BECOMING-OTHER: PLURAL LANGUAGES AND SELVES IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *THE WAVES*, NATHALIE SARRAUTE'S *ENFANCE*, AND CYNTHIA OZICK'S *THE SHAWL*

by

SHARON CARLSON

(Under the Direction of Katarzyna Jerzak)

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the process of becoming in the writing of Virginia Woolf, Nathalie Sarraute, and Cynthia Ozick with primary emphasis on the work of Gilles Deleuze and Mikhail Bakhtin. Essential to this process is the recognition that no ideal language provides the exact tools for the representation of an idea; rather, these authors experiment with form and subject, revealing a process of becoming-other in writing that take place through the encounter of multiple selves and languages.

INDEX WORDS: Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*, Nathalie Sarraute, *Enfance*, Cynthia Ozick, *The Shawl*, *Rosa*, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Mikhail Bakhtin, writing, representation, becoming, becoming-other, autobiography, self, modernism, Nouveau Roman, trauma theory

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SHARON CARLSON

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SHARON CARLSON

Major Professor: Katarzyna Jerzak

Committee: Ronald Bogue
Doris Kadish

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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DEDICATION

For my family, whose vision of my potential illuminated my path, and for Heather Stevens, Candice Endecott, and Lee Lockwood, faithful friends who have helped along the way.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Becoming is never finished; in fact, it is unfinishable. It is always in motion, always changing, always on its way, always vital: a source of life. To conceive of writing as an ongoing process of becoming affirms that no ideal language provides the exact tools for the representation of a certain fixed idea, memory, or experience. Instead, inventive writing creates and incorporates many languages within languages, foreign languages within the mother tongue, idiolects, or, as Gilles Deleuze calls them, minor languages. This kind of writing stretches toward what is *possible* rather than attempting to represent what is *complete* or *knowable*. It is made up of a plurality of languages that are exchanged among multiple subjects.

In the first pages of his book on literature, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, Deleuze explains that

> To write is certainly not to impose a form (of expression) on the matter of lived experience. Literature rather moves in the direction of the ill-formed or the incomplete…. Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any livable or lived experience. It is a process, that is, a passage of Life that traverses both the livable and the lived. Writing is inseparable from becoming: in writing, one becomes-woman, becomes animal or vegetable, becomes-molecule to the point of becoming-imperceptible. (1)

In this passage and in many others from works such as *A Thousand Plateaus*, *Difference and Repetition*, and *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze emphasizes the act of writing as one that involves

becoming, an unfolding of new possibilities in the present. While one may think of writing as an act of representation, a way of tracing the shape of experience, putting a name to it, or expressing it, Deleuze and Mikhail Bakhtin before him prize the surprisingness and unfinalizability of the writing process as a way of drawing something new and unforeseen. Rather than closing around or defining life, writing can open and play with possibilities for life. For Bakhtin, "reality as we have it in the novel is one of many possible realities; it is not inevitable, not arbitrary, it *bears within itself other possibilities*" (37, emphasis mine). Shoshana Felman echoes these ideas, suggesting that literature "alerts us to the essential incompleteness in any system of representation," and thus serves as "a marking place of nonknowledge" that does not necessarily lead to knowledge (Felman 1). Like Bakhtin and Deleuze, Felman stresses that "nonknowledge is not something that we come to know but something out of which we create" (Felman 2). The qualities of incompleteness and nonknowledge mentioned in the above passages are essential to writing that seeks to create something new. This kind of writing does not attempt to describe or reclaim an elusive memory, experience, or self; rather, it begins with the impossibility of knowing completely and affirms the unfolding of unforeseen, unrepeatable potentials.

Writing that does not make its aim the representation of a reality (or a subject, testimony, or memory) that can be searched for and won extends itself forth instead toward what is imaginable, unknown, and in formation. It is a becoming that takes place among subjects and between the boundaries of languages, forming points of connection and collections of expression. Bakhtin stresses that "the language of the novel is a system of languages that mutually and ideologically interanimate each other" (*Dialogic Imagination* 47). He describes the languages of the novel as a system of intersecting planes, mutually informing and providing resonance with each other. Similarly, Deleuze characterizes the quality of becoming as being

"always 'between' or 'among': a woman between women, or an animal among others" (*Essays* 2). This becoming that takes place "between" and "among" also involves entering into what Deleuze terms a "zone of proximity" and a "zone of indiscernibility." I will speak more directly to these zones of proximity and indiscernibility near the end of this chapter. For now, though, I simply want to emphasize that this thesis will explore the two previously mentioned qualities of becoming: first, that it takes place *between subjects,* and second, that it unfolds *among languages*. A certain interpenetration of multiplicities is underway in both, demonstrating that both the subject and the language remain in process, in formation, and affect one another simultaneously.

I have chosen to devote the three chapters of this thesis to each of the following works: Chapter One concerns itself with Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, Chapter Two focuses on Nathalie Sarraute's *Enfance*, and Chapter Three examines Cynthia Ozick's *The Shawl*. I chose these three texts for this project because each of the authors began writing with a recognition of the impossibility of representation. Each writer was aware of, wrote about, and began with the very incompleteness that Deleuze, Bakhtin, and Felman describe in the above passages. Woolf, for example, writes in her diary (and in numerous essays) of a "third voice," a "dimension of language that resists meaning and signification, that exceeds the intention of the addresser and escapes the decoding of the addressee" (qtd. in McGee 240). Sarraute's *Tropisms* and *Conversation et sous-conversation* concern themselves with the petrifying power of words that can make translating the fluidity of inner life problematic. Cynthia Ozick calls for a renewal of language in her essay "Towards a New Yiddish," a language that will have a particularly addressive quality and incorporate tradition, community, memory, and imagination. Each of the three texts examined by this thesis demonstrates the authors' particular preoccupation with a

renewal of language that emphasizes a process of becoming rather than representation. Additionally, each of the three texts demonstrates that this becoming takes place as a resonance between subjects or consciousnesses that are co-present and mutually in formation, affecting, provoking, and stimulating one another. The role of the Other is a question opened up by all three chapters, and one that each approaches differently.

The second chapter of the thesis begins with a discussion of the author's writing about her own writing. How does Virginia Woolf conceive of language? What difficulties of representation and expression occupy her artistic effort? Woolf is celebrated as a brilliant, inventive writer, and many praise *The Waves* as chief among her masterpieces. In her diary, Woolf calls it "my first work in my own style." Drawing from her diary and several of her essays, this chapter will explore how her effort to create new possibilities for writing contributes to the development of this text. *The Waves* seems a fitting place to begin the thesis not only because it embodies the plurality of languages and selves that demonstrates a process of becoming-other, but also because both Sarraute and Ozick refer to Woolf as a significant influence on the development of their own writing.

Also, this chapter attempts to draw attention to the resonances between several of Deleuze's theories on literature and writing and the plurality of languages and subjects present in *The Waves*. What possibilities do the various "others" offer for one another in this text? How do their languages merge, interrupt, intercept, and inform one another? How "other" are the "others" in the text, and to what end does Woolf explore the indiscernibility and interpenetration of the identities of her "characters" or "presences"? (She has written, in fact, that in this text she meant for there to be no characters.) In this chapter, the image of the wave, always in formation and interanimated by other waves, currents, and flows, serves to illustrate the process of becoming as

a passage between bodies, one that involves both a dissolution and reformation of the subject. Through their relationships with one another, the seven friends merge and emerge.

Chapter 3 is a study of form and dialogue in *Enfance*. Nathalie Sarraute employs dialogue in her autobiographical text *Enfance* to create speculation rather than definition; she moves away from what is representative and factual to what is revelatory, unfinished, and surprising. Writing of this kind bears witness to life in a way that, significantly, recreates life – not by reflecting, rephrasing, or imitating the life of a past self, but by providing the kind of openness to possibility and spontaneity that is the essence of life. Sarruate's autobiography is a playful exchange between selves, one that opens space for the emergence of something unforeseen. Approaching autobiographical testimony as a *search* – not for a past reality but as an invitation to encounter something new – leads Sarraute to the polyphonic "I" that speaks. This chapter examines the dialogue that occurs between the co-presences that emerge in *Enfance* and explores the possibilities for regeneration they offer.

Chapter 4 begins with an analysis of Cynthia Ozick's essay "Toward a New Yiddish," presented at a conference in Israel years before her stories about fictional Holocaust survivor Rosa Lublin, "The Shawl" and "Rosa," were published collectively as *The Shawl*. Like Woolf and Sarraute, Ozick's writing begins with an understanding that her art does not attempt to represent or capture memory, experience, or reality. Instead, *The Shawl* offers encounters between Rosa Lublin and others, both real and imagined, as she strikes at, misses, mediates and *reinvents* the stories of her life. Hers is a living history, one that is continually in the process of unfolding, full of implications for her and those she meets. Yet, Rosa's ability to bear witness is challenged and provoked by people who are deaf to her stories, those who do not know, do not want to know, and cannot remember. Rosa's interactions with them cause her to undergo

processes of disintegration and reformation, yet eventually it is her friendship with Persky, another Polish Jew who serves as the presence of an Other who is willing to be addressed, a co-witness, that reestablishes her position as a witness and restores her to health. Also significant in this chapter is the exploration of the role of Rosa's daughter Magda, a presence who inspires, witnesses, and mediates Rosa's inventive processes.

In each of the texts, the interaction taking place among multiple presences and through various languages, whether they are soliloquies, idiolects, or kinds of foreign languages, enables the continuation of creative development. If becoming is an ongoing action taking place among and between bodies, as Deleuze suggests, the presences of those who are Other take part in this process in a vital way, as the motion of becoming involves the creation of zones of indetermination or indiscernability. John Hughes describes Deleuze and Guattari's "zone of indetermination or indiscernability" as "a kind of critical passage or interval… which ultimately eludes the activity of interpretation or recognition" (51). From these zones, new formations emerge and introduce themselves. The zone itself serves as a passage. Deleuze illustrates the concept of these zones of indetermination or indiscernability through his discussion of a passage of Francis Bacon's *Painting,* found in Deleuze's *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation.* Deleuze emphasizes the possibility for something surprising to emerge from the action of drawing:

> Roughly speaking, one starts with a figurative form, a diagram intervenes and scrambles it, and a form of a completely different nature emerges from the diagram, which is called the Figure. Bacon first cites two examples. In the 1946 *Painting*, he had wanted 'to make a bird alighting on a field,' but the lines he had drawn suddenly took on a kind of independence and suggested 'something totally different,' the man under the umbrella.

> And in the portraits of head, the painter looks for organic resemblance, but sometimes 'the paint moving from one contour into another' happens to liberate a more profound resemblance in which the organs (eyes, nose, mouth) can no longer be discerned. (*Bacon* 125-6)

In these examples, the lines of the drawings themselves "took on a kind of independence," diminishing the appearance of recognizable features and moving instead toward the suggestion of other forms.

A subtle transformation takes place as these lines intermingle and allow movement between them, revealing hints of unexpected relations:

> If we start with the bird as an intentional figurative form, we see that what corresponds to this form in the painting, what is truly analogous to it, is not the umbrella-form (which merely defines a figurative analogy or an analogy of resemblance), but the series or the figural whole, which constitutes the specifically aesthetic analogy: the arms of the meat that are raised as analogues to wings, the sections of the umbrella that are falling or closing, the mouth of the man as a jagged beak. What is substituted for the bird is not another form, but *completely different relations*, which create a complete Figure as the aesthetic analogue of the bird (relations between the arms of the meat, the sections of the umbrella, the mouth of the man)….Thus the diagram acted by imposing a zone of objective indiscernability or indeterminability between two forms, one of which was no longer, and the other, not yet: it destroys the figuration of the first and neutralizes that of the second. And between the two, it imposes the Figure, through its original relations. There is indeed a change of form, but the change of form is a deformation, that is, a

> creation of original relations that are substituted for the form: the meat that flows, the umbrella that seizes, the mouth that is made jagged. (Deleuze, *Bacon* 126-7)

An action of "scrambling and rubbing," the "figurative lines will be scrambled by extending them, by hatching them, that is, by introducing new distances and new relations between them, out of which the nonfigurative resemblance will emerge: 'you suddenly see through the graph that the mouth could go right across the face'" (Deleuze, *Bacon* 127). Essentially, the point about the diagram is that "it is made in order for something to *emerge* from it, and if nothing emerges from it, it fails" (Deleuze, *Bacon* 128). Especially significant for this study is Deleuze's remark that the diagram is a way of being "between two stories" (Deleuze, *Bacon* 129). The chapters that follow explore similar kinds of transformation revealed through encounters between multiple selves and languages, ways of being "between two stories." *The Waves*, *Enfance*, and *The Shawl* demonstrate the kinds of "scramblings" that can take place, scramblings of subject, memory, and knowledge, scramblings that are playful relationships between selves and others. There is not one story to tell, there are stories, stories and histories still alive, still forming, still engaging and clutching along with them fragments of the present. Between what is "no longer" and what is "not yet," the multiple subjects and languages in these novels abound with possibility.

CHAPTER 2

"WE ARE FOREVER MIXING OURSELVES": THE MANY VOICES OF *THE WAVES*

By the time Virginia Woolf began working on the novel that was to become *The Waves*, she had already enjoyed the successful publication of many of her most celebrated works, *Jacob's Room*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *Orlando*, establishing her as an important emerging voice in the English literary community of the early twentieth century. Each novel unfolds in the stream-of-consciousness style that was to become a mark of modernist writing, and each deals with experimental themes, notably *Orlando*, written just before *The Waves* and known for its exploration of the title character's journey through several centuries and both genders. While *The Waves* follows in the wake of these novels, continuing Woolf's experimentations with language and subject, it also offers a new point of departure in her writing, one that reveals her interest in the *process* of writing. Early on in the project she notes: "the method of writing smooth narration can't be right; things don't happen in one's mind like that" (Woolf, *Diary* 104). As the first ideas for the manuscript occur to her, she emphasizes in her diary a move away from representational work that would attempt to express some graspable reality, since she has come to understand reality and language as essentially incomplete, always forming and yet unformed, not even reaching toward a total formation but bursting with potentials and directions. In other passages from her diary kept at the time, she notes, "by writing I don't reach anything. [With *The Waves*] all I mean is to make note of a curious state of mind….I want to watch and see how the idea at first occurs. I want to trace my own process" (*Diary* 107). Woolf approaches the writing of this novel with a curiosity that she remarks is new

to her; she is interested in experiencing the writing of the novel, its work of unfolding and her own process of creating in their mutual development. She places herself in a kind of external position to the work, trying to make herself aware of how it grows, trying to become more conscious of its motion. With *The Waves*, she writes, "there must be great freedom from 'reality'" (*Diary* 141). Instead of using language to represent reality, her words "become shimmering substances of color and heat, elements that could not be more poorly suited to serve as the building blocks of self or reality" (Vandivere 224). Near the end of *The Waves* Bernard, perhaps the character who clings more than any of the others to words and stories, affirms: "Life is not susceptible perhaps to the treatment we give it when we try to tell it" (*Waves* 267). Woolf seems to have begun the novel with a similar understanding in mind, undertaking the project of writing it as a search, an exploration of her own process. In the end, the resulting manuscript pleased her immensely; after all of her previous successful novels, she delights in *The Waves* as "my first work in my own style!" (*Diary* 172).

A similar interest in the process of writing as becoming pervades Gilles Deleuze's work, examined at length in his *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What is Philosophy* (both co-written with Felix Guattari) and reappearing in other texts, such as *Dialogues* (with Claire Parnet), *The Logic of Sensation*, and *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Most interesting for this chapter, however, is a section of *A Thousand Plateaus* devoted to a discussion of becoming and called "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible…" that makes several references to Woolf and her work in order to explore concepts of becoming. Deleuze recognizes that she "made all of her life and work a passage, a becoming" (*Plateaus* 280) and notes that:

> Virginia Woolf's [dream] was for the writing to be like the line of a Chinese poem-drawing. She says that it is necessary to 'saturate every atom,' and to do that it is

> necessary to eliminate all that is resemblance and analogy, but also 'to put everything into it': eliminate everything that exceeds the moment, but put in everything that it includes. (280)

Deleuze suggests that this dual effort of saturation and elimination of excess provides the link between the "three virtues" of "imperceptibility, indiscernibility, and impersonality" (*Plateaus* 280) that enable becomings to take place. In this way, "one has suppressed in oneself everything that prevents us from slipping between things and growing in the midst of them" (Deleuze, *Plateaus* 280). This motion of "slipping between" allows for the possibility of becoming-other, a process that we will examine in this chapter through the six voices of *The Waves*.

Essentially, for Deleuze and Guattari becoming is the ongoing action of an encounter that takes place between Others, enabling them to become-other through their interaction. In this encounter one does not consume, reduce, or imitate the Other but rather affects the Other and is in turn affected:

> A becoming is not a correspondence between relations. But neither is it a resemblance, an imitation, or, at the limit, an identification….Becoming produces nothing other than itself. We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are. What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes. (*Plateaus* 238)

Thus, becoming is a motion of transformation and linkage, of conjunction rather than imitation (Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues* 56). The image of the wave provides a fitting illustration of the concept of becoming, one that Deleuze and Guattari discuss in relation to Woolf's novel. They point to her text as one that helps to inform and demonstrate the concept of becoming:

> Waves are vibrations, shifting borderlines…. In *The Waves*, Virginia Woolf, who made all of her life and work a passage, a becoming, all kinds of becomings between ages, sexes, elements, and kingdoms – intermingles seven characters, Bernard, Neville, Louis, Jinny, Rhoda, Suzanne, and Percival. But each of these characters, with his or her name, its individuality, designates a multiplicity (for example, Bernard and the school of fish). Each is simultaneously in this multiplicity and at its edge, and crosses over into the others …. Each advances like a wave. (*Plateaus* 252)

This passage affirms the importance of the image of the wave in the novel, which serves not only as a way of illustrating the interactions and formations that take place between the characters, but also as a vital picture of a source of becoming that is always in motion, transforming, relating to, and responding to the currents and forces it includes.

Waves remain constantly in flux; pursuing one another, layer upon layer, one after the other, between and within each other, they create a dynamic cycle of formation, destruction, and reformation. In *The Waves*, similar relations unfold between characters as their worlds meet, intermingle, form and dissolve one another. As Tamlyn Monson points out,

> The central metaphors of the novel suggest a cyclical model of subjectivity – a process of self-constitution and dissolution represented by the image of a wave rising and then crashing, only to be drawn back into the sea where it rises once more; or a drop forming, becoming heavy, tapering to a point, and then falling, followed by the next drop. Each wave, each drop, embodies a stage in the individual's life; each stage is precipitated by a loss of self preceding the formation of another, reconfigured self. At its formation, the wave or drop is characterized by heaviness and presence, and associated with an unproblematic relation to language, social structures, and conventions. The image of the

> wave rising associates identity with agency, will and force, while the crashing of the wave, the falling of the drop, represents a disintegration of totality and agency – a passivity in opposition to the certainty, desire, and will associated with identity. (173-4)

Many other critics note the significance of the image of the wave in relation to subject formation in the novel, emphasizing that it creates an important connection between the construction of self and language. One notes that the text itself seems to "waver" and thus provides a structural link between the text and Woolf's expression of becoming:

> The waves are also duplicated in the text – they recur within the structure of Woolf's prose. There, linguistic flux and instability often coincide with moments when characters work to define themselves in language. In other words, 'wavering' configurations of language betoken 'wavering' ontological constructions, especially constructions of the self. (Vandivere 222)

Similarly, Ida Klitgard suggests that the cyclical structure of *The Waves* revealed in the intersection of the interludes (descriptions of the sea) and episodes (soliloquies) "provides a dialectical/dialogical form constantly open for change" (56). Klitgard asserts that in the novel Woolf strives to incorporate "intimacy as well as detachment… shock and collision together with flow and continuity" (37) and points to the interpenetration of narratives as a way of achieving these complex relationships. As such, the image of the wave provides a representation of Deleuze's concept of individuation as "mobile, strangely supple, fortuitous and endowed with fringes and margins; all because the intensities which contribute to it communicate with each other, envelop other intensities and are in turn developed" (*Difference* 257).

In addition to the wave, which, as one would expect, reappears often in the novel, Woolf incorporates several other images to suggest the nature of creativity and transformation, as well

as the “disintegration” and “dissolution” which coincide with the process of becoming. Nearly all of these other images imply fluidity: bubbles, drops of water, balloons that float away, smoke rings. Also, these images are on their way to becoming-imperceptible. Each is on its way to becoming partly something else: bubbles are light, transitory, nearly transparent, and given to eruption and disappearance; drops of water, similarly, are small, clear, and difficult to trace; balloons, though perhaps not affected by continual formation and dissolution like the other images, still remain in motion, fragile, and often wandering; and smoke rings quickly disappear in the air, issuing forth only for a moment, changing shape in the air. Each image also suggests inherent multiplicity, being composed of combinations of several substances: soap solutions, molecules, atoms, gases. Each is difficult to perceive, difficult to trace, present only for a few instants, and moves unpredictably, suggesting the fragile nature of becoming.

The Waves begins with a scene of fluidity, one that is also characterized by becomings that are, initially, barely perceptible. At the start of the novel, the first interlude describes the sea as “indistinguishable from the sky, except that the sea was slightly creased as if a cloth had wrinkles in it” (Woolf, *Waves* 7). Eventually, as the sun rises, the “grey cloth” of the sea becomes “barred with thick strokes moving, one after another, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually” (Woolf, *Waves* 7). From this scene, the six voices whose soliloquies form the rest of the novel are introduced, following one another rapidly, each given only a phrase or two. Bernard, the first speaker, “shall be a clinger to the outsides of words all [his] life” (Woolf, *Waves* 48). It is he who, as Neville says, “sees every one with blurred edges” (Woolf, *Waves* 51). Next Susan speaks; she is known for her earthy, almost animal simplicity and strong emotions (“I love and I hate” she repeats in her soliloquies throughout the novel). Then Rhoda, who seems always on the verge of disappearing, speaks briefly. Neville,

who becomes a rival for Bernard, speaks next. A reader and occasional poet, he does not depend on words to frame his world as Bernard does. Next Jinny speaks; she describes herself in terms of motion and possibility and is known for her almost purely sensual relation to her world. After Jinny, Louis, whose father is a banker from Brisbane, speaks. A seventh presence, Percival, is known and loved by all; a warrior who dies in India, he never speaks, but the others imagine his life whenever they are together.

The six voices in *The Waves* form what Deleuze refers to as "complexes of coexistence" (*Difference* 186). They emerge as a "multiplicity [which] must not designate a combination of the many and the one, but rather an organization belonging to the many as such, which has no need whatsoever of unity in order to form a system" (Deleuze, *Difference* 182). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari characterize multiplicities in this way:

> [M]ultiplicities continually transform themselves into each other, cross over into each other…. [B]ecoming and multiplicity are the same thing. A multiplicity is defined not by its elements, nor by a center of unification or comprehension. It is defined by the number of dimensions it has; it is not divisible, it cannot lose or gain a dimension *without changing its nature*. Since its variations and dimensions are immanent to it, *it amounts to the same thing to say that each multiplicity is already composed of heterogeneous terms in symbiosis, and that a multiplicity is continually transforming itself into a string of other multiplicities, according to its thresholds and doors*. (249)

The six friends serve as "thresholds and doors" for one another; they provide space for the passages of each others' processes of becoming-other. Through their encounters with one another, they are constantly initiating and going through the motions of dissolution and formation. They are always crossing into one another, redrawing their boundaries, renegotiating

the elements that form them. Deleuze and Guattari describe this situation as being "fully a part of the crowd and at the same time completely outside it, removed from it: to be on the edge, to take a walk like Virginia Woolf (never again will I say, '*I am this, I am that*')" (*Plateaus* 29). This quote from *Mrs. Dalloway* is echoed by Bernard in *The Waves* and expresses an understanding that one is not fixed or finalized, is not "this" or "that," cannot be named or pointed to. Instead of stating, "I am this, I am that," one is taking part, affecting, and responding. Each of the six voices (which are multiplicities in themselves) makes up another, continually forming multiplicity. Judy Little points out that, "Rather than being poised oppositionally or even subversively, the implicit discourses amplify, explain, modify, or subtly transform each other" (2). She notes that, "For Woolf, subjectivity is 'various': it is 'experimental' and dialogic, as several languages mingle" (Little 29).

Woolf first describes *The Waves* in her diary as a "playpoem," and like a play, each character's words and thoughts are introduced in the manner of a script: Bernard said, Susan said, Neville said, and so on. Their perceptions occur simultaneously, and their soliloquies flow from one voice to another without interruptions. The reader is immediately and completely immersed in one world, then another, with variations of language and description. Together, the six voices speaking convey patches of scenes; they each express a collection of perceptions. One tells of actions: "Now Mrs. Constable pulls up her thick, black stockings," followed by another's depiction of place: "'The walls are cracked with gold cracks,' said Bernard, 'and there are blue, finger-shaped shadows of leaves beneath the windows'" (Woolf, *Waves* 10). From the beginning of *The Waves*, the reader must accept the description offered by each voice as incomplete, knowing that while another opens an additional perspective, another and then another will draw attention to another scene, urgently. Each utterance reveals a world in itself, offering a full

sensation: “And the burning lights from the window-panes flash in and out on the grasses,” but at the same time it reveals a motion that is unfinished and continuing: “My hand burns,” “the cock crows,” “birds are singing,” “the beast stamps,” “cold water begins to run,” “the smoke rises,” “off they fly” (Woolf, *Waves* 10). The multiple voices describe multiple worlds in motion – complex, unfinished, impossible to know completely. Deleuze emphasizes:

> The first effect of Others is that around each object that I perceive or each idea that I think there is the organization of a marginal world, a mantle or background, where other objects and other ideas may come forth in accordance with laws of transition which regulate the passage from one to another. I regard an object, then I divert my attention, letting it fall into the background. At the same time, there comes forth from the background a new object of my attention. If this new object does not injure me, if it does not collide with me with the violence of a projectile (as when one bumps against something unseen), it is because the first object had already at its disposal a complete margin where I had already felt the preexistence of objects yet to come, and of an entire field of virtualities and potentialities which I already knew were capable of being actualized. Now, such a knowledge or sentiment of marginal existence is possible only through other people. (*Logic* 305)

While the different voices provide access to various sensations and interpretations, the effect is not one of completion, as if each of the six characters’ perspectives could fit together to form a complete whole, thus giving a total picture of the scene; rather, their soliloquies illuminate certain spots of interest or remarkable intensities. They are not meant to complement each other seamlessly, but rather to provide sensations of worlds that overlap, coincide, and enrich one another.

In the writing of Joyce and Borges, Deleuze points out that their narratives do not offer "different points of view on the same story, but completely distinct stories which unfold simultaneously" (*Difference* 123). One could conceive of the various characters in *The Waves* in this way as well. Aside from the description of the waves at the start of each episode, Woolf provides no overarching narrative, no complete or closed scene that will find expression when the six characters begin their soliloquies. Six worlds unfold simultaneously, as trajectories. The six voices express their perspectives and sensations, sometimes with stories that overlap or coalesce in significant ways, sometimes anticipating or imagining each other's worlds; yet, instead of combining to form one complete world, they provide ongoing relations with each other's worlds. They do not consume or erase one another but interact, intercede, and intercept. They develop and affect each other. This point is important, for if Woolf's six characters merely offered their own points of view on one story or one world, the encounters between them would not allow for the emergence of new, unexpected formations. It is the encounter with the world of the Other that allows for the emergence of potentials. Deleuze writes: "Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental *encounter*" (*Difference* 139). The encounter with the Other reveals a possible world, a world that I imagine because of the Other's expression:

> Filling the world with possibilities, backgrounds, fringes, and transitions; inscribing the possibility of a frightening world when I am not yet afraid, or, on the contrary, the possibility of a reassuring world when I am really frightened by the world; encompassing in different respects the world which presents itself before me developed otherwise, constituting inside the world so many blisters which contain so many possible worlds – this is the Other. (Deleuze, *Logic* 310)

The encounter with the Other who expresses a possible world can lead to a partial dissolution of the self; the encounter serves as a relation between the Other and the self, and to an interaction that is part of forming, regenerating, becoming-other. Again, this model of dissolution is re-emphasized by the image of the waves, forming, swelling, and crashing to shore only to be gathered into a great moving surge once again. In this process, one's vision changes, one's territory redraws itself, one's elements redistribute: in short, one varies, one becomes.

Judy Little reports that in a letter from September, 1930 (one year before the publication of *The Waves*), Woolf describes her relationships with friends, who serve as "giglamps" and enlarge her field of vision: "There's another field I see: by your light. Over there's a hill. I widen my landscape" (qtd. in Little 31). In this passage, Woolf articulates the possibilities that others introduce, possibilities that would expand or redraw the boundaries of her experience and vision. Similarly, in her autobiographical essay "A Sketch of the Past," she reveals the importance of relations with the "invisible presences" of other people that should be included in her memoir, influences "like magnets that attract us this way to be like that, or repel us the other and make us different from that" (Woolf 92).

In *The Waves*, the six characters express not only their own worlds, providing possibilities to the others, but each also perceives the others' expressions and therefore imagines the others' states of mind. Bernard says: "'But when we sit together, close …we melt into each other with phrases. We are edged with mist. We make an unsubstantial territory'" (Woolf, *Waves* 16). Deleuze asserts that the Other makes things "incline toward one another and find their natural complements in one another" (*Logic* 306). Often one character's thoughts echo or follow those of other characters, suggesting a kind of interception or interanimation taking place between them. In the second episode, which represents the time of early adolescence, the boys

and girls are sent away to school for the first time, separated from their families and from each other. Yet where Bernard's thoughts leave off: "This is our first night at school, apart from our sisters," (Woolf, *Waves* 32), Susan's thoughts echo immediately afterward, "This is my first night at school…away from my father, away from my home" (Woolf, *Waves* 32). The parallel structure of the phrases reveals a consistency, a link between them. Also, both Bernard and Susan mark their absence from relatives, "sisters" and "fathers," revealing a repetition of both circumstance and words. Bernard says: "I must make phrases…or I shall cry"; several lines later, Susan says: "If I do not purse my lips…I shall cry"; Rhoda adds, near the end of her soliloquy, "So I will not cry" (Woolf, *Waves* 32-33).

The connections between them are also revealed through their ways of imagining each other's worlds. They intuit and invent each other's experiences and reactions, exploring possible responses. This way of relating to one another appears early in the novel, in the first episode of early childhood. For example, Susan comes upon Jinny giving Louis a kiss, is distressed, and says, "I will take my anguish and lay it upon the roots under the beech trees. I will examine it and take it between my fingers" (Woolf, *Waves* 13) and Bernard, watching from a distance, provides an external perspective on what the reader has just accessed, Susan's inner state of mind. Bernard sees that Susan "walks across the field….comes to the dip….begins to run….spreads her arms" (Woolf, *Waves* 14) and yet somehow also recognizes, "There is anguish here. The roots make a skeleton on the ground, with dead leaves heaped in the angles. Susan has spread her anguish out" (Woolf, *Waves* 14), revealing a certain understanding of her intentions and actions because he interprets them exactly, he recognizes the anguish she has spread out on the roots. The six friends also envision potential futures for themselves and the others. They imagine each other's stories and invent their own; they envision the coincidences between them.

Louis, watching Neville on the train, remarks: "[Neville] will always slip into cushioned firelit rooms, with many books and one friend, while I tilt on an office chair behind a counter. Then I shall grow bitter and mock at them" (Woolf, *Waves* 67).

Throughout the novel, ways of conceiving experience correspond between characters. Certain thoughts and phrases resonate and repeat between them. Shared images recur in their thoughts: the stamping beast, for example, is first introduced by Louis on page nine, "A great beast's foot is chained. It stamps, and stamps, and stamps," and then used by Rhoda to describe a train that "stamps heavily, breathes stertorously, as it climbs up and down" on page sixty-four. Similarly, after all six friends have finished their first year away at school, Rhoda repeats the words "attach" and "detach" to describe her feelings about school, the approaching summer holiday, and the changes she has experienced:

> So I detach the summer term. With intermittent shocks, sudden as the springs of a tiger, life emerges heaving its dark crest from the sea. It is to this we are attached; it is to this we are bound ….Silence closes over our transient passage. This I say is the present moment; this is the first day of summer holidays. This is part of the emerging monster to whom we are attached. (Woolf, *Waves* 65)

Immediately afterward, Louis, also riding on a train departing from school for the summer holidays (coincidence of situation), similarly describes the summertime as a time when he "hang[s] suspended without attachments" as he is "passing through England in a train" at the same moment as the other five (Woolf, *Waves* 65). In addition, Louis shares with Rhoda an awareness of disappearing, the sense that "we are nothing" which she articulates only a few pages before he says, "[m]y body passes vagrant as a bird's shadow. I should be transient as the shadow on the meadow, soon fading" (Woolf, *Waves* 66) and a few lines later musing, "I am the

ghost of Louis, an ephemeral passer-by" (Woolf, *Waves* 67). Like many of the others at different points in the novel, Louis experiences the process of becoming-imperceptible.

Neville, cast out of the train at the station and into the crowd, describes becoming-imperceptible as a wavelike experience: "The huge uproar is in my ears. It sounds and resounds under this glass roof like the surge of a sea. We are cast down on the platform with our handbags. We are whirled asunder. My sense of self almost perishes; my contempt. I become drawn in, tossed down, thrown sky-high" (Woolf, *Waves* 72). In this wavering, surging sea of others, Neville (as he knows himself) is nearly lost in the currents of others' expressions and potentials. Yet, "grasping tightly all that [he] possess[es] – one bag" (Woolf, *Waves* 72), he maintains some form. Like a wave moving with many other waves, Neville experiences a flattening, destabilizing effect as the flows between him and others diminish the distinctions between them. He becomes one of many waves; they become part of him as well. Yet, significantly, the dissolution Neville experiences here in the presence of others is also simultaneously an exchange of possibilities, an expansion, a motion of joining and formation. As Deleuze puts it, becoming "is less a destruction than an exchange and circulation" (*Plateaus* 155).

The relationship between Bernard and Neville seems especially significant as a demonstration of becoming-other that takes place between people, both because Woolf demonstrates their way of affecting one another more than any of the other characters and also because of their similar interest in words and phrases. However, while Bernard keeps phrases in notebooks, saving them for the one true story he hopes to find (though he never does), and composes letters with his biographer in mind, Neville is a reader, an absorber of words who writes the occasional poem. They share a rivalry from childhood, and the influences they have on

each other are especially strong. Bernard, speaking of a visit with Neville, describes the unsettling effect of one of their encounters:

> He looked at me, turning to face me; he gave me his poem. All mists curl off the roof of my being….Like a long wave, like a roll of heavy waters, he went over me, his devastating presence – dragging me open, laying bare the pebbles on the shore of my soul. It was humiliating; I was turned to small stones. All semblances were rolled up. (Woolf, *Waves* 89)

His encounter with Neville again demonstrates the effect of interaction with the world of another as "devastating," in that it reduces him to "small stones," and yet liberating, in that it also serves to drag him open, providing the possibility for new formations. The encounter between them opens a pathway for health, for a healthy reformation. Indeed, their meeting helps Bernard to recognize that he is not the poet Byron, who he finds himself imitating. Instead, he is able to recommence his own process of formation; he reminds himself, "You are not Byron; you are your self" (Woolf, *Waves* 89). Their interaction allows Bernard to break from an identity blocked by imitation and pretending, closing in upon itself. By cutting into this closed system, the "devastating" encounter with Neville opens a space for connection to new possibilities and combinations. It is an interruption that allows Bernard to continue unfolding and forming instead of stagnating in a fixed (and false) identity.

One of the most important passages of the novel describes the process of the characters' mutual interanimation, a simultaneous becoming-other. Neville, already undergoing the motion of dissolution as he senses Bernard's approaching presence, begins speaking here by describing his own inability to completely name or account for himself:

> I do not know myself sometimes, or how to measure and name and count out the grains that make me what I am. Something now leaves me; something goes from me to meet that figure who is coming, and assures me that I know him before I see who it is. How curiously one is changed by the addition, even at a distance, of a friend. How useful an office one's friends perform when they recall us. Yet how painful to be recalled, to be mitigated, to have one's self adulterated, mixed up, become part of another. As he approaches I become not myself but Neville mixed with somebody – with whom? With Bernard? Yes, it is Bernard, and it is to Bernard that I shall put the question, Who am I? (Woolf, *Waves* 83)

Bernard's voice breaks in at this point, later remarking, "I feel your force. I become with you, an untidy, an impulsive human being whose bandana handkerchief is forever stained with the grease of crumpets" (Woolf, *Waves* 84). In their relationship, "Components remain distinct, but something passes from one to another, something that is undecidable between them. There is an area *ab* that belongs to both *a* and *b*, where *a* and *b* 'become' indiscernible" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Philosphy?* 20). Later, Louis, reflecting back on these moments of mutual dissembling and reformation, remarks:

> We changed, we became unrecognizable….Exposed to all these different lights, what we had in us (for we are all so different) came intermittently, in violent patches, spaced by blank voids, to the surface as if some acid had dropped unequally on the plate. I was this, Neville that, Rhoda different again, and Bernard too. (Woolf, *Waves* 125-6)

Articulating this cycle of becoming, Louis states: "Meeting and parting, we assemble different forms, make different patterns" (170). Bernard describes it this way, again evoking the wave imagery: "I am made and remade continually. Different people draw different words from me"

(Woolf, *Waves* 134). He recognizes why Rhoda "loves to be alone. She fears us because we shatter the sense of being which is so extreme in solitude" (Woolf, *Waves* 133).

In contrast, Bernard recognizes the influence of others as regenerative. He says, walking home from an evening with friends: "I am not one and simple, but complex and many. Bernard in public, bubbles; in private, is secretive….I have to effect different transitions; have to cover the entrances and exits of several different men who alternately act their parts as Bernard" (Woolf, *Waves* 76). In this passage he reveals that he conceives of himself as multiple, as the threshold where variations of "Bernard" come and go. He serves as a place of passage for these multiplicities. Also interesting here is the distinction he makes between the public Bernard, who "bubbles," and the private Bernard, who is "secretive." The bubbling motion, as previously demonstrated, serves as an image of creativity and becoming. In the presence of others, Bernard bubbles with possibilities. His interactions with them stimulate his imagination and offer him visions of potential worlds. When in a crowd of people, he is "making always a passage for [him]self between people's bodies" (Woolf, *Waves* 115) though, in the motion of passage he says, "I am not, at this moment, myself" (Woolf, *Waves* 115). In private and alone, Bernard hardens and stagnates. Yet, at this point in the novel, he calls the fact that he needs an audience "my downfall" (Woolf, *Waves* 115), something that always "ruffles the edge of the final statement and prevents it from forming" (Woolf, *Waves* 115). The presence of others, the audience, prevents the closing and finalization of Bernard's stories. Other people keep the stories unfinished and incomplete, they "ruffle the edge" of his statement so that it is not clean and closed but rather remains open, with the potential to keep forming while not attaining a form.

Several passages of *The Waves* contrast the text's emphasis on becoming and motion with the stagnancy of sickness and death. For example, when left alone while the rest of the

students go on the outing, Neville dwells on the news he has heard earlier in the day of a dead man found with his throat cut, saying "I shall call this stricture, this rigidity, 'death among the apple trees' forever" (Woolf, *Waves* 24). He contrasts the "obstacle" of death with "the ripple of [his] life," but still acknowledges "we are doomed, all of us, by the apple trees, by the immitigable tree which we cannot pass" (Woolf, *Waves* 25). After Percival's death in India, Susan, who loves him, says: "I threw my bunch into the spreading wave. I said, 'Consume me, carry me to the furthest limit.' The wave has broken. The bunch is withered" (Woolf, *Waves* 205). If the image of waves forming, swelling, surging, crashing and dissolving represents each of the characters and their relations to one another, and the image of a single wave represents all seven characters, then Percival's death could be conceived of as the first extension of that wave dissolving, crashing to the shore, thus making the others aware of their own inevitable motion towards the shore. After one of their final dinners, when the six have come together again to visit, Bernard describes the dissolution that accompanies their meeting: "[W]e are slipping away. Little bits of ourselves are crumbling. There! Something very important fell then. I cannot keep myself together" (Woolf, *Waves* 235).

Near the end of the novel, following the last interlude when, finally, "Sky and sea were indistinguishable" (Woolf, *Waves* 236), Bernard, long occupied by filling notebooks with phrases, telling stories, and awaiting the time when he would be able to assemble the phrases into "one true story," instead tells "so many" stories (Woolf, *Waves* 238). Weary of "phrases that come down beautifully with all their feet on the ground," Bernard distrusts "neat designs of life that are drawn upon half sheets of notepaper" (Woolf, *Waves* 238). Instead, he says, "I begin to long for some little language such as lovers use, broken words, inarticulate words, like the

shuffling of feet on the pavement. I begin to seek some design more in accordance with those moments of humiliation and triumph that come now and then undeniably" (Woolf, *Waves* 239).

In mature adulthood the six friends meet again, and Bernard describes the effects of their presences on each other:

> There at the door by the Inn, our meeting-place, they are already standing – Susan, Louis, Rhoda, Jinny and Neville. They have come together already. In a moment, when I have joined them, another arrangement will form, another pattern. What now runs to waste, forming scenes profusely, will be checked, stated. I am reluctant to suffer that compulsion. Already at fifty yards' distance I feel the order of my being changed. The tug of the magnet of their society tells upon me. (Woolf, *Waves* 210)

As before, the presence of the others causes him to "feel the order of [his] being changed." Bernard is "an abstract of inter-relationships; he exists most vitally in the lives of others….He comes to life when faces come before him; in his mind, he creates stories, people, possibilities of existence" (Collins 15). Bernard's awareness of this multiplicity in the process of becoming finally extends to his understanding of story, which he expresses near the end of the novel: "I have made up thousands of stories; I have filled innumerable notebooks with phrases to be used when I have found the true story, the one story to which all these phrases refer. But I have never yet found that story. And I begin to ask, Are there stories?" (Woolf, *Waves* 187). Rather than finding one complete, totalized whole of a story, Bernard now can conceive of many varied "stories." As he becomes aware of this possibility, he describes himself included in a world in motion:

> The world is beginning to move past me like the banks of a hedge when the train starts, like the waves of the sea when a steamer moves. I am moving too, am becoming involved

> in the general sequence when one thing follows another and it seems inevitable that the tree should come, then the telegraph-pole, then the break in the hedge. And as I move, surrounded, included and taking part, the usual phrases begin to bubble up, and I wish to free these bubbles from the trap-door in my head. (Woolf, *Waves* 188).

He calls to himself, saying: "Let us begin this new chapter, and observe the formation of this new, this unknown, strange, altogether unidentified and terrifying experience" (Woolf, *Waves* 189-190).

The final pages of the novel reveal Bernard, who bubbles with language, facing death. Yet he remarks: "Yes, this is the eternal renewal, the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again" (Woolf, *Waves* 297), taking the waves' motion of formation as an image of regeneration. Bernard, as artist, remains "a seer, a becomer," one whose creativity "is always a question of freeing life wherever it is imprisoned, or of tempting it into an uncertain combat" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Philosophy?* 171). As he approaches death, he remarks:

> And in me too the wave rises. It swells, it arches its back. I am aware once more of a new desire, something rising beneath me….Death is the enemy. It is death against whom I ride with my spear couched and my hair flying back….Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death! (Woolf, *Waves* 297).

As one whose creativity has tempted life "into an uncertain combat," continually dissolving and reforming through relations and encounters with others, Bernard can likewise tempt death into this final combat, this encounter, this exchange.

CHAPTER 3

"THE MOST PERSONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY IS COLLECTIVE": INVENTIVE DIALOGUES IN *ENFANCE*

When Nathalie Sarraute began *Enfance* at the age of eighty-three, she sought a way of writing about the self and the past that would promote meetings between them. Along with other Nouveau Roman authors who opposed the "fiction/réalité" dichotomy created by the insistence on "une 'fidelité' référentielle à un vécu 'réellement' advenu [a 'faithful' reference to a life that has 'really' happened]" Sarraute resists labeling her work an autobiography, contending instead that it rests between genres (Wei 3, translation mine). Consistent with her well-known experimental approach toward language in *Tropisms*, Sarraute tends to view words as a petrifying power that makes translating the fluidity of inner life problematic. Though originally a term from the natural sciences used to describe internal responses to external stimuli such as heat or light, for Sarraute "tropisms" indicate the "minimal and barely conscious expansions and contractions, advances or withdrawals [taking] place under the surface of human encounters" that she reaches toward in her writing (Minogue 8).

Extending the idea of tropisms to the inner life, in *Enfance* Sarraute attempts a form of dialogue that would create a space for these movements to occur. However, in writing about her life she recognizes the challenge of creating a work that, inevitably associated with the traditional aims of autobiography, suggests a kind of summarizing or finalizing testimony:

> Traditional autobiographical language has always tended to figure the uncovering of a true self previously hidden beneath masks or misconceptions. The autobiographer,

> writing in a first-person voice that assured both accuracy and identity, would seek, and find, the truth behind events, the essence of a person or a life, a coherent identity over time. (Gabara xi)

In contrast to this approach, Sarraute endeavors to open a space for a testimony that is regenerative rather than representative, concentrating on aspects of presentness, passage, and plurality that characterize a dialogical discourse.

Nearly three decades before she published *Enfance*, Sarraute encountered the work of Ivy Compton-Burnett, an English writer whose novels consisted entirely of a long series of dialogues. Though Sarraute criticizes Compton-Burnett's choice of subject (la riche bourgeoisie) and predictable plots, she prizes the use of dialogue as a quality "absolument neuf" (Sarraute, *L'Ère* 142). In her 1956 essay entitled "Conversation et sous-conversation," Sarraute writes of Compton-Burnett's innovative style:

> Sans doute cette méthode se contente-t-elle de faire soupçonner à chaque instant au lecteur l'existence, la complexité et la variété des mouvements intérieurs… plongeraient le lecteur dans leur flot et le feraient naviguer parmi leurs courants [Without question this method delights in making the reader suspect, at each moment, the existence, complexity, and variety of internal stirrings…that would plunge the reader into their wake and make him navigate among their currents]. (*L'Ère* 146, translation mine)

This narrative strategy tends to value, in place of strict veracity and representation, the process of becoming and discovery possible through the recognition and affirmation of "internal stirrings" that invite the reader to "navigate among their currents." For Sarraute, conceiving of autobiography as the ongoing work of a writing self that changes from moment to moment,

writing about (and with) unrepeatable, multiple selves, provides a new way of writing about inner consciousness, a way in which the autobiography serves as a dialogue among selves.

Sarraute employs dialogue in *Enfance* to create speculation rather than definition; she moves away from what is representative and factual to what is revelatory, unfinished, and surprising. Writing of this kind bears witness to life in a way that, significantly, recreates life – not by reflecting, rephrasing, or imitating the life of a past self, but by providing the kind of openness to possibility and spontaneity that is the essence of life. According to Gilles Deleuze, writing means "témoigner la vie, témoigner *pour* la vie [to bear witness to life, to bear witness *for* life]" in a way that generates health (Stivale 402, translation mine). "The ultimate aim of literature, says Deleuze, is to 'dégager dans le délire cette creation d'une santé, ou cette invention d'un peuple, c'est-à-dire la possibilité de vie [release from the delirium the creation of a health, or the invention of a people, that is to say, the possibility of life]" (Stivale 408, translation mine). This chapter offers an examination of the use of dialogue through *Enfance*, exploring the regenerative possibilities of a dialogue that begins from within as a way of bearing witness to life.

Sarraute employs the innovative form of dialogic autobiography to allow for something new to take place in the present, both for her as the author of the text and for the reader she invites to the dialogue. According to Valerie Minogue,

> The area of reality uncovered is thus inter-personal rather than individuated. It is an area where the writer is everyone and no one, articulating by imagery and analogy a level of inarticulate experience in which the reader in turn will recognize his own moments of consciousness and become, by empathy, both the writer and the writer's creations. Thus the reader too is… no longer a spectator but an active participant. (1)

The dialogical structure of *Enfance* "serves not only to embody the idea of plurality, but also to create the sense of a collaborative endeavor taking place in the present" (Bell 25).

Significantly, *Enfance* enables this "collaborative endeavor" between selves to take place in the present tense, another strategy that moves Sarraute between the (real) past and the (becoming) present and away from framing a collection of memories that would represent her life. She writes: "Je n'aime pas ces étalages de soi-même… [En *Enfance*] ce sont plutôt des moments, des formes de sensibilité… Je n'ai pas essayé d'écrire l'histoire de ma vie [I don't like these displays of oneself… [In *Enfance*] I haven't tried to write the story of my life]" (qtd. in Bell 29, translation mine). Instead, Sarraute, " interested in narrating from the inside rather than from the outside…wrote that all of her experiments in writing sought to 'unveil, to bring into existence an unknown reality'" (Gabara 23). Thus, through the structure of dialogue,

> The reality Nathalie Sarraute explores and analogically recreates is a largely anonymous region of the unselected, unwilled, and largely instinctual reactions which are superseded, but never totally displaced, by the willed and articulate projection of a selected self… Sarraute's brand of realism thus demands – but also stimulates and fosters – in the reader, a high level of participation rather than passive receptivity, and a capacity for searching self-observation. It is reality and character *in course of creation* that the novels of Nathalie Sarraute invite us to observe, rather than accredited Reality and the formed, named characters that we meet in the traditional realist novel. (Minogue 2, emphasis mine)

For Sarraute, it is the sense of becoming in the present that remains significant rather than an accurate representation of her childhood. This kind of writing speaks "in search of an 'addressable you,'" acknowledging the possibilities of knowledge, perspective, and memory that

an “internal thou” provides (Levine 3). Approaching autobiographical testimony as a *search* – not for a past reality but as an invitation to encounter something new – leads Sarraute to the polyphonic “I” that speaks. In *Essays Critical and Clinical* Deleuze specifies that

> To become is not to attain a form (indentification, imitation, Mimesis), but to find the zone of proximity, indiscernability or indifferentiation where one can no longer be distinguished from *a* woman, *an* animal or *a* molecule : neither imprecise nor general, but unforeseen and non-preexistent, singularized out of a population rather than determined in a form. (1)

Since she “consider[s] conventional conceptions of identity to be something imposed from the outside, like a mask, onto undifferentiated and universal matter in movement” (Gabara 25), Sarraute turns inward. Significantly, she recognizes the other voice(s) there “not as object but as an/other subject” (Hermann 6). Sarraute writes in *L’Ère du soupçon* that she rarely names her characters: “If I give a name to a character, I place myself at a distance from him: I name him from the outside. Whereas I am inside his consciousness and I try to move like him, to be taken with him in his movements, carried by them” (qtd. in Gabara 26). Similarly, she approaches her autobiography as a way of building from the inside rather than imposing a concrete, limiting identity from without. Thus, writing about her life becomes a life in itself, the life of the unfolding, unpredictable dialogue “which sees any utterance as equally determined by sender and receiver” (Hermann 12).

Enfance, through its dialogue with an “internal thou,” establishes a kind of ongoing present that unfolds even as it recalls the past. Using the pronouns “I” and “you” to designate selves, her book opens on a conversation already in progress between voices that interact to recollect memories in a telling that is also a meeting of selves. As the two voices begin

discussing the work of autobiography at the start of *Enfance*, one worries that evoking memories would constitute "an old and fossilized style of autobiography that could not but destroy the reality of past experience" (Gabara 29). Yet the other voice responds: "Don't worry about it having been decided in advance… it's still vacillating, no written word, no word of any sort has yet touched it, I think it is still faintly quivering…outside words…as usual…little bits of something still alive…I would like…before they disappear…let me…" (Sarraute, *Childhood* 9). The first words of the book embark upon a conversation that has already been going on and that eventually continues beyond the book. At the end, one says, "Rassure-toi, j'ai fini… [Don't worry, I've finished]" and the other answers : "Pourquoi maintenant tout à coup, quand tu n'as pas craint de venir jusqu'ici? [Why now all of a sudden, when you haven't been afraid up until this point?]," and the book ends with ellipses (…), suggesting the continuation of dialogue beyond the pages (Sarraute, *Enfance* 277, translation mine). The book opens and closes on a continuing meeting, a conversation that tends away from a panoptic and thus petrifying way of knowing memory and towards the potential for revelation that can occur in meaningful conversation. Rather than construing or constructing a (past) self, the dialogue probes, plays, muses, and wonders among selves in formation. These multiple selves serve as supplemental witnesses to life as they "tease and provoke…cajole and caress…irritate and insult" one another (Morson and Emerson 242). The structure of *Enfance* allows room for this playful encounter, and most importantly, for the work of reconstituting the "possibility of a witness or listener inside [her]self," for an "*I* that addresses itself to a *you* in the hope of being recognized as a subject" (Laub qtd. in Levine 8).

Paul Celan writes: "Reality is not simply there, it must be searched for and won" (qtd in Levine 3). He adds, "the 'I' destined to search for [this reality] is not simply there. It, too, must

be searched for and won" (Levine 3). While *Enfance* certainly is a searching endeavor, it is important to emphasize that Celan's suggestion that the past, reality, or the "I" can be "won" seems contrary to Sarraute's purpose. Instead, the dialogic structure provides a venue for the venture, not a progression towards a tenable and thus finalized prize of "I," reality, or a past that can be carried away. In contrast, Sarraute's approach to autobiography reaches for a concept of the "I" as both whole and multi-voiced and suggests that perhaps it is this polyphonic quality that enables the ongoing work of wholeness. Throughout this discussion the concept of wholeness should not suggest an identity that is formed and complete; rather, wholeness is the quality of a moving integration.

At this point let us briefly consider the kinds of identity traditionally acknowledged in Western thought. "Identity can be understood as either that which erases, reconciles, or subordinates all difference, or that which is unique, singular, and irreconcilable…" and thus involved in "ever-recurring conflict" (Spariosu 82). In Plato's model,

> Identity determines difference – not through strife, moreover, but through mimesis. The transcendental One subsumes the many in the form of copies or reflections of itself. These reflections are more or less brilliant or pale, faithful or untrustworthy, according to their relative distance from or proximity to the One. In this respect, the play of the many is denied full power not only in an epistemological but also in an ontological sense… becoming mere play of appearances or simulacra. The transcendental One, on the other hand, becomes all-powerful, omnipresent, and omniscient. (Spariosu 75)

Sarraute however achieves identity through the play of voices that remain heterogeneous without dissolving into homogeneity by engaging in reciprocal re-calling that promotes an alternative to the model of antagonism between self and other. "The dialogic names the discursive relation

between two subjects, understood as a dialogue in which the subject constitutes itself without the annihilation or assimilation of the other" (Herrmann 6). Hers are co-subjects, equals who bring memory into the realm of the present through their interaction. Considered in the frame of Ruyer's concept of a self-forming form, this dialogue "involves a connecting or joining of elements, a process of relating parts within a single field without fusing them into an amorphous 'one' or simply collecting them as aggregates, part-against-part… The primary form of every connection is that of absolute overflight, but that form… is also essentially a force of connection [une force de liaison]" (Bogue, *Arts* 181).

Enfance introduces connections between selves, yet an omniscient perspective or voice is never achieved, nor sought. Instead one voice initiates an episode of memory and the other prompts with a detail unfamiliar to the other, as if each has access to different parts of memory and holds various interpretations of it. Like family members gathering to recall an event, they prompt, coax, and correct each other in an attempt to tease out a fuller, more complex understanding of the remembered event. The multiple perspectives keep their original colors and patterns while joining with others to form a whole, intriguing piece. This working together is an effort of cooperation rather than antagonism, though the difference between the two may only be revealed in the fine nuances of tone. In the dialogue each voice retains singularity precisely in the complex play through which it interacts with the others. Through this interaction identities are assumed and discarded while memories are continually questioned, affirmed, and invented. According to Deleuze, "la fonction fabulatrice ne consiste pas à imaginer ni à projeter un moi. Elle atteint plutôt à ces visions, elle s'élève jusqu'à ces devenirs ou puissances [the inventive function does not consist in imagining or projecting a self. Rather it reaches towards these visions, raising itself up to these becomings or forces]" (qtd. in Stivale 408, translation mine).

The quality of unpredictable, cooperative *invention* through the responsive interaction of the voices in *Enfance* provides a relation between identities that does not absorb, ignore, or antagonize difference.

In *Enfance* otherness within the self, which I prefer to term co-selves or co-subjects--"a series of unique singularities"-- offers perspectives of potential (Spariosu 95). "The subject struggles to rewrite itself as a subjectivity by representing both a subject and an object position. For Bakhtin this means responding to and anticipating the world of another" (Herrmann 27). The conversation in *Enfance* between the "I" and the "you" preserves an otherness that promotes a special way of understanding; it explores the implications of the interaction between two consciousnesses that, rather than suggesting a split self, demonstrate a whole self as both integral and polyphonic. For Julia Kristeva, whose discussion of Bakhtin's theory of the novel leads her to the concept of intertextuality, "…there is meaning, which is 'One' and polyphonic nevertheless… it exists only in the irreducible multiplicities… it follows the whims of desires and games of languages…" (13). Contrary to one critic's assertion that Sarraute's narrative strategy is an attempt to "reclaim the pieces of [her] shattered self" (Gabara xv), the multiple voices of *Enfance* need not be considered fragmented selves or split identities in a sense that suggests estrangement and alienation; instead, they could be considered integral, cooperating entities that together form the forming whole self. It is the action of their ongoing dialogue that creates a free space in the present--a space that is shared by the speaking subjects and the reader.

This kind of space created by dialogue could be conceived of as a place devoid of possession or the mark of an owner. Mihai Spariosu describes liminality "as a margin that permanently detaches itself from the center (any center), thus providing a playful opening toward alternative worlds that are incommensurable with ours" (xiii). Sarraute's dialogue approaches

this detachment from a center by creating a space where multiple versions of remembered events interact: guessing, wondering, and imagining. Her work cannot be said to preserve a center or margins of any kind; rather, the dialogue remains an open field for play. The multiple points of view in *Enfance* could be considered more precisely as a joining of entities in the game of remembering. Again, the joining of one with an/other one here does not indicate a return to the monologic or ultimately omniscient "one" but rather suggests a layered, multi-voiced enunciation. What one critic refers to as "the judgemental voice" in *Enfance*

> [N]ever completely erases the storyteller's viewpoint. The vacillating point of view destabilizes attitudes toward the past and casts doubt on evaluations of people and events that the voices remember. The meanings of any given episode always hover in the interstices of dialogue. The doubled voice thus precludes any attempt to unify the fragments of memory into a finished image of the unified subject" (Gabara 73).

It is precisely the impossibility of this "finished image" with which *Enfance* plays. The multiple perspectives allow for the superimposition of memories and versions of memories upon each other, like doubly exposed film. This kind of scene-within-a-scene is illustrated brilliantly in Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Nostalghia*, another work of art that seeks memory and consistently reveals its problematic nature. The film is replete with images of multiple places, people, and moments that are situated within each other to form impossible landscapes. Acres of Russian countryside and a small hut rest in the open columns of a ruined Italian cathedral, or an entire river flows through the floor of an apartment. One of the characters in the film illustrates the formula of superimposition by painting on the wall of his home: 1+1=1. Two living spaces interrupt one another to form a third living space that must be encountered by the seeker of memory. Similarly, the multiple voices of *Enfance* form the dialogue that addresses the reader.

The addressive conditions of *Enfance* could be considered the qualities that most suggest possibilities for regeneration through a dialogue that is playful and inventive. Bakhtin develops a concept in his theory of the novel that his translators term “addressive surplus” (Morson and Emerson 242), a process that involves “responding to and anticipating the world of another” who is neither silenced nor spoken for (Herrmann 27). Significantly, he eventually turns to a discussion of addressability, emphasizing that “a necessary feature of every utterance is its addressivity… its ‘quality of turning to someone’ ” (Morson and Emerson 131). In *Enfance,* the dialogue between the “I” and the “you” represents a turning towards the other within the self and provides a playful re-turn to memory:

> Starting from the notion of the word as dialogic interplay, Bakhtin develops a seminal distinction between ‘authoritative discourse’ and ‘internally persuasive discourse.’ In its authoritative form, the discourse of the other ‘demands our unconditional allegiance’ and, therefore, it is monological rather than dialogical… By contrast, in internally persuasive discourse the word of the other preserves its open and flexible character… [It] consists of the other’s word tightly interwoven with one’s own. (Spariosu 100)

Enfance reveals this kind of interweaving of words and selves and retains a sense of communion and co-presence. The dialogue of multiple perspectives allows for a surplus of understanding that generates potential ways of being:

> The addressive surplus is the surplus of the good listener, one capable of ‘live entering’ (*vzhivanie*). It requires ‘an active (not a duplicating) understanding, a willingness to listen.’ Without trying to finalize the other or define him once and for all, one uses one’s ‘outsideness’ and experience to ask the right sort of questions. Recognizing the other’s

> capacity for change, one provokes or invites him to reveal and outgrow himself. (Morson and Emerson 242)

Closely related to addressivity in dialogue is what Bakhtin terms a "live entering," a way of "living into" another (Morson and Emerson 53) and a "special relation that adds something new and valuable from an outside and temporarily finalizing perspective" (Morson and Emerson 91). Sarraute positions the "I" and the "you" in a way that allows them to retain separate voices while still engaging one another, a form rarely found in autobiography. The following is one of the many episodes in *Enfance* that provides an example of the banter between the voices:

> …J'ai ressenti… crois-tu vraiment… Il m'a semblé… et c'est tout?... c'est vrai… fais un effort… c'est bien, continue… non, cela, je n'ai pas pensé… non, tu vas trop loin… [I felt… do you really think… It seemed to me… and that's all… it's true… make an effort… it's alright, go on… no, I didn't think that… no, you're going too far]. (Sarraute, *Enfance* 75)

The voices muse, prompt, tease, contradict, co-remember, interrogate, and probe. Bakhtin's discussion of live entering, conceived originally as a way of responding to the suffering of another person, affirms this necessity of retaining an aspect of singularity and separateness. Rather than "merging as much as possible with the other's position, attempting to 'see the world from his point of view' and renouncing one's own outsideness and surplus of vision" (Morson and Emerson 53), Bakhtin advocates understanding "which stresses outsideness, live entering, nonfusion, and active dialogue" (Morson and Emerson 99).

In Bergson's *Memoire et vie* he writes: "Je dis bien que je change, mais le changement m'a l'air de résider dans *le passage* d'un état à l'état suivant [I say that I change, but this changing seems to me to reside in the *passage* from one state to the next] (7, translation mine).

Autobiography that structures itself in the form of a dialogue recreates this element of dynamic passage that remains open to the process of change. Referring specifically to Sarraute's *Enfance*, one critic notes: "L'écriture, en devenir, en movement, en transformation, laisse voir sa texture, son processus [Writing, in becoming, in movement, in transformation, makes visible its texture, its process]" (Wei 1, translation mine). The versions of memory blend together and sometimes dissolve into something new as one voice will clarify, prompt, or correct the other. "The splitting viewpoint… by providing mutual illumination of the characters, brings out and increases their complexity. But the most important impetus to internalization is the psychic and temporal immediacy, the spontaneity and contemporaneity of the narration" (Kahler 168).

For example, after one voice has recounted the memory of being disappointed after a fight with Nathalie's stepmother, Véra, the other remains doubtful: "Non, là tu vas trop loin, tu ne pouvais pas t'attendre à de telles effusions [No, there you're going too far, you can't have expected such sympathetic outpourings]," later suggesting that instead, "peut-être as-tu cherché à profiter de ce calme… [Did you perhaps try to enjoy the calm?]" (Sarraute, *Enfance* 272, translation mine). The dialogue between voices in *Enfance* is a constant motion of passing between characters unnamed and, lost in the course of a narrative that is not attached to any specific source, sometimes indistinguishable. While most critics interpret Sarraute's dialogue as a discourse between two voices, it does not seem unreasonable to imagine that, beyond the print, the responses could come from many different selves, more than two, who enter and exit the realm of conversation without the reader's knowledge. Since the "I" and "you" who address each other remain unnamed, these multiple encounters seem possible. One cannot be certain that the same two who began the dialogue are those who end it; perhaps another has joined, or perhaps they have exchanged places.

The ambiguous nature of the voices' identities at the end of *Enfance* re-emphasizes the possibilities for regeneration that inventive inner dialogue can provide. Sarraute's approach remains consistent with Deleuze's concept of becoming: "We write not with our childhood memories," he asserts, "but through blocs of childhood that are the becoming-child of the present" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Philosophy?* 168). Unlike the kind of identity that must either combat or subsume the other, Sarraute's dialogue offers a model of the self that consists of "self-forming forms" that are constantly changing as a result of their interaction. Their qualities of responsiveness and cooperative invention create a way of witnessing that initiates exchanges with that which is other instead of annihilating or absorbing it. Rather than seeking to secure absolute knowledge of a memory, the dialogic form of the narrative twirls around it, playfully exchanging, adding to, and altering the impressions offered by the multiple voices. Sarraute's unique way of creating dialogue with the past, with her internal selves, and with the reader opens a space where the impossible landscapes of memory can be explored and expanded in the present.

CHAPTER 4

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE (IMAGINED?) OTHER IN *THE SHAWL*

Cynthia Ozick's fiction, consistently influenced by her Jewish heritage, incorporates a sense of history that is living, underway, and making its way between witnesses. In her mid-twenties, an essay by Rabbi Leo Baeck introduced her to the celebration of "living history" and "the idea of becoming, of the never-quite-finished" that he names as values of "the nameless, the incomprehensible and the unattainable" (qtd. in Kauvar, "Introduction" xv) God as creator. When Ozick writes in her essays of a language that can be linked to history, it is this sense of living, emerging history that she prizes: history becomes an inheritance that serves as a generative source. Incorporating it takes place through a process of imagination, which is "more than make-believe, more than the power to invent. It is also the power… to become…. Imagination owns above all the facility of becoming" ("Innovation" 247). Additionally, Ozick interprets the history of the Jews as one that allows for the "power to envision the stranger's heart" (Kauvar, "Introduction" xvii); in this way, the imagination functions in a restorative way since it can stir wondering about the condition of the Other. According to Elaine Kauvar, "Ozick's reading of the Pentateuch and her interpretation of its precept of loving the stranger establish the congruence she makes between metaphor and the ability to imagine another's heart. To the concept of metaphor and the activity of metaphoric language she fastens 'the hope of regeneration'" ("Introduction" xvii).

Yet, while Ozick seeks a new language for the restorative work of the imagination, in an essay called "Innovation and Redemption: What Literature Means," she criticizes the

experimental novel because she believes it "derives from the notion of generations: a belief in replacement, substitution, discontinuity, above all repudiation" (239); in short, she views the experimental novel as an attempt by the authors of a certain generation to usurp past literary traditions, one that declares, "Because I am new, then everything I make or do in the world is new" (239). In contrast, "the innovative imagines something we have never experienced before" and "is not averse to unexpected seizures and tricks, or to the jarring gifts of vitality and cunning" (Ozick, "Innovation" 241). Innovation, for Ozick, may take place through new, experimental forms (she cites Pound and Joyce among her examples of this achievement); however, her critique rests with experimental writing that is *only* "defined through mere *method*" ("Innovation" 242), that which lacks concern for coherence or meaning. She criticizes some experimental writing because "It is to *be*: it is not to allow anything to *happen* or *become*. 'Happen' implies history, 'become' implies idea; both imply [the Hebraic notion of] *teshuvah*, a turning" ("New Yiddish" 164).

Ozick criticizes the stagnancy of writing that merely represents what is "to be," searching instead for a way of writing that allows for becoming to take place. "Every new sentence," she writes, "every new fragment of imaginative literature born into the world, is a heart-in-the-mouth experiment, and for its writer a profound chanciness; but the point of the risk is the continuation of a recognizably human enterprise" ("Innovation" 243). For Ozick, the creative process is a human enterprise because it has the redemptive quality of affirming freedom. Elaine Kauvar remarks that Ozick views "the human being's task [to be] the achievement of freedom" ("Introduction" xv). Writing that affirms freedom does not concern itself *only* with attaining a new experimental form: it also offers, essentially, meaning through and beyond the form itself. While the novel made up of merely form and method strikes her as a reaction against the past,

against older writers, and thus remains stuck in its effort to subsume them, "Innovation in art has as its motivation the extension of humanity, not a flow of spite against it" (Ozick, "Innovation" 244); it is characterized by a "will toward regeneration" rather than a "will to dominate" (Ozick, "Innovation" 244). To write from this "will toward regeneration" is to enable what Ozick calls a process of redemption to take place: "Redemption means fluidity; the notion that people and things are subject to… alteration; the sense of possibility… [the sense that] we can surprise ourselves. Implicit in redemption is amazement, marveling, suspense… everything against the fated or the static" ("Innovation" 246). The kind of language she calls for in her essay "Towards a New Yiddish" will be "utterly freed to invention, discourse, parable, experiment, enlightenment, profundity, humanity" (Ozick 176).

Published a decade after Ozick delivered "Towards a New Yiddish" at a conference in Israel, *The Shawl* is a novella in two parts, made up of a first short section, "The Shawl," and followed by "Rosa." In "The Shawl," Rosa walks to a Nazi death camp, holding her baby daughter Magda "wound up in the shawl" (Ozick, *Shawl* 3) and accompanied by her younger niece, Stella, "who was ravenous" (Ozick, *Shawl* 3). All three share an aching hunger, but it is Magda whom the shawl nourishes, Magda who "took the corner of the shawl and milked it instead," tasting "the shawl's good flavor, milk of linen" (Ozick, *Shawl* 4). Magda, who has learned never to cry, is soothed by the shawl; it keeps her mute, and thus safe from discovery. When Stella steals the shawl to keep warm, however, Magda breaks her silence with long cries of "Maaaa…aaa!" (Ozick, *Shawl* 8) and is thrown into an electric fence that seems to chatter and hum with "lamenting voices" (Ozick, *Shawl* 9). After her death, Rosa takes Magda's shawl and fills her own mouth with it, silencing the "wolf's screech" of her grief (Ozick, *Shawl* 9).

The section that follows, “Rosa,” introduces Rosa at age 58, a Polish immigrant to New York who has recently smashed up her secondhand furniture shop and moved to a cramped room in an old Florida hotel. Stella, whom she blames for Magda’s death, supports her, if reluctantly. Rosa spends her time in her room “littered with letters,” composing letters on whatever paper she can find, to Stella in English, to Magda in “the most excellent literary Polish” (Ozick, *Shawl* 14), letters that rarely get mailed. Rosa waits for a package from Stella, who is sending the shawl back to her, and we learn that for Rosa the shawl is magic: it causes Magda to spring back to life at various ages Rosa has imagined for her. Magda serves as Rosa’s imagined Other, one with whom she can invent stories about Magda’s childhood and her own, one who is somehow not lost but present. One morning, on her way to do laundry, Rosa meets Simon Persky, a Jewish man also from Warsaw, who becomes her companion. Though at first Rosa repeats “My Warsaw isn’t your Warsaw” (Ozick, *Shawl* 19), drawing a line of distinction between their war experiences, during their meetings she tells him about herself, and he reciprocates. Again and again she tells him “thieves took [my life]” (Ozick, *Shawl* 28), and slowly she shares her memories with him. Eventually Persky, imperfect listener that he is, replaces the imagined presence of Magda as the one who receives Rosa’s addresses and draws her back into community with other people.

Ozick begins *The Shawl* with an epigraph taken from Holocaust survivor Paul Celan’s poem “Todesfuge”: “dein goldenes Haar Margarete/dein aschenes Haar Sulamith [your golden hair Margarete/your ashen hair Sulamith]” (Celan 33). While the golden-haired Margarete is addressed by the man who “grants us a grave in the air,” and is by description associated with the Aryan race, the ashen-haired Sulamith represents the poet’s own Jewish beloved. The description of Sulamith’s hair as “ashen” refers not only to its color, darker than Margarete’s and thus non-

Aryan, but also evokes the ash to which the Jewish woman's hair has been reduced. By referencing the poem at the beginning of her book, Ozick links the two women, golden-haired Margarete and ashen-haired Sulamith, to *The Shawl*'s Magda with "eyes blue as air, smooth feathers of hair nearly as yellow as the Star sewn into Rosa's coat," and Rosa, with a "bleak complexion, dark like cholera" (4). As Margarete and Sulamith are juxtaposed in Celan's poem, mentioned beside each other in nearly every stanza, Ozick's Magda and Rosa remain closely linked as well. Similarities persist between Margarete and Magda, Sulamith and Rosa: in Celan's poem Margarete remains a faraway, mute presence, one who is addressed by the German man through letters, much like Magda, who "was silent" (Ozick, *Shawl* 7) and to whom Rosa later addresses her own letters. While both Magda and Rosa possess shares of Sulamith's Jewish heritage, it is Magda who shares in her death: she dies, "swimming through the air" (Ozick, *Shawl* 9) thrown by a soldier into the camp's electric fence.

One of the most important connections between Magda and Rosa reveals itself in their mutual relationship with silence as a condition of survival and preservation. As a baby in the camp, Magda "had been devoid of any syllable; Magda was a mute. Rosa believed that something had gone wrong with her vocal cords, with her windpipe, with the cave of her larynx; Magda was defective, without a voice" (Ozick, *Shawl* 7). She never cries, remaining "buried away deep inside the magic shawl" (Ozick, *Shawl* 6), safely concealed from the attention of guards. Rosa explicitly points to Magda's silence as the condition of her survival: "Every day Magda was silent, and so she did not die" (Ozick, *Shawl* 7). Yet on the day Stella takes the shawl from her, Magda cries, "grieving for the loss of her shawl" (Ozick, *Shawl* 8). The expression of her grief leads to Magda's death, reinforcing Rosa's belief that silence preserves life; she stuffs her mouth with the shawl to prevent her own grief from escaping. However, within this silence, a

crowd of voices persists: “the electricity inside the fence would seem to hum….Rosa heard real sounds in the wire: grainy sad voices…lamenting voices” (Ozick, *Shawl* 9) that seem to express her grief in her place. The voices “strummed so convincingly, so passionately, it was impossible to suspect them of being phantoms,” and when Magda is caught by a guard, they begin “to chatter wildly. ‘Maamaa, maaa-maaa,’ they all [hum] together” (Ozick, *Shawl* 10), echoing Magda’s last and only cry.

Over three decades later, Rosa has become “a madwoman” (Ozick, *Shawl* 13), displaced from her homeland, alone, and no longer able to negotiate silence as survival. Yet she has difficulty bearing witness to the traumatic event, since it is in fact

> a missed encounter with reality, an encounter whose elusiveness cannot be owned and yet whose impact can no longer be erased, in taking hold of the entire movement of the narrator’s life which will henceforth, unwittingly, compulsively strive toward an impossible completion of the missed experience. (Felman and Laub 165)

Interestingly, Rosa does repeatedly miss certain encounters, misapprehends or misinterprets them; she experiences several almost-meetings, and throughout the novella she engages in a search for a lost (and, she fears, deliberately stolen) pair of underpants. Even her language, she laments, is a “lost and kidnapped Polish” (Ozick, *Shawl* 20). The meetings she most anticipates – a long distance call to Stella and the reappearance of Magda – are both, initially, missed encounters. When Rosa expects Stella on the other end of the phone line, instead, absurdly, “it was a lady selling frying pans” (Ozick, *Shawl* 62); when she has dressed and readied the house for Magda, Persky appears at her door instead, pointing to the box Rosa holds and asking: “It’s something alive in there?” (Ozick, *Shawl* 58). The opening of the box itself becomes another missed encounter, since Rosa expects it to contain the shawl that will evoke Magda’s presence;

instead it turns out to be a book: *Repressed Animation: A Theory of the Biological Ground of Survival*, sent by one of the many researchers who aggressively pursue her as some kind of specimen.

Yet, I would argue that Rosa does not "*compulsively* strive toward an impossible completion of the missed [traumatic] experience" as Felman and Laub assert in the above passage. To be stuck in a cycle of this kind, striving toward "an impossible completion," might have been likely for Rosa, given her past. But instead, her interaction with Magda and Persky cuts into this closed space and reopens possibilities for regeneration. Her letters to Magda and conversations with Persky enable her to tell about her life in a meaningful way. Completion or wholeness remains impossible (and such wholeness would also suggest a finalization of her experience), but her encounters with Persky and Magda reveal passages out of the cycle of traumatic repetition. The missed encounters may delay those she originally sought, but importantly, those meetings do still take place. She speaks with Stella; she opens the right box; Magda does "[spring] to life" (Ozick, *Shawl* 64). She even finds the missing underwear – a loss so upsetting that she has wandered the whole city in the middle of the night looking for them, even becoming trapped behind barbed wire on a beach – present and waiting for her all the time, "curled inside a towel" (Ozick, *Shawl* 61).

The quality of incompleteness remaining part of Rosa's experience reveals itself in the fragmented way she recounts her memories, parceling them out to customers who once rummaged through her store: "I used to pick out one little thing here, one little thing there, for each customer," she explains to Magda (Ozick, *Shawl* 67). The store itself seems an extension of her very self: full of mismatched objects, worn, displaced, and useless, by her own description "a cave of junk" (Ozick, *Shawl* 45), the destruction of the store, full of the "property [that] misleads,

brings false perspectives," is "a kind of suicide" (Ozick, *Shawl* 45). "I had a specialty in antique mirrors," she explains to Persky; "Whatever I had there, I smashed it" (Ozick, *Shawl* 26). Her destruction of the store shatters all possible reflections of herself, whether from the mirrors or from the uncomprehending customers, since the store also serves as a space for the transmission of Rosa's story: here she speaks to those who enter of Warsaw and of the camps. It is place of encounter, a place for Rosa to "meet the public," a place where she "wanted to tell everybody – not only our story, but other stories as well" (Ozick, *Shawl* 66). Yet, in this case, the presence of others serves only as a kind of erasure or dissolution of her testimony: "Nobody knew anything… nobody remembered… they didn't remember… they didn't know," she writes to Magda (Ozick, *Shawl* 66). "Whoever came," she tells Persky, "they were like deaf people. Whatever you explained to them, they didn't understand" (Ozick, *Shawl* 27). In shattering the mirrors, which "bring false perspectives," and smashing the store, she violently demolishes both her essential position as a witness and her site of transmission. In response to the deafness she encounters on the part of others, Rosa's destruction of the store creates her own silence, one that is "an active voiding of hearing" (Felman and Laub 183). Afterwards she likens herself to a woman she once saw passing on a tramcar through the Warsaw ghetto, a woman holding a head of lettuce, a potential witness. She explains about the streetcar:

> The most astounding thing was that the most ordinary streetcar, bumping along on the most ordinary trolley tracks, and carrying the most ordinary citizens going from one section of Warsaw to another, ran straight into the place of our misery. Every day, and several times a day, we had these witnesses. Every day they saw us –women with shopping sacks; and once I noticed a head of lettuce sticking up out of the top of a sack – green lettuce! (Ozick, *Shawl* 68)

By destroying the store, she deliberately causes the possibility of witnessing to disappear and also brings about the disappearance of her witnessing self. The event serves as a double action of demolition: not only has she made it impossible for others (the customers) to reflect back to her the memories she shares with them, but she has also destroyed the witness within herself. Like the woman on the streetcar, Rosa imagines herself merely passing through her own experiences, mute and moving away, someone who has seen, but cannot tell: "I am like the woman who held the lettuce in the tramcar" (Ozick, *Shawl* 69), she confesses to Magda.

Yet, through her encounters with Persky, Rosa again begins to bear witness, telling him of her childhood, her family, the camps, and her life in New York. A dynamic and transformative sharing takes place between them, between their stories and languages. Rosa speaks immigrant English and cultured Polish; Persky speaks colloquial Yiddish and un-accented English. Persky provides a dialogue of interruption, a "dialogue in which one speaks in the hope not merely of being recognized finally as a subject but rather of being interrupted, provoked, and overtaken 'by one's own words'" (Levine 166). Persky also stands for

> the place the survivor is herself unwittingly making toward, not necessarily located outside herself, the place, namely, 'of something standing open,' of a wound the 'you' itself may have gathered around, the place of an Other which can only be addressed in speaking through the narrow gate of the second person toward something or someone other than 'you.'….The Other whose place Persky holds and indeed holds open may be said to stand for a new psychic opening in Rosa. (Levine 167)

His presence offers an opportunity for the reconstitution of her position as a witness, a possibility Rosa first explores through her interaction with an *imagined* Other, her daughter Magda.

Magda serves as Rosa's beloved addressee, an imagined Other whose relations with Rosa enable Rosa's eventual flight out of the cycle of traumatic repetition. The two characters remain linked in several subtle ways, extending through one another. As a baby, Magda, wrapped in the shawl, resembles "a squirrel in a nest" (Ozick, *Shawl* 4), and Rosa, older, is also described as squirrel-like, a "scavenger" (Ozick, *Shawl* 13) who hordes odds and ends in her cave-like store. When Magda appears later in the novella, she is "wearing one of Rosa's dresses from high school" and beginning "to resemble Rosa's father" (Ozick, *Shawl* 64-5). Dressed in Rosa's own clothes, the shape of her chin suggesting the lines of Rosa's own face, Magda *reminds Rosa of herself*. As Rosa imagines her, Magda provides the perspective of another, a kind of alternate reflection. As a child, she has "a pocket mirror of a face" (Ozick, *Shawl* 4), and she remains a "pocket of otherness" (Levine 163) who serves as what Deleuze calls an "essence": "an individuating viewpoint… incarnated in a closed fragment, *adjacent* to what it overwhelms, *contiguous* to what it reveals" (*Proust* 143). Rosa and Magda share unstable borders, not only physically, as when Magda's infant form seemed joined to Rosa's own, "mistaken…for the shivering mound of Rosa's breasts" (Ozick, *Shawl* 6), but also through Rosa's imagination which offers a blurry, elusive sense of Magda's presence. Rosa continually describes her with words that oppose solidity and stillness: she resembles "a moth," "a butterfly" when thrown to her death; her coming alive is like "a brilliant swoop," and when she does appear, Rosa says "she was like a butterfly, in this corner and that corner, all at once" (Ozick, *Shawl* 64). To her fluttering, inconstant presence Rosa offers her fragile testimonies, addresses that serve as a tentative re-formation of the witness within herself.

In addition to serving as a resonating Other for Rosa, Magda also stimulates an inventive capacity in her. Writing to Magda removes "a lock…from the tongue," and Rosa calls it "an

immersion into the living language," delighting in "this cleanliness, this capacity, this *power to make a history*, to tell….to lie" (Ozick, *Shawl* 44, emphasis mine). The capacity to lie that she references could be conceived of as a way of passing between stories, between possibilities: a way of affirming *indeterminacy* as "a capacity not to make an exclusive choice, but to keep two incompatible strands of meaning together" (Lecercle 141). When Rosa invents Magda's life – her home in New York, her studies of philosophy – the fabrication of these stories sustains her. She slips between possibilities, telling Stella that she acknowledges Magda's death and simultaneously informing Persky that Magda survived. Of course, both possibilities for Rosa remain equally "true," and through her imaginative encounters with Magda she is allowed to engage them both.

Bakhtin emphasizes that "the listener is either a present individual or the ideal image of an imaginary audience" (Todorov 43). Rosa has both: Persky as a present individual, and Magda as an imaginary audience. These two presences in Rosa's life break into the closed, repeating cycle of trauma and offer potentials of renewal and active regeneration. They introduce new visions and auditions as well as an unfinalized perspective on her being, and Rosa's interaction with them reopens the possibility for her own transformation – "something that necessarily takes place between bodies" (Hughes 13). This essential process of transformation that is initiated in Rosa through her communion with Magda and Persky allows her to move from an entrapment in her grief and guilt, a duration that has lasted thirty-nine years, to the motion of participation with her life as it unfolds. In one of her early conversations with Persky, she explains: "We got three [lives]. The life before, the life during, the life after….for me there's one time only; there's no after….Before is a dream. After is a joke. Only during stays. And to call it a life is a lie" (Ozick, *Shawl* 58). However, first Magda and then Persky offer passages from her blocked state – Magda

as a co-presence who reflects and expands Rosa's imaginative capacities, and Persky as a listener whose presence offers the possibility to reconstitute Rosa's inner witness. The exchanges between them allow Rosa to involve herself in "the now of [her] becoming" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Philosophy?* 112).

CONCLUSION

The authors of *The Waves*, *Enfance*, and *The Shawl* share a recognition of the incompleteness of language as a system of representation and thus begin to create new, innovative languages and forms of language. Virginia Woolf approaches the writing of *The Waves* with an awareness of her own process, and her text reflects an examination of both subject and language formation that focuses on their dynamic interrelationship. The image of the wave itself serves to illustrate the process of dissolution and reformation taking place as the currents of each wave surge into one another, transforming each other. The seven voices of *The Waves* reflect this interrelationship and demonstrate Bakhtin's concept of live entering, living into and through one another, for one another, opening each other to the unfolding of new potentials. As they encounter one another, they enter what Deleuze calls zones of indiscernibility. Bernard and Neville, for example, meeting one another, blur into Bernard-Neville, drawing new boundaries of identity, opening the process of becoming-other. The encounters between characters cut into closed systems and regenerate processes of language and subject formation. In fact, *The Waves* regenerates Woolf's own processes of language, distinguishing itself from many of her other modernist works through its multiple, layered narrators and simultaneously emerging selves. Like Sarraute, Woolf writes moving away from representation and knowledge and towards what emerges between and among multiple languages and selves.

Similarly, *Enfance*, written near the end of Nathalie Sarraute's life, serves as a departure from many of the Nouveau Roman works for which she is known, such as *Tu ne t'aimes pas* and

Le planétarium, in that *Enfance* unfolds as a dialogue between present, interacting selves rather than as a portrayal of a split or fragmented identity trying to recollect the past. Like the characters in *The Waves*, the voices of *Enfance* do not consume or annihilate one another, but instead, through their communion, mutually inform each other. Theirs is a relationship that does not reach toward completion or a finalizing whole; rather, they remain in formation, overlapping and coalescing, telling the stories that develop between them. In *Enfance* the voices that co-remember relate to one another and allow for new possibilities of memory to emerge in the present.

While Cynthia Ozick criticizes some of the experimental writing that would be associated with Woolf's modernism and Sarraute's involvement with the Nouveau Roman on the grounds that it lacks meaning and is reactionary, she essentially affirms and shares Woolf's and Sarraute's attempts to create living histories, stories that are in themselves becoming and unfinalized rather than linear, factual, and representative. When Rosa's capacity to bear witness is shattered through the destruction of her store, her site of transmission, her creation of an imagined Other, her daughter Magda, allows her to reinvent and play with possibilities for the stories of her life. Through her interaction with Magda, in a Polish that was once lost to her, Rosa can accept the impossibility of representing her life with total accuracy. In their playful encounters, Rosa can remember, misremember, re-remember, and most significantly, recreate *many* stories, rather than one totalizing story, that restore her to community and allow for the process of her development to continue.

The chapters of this thesis have explored the possibilities for regeneration offered by the presence of various kinds of Others. These presences, through their relations with one another, create transformations. They offer worlds of potential; they intermingle with the self and open

passages between selves in formation for the action of becoming. The presence of the Other, in all three of the literary texts mentioned in this study, serves not as a totalizing or dominating force, but as a playful companionship, teasing out the unexpected. Enabling a renegotiation of one's territories, the Other co-participates in the active process of subject formation, dissolution, and reformation. Intervening against the blockage and stagnation of sickness and death, encountering the Other stimulates invention, regeneration, and health, opening possibilities for expression to emerge.

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