Article:
Stobie, CE orcid.org/0000-0001-9376-8833 (2022) The Mirrored Monster and Becoming-Wolf: Reflections on Desire in Woolf and Braidotti. Comparative Critical Studies, 19 (2). pp. 213-235. ISSN 1744-1854

https://doi.org/10.3366/ccs.2022.0443

The Mirrored Monster and Becoming-Wolf: Reflections on Desire in Woolf and Braidotti

CAITLIN E. STOBIE

Abstract:

Waves and water, the lens of a lighthouse, a lady's looking-glass: reflecting surfaces abound in the writings of Virginia Woolf. These figurations, in turn, are repeated as a formative image, a reflective motif, in the theory of Rosi Braidotti. This article explores the material implications of both authors' mirrors, arguing that they distort repronormative depictions of women as maternal figures. Particularly, I view the autopoietic theorization of desire in Braidotti's oeuvre through the lens of Woolf's major fiction and non-fiction from 1927 to 1941. With references to works including *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938), and particularly *Between the Acts* (1941), I argue that Woolf's monstrous images inform Braidotti's own writing, especially her 2002 monograph *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*. Yet it is vital to stress that these feminist-materialist echoes exceed binarized understandings of reflections. Alternating between reverence for motherhood, suspicion of procreation, and criticism of reproductive services/technologies, both writers suggest that women's reproductive health cannot be neatly determined by one overarching narrative. They advance an emerging concept of reproductive agency where abortive desires are dangerous and dynamic, steeped both in histories of gestational violence and feminist potential.

Keywords: Rosi Braidotti; Virginia Woolf; abortion; autopoiesis; desire; mirrors; monsters; reproductive agency

Wo/man is other wo/men's woolf.

Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*

'Books', remarked Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* in 1929, 'have a way of influencing each other.'[1] Nearly a century later, with her name and works referenced in swathes of texts – from academic monographs to Broadway plays – this can be read as nothing but an understatement. Woolf's most famous essay continues to sit at the heart of heated discussions about feminism today: both for criticism of issues the author omits due to her own socio-historical positionality,[2] and for what she teaches us about the repetition of gender-based discrimination throughout history. For example, one of materialist feminist Rosi Braidotti's earliest essays appreciates how 'Woolf devoted some memorable pages to the analysis of women's mirror-function, arguing that this ego-boosting activity requires that the female appear as weaker, more incompetent, less perfectible than the male'.[3] The passage in question – which is repeatedly quoted in contemporary criticism of Woolf – uses the figures of Napoleon and Mussolini to illustrate how Bonapartism and fascism both proclaim the supposed inferiority of women in order to increase the illusion of their leaders' literal and figurative statures: women, Woolf observes, 'have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size' (p. 45). Perhaps it is only natural that these images of domination and inequality have lingered in the collective feminist imagination in the years leading up to current unprecedented environmental and global health crises. Yet while Braidotti is clearly one of many to have responded to *A Room of One's Own* on personal, political and theoretical levels, the sheer repetition of reflections on Woolf throughout her oeuvre suggests a unique resonance meriting further investigation.

This article reveals points of continuity between Virginia Woolf's work and Rosi Braidotti's theories concerning: firstly, the use of the mirror motif; secondly, the elaboration of desire as a collective (rather than psychoanalytic) construct; and finally, reproductive norms, using a reading of monstrous reflections in *Between the Acts* (1941) to support my claims. After briefly contextualizing

the role of desire and autopoiesis in Braidotti's theory, I analyse how Woolf reflects upon sexual reproduction in her novels *The Waves* (1931) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927), as well as the short story 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection' (1929) and *A Room of One's Own* (1929). Next I trace repeated references to Woolf's non-fiction in Braidotti's writing, arguing that the reflecting device of the mirror is adapted by the critical theorist as an illustrative symbol: from her critique of scientific discourse surrounding new reproductive technologies, to her playful assertion that 'Wo/man is other wo/men's woolf'.[4] What follows is therefore not a set of Lacanian readings. I am neither invested in mapping a psychoanalytic theory onto the authors' works,[5] nor relying on the symbolic omnipotence of the parental figure in my textual analyses. Further, the monstrousness I refer to is not entirely synonymous with the Bakhtinian grotesque. Instead I am interested in the material implications and limitations of the two writers' literary mirrors, and how they distort the maternal expectations of repronormativity – that is, the socially normalized view that childbirth and childrearing are integral components of the human condition. Such 'reflections' represent reproductive agency: an understanding of women's sexual health that focuses on both individual and collective desires, reorienting respect for foetal vitality without equating it with humanist definitions of personhood. I conclude by performing a reading of *Between the Acts* to illustrate this nuanced understanding of reproductive sexuality. Through their interrogation of procreation and its representation, Woolf and Braidotti magnify the connections between becoming-woman and becoming-animal in a monstrous *mise en abyme*.

During her keynote address at a conference on 'Environmental Humanities and New Materialisms: The Ethics of Decolonizing Nature and Culture' in 2017, Rosi Braidotti was quick to reference Virginia Woolf in her demolition of some masculinist-revisionist representations of the history of materialist theory, arguing that the author's work represents the modern challenge of disengaging gender from sexual difference with 'neo-biological/gestational' specificity.[6] In other words, she reads Woolf as disrupting the discourse of repronormativity, a term first coined by Katherine M. Franke to refer to how 'the legal feminist frame tends to collapse women's identity into motherhood' (Franke

suggests that instead 'we [should] reconceptualize procreation as a cultural preference rather than a biological imperative').[7] Braidotti provided more extensive reflections on the modernist author in her keynote at the 28th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf the following year. In both of these speeches, Woolf's writing becomes symbolic shorthand for visualizing new perspectives on women's material desires. Braidotti moved in her Woolf keynote from analysing Sylvia Plath's iconic 'Daddy'[8] to referencing the 'shimmering intensity' of spaces of desire as she discusses in an article on Woolf's corpus[9]; a seemingly passing reference to the mirrors in *A Room of One's Own* soon led to a call for all 'werewolves and she-wolves' to reflect on thinking clinically, critically and creatively.[10] While María Socorro Suárez Lafuente briefly notes parallels between Braidotti's and Woolf's utilization of mirrors in an intertextual analysis of Gail Jones's fiction,[11] her reading is more concerned with postmodernist theorizations of 'the word' and storytelling than the material(ist) implications of these reflections. I am interested in examining how monstrous reflections figure for transgressive sexual and social desires in both authors' works.

Katherine M. Franke concludes her aforementioned article on repronormativity by asserting that female desire is neither characterized by an absence stemming from trauma inflicted by male sexuality – as many psychoanalytic theories insinuate – nor an antithetical, sentimental understanding of sex as 'warm, fuzzy, soft-focused cuddling'.[12] Instead, she provides an alternative possibility that she views as having been marginalized from both feminist legal theory and broader societal discourse: a woman's desire has 'nasty, messy, perilous dimensions', it is 'full of contradictions' and 'risks bumping up against danger'.[13] Variations on this third alternative, this sense of risk, appear throughout Rosi Braidotti's theory.[14] In a 2012 interview with Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, she uses the word 'desire' no less than 10 times in reference to psychoanalysis, spirituality, the future, political agency and more.[15] In *Nomadic Theory*, she writes of how desire and fear are interlinked instinctual reactions which patriarchal society attempts to control and pathologize by associating gendered, racialized and animalized embodiment with deviance.[16] Elsewhere Braidotti provides an alternative, and intersectional, definition of the term:

> Desire is for me a material and socially enacted arrangement of conditions that allow for the actualization (that is, the immanent realization) of the affirmative mode of becoming. Desire is active in that it has to do with encounters between multiple forces and the creation of new possibilities of empowerment. It is outward-directed and forward-looking, not indexed upon the past of a memory dominated by phallocentric self-referentiality.[17]

The forward-looking trajectory of feminist desire may appear, on the surface, not to be dissimilar to any other narrative *Bildung*. Yet Braidotti's theorization is careful to stress how an understanding of autopoiesis as active and networked is central to this concept. Emerging from the scholarship of biologists Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, 'autopoiesis' literally refers to the self-making process wherein any living system (such as a cell or organism) creates and sustains its own existence. Their theoretical model is overtly uninterested in discussions of reproduction and evolution, concentrating instead on 'the organization which makes a living system a whole, autonomous unity that is alive regardless of whether it reproduces or not'.[18] This last clause is crucial to stress because there appear to be many misinterpretations of the term and how it may apply to new materialist metaphors for processes which exceed literal or biological definitions of reproduction. If one searches 'autopoiesis' on Google, for example, the very first result features a picture from the term's Wikipedia page: a magnified photograph of a cell undergoing mitosis. While it is technically correct that eukaryotes are autopoietic systems, this illustration at the moment of cell division is not helpful for visualizing Maturana's and Varela's concerns. Materialist imagery of making kin – whether genealogically or nongenealogically – is secondary to the prime discussion, which is of the continual growth process that a singular system undergoes to maintain its life and vitality. This is not to say, however, that autopoiesis is synonymous with reductionism. In an article co-authored with Ricardo Uribe, Maturana and Varela stress that they are interested in 'the network of interactions of components which constitute a living system as a whole, that is, as a "unity"'.[19] The whole, in short,

Formatted: English (United Kingdom)

is just as important as the sum of its parts; autopoiesis recognizes the vital role that each smaller element plays in an organism's or system's sustenance.

Braidotti utilizes the concept of autopoiesis at several points in her oeuvre. This is particularly apparent when she writes in favour of approaching the world through affectivity and not cognition:

> as singularity, force, movement, through assemblages or webs of interconnections with all that lives. The subject is an autopoietic machine, fuelled by targeted perceptions, and it functions as the echoing chamber of zoë. This nonanthropocentric view expresses both a profound love for Life as a cosmic force and the desire to depersonalize subjective life-and-death. This is just one life, not my life. The life in 'me' does not answer to my name: 'I' is just passing. [20]

In this theoretical model, autopoiesis is both a biological and ontological process that recognizes the simultaneous self-sufficiency and interconnectedness of all living organisms. What is integral to one's identity formation is, ironically, depersonalization (particularly the recognition that the self constitutes one part of a larger whole). Following Braidotti, we can take the 'desired state' to signify 'Not just libidinal desire, but ontological desire, the desire to be, the tendency of the subject to be, the predisposition of the subject towards being'.[21] In this way we can conceive of desire as both a bodily form of craving – whether this is sexual, epicurean or otherwise – and a more philosophical state of not-yet-being, of wishing-to-be as both the subjective 'I' and time passes. For in the case of Woolf's writing, too, desire cannot be read with only one organism, or species, in mind.[22]

I opened this article with two quotations: an epigraph where Braidotti evokes Woolf, and a reference to the role of literary mirroring in *A Room of One's Own*. In Woolf's final novel, *Between the Acts*, texts not only hold sway over each other, but people too: 'Books are the mirrors of the soul.'[23] This adaptation of a well-known idiom, 'The eyes are the mirror of the soul', causes asymmetry to arise between the plural form of the pages/reflectors and the singular life force (and the potentially posthuman manner in which the human body is omitted altogether from this imagery). As

Braidotti illustrates in a book chapter co-authored with Griet Roets, her theory challenges the concept of symmetry; desire is not underpinned by a psychoanalytic dialectic of lack and guilt, but is rather a generative site of production.[24] A single desire, in other words, refracts multiplicities of further desires. Developing an analogously literary approach from Braidotti's theorization that the whole of each living system holds as much moral worth as each of its parts, we can analyse symbolic elements which recur throughout Woolf's works, and explore how they interact with Braidotti's thematic formations of desire.

WOOLFIAN MIRRORS

The etymological origins of the word 'influence' suggest the process of a substance *flowing into* something else. With this fluid imagery in mind, Woolf's aptly titled *The Waves* contains the words 'I am rooted, but I flow'[25] – uttered by the character Jinny when describing her dances with men she desires – which are quoted verbatim and repeatedly by Braidotti when formulating her feminist theory. Throughout *The Waves*, the moon and sea are reformulated as duplicitous symbols that simultaneously signify both terror and awe at the thought of procreation. While Bonnie Kime Scott has observed that characters such as Louis 'may suspect that the animal resides within them, grubbing, stamping, or lurking in a mirror',[26] and Rachel Crossland provides a convincing reading of how physicists' theories on the complementarity of particles and waves influence Bernard's comments on individual and communal identity,[27] I am interested in exploring how the three female focalizers are associated with distorted reflections on autopoietic and collective desires. Firstly, Susan, who is often associated with 'breeding' animals or waves in the sea (p. 81), adopts the archetypal maternal role by marrying a farmer and birthing many children. Yet as noted above, Jinny is also associated with aquatic imagery. It is crucial that both Susan (who views sex as a biological and social duty) and Jinny (who considers it recreationally) are associated with water: this suggests oceanic reflections in *The Waves* cannot merely be read as fertility symbols.

The matter of duplicitous desires is further complicated by the presence of Rhoda, who is referred to at least three times as 'the nymph of the fountain always wet' (p. 96). Nymphs are traditionally seen as fertility deities, but Rhoda remains nulliparous by abstaining from sexual intercourse barring one brief affair. Additionally, her reflections on the sea focus neither on reproduction nor sexuality, but rather on isolation, as illustrated by her identification with 'the moon [riding] through the blue seas alone' (p. 85). Her fear of the so-called 'horror of the spring' also suggests an aversion to sexual reproduction (p. 106), contrasting strongly with both Susan's repronormative desires and Jinny's casual approach to sex. The 'vagueness' of her position on sexual reproduction is illustrated, crucially, in a passage where Jinny and Rhoda reflect on their faces in a mirror (p. 32). First Jinny notes that she hates seeing her own reflection in the looking-glass; next she describes Rhoda's image as 'mooning 'and 'vacant' (p. 31). The focalization then shifts to Rhoda, who uses parallelism to align Susan's face with 'Yes' and Jinny's face with 'No' (p. 32). If Susan represents maternity, and Jinny's antithetical position is suggestive of sterility, then Rhoda symbolizes the ambivalence of those who may be fertile but simply *do not want* children; the presentation of three different understandings of reproductive sexuality is also remarkably similar to Franke's discussion of women's desire as either a response to sentimentality, lack or risk in her theorization of repronormativity.

It is noted many times throughout the text that Rhoda 'resent[s] illumination, reduplication' (p. 95); later she asserts 'I have no face' (p. 107), and 'No echo comes when I speak' (p. 237). Even the simple act of stepping over a puddle evokes fear (p. 50),[28] as reflections on surfaces come to symbolize replication through genetic progeny. In refusing to be mirrored or echoed, Rhoda represents valid anxieties of women lacking access to abortion, contraception and other reproductive healthcare at the time: from the 13th to 19th centuries, English law followed Church teaching, stating that it was acceptable to terminate a pregnancy before quickening (when foetal movement is first detected), but laws such as the 1929 Infant Life Preservation Act limited access to abortifacients and operations, causing women to resort to poisonous substances or unsafe surgical procedures.[29] Patrizia Muscogiuri astutely notes in an article on oceanic imagery in Woolf's writing that 'the voice of the

sea [is the] voice of the other – both in the sense of the other "inside" and in the sense of those innumerable unknown others bodying forth the Woolfian sea of life'.[30] In the case of Susan, the 'unknown others' can be read as her future children. Conversely, to Rhoda the sea is not a repronormative image of constant regeneration; rather it symbolizes an inner outsider, a depersonalized voice within longing for the political power of living what Rosi Braidotti would term 'life itself'.[31] Rhoda desires the possibility of reproductive agency where sex is divorced from procreation. The refraction of these characters' three disparate views suggests the sea may represent any literal or aesthetic understanding of re-production – or its negation. Reflections and inversions of varying perspectives recur throughout *The Waves* to present a diffracted understanding of sexual desires and agency through reproduction, sterility and abstinence.

Water is not the only mirroring device in Woolf's oeuvre, and many of her works predating *The Waves* are concerned with reflecting upon repronormativity in other ways. The titular tower in *To the Lighthouse* is one of many narrative structures which literally foregrounds such mirroring through the Fresnel lens, which is used as a reflecting device in lighthouses. Yet what is most interesting in this text is its characters' fractured understandings of creation and creativity, often constructed by breaking from repronormative conventions. The unmarried artist Lily Briscoe shows through her painting that '[m]other and child […] might be reduced […] to a purple shadow without irreverence'.[32] Recreating the world through visual art, Lily (like Rhoda and Jinny) rejects literal associations of female creativity with sexual reproduction. Even Mrs Ramsay, the archetypal 'good mother', displays a certain degree of ambivalence: she outwardly dotes on her children, but observes in solitude that 'they [would never] be so happy again' and 'would suffer' (p. 50; p. 67). This prediction is crucially validated when her daughter Prue dies in childbirth. In an article fittingly titled 'Mothers, Daughters, Mrs. Ramsay: Reflections', Brenda R. Silver provides an excellent analysis of shifting feminist perspectives on this character with particular reference to Adrienne Rich's concept of matrophobia[33]: a fear not of motherhood or mothers in general, but rather of *becoming like* one's mother. Stories of mirroring, in other words, are inevitably also about mothering. Yet, while

repronormative society causes all the mothers and daughters in *To The Lighthouse* to suffer in different ways, none of them are entirely hostile towards maternity. Even when Lily diminishes the forms of Mrs Ramsay and her child to an abstract shadow, she asserts that she 'did not intend to disparage a subject which […] Raphael had treated divinely' (p. 145). The depersonalized and abstract painting is an autopoietic form that reflects multiplicities of desires and definitions of (pro)creation. Alternating between reverence for parenting and artistic distortions of reproduction, the text suggests that the ethics of women's reproductive matters are impossible to encapsulate within a single narrative.

Monstrousness recurs in Woolf's fiction and non-fiction when approaching this array of distorted societal and reproductive expectations, such as when Mrs Ramsay expresses that she wishes she could preserve her children in their youth so as 'never to see them grow up into long-legged monsters' (p. 49). The same word is alluded to in 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection'. This short story focuses on scenes reflected in a mirror owned by an unmarried and presumably nulliparous woman named Isabella Tyson, who is absent from her house (and thus the narrative) for most of the story. The distanced narrator imagines that it is 'monstrous' that people like the spinster anxiously fixate on appearances, obsessing over conversations, dinners and other social arrangements.[34] The narrator wishes that they could instead 'prize her open with the first tool that came to hand – the imagination' (p. 6). Yet this thought is disrupted when Isabella returns to her house and, by extension, appears through the looking-glass. The narrator observes her startling appearance in suddenly contradictory terms: 'To talk of "prizing her open" as if she were an oyster, to use any but the finest and subtlest and most pliable tools upon her was impious and absurd' (p. 8-9). It is significant that a bivalve mollusc is mentioned here, not least because oysters are capable of reproducing sexually and asexually; their reproductive systems contain both eggs and sperm cells, allowing for self-fertilization. Another interesting consideration for our discussion of reflections is that the shells of oysters are symmetrical once shucked. Yet we are told that we *cannot* prize Isabella open; with 'no thoughts' and 'no friends', there are echoes of Rhoda's character within Isabella's as the 'woman

herself' is described as 'nothing', 'perfectly empty' (p. 10). In this case, the oyster represents a closed, autopoietic system. Our expectations of a charismatic socialite are thwarted by her supposedly horrific face with its wrinkles and veins, and the revelation that the letters on her dresser are 'nothing but bills' (p. 10). This sense of negation causes us to reflect upon the fate of so-called childless women in old age: desexualized, they are neither wholly spectacles nor subjects. Simply put, Isabella is more mirror than material actor.

I have already elucidated how Woolf's imagery of women holding up mirrors to inflate the egos and images of patriarchs in *A Room of One's Own* has resonated with many feminist thinkers. An under-investigated association, however, is that the concept of monstrousness rears its head in the pages preceding *and* following the mirror-function passages. Woolf writes that when tracing the archetypal figure of Woman through literary history, it was an

> odd monster that one made up by reading the historians first and the poets afterwards—a worm winged like an eagle; the spirit of life and beauty in a kitchen chopping up suet. But these monsters, however amusing to the imagination, have no existence in fact. What one must do to bring her to life was to think poetically and prosaically at one and the same moment, thus keeping in touch with fact—that she is Mrs Martin, aged thirty-six, dressed in blue, wearing a black hat and brown shoes; but not losing sight of fiction either—that she is a vessel in which all sorts of spirits and forces are coursing and flashing perpetually. (p. 37)

Here, just as in Woolf's aforementioned fictional works, we are presented with a range of duplicitous images. There is the excreting and bleeding female body, aligned with burrowing parasites and beastly kidney fat. Yet the same figure may be revered as a bird of prey – or, even further, elevated to the status of holy vessel who divines ideas like little fish from the collective stream of unconsciousness (p. 7). It should be clear by now that Woolf's interest in mirrors is not for any superficial sense of doubling, or symmetry between the split self (in its material and idealized forms).

Rather, 'reflections' in her novels, stories and essays distort normalized social roles, particularly those of women as re-producers. This is further reinforced directly after the passages on women's mirror-functions. Woolf begins the fourth section of her famous essay, which accounts for the supposed anger which is found in the writing of childless women like Margaret Cavendish and her contemporary Anne Finch, by explaining that 'some great lady would take advantage of her comparative freedom and comfort to publish something with her name to it and risk being thought a monster' (p. 49). In an earlier essay on the Duchess of Newcastle appearing in *The Common Reader*, Woolf paints a monstrous, witch-like image of Cavendish crying 'John, John, I conceive!' whenever her thoughts begin to 'boil and bubble', whether this is when writing 'of wars, [or] boarding-schools, and cutting down trees, of grammar and morals, of monsters and the British'.[35] The implied binary in this last clause evokes nationalist and racialized elements of monstrous discourse, a worrying association which I discuss in the next two sections of this article. But considering the above readings of just a few of the autopoietic forms and mirrors in Woolf's oeuvre, it would be too reductive to dismiss the word 'monster' as a mere insult. There are both merits and limitations to understanding reproductive agency as an expression of monstrous desires. This is particularly true for contemporary feminist theorists, as the following section traces how Virginia Woolf's reflections about aesthetic limitations placed on women – and the ostracism they may face for exercising creativity outside the realm of sexual reproduction – are formative for Rosi Braidotti's philosophy.

BRAIDOTTI'S MONSTERS

In one of her earliest essays, 'Body-Images and the Pornography of Representation', Rosi Braidotti writes of new reproductive technologies and Foucauldian mirror-relationships,[36] drawing on Luce Irigaray's *Speculum de l'autre femme* (*Speculum of the Other Woman*).[37] The title of this text is pertinent to our discussion for two reasons: it simultaneously refers to an invasive medical instrument used in gynaecology, and the Latin word for 'mirror' in a critique of Lacan's conception of the mirror function. Paraphrasing Irigaray, Braidotti notes that in patriarchal discourse women are 'the flat

surface that is supposed to reflect the male subject; her bodily surface, deprived of any visible organs, without anything to see is the mirror'.[38] She goes on to evoke Donna Haraway, arguing against the concept of symmetrical mirror functions and advocating for detached, partial perspectives 'like the eye of a travelling lens'.[39] Crucially, Braidotti's use of the mirror mimics Woolf's in this analogy, in that she is rendering woman simultaneously as image and reflective device, *and* as an agent who may create or distort at will. Throughout her essay, Braidotti is critical of new biomedical technologies: she recognizes how they may afford certain women the opportunity to reproduce but is wary of how they risk framing all people with uteruses as identical regardless of race, age or other factors.[40] This is an important but underdeveloped point. Rather than historicizing Western medicine's experimental violence against women of colour – slaves were often forced to act as test subjects by surgeons developing gynaecological instruments like forceps or speculums, and rarely given pain relief – Braidotti is more concerned about the future, particularly the possibility that in vitro fertilization, surrogacy, [41] and emerging technologies may result in women being viewed as homogenous reproductive organs instead of living beings. While more sensitive to identity politics than Woolf's writing, therefore, Braidotti's early utilization of mirror imagery is similarly limited by its reliance on normative conceptualizations of cisgender (and implicitly white) womanhood.

Although she does not directly reference Woolf in this essay on pornographic representations and reproduction, the modernist writer – and her mirrors – certainly recur in Braidotti's later works. The aforementioned lines from *The Waves* ('I am rooted, but I flow') are repetitively quoted to comment on the gendered 'logic of domination' in *Nomadic Subjects*,[42] *Nomadic Theory*,[43] 'Intensive Genre and the Demise of Gender',[44] in a co-authored article,[45] and in interviews.[46] In her discussion of Deleuze and Guattari's work on Kafka in *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*, [47] Braidotti repeatedly likens Woolf to Kafka (p. 8; p. 94), who famously shatters anthropocentric worldviews by distorting the human form in his novella *Die Verwandlung* (*The Metamorphosis*).[48] She also makes a passing reference to 'Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath who saw monsters emerging from the depth of their inner mirrors' (p. 203). While Braidotti is alluding to the

two women's mental health problems,[49] it is important to remember that she is not merely concerned with *inner* worlds; she is interested in the shared desires of many autopoietic subjects. Her interest in interconnected outsiders is perhaps most clearly expressed in her 2006 monograph *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*.[50] Formulating the aquatic becoming-woman/animal of Vita Sackville-West in Woolf's writing, she writes, 'One does not run with Woolf alone: women, even Virginia Woolf herself, must learn to run with other (s/he)-wolves'.[51] Readers of Deleuze and Guattari might deduce that this statement refers to the human-wolf multiplicity, but what is more apparent is the reference to Clarissa Pinkola Estés's *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, a famous analysis of the wild woman archetype of the feminine psyche and a treatise against gendered domestication. Drawing on the oral tradition of her Mestiza Latina heritage, and employing the figure of the lone wolf in conjunction with contrasting imagery of swans and mice or feathers and scales, Estés uses the metaphor of 'The Mistaken Zygote' to argue that women artists are often born into families who misunderstand their creative drive; they grow to be torn between their work and 'doing labor that abort[s] their creative lives on a daily basis'.[52] Here Braidotti is evoking a transcultural lineage of feminist thinkers who are realistic about material demands placed on women, and who write against repronormativity and anthropocentricism by conceiving alternative, posthuman forms of feminine creativity. Contacting the power of the monster through literary reflections, therefore, Braidotti smashes patriarchal expectations by becoming-wo(o)lf.

Rosi Braidotti's indebtedness to Virginia Woolf is further emphasized in a recent article outlining a critical framework for the posthumanities, where she refers to women's aforementioned sense of being outsiders within society as described in *Three Guineas* and other feminist literature.[53] Although not directly quoted by Braidotti, there is a particular passage in Woolf's essay that evokes the imagery I have already demonstrated as a motif in her earlier fiction and non-fiction. I am referring to the section in *Three Guineas* where the author advises writers to create original approaches to communal identity in their practice, instructing them to 'Find out new ways of approaching "the public"; single it into separate people instead of massing it into one monster, gross in body, feeble in mind. And then

reflect' (p. 176). Initially, the appearance of the words 'single' and 'separate' may cause one to believe that Woolf is arguing against the concept of communal identity. Yet my earlier discussion of autopoietic replications of the self demonstrates otherwise, as depersonalization ultimately leads to an ethical sense of interconnectedness in Braidotti's theorization of Woolf. Once again, it is important to stress how this echoing imagery exceeds any binarized or symmetrical understandings of reflections or repronormative associations with creativity. This is particularly apparent when one considers how images of monstrousness, reflections and collective desires manifest in Woolf's final novel.

ABORTIVE REFLECTIONS: *BETWEEN THE ACTS*

A 2006 article by Galia Benziman performs a psychoanalytic reading of the role of mirrors and communal identity in *Between the Acts*,[54] paying close attention to the final scene of the play within the novel where Miss La Trobe turns a mirror on the audience. Benziman argues for a narrative of fragmented identity and Lacanian subject formation where the mother or other functions as a mirror.[55] Yet, when considering the many mirrors that appear before the climactic reflection of 'Ourselves', it appears the text is less concerned with a psychoanalytic narrative of broken identity and more with refracting nonanthropocentric perspectives on what Woolf describes in the novel as 'Man the Master' (p. 109). Benziman concludes her analysis by stating that, even though the novel is critical of nationalist discourse, it ultimately argues for 'some collective self-image'.[56] Yet these last two words appear somewhat paradoxical, especially when they are used in the context of individualist theories of early identity formation. Developing Benziman's argument for unity in *Between the Acts* by focusing on collective *desires*, it becomes apparent that the novel actually embraces abortive images of monstrousness and ethical ambivalence. Braidotti's playful assertion in *Metamorphoses* that 'Wo/man is other wo/men's woolf' (p. 141), with its deconstructionist forward-slashes and its phonetic reference to both the human and the animal, magnifies the material connections between

creative potential and becoming-woman in a monstrous infinite regress. Similarly, I read Woolf's last novel as an embodied story of collective desires in adult, and autopoietic, subjects.

Woolf's posthumously published final novel opens at a country manor called Pointz Hall as we are introduced to Isa, a mother of two whose dissatisfaction with her marriage to Giles Oliver is palpable. This is not only because of her suppressed desire for a local farmer, Rupert Haines. After exchanging flirtatious glances with Haines, her discontent is further expressed the following morning when she reflects on her relationship with the 'father of [her] children' (p. 11), a phrase which is repeated throughout the novel – often in tandem with the words 'love and hate' (p. 127). Isa continues to regard her marriage and progeny while staring into a folding mirror on her dressing table:

> Inner love was in the eyes; outer love on the dressing-table. But what feeling was it that stirred in her now when above the looking-glass, out of the doors, she saw coming across the lawn the perambulator; two nurses; and her little boy George, lagging behind? (p. 11)

Eyes, here, are far from simple mirrors of the soul. There is a clear distinction between the private desires of the material subject, and outer projections of desire as inferred in each of the nonidentical reflections of Isa presented by the three sheets of glass. It is equally important to consider the above extract also evokes a trinity of feelings rather than a symmetrical dualism. Once again, we are reminded of Katherine M. Franke's three-way framework for understanding women's sexuality, and her suggestion that the only truly feminist theorization of desire involves discussing its supposedly unpalatable elements like fear and risk. Rachel Crossland argues that the third emotion, which Isa only begins to detect when drawing her eyes towards a scene completely divorced from her material surroundings, is peace.[57] I am interested in another possibility which manifests in a phrase at the close of this passage: '"Abortive" was the word that expressed her' (p. 12).

In the scene that immediately follows, Isa's interest is piqued by an article in her father-in-law's copy of *The Times*. We are only granted oblique glimpses of sentences and quotations, such as the

words ‘horse with a green tail’ (p. 15), but through monstrous imagery it transpires that the story involves sexual assault. Importantly, Woolf is referring to a 1938 newspaper article about Dr Alex Bourne, who was arrested for performing an abortion on a fourteen-year-old rape victim, as Stuart N. Clarke notes in a 1990 article in *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*.[58] Bourne’s case took place just two years after the establishment of the Abortion Law Reform Association (ALRA). Perhaps due in part to mounting pressure from women’s groups and MPs about unsafe abortions, Dr Bourne was acquitted; while terminations of pregnancy remained illegal in the UK for three more decades, the case set a precedent by which a minority of educated, wealthy and white women were able to access safe abortions. Woolf’s interest in shifting attitudes to women’s reproductive agency is reinforced by references throughout Chapter V of *A Room of One’s Own* to a feminist writer named ‘Mary Carmichael’ (p. 104-106; p. 110; p. 115-117; p. 119; p. 123). This fictitious author’s name is remarkably similar to Marie Carmichael, the pseudonym for Marie Charlotte Carmichael Stopes, who founded Britain’s first birth control clinic in 1921 (just two years before the publication of *A Room of One’s Own*). The historical figure opposed abortion but, controversially, campaigned for eugenics alongside contraceptives, advocating for the forced sterilization of those deemed unfit for parenthood. In 2020, one year before the centenary of Stopes’s birth control clinic, an international non-governmental organization and abortion provider changed its name from Marie Stopes International to MSI Reproductive Choices to distance itself from her views on population control. Variations on Stopes’s name have thus signified for decades both the feminist possibilities of reproductive healthcare and the ableist, classist and racist implications of only granting *some* individuals agency when accessing such services.

Together with the socio-historical context of the decades leading up to the 1967 Abortion Act, Isa’s ambivalent shifts in thought – from contemplated infidelity to resigned commitment, then maternal fondness and finally horror at the thought of unsupportable pregnancy – show that the abortive manner in which her ‘desire peter[s] out’ is crucial to reading *Between the Acts* (p. 42). Soon it transpires that Isa’s husband Giles is also harbouring desires for others, particularly Mrs Manresa,

one of the many guests to visit Pointz Hall for an annual pageant. He is also simultaneously fascinated and repulsed by Manresa's friend William Dodge, and Dodge's detectible sexual attraction towards Giles and other men. The severity of Giles's repressed feelings is most starkly displayed when he encounters a snake with a toad stuck in its jaws. He is kicking stones while walking to the barn, trying (and failing) to distract himself from unfaithful thoughts: 'The first kick was Manresa (lust). The second, Dodge (perversion). The third himself (coward). And the fourth and the fifth and all the others were the same' (p. 61). Immediately following this triad of images, Giles encounters the two animals and decides to repetitively stamp on them, since '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' (p. 61). His elimination of the animals is similar to Isa's earlier abortive meditations on desire in more than one sense. In both cases there is the contemplation of lust and an extramarital affair, immediately followed by shame – although in Giles's case, his guilty feeling of perversion is projected onto an external figure, rather than internalized. Another important parallel is that both scenes feature the evocation of three feelings, and three figures, rather than a mirrored dualism. Finally, the death of the toad is quite literally referred to in abortive terms as the concept of birthing is first inverted and then terminated by Giles's stamping. While the couple's desires are similar, they are asymmetrical. Yet in the cases of both Isa and Giles, monstrous images – a horse with a green tail, a toad within a snake[59] – appear to suppress their desires for a less possessive relationship, for an active and networked approach to reproductive agency.

The concept of monstrousness is complicated by a plethora of mirrors in the second section of the novel: from the play within the play, where maids hand mirrors to their mistresses (p. 77), to the audience where Mrs Manresa repeatedly adjusts her make up (p. 81; p. 106; p. 110). Towards the end of the pageant, the cast appear from the bushes holding many reflective surfaces such as a mother's cracked mirror, prompting the audience to question whether these figures are 'Children? Imps–elves–demons' (p. 109). Presenting themes of motherhood and natality, in this scene we are reminded once again that stories of mirroring often involve the concept of mothering, whether this is the fear of

becoming one's mother or anxieties about being reflected through one's progeny. The undesirable aspects of repronormative discourse, and the monstrousness of the actors' diminutive forms, are reinforced when the cows and dogs of the manor join the procession: 'Walloping, tail lashing, the reticence of nature was undone, and the barriers which should divide Man the Master from the Brute were dissolved' (p. 109). It is vital that the distinction between human and nonhuman animals disappears in this moment. This demonstrates that the Brute is not the symmetrical antithesis of Man the Master's underlying nature;[60] rather, elements of both are reflected within one another, as the animals come to participate in the performance. Furthermore, as Derek Ryan notes in his materialist-semiotic reading of their performance of 'hum/animality', cows reappear later in the novel in a *glass* painting.[61] Mirrors on mirrors.

But there are limitations to using non-anthropocentric imagery against repronormativity, particularly considering how eugenic discourse often reverts to discussions of animality and genetic progeny. This becomes evident as the pageant draws to a close and Reverend G. W. Streatfield addresses the audience. Though a member of the clergy, he is portrayed as a being with extremely human urges, particularly when he reaches for tobacco he has been trying to hide in his pockets and it becomes 'plain to all that the natural desire of the natural man [i]s overcoming him' (p. 115). Yet the narrator observes that whether 'gentles and simples, [the audience] felt embarrassed, for him, for themselves. There he stood their representative spokesman; their symbol; themselves; a butt, a clod, laughed at by looking-glasses; ignored by the cows' (p. 113). Here, social classes unite in displaying shame and suspicion towards supposedly natural human urges that the clergyman epitomizes. A further and ableist interpretation of the word 'simple' manifests in an exchange with the reverend shortly after this, when Mrs Parker appeals to him to exorcize Albert, who is referred to repeatedly by members of the community as 'the idiot' (p. 115). Rev. Streatfield argues in an indirect manner that Albert, too, 'is part of ourselves', to which another audience member responds, 'But not a part we like to recognise' (p. 115). The reverend's own abortive willpowers and his arguments against eugenic ideology illustrate that the image of the audience in the cracked mirror is not broken, as a

psychoanalytic reading of the text might suggest; rather our brute natures, our underlying vitalities, encompass a spectrum of monstrous feelings including jealousy, lust and violence (whether this is discursive or physical). In other words, the novel demonstrates Braidotti's theorization that abortive desires are integral and natural parts of the autopoietic process of becoming. This is an unpleasant prospect, perhaps particularly for those who wish to epitomize humanist values like charity – a fact that is demonstrated by the audience members' donation of coins into a hat while making most uncharitable comments about Albert, and their clear insinuation that they would prefer *not* for people such as him to reproduce. Cognitive dissonance surrounding the monstrous form is further reinforced in snippets of chatter following the play, when someone remarks that 'there's a sense in which we all […] are savages still. Those women with red nails' (p. 118). The concept of savagery is inherently linked with racist animalization and sexualization due to histories of colonial expansion and slavery, as addressed in recent scholarship by Sadiah Qureshi,[62] Bénédicte Boisseron,[63] Zakiyyah Iman Jackson,[64] and others. Together, these extracts illustrate how repronormative appeals to preserving and regenerating 'the jolly human heart' are inherently intertwined with discourse about animality, disability, gender and race (p. 104). This is not to imply that anti-repronormativity is necessarily an indicator of ethical virtue, either. As the case of Marie Stopes shows, seemingly charitable advocacy for access to contraceptives and reproductive healthcare may be rooted in eugenic motives.

Intertwined forms of discrimination, violence and imperialist expansion are evoked again once the crowd has dispersed, and Giles's aunt Lucy fingers her crucifix while regarding a fish pond, seemingly caught 'between two fluidities' as she reflects on the 'continents' of lily leaves she has named 'India, Africa, America' and on the implications of the play's final scene titled 'Ourselves' (p. 121). The forms of the fish flit between fluidities, too, appearing to reinforce Lucy's humanist faith in an underlying unity as planned by a higher power. In contrast, when Lucy asks her niece-in-law if she agrees with the implied message of the play, that 'We act different parts; but are the same' (p. 114), Isa appears ambivalent. Crucially, her alternation between the words 'Yes' and 'No' is compared to the expansion and contraction of the tides on a shoreline (p. 127). There are echoes here

of Rhoda's representation of Susan as 'Yes' and Jinny as 'No' in *The Waves*. Once again, the sea signifies neither fertility nor negation: it symbolizes nothing but duplicity. In my analysis of Isabella's character in 'The Lady in the Looking Glass', I argued that the lone and ageing female body is depicted as more of a passive mirror than a material actor. Yet here, an almost identically named character represents both the pressures of repronormative society and the possibilities of reproductive agency in the presence of another female character. Isa's exchange with Lucy may be ambivalent but, crucially, her response is informed by her own feelings rather than another's doctrine or perspective. My reading is supported by the recurrence of a very specific phrase in the final pages of *Between the Acts*, which is strikingly similar to a sentence quoted earlier from the penultimate paragraph of 'The Lady in the Looking Glass': 'Isa had only bills' (p. 128). The reader will notice that, while extremely similar, these scenes and words are nonidentical.[65] Woolf's experiment is an act of repetition with difference. This is proven by the distinction between the full name 'Isabella' and the nickname which appears more prominently in the later text, *Between the Acts* – a technique that is further mirrored, I would argue, by the pseudonymization of Mary Carmichael in *A Room of One's Own*. Isa's ambivalent and changing reflections, Giles's abortive desires, and the scenes involving Rev. Streatfield show there are many anti-repronormative and posthumanist identities at play in the novel. Combined they imply that there is no clean slate or state of innocence to return to. Rather, to understand human nature we must accept the spectrum of monstrous elements within, while also acknowledging how the concept of nonhuman animality has historically been utilized to support population control. What the novel offers is thus not a simple reflection on the collective unconscious, but rather a collage of complex and conflicting desires.

CONCLUSION

In yet another of her short stories entitled 'A Society', Virginia Woolf urges the reader to 'remember […] that fiction is the mirror of life.'[66] I have charted one of many ways into reading Braidotti's philosophical utilization of autopoiesis; within her writing, the call of Woolf's non-fiction merges

with echoes of her fictional mirrors. Both of these authors' oeuvres distort the distinction between the individual and society through echoing perspectives on reduplication. They also foreground the limitations of utilizing monstrous images to combat gestational violence – particularly when considering the eugenic and racist histories of population control, as shown by the reflected figure of Marie/Mary Carmichael. When read together, varying feminist perspectives suggest reproductive choices cannot be neatly determined by one overarching narrative, anticipating a collective understanding of reproductive agency which is still largely underdeveloped by those who frame topics such as abortion in an anti-/pro- dichotomy between life and death. Finally, in the face of ongoing public health crises, and faced with the possibility of living mostly autopoietic lives even as we return to work, it is worth considering how we come face-to-face with our own reflections in every Zoom room and Teams meeting; the global community must reflect on the lone experience of life itself, together. Braidotti's and Woolf's works have much to teach us about desire as both the space between different beings, and the drive to unite.

NOTES

[1] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 142. Subsequent references to this work will be given in the main body of the article.
[2] Recent scholarship, such as Laura Fish's critical race study of how contemporary Black feminist writers either anticipate or complicate Woolf's concept of mirroring, signals an importantly comparative and postcolonial intervention in modernist studies. See Laura Fish, 'Woman in the Mirror: Reflections', *Synthesis*, 7 (2015), 92-105 (p. 94).
[3] Rosi Braidotti, 'The Subject in Feminism', *Hypatia*, 6.2 (1991), 155-172 (p. 158).
[4] Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*, first edition (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), p. 141. Subsequent references to this work will be given in the main body of the article.
[5] In a paper on Virginia Woolf's reading of *Anna Karenina*, Roberta Rubenstein uncovers that Woolf was struck by two characters' mute exchange of glances through a mirror, which the author used to conclude that fiction is not designed to provide psychoanalytic reflections on characters' inner lives. See Roberta Rubenstein, 'Reading Over Her Shoulder: Virginia Woolf Reads *Anna Karenina*', in *Woolf Editing / Editing Woolf: Selected Papers from the Eighteenth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, edited by Eleanor McNees and Sara Veglahn (Clemson, SC: Clemson University Press, 2008), pp. 76-83 (p. 77).
[6] Rosi Braidotti, 'Posthuman Critical Theory: A Materialist Politics for Troubled Times', Environmental Humanities and New Materialisms: The Ethics of Decolonizing Nature and Culture, COST Action Network: Networking European Scholarship on 'How Matter Comes to Matter', 8 June 2017, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris. Keynote address.
[7] Katherine M. Franke, 'Theorizing Yes: An Essay on Feminism, Law, and Desire', *Columbia Law Review* 101.1 (2001), 181-208 (p. 183; p. 185). While Franke's essay is critical of social forces that incentivize motherhood, more recent scholarship in queer studies uses the paradigm of repronormativity to advocate for same-sex and trans* parenthood. See, for example, Anna L. Weissman, 'Repronormativity and the Reproduction of the Nation-State: The State and Sexuality Collide', *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* 13.3 (2017), 277-305.
[8] Sylvia Plath, 'Daddy', in *The Collected Poems* by Sylvia Plath, edited by Ted Hughes (New York, NY: First Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008), pp. 222-223.
[9] Rosi Braidotti, 'Intensive Genre and the Demise of Gender', *Angelaki*, 13.2 (2008), 45-57 (p. 48-49).
[10] Rosi Braidotti, 'Virginia Woolf, Immanence and Ontological Pacifism', Virginia Woolf, Europe and Peace: The 28th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf, 23 June 2018, Woolf College, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK. Keynote address.
[11] María Socorro Suárez Lafuente, 'Gail Jones's Intertextual Mirrors: In the Footsteps of Virginia Woolf', *Oceánide* 13 (2020), 120-126 (p. 121).
[12] Franke, 'Theorizing Yes', p. 206.
[13] Franke, 'Theorizing Yes', p. 207.
[14] The concept of desire is also central to her philosophical influences, particularly Spinoza and Deleuze. See Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethica, ordine geometrico demonstrata*; translated by Edwin Curley as *Ethics* (London: Penguin, 1996); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *L'Anti-Oedipe* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1972); translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane as *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).
[15] Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, 'Interview with Rosi Braidotti', in *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*, edited by Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities, 2012), pp. 19-37 (p. 20-37).
[16] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti*, first edition (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 82.
[17] Rosi Braidotti, 'Becoming Woman: or Sexual Difference Revisited', *Theory, Culture & Society* 20.3 (2003), 43-64 (p. 57).
[18] Francisco J. Varela, Humberto R. Maturana and Ricardo Uribe, 'Autopoiesis: The Organization of Living Systems, Its Characterization and a Model', *Cybernetics Forum* 10.2-3 (1981), 7-13 (p. 7).
[19] Varela, Maturana and Uribe, 'Autopoiesis', p. 7.
[20] Rosi Braidotti, 'The Politics of "Life Itself" and New Ways of Dying', in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, edited by Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 201-220 (p. 210).
[21] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, second edition (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 124-125.
[22] This is a point that Derek Ryan outlines in his excellent study of non/human desire in Woolf's *Orlando*. See Derek Ryan, *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory: Sex, Animal, Life* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 101-102.
[23] Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* (London: Penguin Classics, 1992), p. 12. Subsequent references to this work will be given in the main body of the article.

[24] Griet Roets and Rosi Braidotti, 'Nomadology and Subjectivity: Deleuze, Guattari and Critical Disability Studies', in *Disability and Social Theory: New Developments and Directions*, edited by Dan Goodley, Bill Hughes and Lennard Davis (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 161-178 (p. 168).
[25] Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 83. Subsequent references to this work will be given in the main body of the article.
[26] Bonnie Kime Scott, *In the Hollow of the Wave: Virginia Woolf and Modernist Uses of Nature*, first edition (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2012), p. 156.
[27] Rachel Crossland, *Modernist Physics: Waves, Particles, and Relativities in the Writings of Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence*, first edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 58.
[28] This episode is mirrored almost verbatim when Woolf describes her fear of stepping over a puddle in the second of her three memorable 'moments of being'. See Virginia Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', in *Moments of Being* (London: Hogarth Press, 1985), pp. 61-159 (p. 78).
[29] For a more detailed timeline of changes to access and laws, see the Abortion Rights website: https://abortionrights.org.uk/history-of-abortion-law-in-the-uk/; for a growing timeline of literary abortions in the UK and US, see historian Lesley Hall's webpage: https://www.lesleyahall.net/abortion.htm.
[30] Patrizia Muscogiuri, 'This, I Fancy, Must Be The Sea: Thalassic Aesthetics in Virginia Woolf's Writing', in *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World: Selected Papers from the Twentieth Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf*, edited by Kristin Czarnecki and Carrie Rohman (Clemson, SC: Clemson University Press, 2011), pp. 101-107 (p. 105).
[31] Braidotti, 'The Politics', p. 204.
[32] Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 45. Subsequent references to this work will be given in the main body of the article.
[33] Brenda R. Silver, 'Mothers, Daughters, Mrs. Ramsay: Reflections', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 37.3-4 (2009), 259-274 (p. 266-267).
[34] Virginia Woolf, *The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection* (London: Penguin Classics, 2011), p. 6. Subsequent references to this work will be given in the main body of the article.
[35] Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader* (London: Hogarth Press, 1929), p. 103-104.
[36] Rosi Braidotti, 'Body-Images and the Pornography of Representation', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 1.2 (1991), 137-151 (p. 139-140).
[37] Luce Irigaray, *Speculum de l'autre femme*, (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1974), translated by Gillian C. Gill as *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).
[38] Braidotti, 'Body-Images', p. 148.
[39] Braidotti, 'Body-Images', p. 150.
[40] Braidotti, 'Body-Images', p. 143.
[41] For a more optimistic perspective on birth, biology and queer kinship, see Sophie Lewis, *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family* (London: Verson, 2019).
[42] Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, p. 21.
[43] Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, p. 74.
[44] Braidotti, 'Intensive Genre', p. 46.
[45] Roets and Braidotti, 'Nomadology and Subjectivity', p. 166.
[46] Rosi Braidotti and Lisa Regan, 'Our Times Are Always Out of Joint: Feminist Relational Ethics in and of the World Today: An Interview with Rosi Braidotti', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 28.3 (2017), 171-192 (p. 174).
[47] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka : Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
[48] Franz Kafka, *Die Verwandlung* (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1916); translated by David Wyllie as *The Metamorphosis* (Project Gutenberg, 2002).
[49] She is also clearly referencing Woolf's childhood memory of looking in a mirror and seeing the monstrous face of an animal peering from over her shoulder. See Virginia Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', in *Moments of Being* (London: Hogarth Press, 1985), pp. 61-159 (p. 69).
[50] Rosi Braidotti, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*, first edition (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), p. 194.
[51] Braidotti, *Transpositions*, p. 195.
[52] Clarissa Pinkola Estés, *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Contacting the Power of the Wild Woman*, first edition (London: Rider, 1992), pp. 164-196 (p. 191).
[53] Rosi Braidotti, 'A Theoretical Framework for the Critical Posthumanities', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 36.6 (2019), 31-61 (p. 9).
[54] Galia Benziman, '"Dispersed Are We": Mirroring and National Identity in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*', *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 36.1 (2006), 53-71 (p. 54).
[55] Benziman, '"Dispersed Are We"', p. 57-59.
[56] Benziman, '"Dispersed Are We"', p. 69.
[57] Rachel Crossland, *Modernist Physics: Waves, Particles, and Relativities in the Writings of Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence*, first edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 71.

[58] Stuart N. Clarke, 'The Horse With A Green Tail', *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, 34 (1990), 3-4.
[59] Christine Alt makes the astute point that this is a common feeding practice in snakes; while the image may be graphic, it is 'entirely natural' for them to eat their prey whole. See Christine Alt, *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 165-166.
[60] The connections between beast/brute and man/master are explored at length by Mary Midgley in one of the best-known modern studies of human behaviour as contextualized within the animal kingdom. Midgley repeatedly emphasizes how beastliness is a false construct that denies the orderliness of both the 'animal within' and nonhuman animals (1995: 49), but her philosophy lacks sensitivity to the historical oppression of certain racialized and exoticized bodies within this framework. See Mary Midgley, *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature*, second edition (London: Routledge, 1995).
[61] Derek Ryan, '"The reality of becoming": Deleuze, Woolf and the Territory of Cows', *Deleuze Studies* 7.4 (2013), 537-561 (p. 550-551).
[62] Sadiah Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
[63] Bénédicte Boisseron, *Afro-Dog: Blackness and the Animal Question* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2018).
[64] Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiblack World* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2020).
[65] The resonance between the two texts is referenced obliquely by Susan Dick in her editorial commentary on a collection of Woolf's shorter fiction; Dick writes that some annotations gesturing towards repetitions of passages from the short stories in Woolf's longer works had to be omitted as 'There simply was not enough room in the edition to note all such echoes.' See Susan Dick, 'A Book She Never Made: Editing *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*', in *Virginia Woolf: Interpreting the Modernist Text*, edited by James M. Haule and J.H. Stape (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 114-126 (p. 125).
[66] Virginia Woolf, 'A Society', in *Monday or Tuesday* by Virginia Woolf (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace and Company; Rahway: The Quinn & Boden Company, 1921), pp. 3-20 (p. 17). Kindle edition.