herself "only to names and faces; and [hoards] them like amulets against disaster" (43). Rhoda assimilates names and faces which help her create a feign of unique subjectivity, but she is ultimately more than the sum of names and faces, masculinity and femininity, heterosexuality and homosexuality.

The uncertainty of Rhoda's sexualized subjectivity forces her to "bang [her] hand against some hard door to call [herself] back to the body." This process of distinct subject formation will prevent her from "[falling] down into nothingness" (44). Her brief encounter with Miss Lambert displays a more positive aspect of Rhoda's non-individualized subject position — i.e., the multiplicity it can encompass and envision. Rhoda seems to admire her teacher, and this respect leads her to conclude that "Month by month things are losing their hardness; even my body now lets the light through" (45). Rhoda's comments suggest the loss of specified borders for the human bodily frame, reminding us of Deleuze and Guattari's vision of human continuity and sexual prolificacy; but this moment of communal connectedness does not persist. She later dreams that she is an Empress who conquers with an attitude of defiance; yet she quickly realizes that this vision of strongly individualized subjectivity "is not solid; it gives me no satisfaction" (56). Rhoda's will to a Cartesian ego is unsuccessful. Her body fails, and as it "thaws," she feels "unsealed" and "incandescent." She again returns to a communal model of subjectivity that allows the waves and stream to "[pour] in a deep tide fertilising, opening the shut, forcing the tight-folded, flooding free" (57). Her continuous

struggle between a forced or folded sense of self and an inclusive model of human connectedness comes to an early climax when she remembers the puddle that she felt she could not cross.³³ She recalls that “Identity failed me,” but she then recollects how she proceeded to “[return] very painfully, drawing myself back into my body over the grey, cadaverous space of the puddle.” She concludes that “this is the life then to which I am committed” (64). Rhoda is conscious of the artifice of her constructed subject position and she knows how “we have invented devices for filling up the crevices and disguising these fissures” in order to affect an apparently complete ego. Keith M. Booker notes that “Rhoda is unable to find any role at all to occupy comfortably” (39). Rather than seeing Rhoda as incapable of locating a culturally endorsed part to play, we can see her as a powerful resister of the social machine’s desire for individualized agents. Her “inability” to occupy a specific and distinct role demonstrates her ability to resist society’s desire for separate beings who can perform isolated capitalistic tasks.

Rhoda (re)experiences her existential crisis/struggle following the third interlude. She observes the artificial behavior of other people with their “faint smiles” that “mask their cruelty, their indifference,” and knows that she too must “thrust [herself] back to stand burning in this clumsy, this ill-fitting body.” She professes to “hate all details of the individual life,” but also acknowledges that “An immense pressure is on me” — a pressure to act in a society that demands separate actors (105). She knows that Susan and Jinny, who have acquired the socially sanctioned female roles of mother and sensualist respectively, perform more effectively in the social world; “they say Yes; they say, No; they bring their fists down with a bang on the table” (106). Moreover, she understands how this behavior is ultimately artificial. She sees how others are also faceless and undefinable by either their physical sex or gender performance. Rhoda resists this ersatz constructed self and remains “perpetually contradicted” (107). She reflects: “I am to be broken. I am to be derided all my life. I am to be cast up and down among these men and women ... like a cork on a rough sea” (107). In Rhoda’s first overt mention of sexed identity, she expresses her own sexual ambiguity by noting her relatedness to both men and women. And yet Louise Poresky argues that “Rhoda eludes all sexuality completely” (*The Elusive Self* 189). While Poresky delineates some of the confusion regarding Rhoda’s subject position, we should not view the sexually ambiguous character as an un-sexed being. Rhoda avoids a static male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual categorization and reminds us of Deleuze and Guattari’s vision of a multiplicity of sexes, genders, and sexualities — “a thousand tiny sexes.”

Rhoda's sexual status becomes both more prominent and more confusing as the narrative unfolds. Bernard initiates a repeated description of her as "the nymph of the fountain,"³⁴ which introduces a classical myth that suggests Rhoda's sexual deviancy. This myth of Arethusa's escape from Alpheus into the ground as fluid water helps us understand Rhoda's ambiguous resistance to society's desire for codified sexed and sexualized beings.³⁵ Her disassociation from a static sexual/social subject position is extremely frightening. Part of this fear derives from her observation that "nothing persists." The constantly changing and developing fold of social human life prevents a "real" and "true" conglomeration; because Rhoda consistently resists society's pressure to create artificially an illusion of rounded and complete subjectivity, she is quite fearful and insecure. She knows that there is "no single scent, no single body for me to follow" (130). Again she must physically exert herself — must "press [her] hand against the wall to draw [herself] back" — and imitate the actions and words of others "to have lodgment" (131).³⁶ Rhoda makes several attempts to resist society's desire that she isolate a specific sexual/social identity, but she still must engage and respond to this social demand. Her resistance becomes complicated with the death of Percival — another reminder that nothing persists. She now feels "alone in a hostile world" (159). Moreover, she despises this isolation. She declares that "the human face is hideous," and announces that she is "sick of privacy" (159-60). The exclusion Rhoda experiences recalls her notable absence from the early scenes of the novel; she feels solitary because she is no longer connected to the artificial unity that Percival created. The nationalistic connectedness constructed around and through Percival collapses and fails.³⁷ Rhoda is left with the demands of desire-producing society which pressure her to affect a distinct subject position.³⁸ Tamar Katz identifies Rhoda as "the speaker who feels her identity most fragile" (237). This fragility is even more prominent following the loss of Percival as a cultural centering device. Her lack of individualized ontological stability, however, ultimately facilitates her vision of malleable and interconnected sexualized identities and social subjects because she does not conceive of herself as distinctly different from others.

As readers, we learn late of Rhoda's love connection with Louis (170),³⁹ perhaps her last desperate attempt to assume a socially sanctioned female role. Moreover, we may hear as much about Rhoda leaving Louis as we do about their relationship. Louis initially briefly states that "Rhoda left me," but he soon elaborates: "Rhoda, with whom I shared silence when the others spoke, she who hung back and turned aside when the herd assembled and galloped with orderly, sleek backs over the rich pastures, has gone now like the desert heat" (202-03). Although Louis and Rhoda have shared the conspirator status as outsiders in the novel,⁴⁰ Rhoda

appears to resist even this codifying identity. Removing herself from this heterosexual romance, she also dismisses her association with compartmentalized humanity.⁴¹ She critiques the social machine for chaining her “to one spot, one hour, one chair.” She explains that she initially “yielded” to the force of the social desires: “What you did, I did. If Susan and Jinny pulled up their stockings like that, I pulled mine up like that also” (204). She acknowledges that she has tried to satisfy the produced desires of her society; she has endeavored to act like a mother and like a sensual seductress. She will, however, no longer strive to create an artificial subject position from which to act and speak. Again, this is a risky and frightening move for Rhoda. She feels rolled over the waves and notes how “Everything falls in a tremendous shower, dissolving me.” She seems formless and permeable, but this does not prevent her from acting. She says: “Putting my foot to the ground I step gingerly and press my hand against the hard door of a Spanish inn” (206). Rhoda opts against a static social/sexual identity, and her multiplicity involves action. This small action may initially return her to *a* body, but her vision and observations anticipate the social and political potential of a multi-sexualized subject position.

Rhoda’s struggle to resist social pressures continues in the final group-scene of the novel. During the reunion dinner at Hampton Court, Rhoda no longer hides her body from the group, but she explains that “it is only that I have taught my body to do a certain trick” (222). Rhoda seems to have accepted her disembodied status as a resister of social pressures. She also understands the socially produced desires of her friends — “children, authority, fame, love, society” — and continues to insist that she “has no face” (223). Moreover, Rhoda is now concerned with the world, extending her vision of multiplicity beyond her childhood community. She feels that she “must undergo the penance of Hampton Court,” but she has a larger sense of interconnectedness in mind. She longs to “embrace the entire world,” but knows that she still “must go through the antics of the individual” (223-24). She sees the artifice of the individual subject and wants to incorporate the global community. She ultimately claims that “The still mood, the disembodied mood is on us ... and we enjoy this momentary alleviation (it is not often that one has no anxiety) when the walls of the mind become transparent.” She concludes that “This is our dwelling-place. The structure is now visible. Very little is left outside” (228). The absence of “self-serving” bodily borders facilitates relief and the absence of tension. There are no more borderlines to cross or blur; the dichotomies between sexual identities and social subjects have dissolved and all is enclosed within Rhoda’s vision of a fantastic communal subjectivity. Rhoda hears the suffering of the world (230), wants very much to embrace the multitude, but

observes how "light falls on them again. They have faces. They become Susan and Bernard, Jinny and Neville." She terms this artificial process of individualization "shriveling ... an humiliation" (232). Rhoda's dreams of communion are not realized completely; yet we ought not forget her mystical image of integration, which resists the pressures of society that demand individually folded sexual subject positions.

In Bernard's final speech, we can note much of Rhoda's vision. He now realizes that he is "not one person." He reports: "I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am — Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis: or how to distinguish my life from theirs" (276). He recounts Rhoda's death in a way that captures its mystery. He describes her as "always so furtive, always with fear in her eyes, always seeking some pillar in the desert," and indicates that "she had killed herself" (281). While the exact method of her suicide remains unclear, she does ultimately resist society's desire for her to establish a static social and sexual identity through death. This is an ambiguous and incomplete resistance. Her death leaves her vision of global integration unfulfilled; and yet it does lead Bernard to relate immediately that "this is not one life; nor do I always know if I am man or woman, Bernard or Neville, Louis, Susan, Jinny or Rhoda — so strange is the contact of one with another" (281). He recognizes that he has "been talking of Bernard, Neville, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda and Louis. Am I all of them? Am I one and distinct? I do not know." He "cannot find any obstacle separating us." He now believes that "There is no division between me and them," and he concludes that "This difference we make so much of, this identity we so feverishly cherish, was overcome" (288-89). Rhoda's suicide may curtail her earthly pursuit of this vision of communal subjectivity, but Bernard quickly resumes her struggle and reminds us of her image of multiplicitous sexual/social subjectivity.

The difficult struggles of Rhoda and *Ogilvy* against socially produced desires for static individual sexual identities certainly do not come to "happy" ends. They die near the conclusion of their respective narratives, but as Rachel Blau DuPlessis has argued, we need not privilege the endings of modern fiction by women (*Writing Beyond the Ending* 142).⁴² Additionally, we need not maintain stable and specified conceptions of sexual and social roles to be politically engaged as critics. As ambiguously sexualized figures, Rhoda and *Ogilvy* demonstrate a negotiation of dominant discourses of female deviancy as well as a resistance to society's produced desire for distinct subject positions. Second-wave feminists criticized Hall for not positing a more victorious portrait of the lesbian and chastised Woolf for avoiding the polemical depiction of a "true" female identity. Hall and Woolf, however, reveal how this emphasis on difference and uniqueness is insufficient. Hall re-

hearses the binary advocated by Showalter, and ultimately envisions Ogilvy as male, female, and equivocal. Woolf constructs “masculine” and “feminine” characters as well as homosexual and heterosexual heroes and heroines, but she eventually finds these dualistic understandings to be reductionist. Rhoda and Ogilvy cannot be encircled by static and artificial denotations of sex, gender, and sexuality; and their resistances constitute a politically powerful statement for the concept and appreciation of a multi-sexualized identity. Socially produced desires attempt to codify normalized and permanent spheres for people — the same spheres that second-wave feminism attempted to advocate and uphold. Rhoda and Ogilvy resist these categories and anticipate a Deleuzian image of multiplicitous sexual subjectivity. As we move from the polarized and rigid theories of second-wave feminism to the malleable domain of gender theory, critics must begin to move beyond the application of “masculinity” and “femininity” as useful terms, without extensive qualification, contextualization, and explanation. Contemporary with and similar to trickle-down economics, second-wave feminism sought to accentuate difference as a means to usher in a new order; however, as Reaganomics only led to a greater discrepancy between rich and poor, second-wave feminism has ultimately made the disparities between sexes, genders, sexualities, cultures, nationalities, etc. more severe and seemingly permanent. Inspired by the powerful call of Judith Butler to trouble gender, and Deleuze and Guattari’s mystical theories of sexual and social subject formation, we as critics can also prefigure the dynamism of the fold and anticipate the prolificacy of sexualized subject positions exemplified by Rhoda and Ogilvy. ✱

Notes

¹ Noreen O’Connor and Joanna Ryan speak of this period as the formative time not only for the ideas of lesbianism, but also as the beginning of organized feminist activity (24-25). They examine earlier notions of female companionship as a romanticized same-sex friendship, and suggest that the New Woman of the late nineteenth century led to the New Women of the twentieth century. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg distinguishes the New Women of the nineteenth century from those of the twentieth century by suggesting that the latter actually revised male discourses of sexuality, rather than simply opposing the power of the dominant voice (265). Indeed, Catharine Stimpson notes that the English lexicon did not even recognize the term “lesbian” as a noun for a female homosexual or as an adjective for female sexual passion until 1908 (365).

² I use the term “deviant” because it is used by the writers of medical discourses to denote dissociation from the accepted sexual norm. Jonathan Ned Katz’s influential work, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (1995) points out that our ideas of sexual

deviancy change because our conception of proper sexuality changes. Moreover, Katz's work, like Diana Fuss' "inside/out," explains that heterosexuality defines itself in opposition to a deviancy known as "homosexuality." This notion of homosexuality is not static; it changes to meet the desires of heterosexuality. To this extent, although social discourses only began to make demands of the homosexual in the early twentieth century, there have always been "homosexuals" because there has always been a defined sphere of sexual propriety, and hence a castigated sphere of sexual deviancy.

³ Freud and Ellis serve as convenient pillars of thought, between which various members of the scientific community developed different ideas. Ernest Jones, Karen Horney, and Richard von Krafft-Ebing all constructed theories of the female homosexual which deserve some mention. Horney believed that the lesbian was a woman who identified too strongly with the father in the Oedipal stage, and hence strives to behave as a mature male figure (61). Ernest Jones offers perhaps the most humorous theory. He claims, like Horney, that some lesbians are women who identified too much with a father figure; however, he also speaks of other lesbians who conversely spent too much time around women, and eventually become sexually interested in them. Jones seems to think one can "become" a lesbian in either way (459). In a similar vein, von Krafft-Ebing provided four levels of lesbianism, which he understood of four stages of female masculinity (262-64).

⁴ Freud's influence certainly did not die after the 1920s. In a now famous essay, "A Developmental Theory of Female Homosexuality," Catherine Lillie Bacon, working with early Lacanian revisions of Freudian thought, suggests that woman develop into homosexuals because they are not taught proper sexual roles in the early phases of subject formation (132-33).

⁵ Ellis felt that this first category of "lesbians" could be treated and cured. For a helpful discussion of the influence of Ellis' thought in twentieth-century Britain, see Hamer (49-52).

⁶ Similar to my use of "deviant," I want to qualify my use of "perversity." I employ this term because it is used by Freud and Ellis. Moreover, like "deviancy," "perversity" denotes a difference from the accepted normalized and heterosexualized understanding of sex, sexuality, and gender. Since I am more interested in understanding *Rhoda* and *Ogilvy* as different from the "normal" heterosexual conception of woman, "perversity" is often a more appropriate term than "lesbian," which as I have noted, was not commonly used in its nominative form at the time of Woolf and Hall.

⁷ Not surprisingly, the vast majority of critical scholarship on Hall focuses on her deviant lifestyle and its relation to her literary work. Early biographies by Vera Brittain, Lovat Dickson, and Hall's lover, Lady Una Troubridge, all overtly attempt to connect Hall's life with her literature. Later biographical studies by Richard Ormrod, Michael Baker, and Terry Castle acknowledge associations between Hall's activity and her writings, but also attempt to position the author within her socio-historical moment. When critics do discuss her literature, they concern themselves almost exclusively with

The Well of Loneliness (1928), which brought Hall much notoriety when the book was banned following an obscenity trial. For a useful consideration of the banning of *The Well* and the court proceedings, see Leigh Gilmore, Adam Parkes, Joan Scanlon, Jane Marcus, and Michèle Aina Barale. Other treatments of *The Well* include Jean Radford's reading of the novel as a lesbian romance narrative, Inez Martinez's interpretation of the hero(ine), Stephen Gordon, as a lesbian bound hero, Margot Gayle Backus's Post-Colonial critique of Hall's depiction of maternal figures, and Joanne Glasgow's discussion of Hall's work within the Catholic literary tradition. There are no critical discussions of any story from *Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself* (1934), the volume in which the short story of the same title was published. "Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself" receives perfunctory comments in some of the biographical studies of the author, but only Claudia Stillman Franks's *Beyond The Well of Loneliness: The Fiction of Radclyffe Hall* (Avebury: 1982) offers a cohesive consideration of Hall's short fiction.

⁸ While no critics dispute that Hall depicted Ogilvy as a lesbian, there is no definitive indication of this in the story. However, in her "Author's Note," to *Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself*, she does indicate that Ogilvy's character initially served as a model for the protagonist of *The Well of Loneliness*, Stephen Gordon (ii), whom society certainly viewed as a fictional representation of a sexually deviant woman. Additionally, this prefatory comment indicates the importance of "How Miss Ogilvy Found Herself" to Hall's project as a writer.

⁹ Perhaps the best indicator of Woolf's knowledge of Hall comes from the former's own writings regarding the latter. Although Woolf does not mention Hall in her *Reading Notebooks*, she does discuss the publicly scandalous woman in her diaries, letters, and essays. Woolf was aware of the obscenity trial of Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* and mused in her diary: "What is obscenity? What is literature? What is the difference between the subject and the treatment?" (3: 207). She notes her relief that she will not be called as an "expert witness" in the hearing, for she was not an expert in obscenity, "only in art" (*Diaries* 3: 207). Woolf's recorded opinion of Hall is ambiguous at best. In her diary account of E.M. Forester's visit to Hall, Woolf describes the latter as yelling "like a herring gull, mad with egotism and vanity" (*Diaries* 3: 193). Woolf did not want the popular attention of Hall, and she makes this clear in her letters. Regarding the obscenity trial, Woolf satirically indicates that most members of Bloomsbury "are trying to evade the witness box for reasons you may guess. But they generally put it down to the weak heart of a father, or a cousin who is about to have twins" (*Letters* 3: 555). She claims that "no one has read [Hall's *Well of Loneliness*]; or can read it.... So our ardour in the cause of freedom of speech gradually cools, and instead of offering to reprint the masterpiece, we are already beginning to wish it unwritten" (*Letters* 3: 520). Woolf reports her mother-in-law's mixed reviews of *The Well* (*Letters* 3: 525-26), and in a previously cited 1 November 1928 letter to Quentin Bell, she discusses her plans to consider the evidence used against Hall and her novel at a meeting (*Letters* 3: 555). Woolf ultimately did not testify at Hall's trial, and she also expressed her desire that her lover, Vita Sackville-West, avoid the witness box. In a 30 August 1928 letter, she suggests to Sackville-West that "your proclivities are too well known" (*Letters* 3: 520).

Moreover, Sackville-West also used her letters to discuss Hall with Woolf. Sackville-West explains that she “[feels] very violently about *The Well of Loneliness*. Not on account of what you call my proclivities; not because I think it is a good book; but really on principle.... Because, you see, even if the *W. of L.* had been a good book, — even if it had been a great book, a real masterpiece, — The result would have been the same. And that is intolerate. I really have no words to say how indignant I am” (279-80). Woolf was certainly conscious of Hall and her work, but she never appears to offer overt and clear support of Hall’s project as a either writer or a sexually deviant woman.

Perhaps the most significant allusion to Hall’s work in Woolf’s writings is in *A Room of One’s Own*. In this essay, she refers to Sir Charles Biron, the obscenity judge at Hall’s trial, while positing her vision of a potential love plot between Chloe and Olivia (85-86). Many critics have developed the various connections between Hall and Woolf, none more effective than Jane Marcus in “Sapphistory.” For further discussion of Woolf’s knowledge and support of Hall, see Wiesen Cook (731), Cuddy-Keane (154) and Zimmerman, “Is Chloe likes Olivia a Lesbian Plot?” (170).

¹⁰ Woolf’s desire not to make overtly and obviously public her romantic relationship with Sackville-West has been well documented. She also seems to have guarded somewhat her feelings about lesbianism and other lesbians. In her diary, Woolf initially seems happily surprised to observe that “these Sapphists *love* women,” but she did later discuss her fear that she might be “attacked for a feminist & and hinted at for a sapphist” (*Diaries* 3: 262). Woolf does not appear to want the notoriety acquired by Hall, and appears to have feared the possible ramifications of any rumors linking her to lesbianism. However, Woolf could also express her sensual and sexual feelings for her lover. In a now famous letter, she asks Sackville-West: “If I saw you would you kiss me? If I were in bed would you — I’m rather excited about Orlando tonight: have been lying by the fire and making up the last chapter” (*Letters* 3: 443). Critics still contest the extent of Woolf’s sexual relationship with Sackville-West, but recent work has begun to accept openly Woolf’s status as a homosexual and heterosexual woman. Certainly the most extensive study of Woolf’s relationship with Sackville-West is Suzanne Raitt’s *Vita & Virginia* (1993), but others, including Meese, Knopp, and DeSalvo have offered important criticism on this extended love affair.

¹¹ Wiesen Cook argues that the appearance of Woolf’s characters as “non-lesbians” may be socially constructed — influenced strongly by the politics of canon formation. Wiesen Cook examines the work of Woolf, Hall, and Djuna Barnes and concludes that Woolf was canonized and turned into a heterosexual writer, while Hall was scandalized and Barnes was forgotten (718-19). Nevertheless, the question of Woolf as a lesbian writer, or a writer of lesbian fictions, has gleaned recent critical attention. A collection of essays edited by Eileen Barrett and Patricia Cramer, *Virginia Woolf: lesbian readings* (1997) may be the most recent work on this topic, but other critics have also considered Woolf’s lesbianism in relation to her writings, including Oxindine (173), Danell Jones (181), and Eberly (130).

¹² We discern Rhoda's sex to be female because she is referred to through the female pronouns "she" and "her" and because she speaks with the other women in the early part of the novel, although Woolf does not specifically call attention to a definite sex for Rhoda. Her sexuality, however, is much more confusing. While not an overt lesbian, at various points in the novel Rhoda begins to express her sensuality in ways that invite us to ponder the possibility of her homosexual desires. I am not interested, of course, in denoting Rhoda a "lesbian." Rather, as indicated, I am concerned with her status as a sexually ambiguous woman; nevertheless, much of this ambiguity comes from her appearance as a woman who resists the dominant heterosexual discourses of society. Annette Oxindine has certainly been the strongest critical voice in arguing for Rhoda's lesbian proclivities. Oxindine reviews the earlier drafts of *The Waves*, and indicates that Woolf removed much of the sensual language used by Rhoda (173). Oxindine also points out that Woolf removed a sensual and sexual scene between Rhoda and a young woman named Alice, and replaced this with Rhoda's respectful notes on Miss Lambert (177). See *The Waves: Two Holograph Drafts* (122-23). Moreover, Oxindine also indicates that Woolf decreased her use of the Greek myth of Alpheus and Arethusa (174). This myth, Oxindine maintains, which Woolf initiates by Bernard's reference to Rhoda as "the nymph of the fountain" (see *The Waves* 130, 174, 259) invites us to consider Rhoda as a woman dissociated with heterosexual desire. [See more detailed discussion of this myth in note 46.] Other critics have also discussed Rhoda's sensuality and sexual deviancy, including Gillian Beer, who notes that Rhoda's youthful language is "everywhere erotically charged" (xxxii). Eileen B. Sypher ultimately resists describing Woolf's writings as "lesbian," but she does consider the presentation of Rhoda in the early drafts of the novel and speaks of her sexual insecurity (199). Also, Sue Roe's "The Mind in Visual Form: Sketching *The Waves*," offers an important commentary on Oxindine's work, because it considers the many difficulties involved in working with Woolf's early drafts of *The Waves* (245-47).

¹³ Ormrod briefly explores Hall's knowledge of Freud (102); Baker suggests that Hall was familiar with Freudian thought via Ellis' writings (218); and Castle argues that Hall and other lesbian writers of the early twentieth century satirized psychoanalytic theories of female homosexuality (9). Esther Newton provides a nice overview of the influence of Freudian ideas in Britain during the 1920s (esp. 560-63).

¹⁴ Woolf's own comments about Freud and psychoanalysis remain ambiguous, but she did record meeting the famous psychoanalyst (*Diaries* 5: 202). The most extensive study of Woolf's knowledge of Freud is Elizabeth Abel's *Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis*. Abel considers Woolf's sources of information about psychoanalysis, discusses the Hogarth Press's publication of the International Psycho-Analytical Library in 1924, and explores the involvement of Woolf's friends and family in psychoanalysis. Fassler also identifies Woolf's knowledge of Freud's works (240).

¹⁵ Barbara Fassler explains that Freud ultimately blames the lesbian for *acting* perverse, because he maintains that the female homosexual should have sought corrective treatment (247).

¹⁶ Gillian Whitlock provides a useful consideration of Hall's familiarity with Ellis and his theories (556). Fassler offers a helpful discussion of Woolf's knowledge of Ellis's theories.

¹⁷ Fassler explains that Woolf's family library contained many of Ellis's works, and many of these books ended up in Woolf's own collection.

¹⁸ Lesbian feminists began to respond to many monolithic first-wave feminists during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Helena Michie's, "Not One of the Family: The Repression of the Other Woman in Feminist Theory," served as both a sharp critique and a rallying cry. She repudiates feminist discourse for re-creating the oppressive patriarchal image of a family, which leaves the other woman orphaned. She also encourages feminists to welcome the non-white, non-Western, non-heterosexual, non-middle-class woman into the various dialogues of gender politics. Bonnie Zimmerman's groundbreaking essay, "What Has Never Been: An Overview of Lesbian Feminist Literary Criticism" speaks of lesbianism as a problematic category. Zimmerman concludes that we cannot arrive at one mode of lesbian criticism, as we cannot establish one form of heterosexual critical thought. She emphasizes that different women must be allowed to develop different subject positions. From this phase, queer feminist/gender theory moves in a different direction as it attempts to locate and represent the lesbian. The later work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Diana Fuss combines Michie's and Zimmerman's concerns about the individual woman with social and historical approaches. Sedgwick speaks specifically of how gender theorists must now balance a radical reading of distinctly sexed beings with Marxist readings of history (13). Fuss, following Sedgwick's cues, re-reads and deconstructs the history of sexual deviancy, examining homosexuality as that against which heterosexuality defines itself and its borders (3).

¹⁹ Foucault notes that medical and other scientific discourses attempted to establish codified forms of sexuality in the nineteenth century. He maintains that "the history of sexuality — that is, what functioned in the nineteenth century as a specific field of truth — must first be written from the viewpoint of a history of discourses." Moreover, he views these 'reverse discourses' as additional forces which act upon this field of truth (69).

²⁰ Deleuze's use of the term "fold" can be extremely confusing. He uses it as a verb, to indicate the act of creating an artificial subject position. He also uses it as a noun to denote two related, but different, concepts. He sometimes uses the term "fold" to denote the three-dimensional continuum of human life which is constantly changing and developing. He also uses the term to denote an "individualized" sphere of ersatz subjectivity. The "fold," for Deleuze, is at once the process of affecting a "distinct" subject position, that "distinct" position, and the perpetuity on which all of human life exists (imagined here in Figures 5 and 7). This process of constructing an artificial subjectivity does not need to be imagined as a folded corner (see Figure 2), although this image is helpful because it demonstrates through a color change how the entire fold is

influenced by the folding of one part. In Figure 6, we see how one can establish an ersatz sense of enclosure by pinching a part of the three-dimensional continuum.



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

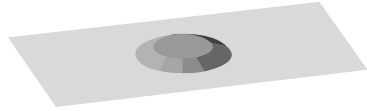


Figure 8

Moreover, one's level of power certainly influences one's folding. If you have a great deal of power in society, you can create a greater illusion of roundedness (see Figure 8), but this is still artificial, and is ultimately only a part of the perpetuity. Deleuze and Guattari are quite fond of using various visual images in their work. The images that I am using are *not* reproduced from their writings, and I am using them only to make clear my application of their theories. Other ways in which Deleuze and Guattari image the fold are as a point "where several lines intersect" ("On Leibniz" 161), and as an egg — an ersatz sphere — that is criss-crossed by lines (*Anti-Oedipus* 19).

²¹ Deleuze's language is often difficult to discern because of his complex thought, and because he is always being translated from the French. He here uses the term "line" to refer to the three-dimensional continuum of human life, which "individuals" must fold in order to survive in a capitalistic society.

²² Deleuze and Guattari's use of the term "machine" is another confusing metaphor prominent in their theories. Ultimately they view all acting and reacting forces as machines. Siegel offers a helpful explanation: "The human body is composed of machines that interact with machines in the world through flows that include but go beyond the merely material, so that, for example, an eye-machine might be described as receiving a flow of images from a computer screen as machine" (18). While all force-producing elements can be theorized as machines by Deleuze and Guattari, they also use the term to denote the system of desires created by a capitalistic society. For an additional discussion of Deleuze and Guattari's use of the machine metaphor, see Siegel (18-19).

²³ Although the writings of Deleuze and Guattari are sometimes confusing because of their strange use of terms, such as desire and production, they explicitly state the relation between desiring production and social construction. Indeed, they state that "the truth of the matter is that *social production is purely and simply desiring-production itself under determinate conditions*" (*Anti-Oedipus* 29). They indicate that "there is no

such thing as the social production of reality on the one hand, and a desiring-production that is mere fantasy on the other" (*Anti-Oedipus* 28). The desiring productions that Deleuze and Guattari associate with the social machine are the same forces that compel individuals to behave in socially codified manners.

²⁴ Siegel offers a helpful explanation of Deleuze and Guattari's use of the phrase, "a thousand tiny sexes." She notes that Deleuze and Guattari view "sexuality as we generally know it" as "an expression of desire 'territorialized' by the codes of a specific culture; that is, desire has been organized, structured, and restricted in order to serve a society's needs" (18). There are an infinity of sexes and sexualities, but society pushes subjects into established norms so that they can be purposeful in a capitalistic world.

²⁵ Hall's conscious use of a binary gender and sex system reminds us that she was negotiating the discourses of Ellis, which saw the lesbian as a man in a woman's body, devoid of socially recognized sexuality. Although she (re)presents Ellis's thought, she also moves beyond this sense of duality with her creation of a third, ambiguously sexualized figure near the conclusion of her story.

²⁶ Woolf discussed *The Waves* extensively in her *Diaries* and *Letters*. See for example, *Diaries* 3: 113; *Diaries* 3: 118; *Diaries* 3: 139; *Diaries* 3: 203; *Diaries* 3: 209-10; *Letters* 4: 204; *Diaries* 3: 236; *Diaries* 3: 257; *Diaries* 3: 259; *Diaries* 3: 264; *Diaries* 3: 285; *Diaries* 3: 303; *Diaries* 3: 312; *Diaries* 3: 339; *Diaries* 3: 300; *Diaries* 4: 10; *Letters* IV: 402.

²⁷ While many critics have discussed Woolf's formal experimentation in *The Waves*, J.W. Graham's "Point of View in *The Waves*: Some Services of the Style," and Eric Warner's *Virginia Woolf: The Waves* remain the most extensive examinations of the novelist's innovative techniques. Other critics, however, have added to this critical discussion, especially, Vandivere (223), Levin (164), and McGee "The Politics of Modernist Form" (631-32). Woolf herself, of course, discussed this formal innovation in her diaries and letters. In January of 1931, while finishing *The Waves*, she explained, "I want to make prose *move* — yes, I swear, move as never before" (*Diaries* 4: 4). Moreover, in "The Narrow Bridge of Art," she began to outline her new vision of art and fiction, which would integrate poetry and drama (esp. 18-23; cf. note 36).

Woolf's use of non-Cartesian methods of characterization, which encourage a communal understanding of subjectivity, have become extremely popular topics in criticism. For example, see Makiko Minow-Pinkney's *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject* (1987), Ruth Porritt's "Surpassing Derrida's Deconstructed Self," and Keith M. Booker's "Tradition, Authority, and Subjectivity: Narrative Constitution of the Self in *The Waves*." Moreover, Woolf's own comments concerning her "characters" are revealing. Reflecting upon the review of her novel in *The Times*, she wrote in her diary how "odd, that they (The Times) shd. praise my characters when I meant to have none" (IV: 47). In a letter to G.L. Dickinson she returns to the question of character and community. She explains:

But I did mean that in some vague way we are the same person, and not separate people. The six characters were supposed to be one. I'm getting old myself — I shall

be fifty next year; and I come to feel more and more how difficult it is to collect oneself into one Virginia; even though the special Virginia in whose body I live for the moment is violently susceptible to all sorts of separate feelings. Therefore I wanted to give the sense of continuity, instead of which most people say, no you've given the sense of flowing and passing away and that nothing matters. Yet I feel things matter quite immensely. What the significance is, heaven knows I can't guess; but there is significance — that I feel overwhelmingly. Perhaps for me, with my limitations, — I mean lack of reasoning power and so on — all I can do is to make an artistic whole; and leave it at that. (IV: 397)

This interest in the communal sense of self is especially important to our consideration of Rhoda's multiplicitous sexual and social subjectivity because she demonstrates many of the qualities for which Woolf appears to be striving.

²⁸ While Rhoda has not received vast amounts of critical attention, many scholars have made important contributions to the commentary on her "character." I draw attention to the term "character," because, as demonstrated above, many critics argue that there are not separate characters in *The Waves*. However, I am discussing the "character known as Rhoda." Evelyn Haller argues that Woolf may have drawn on the ballet, *Le Spectre de la Rose* for Rhoda's character (213). Barbara Schlack suggests that Rhoda was based on characteristics of the Romantic poet, Percy Shelley. Jane Marcus posits that Woolf makes use of Shelley's poems, especially "The Indian Girl's Song," to construct a language for subordinated women like Rhoda who arrive at heroic deaths ("Britannia" 137). Patricia Laurence connects Rhoda with Rachel Vinrace in *The Voyage Out* (147), a nexus also discussed by Madeline Moore (*The Short Season Between Two Silences* 133). Roger Poole claims that Woolf "exorcised" a certain part of her self through her depiction of Rhoda (200). Diane F. Gillespie points out that Rhoda's insistence that she has "no face" might recall Vanessa Bell's paintings of faceless individuals (*Sisters*' 176). And Judith Wilt offers an interesting discussion of Rhoda as a modern version of *Lear's* Cordelia (191).

²⁹ It is difficult to speak of a plot, per se, in *The Waves*. The novel's innovative formal techniques preclude a proper progression of events, but we do (over)hear characters speak of activities and events; these are the plots from which I am suggesting that Rhoda is often excluded.

³⁰ Although Oxindine remains the sole critic who offers an extensive discussion of Rhoda's potential deviant sexuality, other writers have examined Rhoda through the lenses of feminist and gender theory. Miriam L. Wallace's "Imaging the Body: Gender Trouble and Bodily Limits in *The Waves*," and Garrett Stewart's "Catching the Stylistic D/Rift: Sound Defects in Woolf's *The Waves*," are good examples of such approaches.

³¹ Many critics have offered useful discussions of Freud's notion of the Law of the Father and Lacan's understanding of the Law of the Phallus. A very concise and helpful consideration of these terms is Camille Roman's "Female Sexual Drives, Subjectivity, and Language: the Dialogue with/beyond Freud and Lacan" (esp. 9-12).

³² Harper draws on R.D. Laing's *The Divided Self* in her argument to theorize a presentation of ontological insecurity (esp. 40-64).

³³ Both Poole (201) and Richter ("Hunting the Moth" 17-18) point to a famous diary entry in which Woolf experiences a similar existential crisis in front of a puddle. Woolf remembered how she "used to feel this as a child — couldn't step across a puddle once I remember, for thinking, how strange — what am I?" (*Diaries* 3: 113).

³⁴ Bernard uses this phrase to describe Rhoda again (174, 259), and Neville relates how Rhoda returns to fountain to replenish herself (139).

³⁵ The myth of Alpheus and Arethusa revolves around the latter's escape from the former. Alpheus develops a strong passion for Arethusa. He pursues her, but Diana changes Arethusa into a fountain (hence the term "nymph of the fountain") so that she may escape through the ground into the lower parts of the earth. Harvena Richter argues that the description of Rhoda as the "nymph of the fountain" suggests her association with the Alpheus and Arethusa myth (*Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage* 125). Oxindine explains that this myth does not categorize Rhoda as a "lesbian," but it does encourage us to view her as a woman who "longs to escape heterosexual pursuit" (174). With regards to Rhoda, I am interested in this resistance to the dominant heterosexualization of sexuality. Her "deviancy" places her outside the realm of socially recognized sexuality. There are other potential references to this myth of Alpheus and Arethusa in Woolf's writings. In "Professions for Women," she notes how a woman writer "sought the pools, the depths, the dark places where the largest fish slumber" (240), and in *To The Lighthouse*, she describes Mrs. Ramsay as having "scarcely a shell of herself left for her to know herself by" and notes how "the beak of brass, the arid scimitar of [Mr. Ramsay], the egotistical man, plunged and smote, demanding sympathy" (60). While these may not be direct allusions to the myth of Alpheus and Arethusa, they demonstrate Woolf's use of water as an image of creative escape and provide another example of a female in Woolf's corpus feeling attacked by the dominating desires of a heterosexual male.

³⁶ Hussey discusses this scene as an example of one of the many times in the novel when Rhoda demonstrates her dependence upon others (17).

³⁷ Contemporary politically-minded critics have emphasized the importance of Percival as a cultural stabilizing force who provides a sense of national identity. Marcus's influential essay "Britannia Rules *The Waves*" takes up the question of the novel's politics and argues that Woolf constructs a highly critical work about culture making (228). Patrick McGee's "The Politics of Modernist Form; or, Who Rules *The Waves*," responds to Marcus's argument, qualifying her statements by reminding us of Woolf's complicity in a colonizing culture (631-32). In an earlier essay, "Woolf's Other: The University in Her Eye," McGee points out how *The Waves* is a highly politicized work because it attempts to move beyond the symbolic realm of the university, associated with the dominating forces of a culture.

³⁸ She observes the structures of society and knows that as humans “we are not so various or so mean” (163). The public world in which we participate appears harsh with its “mean streets where ... people swarm off the pavement, pinching raw meat with thick fingers” (164), but Rhoda understands how we are interrelated as agents in this realm.

³⁹ It may be interesting to note that immediately prior to Louis’ announcement that he and Rhoda are lovers, he speaks of a street corner, where “Rhoda sometimes comes” (170). This may be an indication that Rhoda’s romantic relationship with Louis is an occasional activity.

⁴⁰ Later in the novel, various speakers return to this notion of Rhoda and Louis as outsiders or conspirators. Bernard speaks of Neville, Louis, and Rhoda as rebels against European ideas (246). He also discusses Rhoda and Louis as individuals who resisted traditional roles (259), and near the end of the novel, he once again terms Rhoda and Louis “conspirators” (276). Rhoda also returns to this denotative marker, “conspirator,” as a way to describe both herself and Louis (227); however, as mentioned, there is a sense at this point in the story that Rhoda has accepted her disembodied status and is now concerned with more global issues.

⁴¹ She also proclaims her hatred of human life and human beings, a testament to the power of her resistance to society’s desires for individually separated and sexually distinct bodies, and a strong foreshadowing of her eventual death (203). She continues her diatribe against the human form by noting the unpleasant smell of her companions (204).

⁴² DuPlessis indicates that modern fiction often revises and re-employs traditional narratives, such as the romance and quest, for other purposes (*Writing Beyond the Ending* 142).

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