

Knowledge and Experience in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*:

an exploration of epistemology at stake in modernist fiction

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I – Introduction

In Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*¹, one of the novel's main characters, Bernard, is constantly driven by a strong urge to describe his surroundings. His need to describe forces Bernard to employ language as a medium in his constant attempt at representing his immediate surroundings. He thereby creates a relation between himself and the world that goes through language. Bernard's need to describe the world becomes a barrier between himself and the real world already at an early age. And he only discovers, while shaving as a middle-aged man, that it is not possible for him to grasp and represent the world fully through language. This discovery leaves Bernard disenchanted with language and its possibilities as his experience of the real world never seems to genuinely translate into prose. Bernard struggles with the fact that his descriptions only capture life through mimetic representation. He discovers that *re*-presentation is always separated from the real by language. Description is never the same as the real, as well as it always seems to transgress that which it is representing. Bernard discovers that his urge to describe life through language is an attempt at describing everything, but at every turn of his description he is confronted with language's inability to do exactly that. This discovery forces Bernard to reassess his narrative strategy as well as the possibility of transferring knowledge through language.

The question that Woolf is posing through Bernard is: How is it possible to describe the real world objectively, all the while being a part of it? (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 59)² Bernard's struggle with language in the *The Waves*, in other words, is also Woolf's struggle and the struggle of modernist fiction. Woolf not only represents the problematic relationship between representation and knowledge on the level of content in *The Waves*, she also emphasises the problematic nature of language through the form of the novel. In *The Waves* she

¹ Woolf, Virginia. *The Waves*. 1931. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. Print.

² Banfield, Ann. *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism*. 2000. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Print.

employs experimental narrative structures, as the novel is made up by a number of subjective internal monologues. The subjective soliloquies are only broken up by short interludes describing the sun passing over a deserted beach. Woolf's experimentation and innovation, as well as Bernard's, offers a closer look at the relationship between the epistemology of Modernism and the way in which knowledge is at stake in the novel.

In the article "A Semiotic Definition of Aesthetic Experience and the Period Code of Modernism"³ from 1982, Douwe Fokkema explains that Woolf's novel *The Waves* "provides us with an exemplary demonstration of Modernist code." (66) The modernist code, Fokkema clarifies, is made up of a number of complex linguistic strategies, of which the two most prolific are: The narrator's awareness of his or her own "provisional [and] hypothetical nature" (69) as well as the hypothetical nature of both language and knowledge. By employing these ideas as narrative strategies, the modernist code encrypts information, in an effort to make the world strange so that the reader can rediscover and experience the world anew. Fokkema argues that the "[i]ntellectual" (71) themes of *The Waves* are overshadowed by the fact that the novel is a stylization of modernist code as such, which means that as soon as the code has been deciphered the novel does not offer much in terms of content that can successfully "attract readers" (66). The content in itself is not sufficiently estranging. My experience of *The Waves*, however, holds my attention beyond the novelty of its code. What is interesting is that even though Modernism is trying to break away from a false sense of objectivity by creating a code that is based on a structural subjectivity, Woolf is none the less trying to instil a sense of objective knowledge through fiction. Woolf's modernist fiction is integrating both code and content in order to establish the boundary of knowledge in fiction. The possibility of knowledge in fiction, is that which has always intrigued me most in relation to fiction. Both Woolf and Bernard, both the

³ Fokkema, Douwe W. "A Semiotic Definition of Aesthetic Experience and the Period Code of Modernism." *Poetics Today* 3.1 (1982): 61–79. Web.

code and content of *The Waves*, are engaged in a symbiotic discovery of the extent to which modernist fiction can create a world in which real knowledge is at stake.

The American literary scholar Ann Banfield also believes that not only the code, but also the content of *The Waves* is worth investigating. Banfield is trying to establish how Woolf is using fiction to represent and engage the possibility of genuine objective value as a form of knowledge. In the book *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism* (2000) Banfield delves into Woolf's oeuvre and discovers that her innovative and experimental fiction is in fact a proper discussion of philosophical epistemology as such. According to Banfield, Woolf's novels reveal a literary representation and discussion of the famous English philosopher Bertrand Russell's epistemology. At the heart of Woolf's fiction, she explains, there is an interest in representing Russell's epistemology in order for fiction to gain value as a form of knowledge. Banfield lays out how Woolf's modernist fiction can in fact teach the reader something new about the *real* world (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 60).

It is important to stress the fact, however, that Banfield does not only understand Woolf's modernist fiction as capable of transferring knowledge as representation, but she rather sees fiction as an alternative to philosophical inquiry (*The Phantom Table* 383). This means that even though Banfield engages the epistemology of Modernism as a modernist representation of Russell's epistemology, she also considers this form of fiction to partake in a certain, alternative, creation of knowledge. Banfield argue that Woolf, by using Russell's epistemology, actually gives her fiction a proper logical structure and therefore creates knowledge. Banfield's investigation raises a string of important questions, not only in relation to how fiction is able to represent epistemology, but also how representation as such is capable of creating a form of knowledge. In other words, Banfield is exploring what it is that Woolf does in *The Waves* and other novels that makes fiction *epistemological*. This does not mean that she believes that the knowledge at stake in modernist fiction is independent from a representation of philosophy.

Russell's epistemology is crucial to Banfield's reading of Woolf, which means that the knowledge at stake in *The Waves* necessarily refers back to Russell's epistemological framework. I agree with Banfield in so far as the relationship between fiction and knowledge is at stake in modernist fiction, but as I see it, Woolf's modernist fiction always does more than referring back to a specific philosophical discourse. Modernist authors were interested in the relationship between fiction and knowledge (Childs 21)⁴ and in *The Waves* it is possible to see this interest both as representation and, as I will argue later, a performance. In other words, by engaging and exploring Banfield's argument in *The Phantom Table* I will be able to delve into what it means that there is epistemology at stake in *The Waves*. In order to do so I will examine what is being represented in *The Waves*, e.g. Bernard's constant exploration for the potential of language, and I will continually question my own experience of the novel, which depends as much on the performance of the form as well as the content. I expect that by doing so, it is possible for me to define the way in which Woolf is relating representation and knowledge in *The Waves* and thereby define the relationship between Woolf's modernist fiction and epistemology without referring back to Russell's epistemology.

I agree with Fokkema when he writes that it is as a stylisation of form, as a stylisation of modernist code, that *The Waves* at first attracts its attention. But my interest in *The Waves* stems from the inherent double and interrelated nature of code and content. The construction creates an experience of something more complete at stake in the novel. The experience of *The Waves* is difficult to classify and it holds more questions regarding the nature of knowledge and the relationship between knowledge and fiction than answers. I therefore disagree with Fokkema in so far as he believes that it is as a code that *The Waves* is most interesting and thereby also demands most attention. The questions relating to the possibility of representing knowledge as well as performing knowledge through language has kindled my interest in the novel and these

⁴ Childs, Peter. *Modernism*. New York: Routledge. 2008. Print.

factors have become the roots of the following exploration of Woolf's *The Waves* and thereby Modernism.

The question I will be exploring in this thesis pertains to Banfield's reading of Woolf's fiction. What is the epistemology of Modernism? Or in order to be more precise: How does modernist fiction relate to epistemology? My working hypothesis is that Woolf's modernist fiction is referring back to epistemology, not primarily as a representation of Russell's epistemology, but rather as an experience of knowledge, a form of fiction which is continually inscribing knowledge through the paradoxical nature of language.

The exploration of the performance of knowledge at stake in *The Waves* is made up of three chapters. First, I begin by delving deep into Banfield's analysis of Woolf's fiction. It is an important place to start, in order to establish how fiction and knowledge is related through a representation of philosophy. Thereafter, in the second chapter, I will expand on Banfield's analysis of epistemology by dividing the experience of fiction into representation and performance. In order to develop this argument, I approach fiction as a performance of knowledge and in order to elaborate how these performances of knowledge can be turned into practical readings of fiction I turn to three thinkers, Ernst van Alphen, Noël Carroll, and Dorthe Jørgensen, who try to approach and use thinking at stake in art and literature. In the third and final chapter, I will develop a new understanding of the knowledge at stake in *The Waves* by employing Gilles Deleuze's epistemology and relating his ideas of event and series to fiction. I argue that fiction is made up of a number of series, of which all are made up of singular events. I argue that Deleuze's empirical epistemology is a useful tool in conceptualising the knowledge at stake in the form of *The Waves* as well as in the content of the novel. I argue that modernist fiction proposes a different kind of knowledge than we are used to in the external world. A form of knowledge that is continually becoming. Woolf's modernist fiction is an opportunity to articulate the epistemology of Modernism as a lived knowledge that is always becoming. In this

sense, modernist fiction is recreating the relationship between the individual and reality through fiction.

II – Epistemology in Woolf’s Modernism

In her book *The Phantom Table* Banfield approaches the epistemology at stake in Modernism by focusing on the relationship between Woolf and Russell. Banfield argues that Woolf’s Modernism is an attempt to invent a new form of fiction. By employing Russell’s epistemology as a key to decipher the imagery and the novels’ form, Banfield argues that Woolf is translating philosophical principles into aesthetic principles and she thereby becomes capable of representing reality. Without engaging in a discussion of the problematic status of any a form of art which aspires to represent anything objectively, Banfield describes Woolf’s aspirations as a modernisation of fiction. Woolf’s experiments with form are attempts to write fiction that grasps the possibility of knowledge in fiction by offering an experience that has objective value rather than only focusing on representing the subjective world (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 59). It is necessary for Woolf to experiment with the possibilities in fiction, because modernist fiction was to her taste too narrowly focused on the subjective and private world of the writer instead of the reality of the external world (“Modern Fiction” 899)⁵. Banfield argues that Woolf develops Modernism from being an exercise in psychological impressionism to being an attempt at writing fiction that has actual objective and thereby cognitive value. By extending the possibilities at stake in modernist fiction, from only including the private and subjective world to also containing the public objective world, Woolf creates a form of fiction which relates to the reader in a new more totalising way (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 334-5). According to Banfield, Woolf effectively bridges the gap between the clear, but fragmented knowledge of philosophy and science and the “blur of sense perception” pertaining to the singular experience (*The Phantom Table* 187). Woolf’s modernist fiction employs an imagery that represents Russell’s epistemology as well as a form that, Banfield argues, performs his epistemology. As a combination of performance and representation, Banfield understands

⁵ Woolf, Virginia. “Modern Fiction.” *Modernism – An Anthology*. Ed. Lawrence Rainey. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. 897-901. Print.

Woolf's fiction as something which has a clear and objective value and in effect produces objective knowledge. Banfield's affirmation of cognition at stake in Woolf's fiction, however, always depends on Russell's philosophical work. And even though Banfield does recognise Woolf's more independent aspirations in relation to philosophy, the *epistemology of Modernism* remains sterile in terms of an actual (alternative) process of thinking. In the following chapter I will investigate Banfield's argument further, in order to establish whether or not it is possible to grasp the production of knowledge in *The Waves* as something more free and more creative than always referring back to Russell's epistemology. In order to do so I will have to first start with uncovering the relation between thinking and Modernism.

II – I Modernism

Banfield defines modernist fiction as fiction that is closely related to epistemology. This is already made clear in the subtitle to her book *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism*. In order to grasp why it is necessary for Banfield to investigate the epistemology at stake in Woolf's oeuvre, I will first lay out the way in which Modernism is traditionally understood.

Peter Childs writes in his seminal work *Modernism* (2000) that “Modernism is variously argued to be a period, style, genre or combination of the above” (12) and he states that it is “impossible and undesirable to speak of a single ‘modernism’” (13). As Childs is trying to define Modernism in all its incarnations, he does not reduce his use of Modernism to either one definition or the other. He does award prominence, however, to the use of Modernism as either a time- and geography-bound movement, which started by the end of the 19th century and was over by 1930, mainly situated in the Anglo-Saxon world; or a genre-bound movement, defined by a set of stylistic devices used as a general response to the radical developments in science, philosophy and psychology in the late 19th and early 20th century (19, 37). The great anthology

on modernist fiction and poetry, *Modernism: an Anthology* (2005)⁶ edited by Lawrence Rainey, similarly gives prominence to these two general interpretations of the modernist movement, as the anthology contains Anglo-Saxon writers of the period mentioned above and it is peppered with chapters called *Continental Interlude*'s, which is more a genre/style-bound choice. Collecting such a vast and polymorphous number of texts under one single predicate, is always, to a certain extent, a violent act toward the singularity of the text. But it is a necessary act if literary scholars are to be able to grasp fiction as a phenomenon that transgresses the particular text. It is, however, a necessity that Banfield submits to without elaborating further how she uses the predicate. The first question I have to attend to, therefore, is the relationship between Modernism and epistemology.

The reduction that Banfield commits to, is a conceptualisation of Modernism that is, at its most basic, a reaction to a number of social-historical occurrences and a general problematisation of truth (*The Phantom Table* 17). These occurrences demand fiction to reassess its own relation to the external world and pay closer attention to the validity of knowledge. Childs explains that by the late 19th century authors start innovating and experimenting⁷ with the form and content of fiction, in order to write in a way that remains relevant in relation to the then most modern paradigms of knowledge (76). The developments in both philosophy (mainly that of William James, Henri Bergson, Friedrich Nietzsche) and psychology discredited the Enlightenment dream of relieving the subject from its 'self-induced ignorance.' Philosophy and psychology do so by not recognising and undermining the independence of the subject and by the turn of the century the subject is no longer be considered as a sovereign entity (38). As a general response to this precarious condition for the subject, experimental modernist artists pose new 'modern' questions in fiction, e.g.: Is it possible to

⁶ Lawrence Rainey, ed. *Modernism an Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2005. Print.

⁷ It is important to emphasise that, according to Childs, realist novels have always been, and still are, the single most popular genre in fiction. Realism sells much better than experimental literature even today and it is what is being most produced (Childs 3).

represent the world realistically? If so, how is one to do that? Modernism's response to the scientific advances is to develop an alternative mode of representation that incorporates these questions. Modernism develops fiction that not only explores the boundaries of what is possible to represent in writing, but also fiction that investigates the boundaries of knowledge within a world without a fixed subject (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 342-39). This development is only augmented by the disruption of the major epistemological frameworks of the Enlightenment. Christianity and physics are destabilised by Charles Darwin popularising evolutionary theory and Einstein introducing relativity at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th. Childs writes, that whereas Darwin's theory of evolution exposes Christianity as an incoherent framework for understanding the world we live in, Einstein's theory of relativity similarly discredits Newtonian physics and classical static mechanics as a valid interpretation of the external world. The epistemology of modernist fiction in the early 20th century, is a product of the general interest in establishing an alternative framework for knowledge which disregards the logocentrism of the Enlightenment. Modernism interprets these developments as a discreditation of realist fiction's omniscient narrator. It responds by replacing the narrator's former position as the text's Archimedean point and Cartesian cogito with a more incomplete and subjective, but thereby also, according to the modernist writers, more *real* mode of narration (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 59-60). The modernist response to these developments is to cultivate new narrative strategies. Traditionally modernist fiction has been considered to be a form of fiction that disregards the possibility of an objective representation of the external world (Banfield 60) and thereby foregrounding questions such as: "What is there to be known?; Who knows it?; How do they know it, and with what degree of certainty?" (McHale 9)⁸.

The American literary scholar Brian McHale elucidates further the way in which fiction can be 'epistemological,' by employing the idea of the 'dominant' from narratology,

⁸ McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. 1987. London: Routledge, 2001. Print.

popularised by the Russian literary theorist and linguist Roman Jakobson. In his book *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987) McHale writes that a 'dominant' is a tool, which

specifies the *order* in which different aspects [of the text] are to be attended to, so that, although it would be perfectly possible to interrogate a postmodernist text about its epistemological implications, it is more *urgent* to interrogate it about its ontological implications. (11)

By using the dominant as a tool, McHale defines the difference between the two literary movements (Modernism/Postmodernism) as a result of the urgency with which the reader engages the questions that the text poses. By using the concept of the dominant, it becomes clear that the Modernism Banfield discusses in *The Phantom Table*, is not defined by a set of relatively narrow stylistic devices or reduced to being texts that are produced at a certain point and place in history, but instead is fiction which has an intention in relation to the development of new modes of investigating epistemology.

Banfield hopes to expand on McHale's basic interpretation of Modernism by exploring how Woolf's modernist fiction actually engages in epistemological considerations by attempting to reach an objective form of representation. In other words, she redefines the relationship between modernist fiction and epistemology as something which is not only contained in the *form* and *content* of the text. This is necessary as the relationship between Modernism and epistemology is an oft repeated fact (see: Childs, McHale, Douwe Fokkema), though without investigating the meaning of this statement in depth. How the text is foregrounding epistemology is engaged at length in *The Phantom Table*. Banfield is problematizing the 'orthodox opinions' on what Modernism epistemology is by evaluating Woolf's philosophical considerations.

In *The Phantom Table*, Banfield argues that it is necessary to depart from understanding Modernism as a stylisation of the subjective character of knowledge. Banfield argues, by introducing a Russellian epistemology and vocabulary, that Woolf moves beyond orthodox Modernism's subjective 'saturation of atoms' (*The Phantom Table* 300), toward a more

objective form of fiction, which she hopes is able to truthfully represent the objective world (*The Phantom Table* 245). In other words, Banfield argues that Woolf experiments with the possibilities of narrative representation, not by accepting modern science's criticism of objective knowledge, but instead by attempting to find ways to represent the objective world truthfully through the informed use of philosophy. What is at stake for Woolf, is the possibility to represent the objective world through fiction, she tries to do so by employing genuinely objective perspectives ("Modern Fiction" 899) and thereby using the form of her novels to create an objective representation of reality.

Banfield explains that Woolf's attempt toward a form of representation of objective reality that documents it truthfully, is keeping two important stylistic innovations attentively in mind. The first innovation, which is considered orthodox to Modernism, is the possibility of representing the private world without necessarily 'locking' the perspective to one single subject. Banfield uses *To The Lighthouse* (1927)⁹ to demonstrate this innovation. In *To The Lighthouse* James, the Ramsay's youngest son, is caught daydreaming by the narrator. Woolf writes: "But whose foot was he thinking of, and in what garden did all this happen? For one had settings for these scenes; trees that grew there; flowers; a certain light; a few figures." (*To the Lighthouse* 171) Banfield explains that the questions at stake in this text are James' questions rather than the narrator's questions, because

the reader attributes the question to him and interprets "this" as pointing to something in his imaginary perspective. Such grammatically subjective terms and constructions like them are referred to the third person and represent its perspective. It is possible because there is no "I," for when an "I" is added, e.g. "in what garden of mine did this all happen?," it is no longer possible to interpret the sentence as his question. This novelistic third person becomes the name for the momentary subject, a reduced cogito "(s)he was thinking." (*The Phantom Table* 315)

Modernist fiction refuses to accept the possibility of an omniscient narrator that is so often employed in literary Realism, instead the text rather has to be understood through a limited

⁹ Woolf, Virginia. *To The Lighthouse*. London: Grafton Books, 1927 [1977]. Print.

number of point of view's (Bal 149-55)¹⁰. Woolf's narratives are characterised by employing focalisation as a method to highlight the private nature of knowledge. As Banfield writes,

built into this shifting language is the possibility of multiple perspectives. Each sentence of represented thought linguistically represents a subject's occupied perspective. Shifting from perspective to perspective, the novel's language constructs a public world which "enables us to pass beyond the limits of our private experience" (*The Phantom Table* 316).

Private language without a subject, then, for Woolf, is a possibility to represent various particulars – or to use a Russellian vocabulary various sense-data – without needing to limit the representation to one single individual's experience throughout (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 315). The second, and according to Banfield truly Woolfian innovation, is the possibility of creating a neutral environment for the occupied perspectives to unfold in. This environment comes about through representing unperceived perspectives. In *To The Lighthouse*, Banfield suggests, that the *Time Passes* chapter is an example of the unperceived perspectives and in *The Waves* it is the interludes (*The Phantom Table* 317). According to Banfield representing unperceived perspectives gives the text a structure which mirrors the logical form of reality (reality is here understood as Woolf's interpretation of Russell's epistemology), which is necessary in order to give a representation an objective character (*The Phantom Table* 321). The unperceived perspectives appear in *The Waves* as periodical interludes that break up the fabula: "*The sun fell in sharp wedges inside the room. Whatever the became dowered with a fanatical existence. A plate was like a white lake. A knife looked like a dagger of ice.*" (Woolf, *The Waves* 89) Banfield argues that the interludes are 'unperceived,' because the short chapters include no reference to a narrator or speaker. The quote is set in free indirect speech and Banfield argues that these inserts break off the story to give it logical form (*The Phantom Table* 319-21, *Unspeakable Sentences* 185-9)¹¹. The unoccupied perspectives of the short interludes,

¹⁰ Bal, Mieke. *Narratology – Introduction to the theory of the narrative*. 3rd Ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009. Print.

¹¹ Banfield, Ann. *Unspeakable Sentences*. London: Routledge, 1982. Print.

create the logically necessary neutral world within which the occupied perspectives are related to reality. Banfield argues that by employing these two stylistic devices Woolf achieves fiction which is objective, because, like Russell's epistemology, there is the occupied perspective as well as an objective reality. Banfield writes, "Woolf's aesthetic, while reserving a place for the personal, is itself impersonal." (*The Phantom Table* 384) This means that Woolf's investigation into the boundaries of knowledge, starts at the point where Modernism supposedly ends; in the subjectivity of the text. Woolf's "world seen without a self" (Woolf, *The Waves* 239) transgresses the subjective world of the 'I' and claims to represent the world in a way that transgresses orthodox Modernism.

The fact that Banfield proposes that Woolf's texts are attempts at a more objective form of representation does not make the representations any more or less truthful. But the intention does raise several important questions. E.g. in what way is the experience of objective fiction different from the experience of subjective fiction?; and more importantly, what is the relation between representation and reality within a text that emulates the experience of reality? These questions are of epistemological nature, but there is one question which raises itself above others in relation to the overall interest of my investigation: To which extent does Banfield's interpretation of Woolf's new modernist fiction let Woolf's fiction actually perform epistemology? I hope to clarify that Banfield's understanding of Woolf's fiction as being a representation of, in both form and content, Russell's epistemology, is in fact shutting down all the possibilities of actual knowledge at stake in fiction in general.

II – II Modern times and modern epistemology

In the first chapter of *The Phantom Table* "Introduction: Table Talk," Banfield makes an effort to introduce the various characters and the philosophical trends, which she considers to have lasting influence on Woolf's philosophical outlook. The Bloomsbury Group, of course, gets a

lot of attention, but Banfield explains that it is necessary to look beyond the boundaries of the circle of Bloomsbury regulars in order to grasp Woolf's philosophical and stylistic development (*The Phantom Table* 52).

Banfield writes that Bloomsbury is what happened when "Cambridge philosophy moved to London" (*The Phantom Table* 8). What she means is that "in the formative years 1900 to 1904-5 ... Bloomsbury's male members were Cambridge undergraduates" (*The Phantom Table* 8) and as undergraduates the Bloomsbury men had the fortune to experience the "*annus mirabilis* for Cambridge philosophy, for in that year [1903] were published Russell's *Principles of Mathematics* and Moore's *Principia Ethica*" (*The Phantom Table* 9) as Banfield quotes Leonard Woolf for saying. But not only had these undergraduates from 1903 taken up residence in and around Bloomsbury in London by 1910. More importantly, also the three major Cambridge philosophers, Russell, Alfred North Whitehead and G. E. Moore made their way to London around those years. Together these three philosophers are important for the development of British philosophy of the 20th century and Banfield does not consider it a coincidence that the Bloomsbury group flourishes about the time the three philosophers arrived in London. Whitehead moved to London in 1910, Russell in 1911 and Moore lectured at the University College London in 1910-11 (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 10). That Bloomsbury 'happened' "when Cambridge came to London" (*The Phantom Table* 8), Banfield explains, has to be understood in a twofold manner. The reason is that it is not only the physical movement from Cambridge to London that was important, but also the modernisation and metropolisation of the isolated, classical, and elitist Cambridge philosophy is crucial (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 23). The theoretical issues of Bloomsbury (as well as Moore, Russell and Whitehead's issues), were modern issues. As Banfield writes: "It [The Home University Library of Modern Knowledge] defined "modern knowledge" as centrally mathematical, philosophical and

scientific, with an emphasis on physics and astronomy, ... [i]t also included economics, evolution, socialism history and literature” (*The Phantom Table* 24).

The influence of Cambridge philosophy on Bloomsbury, and by extension on Woolf, was massive, though at the same time she remained being inspired by the metropolitan and modern ‘real world.’ Russell’s epistemological philosophy becomes, according to Banfield, crucial to Woolf’s philosophical development. “Russell,” Banfield quotes Clive Bell for writing, “though no one has ever called him ‘Bloomsbury,’ appeared to be a friend and was certainly an influence.” (*The Phantom Table* 41) The departure from Cambridge, the publications of Home University Library of Modern Knowledge and the modern, more egalitarian function of the University College London created an environment and an opening of philosophical discourse to women, the working class and other subaltern classes and individuals (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 18). Being without formal education, Banfield explains, does not exclude Woolf from understanding the philosophical development of her time. Banfield fully expects Woolf to “know philosophy” and due to Cambridge’s physical transfer to London, she also expects Woolf to be well versed in the contemporary philosophical controversies and discussions of her day (*The Phantom Table* 30-1).

In the second chapter: “The geometry in the sensible world: Russell’s analysis of matter”, Banfield delves into Russell’s epistemology from 1910-19 (*The Phantom Table* 64). She does so in order to demonstrate to which extent Russell’s epistemology has influenced the philosophical project in Woolf’s fiction.

Let me start by introducing Banfield’s understanding of Russell’s influence on Woolf’s oeuvre, before laying out the critical characteristics of Russell’s epistemology anno 1910-18. Banfield explains that Woolf employs several recurring images in her fiction that echo Russell’s epistemology. These images partake, directly or indirectly, in the discourse surrounding Russell’s discussion of the role of sensation in relation to knowledge. In other words, Banfield

interprets a number of images in Woolf's novels as direct representations of Russellian philosophy (see: *The Phantom Table*, chapter 3). Amongst the many examples that Banfield summons, is the private world of the room – cut off from the public world – the most significant.

In *The Waves* Woolf presents the Louis' room as such a privately accessible haven.

'Yet I still keep my attic room. There I open the usual little book; there I watch the rain glisten on the tiles till they shine like a policeman's waterproof; there I see the broken windows in poor people's houses; the lean cats; some slattern squinting in a cracked looking-glass as she arranges her face for the street corner there Rhoda sometimes comes. (Woolf, *The Waves* 140)

Banfield writes that when Woolf uses the private room it is "impenetrable to the observer" (*The Phantom Table* 12). Louis' attic room is such an impenetrable and safe private space. To Louis, his attic room is a place where he is in total control of his own identity. He is first observing the neighbour, then the street. Louis' private attic room is, therefore, a representation of the privacy and singularity of sense perception. Juxtaposed to the privacy of a room, there is the public perspective of a shared dinner table (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 120). The dinner table is a recurring image in Woolf's fiction as well as in *The Waves*. Banfield argues, that rooms and tables are representations of Russell's understanding of the private perspective (*The Phantom Table* 111), as opposed to the possibility of a public and objective perspective (*The Phantom Table* 120). "The privately localized and temporalized reduced subjectivity receives an objectivity" (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 78) in the public sphere. At the first dinner in *The Waves* the six speakers are comparing their individual experiences of their youth.

'The leaf danced in the hedge without anyone to blow it,' said Jinny.

'In the sun-baked corner,' said Louis, 'the petals swam on depths of green.'

'At Elvedon the gardeners swept and swept with their great brooms, and the woman at a table writing,' said Bernard.

In this way, at the dinner table the individual private perspectives, the childhood memories, receive a sense of objectivity as the stories of youth are shared and verified in the public space around the table. The speakers are sharing the individual experiences of youth and by the dinner table they become factual, as the private perspective is tested and validated in the common. The

recurring presence of private rooms and public dinner tables throughout Woolf's novels are, according to Banfield, representations of Russell's epistemology and his theory of the private, and subjective, perspective of sense-data and the public and therefore objective, possibly unobserved sensibilia (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 106-7). Banfield acknowledges and describes many other minor examples of Russellian theory in Woolf's writing (*The Phantom Table* 123).

It is, however, important to also let it be known that Banfield believes Woolf's imagery to, at certain stages, transgress Russell's philosophy (*The Phantom Table* 245). Banfield explains that the images and clues that are spread throughout Woolf's novels partake in a discussion of Russell's epistemology. She writes that it is possible for modernist fiction to transgress the fragmented nature of science and the arching nature of philosophy (*The Phantom Table* 245), because Woolf combines the "[p]ure seeing," which "is detached from use" (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 265) and it is subjective and particular, as well as it utilises the bare 'granite' of true logical form (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 287). By doing so Woolf represents "the logical possibility of unoccupied perspectives" (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 293). Banfield states that this form of representation places Modernism a step further than science and philosophy. Banfield writes:

The ordinary and the analytical mind are the negation one of the other. One is rambling, vague, illogical, opens itself indiscriminately to the unpredictableness of sense-data but ultimately detaches itself from the immediate ... The other is sterile, precise, rigorous, formal, breaks things down into discrete units and orders them. The two classes of mind are ... mutually exclusive (*The Phantom Table* 192).

Woolf's fiction is transgressing the limitations of both the analytical positions of science and philosophy and the subjective perspective of the ordinary mind. In other words, the sterile analytical approach of science, pertaining to the particulars, and philosophy, pertaining to the arching statements about the reality of things, are according to Banfield all transgressed in Woolf's fiction. Banfield understands Woolf's fiction as an investigation into the particular

table without it being a table of actual physical characteristics. Hence the name of her book: *The Phantom Table*.

In order to appreciate the, at first glance, imaginative scope of Banfield's project in *The Phantom Table*, it is necessary to develop a better understanding of Russell's epistemology and the possibility of unoccupied perspectives. Banfield writes that Russell's interest in epistemology was surging around the time Russell and Whitehead published *Principia Mathematica* (1910). Being exhausted by the strict reason of an ideal purely mathematical logic (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 10-1), Russell departed from abstract discussion of ideas to engage the particulars of everyday life. The particulars of everyday life do not only remain important in the work that Russell performs in the decade following *Principia Mathematica*, the particulars of everyday life pushes Russell to adapt to a naturalistic epistemology (Kitchener 130)¹². Richard F. Kitchener attempts to deepen the understanding of Russell's epistemology in the 1910's by explaining why Russell is adapting to a naturalistic epistemology. Kitchener writes:

Throughout Russell's many writings on epistemology, two different conceptions of epistemology can be found. On the one hand, there is a more traditional Cartesian account of the nature and task of epistemology: according to this conception, the primary task of epistemology is to answer the sceptic and to show that knowledge is possible by showing that we do have certain, indubitable knowledge. ... Alongside this traditional concern of epistemology, however, there is another, quite different conception of epistemology to be found in Russell – a NE [Naturalistic Epistemology]. (133)

It is Russell's naturalistic epistemology, which Banfield argues that Woolf is representing (*The Phantom Table* 64). A naturalistic epistemology does not investigate the possibility of a knowledge of the external world. Naturalistic epistemology rather investigates the relationship between the particulars of the external world to the individual. Kitchener argues, that by implementing a naturalistic epistemology, Russell departs from the theoretical realm of pure philosophy, which for Russell means a realm of analytical philosophy, in order to take part in

¹² Kitchener, Richard F. "Bertrand Russell's Naturalistic Epistemology." *Philosophy* 82.01 (2007): 115-146. Web.

an epistemology based on the particulars in the experiences of life (134). Particulars are the raw singular facts, but these singular entities always pose problems for the philosopher. Banfield writes, that when the philosopher rejects idealism, then the philosopher is stuck with the “blur of reality” (*The Phantom Table* 187). Russell’s naturalistic epistemology is, at the outset, an epistemology which has rejected idealism, but still seeks order in the *blur of reality*. Russell intends to harness the blur of sensation, by developing an epistemology founded on a frame of logic (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 83). Banfield writes that to Russell “[u]niversals and forms constitute the “logical foundation” of knowledge.” ... “Logic is necessary to it ... because it gives a completer reality” (*The Phantom Table* 83). This means that within Russell’s epistemology the world is made out from a number of particulars, that are organised within a logical structure.

This worldview results in a division which Banfield considers of critical importance to Woolf’s fiction. Russell makes a division between the private singular experience of *sense-data* and the objectivity of the logical necessary unperceived sense-data which he calls *sensibilia* (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 71). A sense-datum is the subject’s sensual experience of a physical object. It is the perception of white when something white presents itself to the eye, or it is the perception of the sun’s yellowness. Sense-data are per definition private and they form the window in the private room – the relation between private world and the public world. To Russell, perception is a common-sense proof of our own place in the external world and our everyday interactions with it. Sense-data are, in other words, the reason why we consider ourselves a part of the external world, as Banfield quotes Russell for writing: “Physics exhibits sense-data as functions of physical objects” (*The Phantom Table* 68). Sensibilia, however, are different from sense-data, because a sensible is a physical object’s theoretical characteristic without the object being sensed by a subject. As sensibilia have not been perceived by senses, but still are considered to have theoretical reality, they are real outside the singular perception.

Sensibilia is the logical form, a form Banfield argues to be repeated in Woolf's fiction. Understood in this way, sense-data of a table do not exist independently of the sensing subject, but the sensibilia of tables are always logically necessary. Sensibilia are the real world without the perceiving subject (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 70-1).

The distinction between sense-data and sensibilia is important, because it creates the logical possibility of an objective reality outside sensual perception. Russell thereby affirms the existence of an objective reality, which is impossible to access for the subject, but none the less logically exists. Banfield argues that Woolf is attempting to transform Modernism from wallowing in its own inability to represent anything objectively and employing extreme subjective forms of representation, toward representing objective reality in itself. Woolf does so by representing the logical form of Russell's epistemology through the unperceived perspectives and she is filling this logical space with the occupied perspectives. In *The Waves*, Banfield argues, what is being represented in the story, gains a form of permanence outside the experience of it. The objective is obtained through form, and that is what *The Waves* is all about (*The Phantom Table* 384). The novel is an experiment in giving objective reality to fiction through a performance of Russell's logical form. Banfield argues that Woolf uses her knowledge of philosophy in order to attempt to create an objective reality out of fiction.

In *The Waves* the narrator presents the lives of the six friends, Bernard, Susan, Louis, Neville, Rhoda and Jinny. The reader meets these six characters through a number of soliloquies. In order for the reader to navigate through these internal monologues, the external narrator offers short and concise: "said Susan" or "said Neville" at the beginning of each new soliloquy. In the first meeting with the six speakers it already becomes clear that the narrator is describing the experiences and perceptions of each character:

'I see a ring' said Bernard, 'hanging above me. It quivers and hangs in a loop of light.'
 'I see a slab of pale yellow,' said Susan, 'spreading away until it meets a purple stripe.'
 'I hear a sound,' said Rhoda, 'cheep, chirp; cheep chirp; going up and down.'

‘I see a globe,’ said Neville, ‘hanging down in a drop against the enormous flans of some hill.’

‘I see a crimson tassel,’ said Jinny, ‘twisted with gold and threads.’

‘I hear something stamping,’ said Louis. ‘A great beast’s foot is chained. It stamps, and stamps, and stamps.’ (Woolf, *The Waves* 5)

The story unfolds through six independent points of view, only with a minimum of interjections by the narrator. This results in the reader gaining access to the story, through six widely diverse worlds and diverse *perceptions of reality*. Interrupting these singular points of view, are short chapters that are set entirely in an italic font. These interludes are the short descriptions of a beach throughout the day, while paying close attention to the sun crossing the sky. The novel begins in medias res in an interlude with: “*The Sun had not yet risen.*” (Woolf, *The Waves* 3) Similarly the novel ends in a short interlude stating: “*And the waves broke on the shore.*” (Woolf, *The Waves* 248) In this sense, the interludes are physically framing the story and according to Banfield the interludes form a logical scaffolding that is holding the catalogue of private perspectives together throughout the novel. The interludes and the story are not explicitly related with each other (though there are references throughout the story of a woman sitting at the speakers’ childhood home in Elvedon writing (Woolf, *The Waves* 12), it is never stated explicitly related to the narrator) in terms of content. According to Banfield the interludes attempts at representing the world of sensibilia and the story is made up of sense-data through the subjective soliloquies. As I explained earlier, sensibilia are the logically necessary form of the external world. As a frame, it is possible to understand sensibilia as that which is not focused on by the speakers. What each of the characters are describing, is then their own individual experience of reality. In this sense, following Banfield’s argument in *The Phantom Table*, each speaker is representing sense-data.

II – III Woolf’s Modernism according to Banfield

The Waves is, Banfield argues, the climax of Woolf's attempts toward a "new modernism" (*The Phantom Table* 387). It succeeds in creating vivid sensual representation, a "picture book" and "art of the eye" (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 257), and the interludes of the theoretically possible 'unperceived perspectives' create a geometrical skeletal structure that gives the novel "surface weight" and gives fiction an objective nature (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 280). *The Waves* is a product of Russellian thought and Banfield specifically understands the novel as Woolf's best attempt toward a new 'objective Modernism.' 'New Modernism,' however, is not to be misunderstood as a different project than Modernism as such – understood as fiction that investigates the boundaries of knowledge – instead the term 'new' signifies a different point of departure for epistemology. Banfield shows that Woolf gives the performance of fiction an objective basis, but she is unwilling to discuss how the experience of this objective fiction creates a different foundation for objective knowledge. The objective world is simply there and together with Russell, she is unwilling to perform further investigations of it. Instead Woolf insists on attempting to map the boundaries of the external world in relation to a private knowledge. Banfield argues that Woolf is able to escape the privacy of the mind, by implementing Russell's epistemology as a narrative strategy. The narrative style lets the author escape the privacy of the individual. The strategy is to a large degree literary adaptations of Roger Fry's critique of the impressionist and post-impressionist movement (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 247-8). Banfield writes: "Fry combined the eye and eyelessness, color and skeletal form." (*The Phantom Table* 249) Inspired by Fry, Woolf establishes a writing style which is closely related to the epistemological questions that were developed by analytical philosophy. 'The eye and skeletal form' relate to Russell's inquiries into the private subjective perception of the world and the public skeletal logic of the world's facts and propositions. Sense-data make up our being in the world, the colours and contours of impressionism is the indiscriminate representation of sense-data. Sense-data are, however, products of the subject's meeting with the logically

necessary external world of sensibilia. In this sense there is an objective – public – world behind the sense-data of perception. The objective world of sensibilia is made up in a skeletal logical form (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 255). The subject is then not related with that which is represented, as the use of the logical structure of sensibilia in a representational investigation of the world, validates the private perspectives. As Banfield writes: “art is more than a picture of appearances. ... It is a directly apprehendable pattern” (*The Phantom Table* 256). To investigate the boundaries of a public knowledge, Woolf’s ‘new modernist’ fiction attempts to fit the private world of sense-data into an objective representation, by employing a clear skeletal form. Banfield argues that Woolf’s novels continually represent the unperceived perception, de facto representing something unobserved. Thereby Woolf represents the public world without referring to the authority of the narrator.

To Banfield, therefore, there is a close relation between Modernism and the process of creating knowledge of the external world because of its involvement with Russell’s epistemology. This is of relevance because if fiction not only represents epistemological discussions, but also performs epistemology, a form of epistemology which is different from both science and philosophy, Woolf’s Modernism can in this sense help to gain a better understanding of the relationship between fiction, knowledge, and sense perception. Maybe Woolf’s fiction occupies the centre of a triangle of knowledge. A triangle which has one leg occupied by science, the other occupied by philosophy, and the last occupied by common sense. If Woolf’s new Modernism performs knowledge, it performs neither of the three and it will never be reduced to only two. Instead Woolf’s fiction occupies a position in the middle.

In the following chapter I will investigate this claim further. I will establish how knowledge and fiction are related in Woolf’s fiction according to Banfield. Banfield argues that Woolf’s fiction depends on a style that transgresses the individual, desires, opinions, perspective, and even death – Woolf’s fiction transforms into “a free art’s worship” that

“records the world as it is” (*The Phantom Table* 388). Is this ‘Modern elegy’ an investigation of the limits of knowledge, or does Banfield unknowingly depart from her initial goal, namely defining epistemology at stake in Modernism.

III – Performing fiction and the act of thinking

In the previous chapter I discussed the concept of Modernism and Banfield's conceptualisation of Woolf's new Modernism. In this chapter I will develop Banfield's reading further by critically engaging instances of knowledge at stake in her book, which are better understood as performances of epistemological reflection rather than representation. This will help me to gain a better understanding of what it means that Modernism foregrounds epistemology. The question I am getting at and hope to expand upon in this chapter is: What is the nature of the 'epistemology' which is believed to pertain to modernist fiction and how does it translate into knowledge?

Epistemology is in essence a branch of philosophy that deals with the theory of knowledge. In broad terms, epistemology is a theory about how belief is justifiably designated as knowledge. But as a branch of philosophy, epistemology relates to knowledge in different ways. In his discussion of Russell's epistemology, Kitchener makes a clear distinction between 'internal' epistemology and 'naturalistic' epistemology (136). The difference between the two branches of epistemology is a difference on the level of theory. Whereas internal epistemology engages the theoretical conditions for knowledge as such, naturalistic epistemology understands our private beliefs to already *be* knowledge and they are the point of departure for reflecting on questions pertaining to the justification of science. To naturalistic epistemology "knowing is a natural state in the world" (Kitchener 136). The fact that knowledge is a natural state of being, changes the emphasis of an epistemological investigation from a theoretical consideration over the nature of knowledge itself, to a consideration regarding the intricate relation between the private knowledge of the sensed reality and a possibility for objective knowledge. As mentioned earlier, Russell's shift toward a naturalistic epistemology in the 1910's, coincides with his influence on Woolf's philosophical attitude (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 34). Following Banfield argument, it means that Woolf's fiction is not an investigation of the intrinsic, and

highly technical, possibilities of knowledge in itself, but rather the relation between the private knowledge of the external world, as we experience it through our senses, to an objective knowledge (*The Phantom Table* 298). In this sense, Banfield argues, the ‘epistemology’ belonging to Woolf’s Modernism is a naturalistic epistemology and when Woolf employs an experimental form in *The Waves*, it is because she hopes the novel’s framework to mimetically represent that of the world in Russell’s epistemology.

I will now try to engage Banfield’s argument further and explore the consequences of understanding fiction as primarily a representation of a philosophical system, and how this understanding influences the instances of thinking that Banfield performs in the reading of Woolf’s texts. I will in this chapter investigate the consequences of Banfield’s analysis in order to explore how knowledge can be said to be at stake in *The Waves* as such. I will, in other words, explore and criticise Banfield’s use of Russell’s philosophy and develop and suggest an alternative understanding of the epistemology of Modernism.

III – I Representations- and performances of epistemology

Throughout *The Phantom Table*, Banfield is defining Modernism as a movement that uses fiction to mimetically *represent* (Russell’s) epistemology. To Banfield, Woolf’s Modernism is a narrative ‘showing’ of Russellian epistemology. Understood in this way, Banfield does not consider Woolf’s representation to contain a cognitive object, because a philosophical system is being represented, it is not a genuine performance of a cognitive process. A large part of *The Phantom Table* is directly related with considerations of representations of epistemological questions. The chapter “The world seen without a self: Woolf’s analysis of matter” (*The Phantom Table* 108-59) confirms a catalogue of images that iconically represent Russellian ideas, and in the chapter “How describe a world seen without a self” (*The Phantom Table* 294-358) Banfield argues that Woolf’s stylistic innovation is a representation of Russellian

epistemology through form, which is a symbolic form of representation. The dissection that Banfield performs in these two chapters, exposes an intimate dependency on representation between Woolf's work and Russell's epistemology. Understanding Modernism as a representation of epistemology transforms the text into a series of complex allegories, which all can be deciphered through a comparative analysis between philosophy and fiction: the house represents the possibility of an objective world, and distant sounds represent the subjective registration of objective atoms, the private worlds of individuals relate to the objective world of unseen perspectives etc. (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 108–55).

I consider this analysis in *The Phantom Table* to be successful, as Banfield convincingly argues that Russell's epistemology is an important framework for interpreting what is at stake at the level of representation in Woolf's fiction. Even though it might be of historical and biographical importance, considering fiction as a representation of a certain strain of thought is a dangerous reduction of the multifaceted nature of modernist fiction. It is a reduction, however, which enables Banfield to expose a historically important connection between Russell and his philosophy and Woolf and her fiction. But if we are to understand the representation of Russell's epistemology to be the 'epistemology of Modernism' as such, it becomes a negative reduction. If Woolf's fiction, and Modernism in general, is primarily a representation of a philosophical discourse, then Woolf's novel's lose their multifaceted framework and their relation to thinking. In the sense that Banfield proposes to read Woolf, modernist fiction is nothing more than an illustrated 'user manual' for philosophical epistemology and it has no relation to the practical endeavour the process of cognition is. This is a dangerous reduction of what is at stake in Woolf's fiction. In order to grasp the consequence of such a position, it is necessary to explore how representation transfers knowledge.

As a representation of epistemology the text transfers knowledge by 'showing' philosophy. This means that Modernism reduces the text to be an allegory, which, in a different

way than philosophy proper, is demonstrating what (Russell's) epistemology is. If fiction is understood through allegory, the experience of fiction loses its ability to add anything original to the world, because allegory always ultimately refers back to the intention of the author, or the intention of the reader. Understanding Modernism as an allegorical representation of epistemology is then reducing the possibility of modernist fiction to add anything in relation to the world in terms of independent and truly new forms of thinking. The notion of an all-powerful author, able to exhaustively represent the world, let alone philosophy, is one of the ideologies of fiction, which modernist fiction effectively is trying to disband (see previous chapter) by implementing less authoritative narrative strategies. The idea of a reader implementing allegories for the sake of an external argument is equally detrimental for the singularity of the experience of fiction in general. The nature of modernist fiction disavows any external manifestations of a subject being able to read in *one* dominant way. Modernist fiction has integrating the reader's subjective position, in order to act out knowledge instead of defining one 'knowledge.' It is necessary to explore this performative side of modernist fiction further, in order to grasp the epistemology of Modernism anew. By exploring the epistemology of Modernism as something which in itself is a multifaceted experience, both a performance and representation, I will be able to accommodate modernist fiction's struggle against authority, as well as specifying what its claim to knowledge is. The fact that Banfield reduces important aspects of Woolf's oeuvre, both form and content, to being a consequence of an urge to represent strictly external philosophical considerations, results in a dominating reading that goes against the nature of Modernism's anti-authority nature. Apart from just philosophical consideration there are equally always considerations of social, historical and literary developments at stake in fiction. I will now emphasise a less narrow interpretation of the way in which Modernism relates to epistemology. I consider this interpretation of Modernism to be related with the moments in *The Phantom Table*, where Banfield transgresses considerations of

representation and states that Woolf's fiction is emulating Russell's through form (*The Phantom Table* 277).

The Greek literary scholar Stathis Gourgouris liberates fiction from relating to knowledge through representation in the book *Does Literature Think?* (2003)¹³. To Gourgouris fiction is in itself a process of thinking and he attempts to describe how the processual nature of fiction changes its relation to knowledge. Gourgouris argues that when the reader reads fiction an event occurs in the act of reading – the text is being performed. It is a performance because fiction contains an intrinsic performativity that is actualised in every reading of the text regardless of the content (Gourgouris 43). Though I will not discuss Gourgouris' project in detail, as it mostly delves into the relation between the social-historical performance of myth, my investigation follows a similar trajectory to the one he lays out in the following:

[L]et us consider the claim of literature's intrinsic theoretical capacity to be a performative matter, a matter of (re)framing the conditions of action and perception within a shifting social-historical terrain, which renders one's relation to the object of knowledge a process (praxis) of restlessness and transformation. In this respect, literature's theoretical praxis makes the classic dichotomy between *vita activa* and *vita contemplative* no longer applicable. ... [S]o literature's aim to knowledge cannot be reduced to an object that could be externally determined and circumscribed. (11)

Gourgouris defines the performance of fiction as a simultaneously practical as well as active process of thinking. Fiction is thereby a mode of thought that continually inscribes knowledge in experience of it, through the "text's conditions of production [e.g.] ... historical context, linguistic idiom, cultural tradition, biographical parameters, and so on," (Gourgouris 11). Gourgouris specifies that these conditions of production, both those of origin (and here I mean specific to the time in which the piece was written) and the instance of textual performance, should "be considered, not external to the text, but internal to the overall process" (11). Understood in this way, fiction is an assemblage of performance and representation, a compound being that gives rise to experience, which both encompasses the creative moment of

¹³ Gourgouris, Stathis. *Does Literature Think?* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003. Print.

its historical production as well as the moment of reading. The performance is, as an event, always singular, but at the same time, because of the actual text's material timelessness and historical origin, also a transgression of singularity. In her analysis of Woolf's fiction, Banfield only emphasises the representational layer of fiction.

Gourgouris understanding of what is at stake in fiction, offers an alternative conceptualisation of the epistemology that pertains to Modernism. As a performance, modernist fiction not only *foregrounding* questions of epistemology, because the way in which these questions are being foregrounded means that they are also being performed – modernist fiction is performing epistemology. In other words, modernist fiction is a form of fiction that is establishing a form of epistemology as its cognitive object. In this sense Modernism seizes to be a representation of a certain system of thought – a certain epistemology – by instead becoming a praxis – a practical explorative mode of thought. Understanding, as Banfield does, Modernism's epistemology to mimetically represent a finalised body of thought, is a significant reduction of the possibilities in modernist fiction. The epistemology of Modernism should rather be considered to be a process of reflecting on epistemological questions, a process of relating the private knowledge of the external world to a public knowledge. This relation between epistemology and Modernism confirms a more diverse interaction between fiction and thought than what mere representation can transfer.

This alternative understanding of Modernism, demands to shift the analytical emphasis from that which is being represented through form or content, toward an investigation of the text as a compound of performance and representation. In other words, the analytical object should be the meeting between the reader and the text, rather than what the author intended when writing the text. In order to explore the idea that fiction performs thinking as well as represents thinking, I intend to follow Gourgouris example and investigate the production of knowledge in the experience of fiction. I believe that by doing so, it will become possible to

approach the epistemology of Modernism as it is being represented and performed. In other words, I will follow the argument that Banfield presents in *The Phantom Table*, but I will take it beyond the question of how the text *represents* in order to ask how it *performs*.

The performative character of fiction, Gourgouris explains, ultimately stems from the creative process – ‘Poiesis.’ Poiesis “does not work by putting forward a definite project to be organized and instituted in some specified future; it works indefinitely and infinitely both because it is irreducible to its parts (that is, singular) but also because it is interminable reproducible each time anew.” (Gourgouris 43) The creative process is continually producing the artwork anew. Banfield’s interpretation of Woolf’s oeuvre for example, is equally a creative process as well as that of Gourgouris. Poiesis, in other words, is the concept Gourgouris uses to designate the assemblage of representation and performance at stake in fiction. In *The Phantom Table* Banfield’s analysis of Woolf’s fiction goes beyond the text itself, she also uses Poiesis, or the experience of fiction, as a more practical mode of thinking. These performances are problematic, because Banfield’s warrant is based on Woolf’s fiction representing philosophy. In the final chapter, “The Modern Elegy,” Banfield explores the boundaries of modern (contemporary) knowledge and she writes that: “The limits [of knowledge] appear also in the problem of transcription, of converting a private, incommunicable acquaintance into a transmittable knowledge by description.” In this dense discussion of the possibilities of knowledge in modern society (of which the quote serves as an example), Banfield refers back to Russell’s epistemology. This means that the process of modern thinking, which Banfield believes to uncover in Woolf’s fiction is defined by an epistemology that Russell already departed from around 1918 which is problematic in itself (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 382-3). In the following I will try to make it more clear how Banfield’s performance of epistemology, her genuine investigation into the value of fiction in relation to knowledge, is

problematical because of her theoretical framework. I will do so by giving her reading of form in *The Waves* a closer look.

In chapter 7: “How describe the world without a self?” (*The Phantom Table* 294-357), Banfield specifies that *The Waves* is an experimental attempt at a truthful representation of the objective world. She argues that Woolf attempts to create a representation of the objective world by experimentally employing the Russellian difference between private and public world, the difference between sense-data and sensibilia, in the novel. Banfield conceptualises the kaleidoscopic soliloquies as representations of individual psychological and subjective ‘perspectives’ and their corresponding sense-data (*The Phantom Table* 308–9). Regardless of their content, the soliloquies offer private perspectives and per definition private knowledge. These intrinsically private perspectives are in the interludes exchanged with the theoretically possible, neutral, unperceived perspectives. According to Banfield, Woolf uses the unperceived perspectives in order to give the soliloquies a relation to an objective reality. This means that Banfield believes that Woolf’s use of innovative language and form in *The Waves* is more a further representation of Russell’s epistemology than a way in which epistemology is being performed. The interludes, she argues, give the private perspectives of the six speakers a relation to a neutral objectivity - “The unobserved thus finds in the novel a “neutral monist” language.” (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 318) The interludes create a logical framework and thereby continuity between the subjective sense-data, and the interludes employ the “images of sensibilia and erect them into an explicit formal expression of the geometry of the external world.” (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 147) In other words, Banfield uses the theoretical possibility of unperceived perspectives in Russell’s epistemology as a formal innovation, which creates fiction that not only represents philosophy, but also gives the novel an ‘objective reality.’

I will try to elucidate why this is a somewhat problematic interpretation of the form of *The Waves*. The second interlude begins as follows:

The sun rose higher. Blue waves, green waves swept a quick fan over the beach, circling the spike of sea-holly and leaving shallow pools of light here and there on the sand. A faint black rim was left behind them. The rocks which had been misty and soft hardened and were marked with red clefts. (Woolf, *The Waves* 21)

First off, the interlude does not necessarily represent a neutral description. If the snippet is read independent from Banfield's analysis on Woolf and Russell, it is possible to read it as a description of a sun-rise, without questioning if it actually represents a *perceived perspective or not*. In Russellian terms, the interlude could just as well be a representation of sense-data as sensibilia as the narrator, though explicitly withdrawn from the text, is still describing the sun, sea and beach. However, if I am to follow the logic of Banfield's argument, the passage is an attempt at representing unperceived perspectives, an attempt that gives the novel a logical form, a form that qua its form represents the experience of the real world. In this sense, the non-perceptible narrator is 'showing' the world, mimicking the method of the camera, before the narrator highlights various landscape features, first zooming in on this – "*shallow pools of light*" – then zooming in on that – "*the rocks which had been misty.*" Banfield argues that it is the lack of pronouns, the few adverbs and the fact that the interlude remains in the past tense, that gives the description an objective character (Banfield, *Unspeakable Sentences* 185–6). The distance gives a sense of being "neither 'egocentric' or 'subject-centred' because [they occur] in contexts with no first- or third-person pronouns" (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 317). The interlude is motivated by an attempt to reach an objective representation of the external world by implementing a logically necessary 'empty space' in the narrative (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 277).

It is curious, however, that Banfield insists on viewing the interlude as an 'objective' or 'neutral' empty space, because the interlude does not escape committing the landscape to description. "Description" Mieke Bal writes "is a privileged site of focalization, and as such it

has a great impact on the ideological and aesthetic effect of the text.” (35) Bal argues that descriptions are never able to obtain complete neutrality, a fact that the modernist authors were well aware of in their critique of Realism (see chapter 1). The neutral gaze, independent as it is from pronouns, explicit subjects, and narrators, does always submit the gazed upon to an (often arbitrarily motivated) rhetoric (Bal 45). The rhetoric of the interlude is a rhetoric of disinterested interest. It is the rhetoric of an observer having the time and eye for observing nature for its own sake. This mode of description, however, leaves out a number of other features of the landscape. The narrator does not commit the land to the scrutiny of domination or the need to meet production quotas. Disengaging nature from the means of survival, e.g. disregarding thousands of years of agriculture and fishery, is a move which is, if not explicitly political, ideologically motivated. It is at any rate hard to imagine a fisherman or a factory worker describe the landscape as Woolf does in the interlude. By not acknowledging this fact, Banfield fails to convince me that her analysis in fact engages the experience of Woolf’s fiction as an independent performance. Together with Bal I “cannot accept its implied elimination of responsibility.” (72) Banfield’s reading of the interlude, remains being a substantial but none the less superficial biographical reading of the way in which *The Waves* represents Russell’s philosophy. It results in failing to grasp the experience at stake in fiction and thereby also failing to grasp what is actually the particular epistemological nature of Woolf’s modernist fiction. Banfield’s interpretation of the form of *The Waves* seems to be dominated by allegory and representation and therefore not by the performance in itself.

Understanding the interludes as Russell’s unperceived perspectives is detrimental for the moments when Banfield tries to think along with the experience of the novel. The reason is that when she in *The Phantom Table* does offer genuine creative thinking in relation to epistemology, as Banfield does in the chapters “Solus ipse, alone in the universe” and “The modern elegy”, these readings are affected by the framework through which she works. In other

words, Banfield's performative and interesting "androgynous union of mysticism and logic" (386) remains uninteresting and sterile, without acknowledging another foundation for the thinking that is at stake in her book. The knowledge that Banfield does uncover and perform in her reading of Woolf's modernist fiction, is so closely dependent on the possibility of objective representations and unperceived perspectives, that it is not possible to conceive this knowledge as independent from the representation of epistemology. That is the reason why I consider the representation of epistemology to be Banfield's most interesting work in *The Phantom Table*, and ultimately why I see it as the most disappointing foundation for an exploration of the epistemology of Modernism.

III – II *The experience of fiction*

When I write that the experience of modernist fiction partakes in a creation of knowledge which can be categorised as epistemological, it is necessary to investigate and qualify this production further in order to develop it academically.

The nature of the experience of fiction is, as Gourgouris points out, defined by Poiesis (11). Poiesis not only characterises the original event when the author actually, historically speaking, creates the work of art, but Poiesis also includes the singular performance of the artwork. In this sense, every new performance of fiction, is another creative process, Poiesis, taking place. This means that when dealing with the performance of fiction, the analytical object is the singular experience of the novel. For this reason, I will now turn my attention to three thinkers who all claim to turn their attention to the experience of the artwork, rather than the artwork itself. By doing so, it will become easier to understand how to make the experience of the artwork the centre of an analysis. And it will be possible to grasp the knowledge at stake in the experience of art better.

In the article “Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience” (2012)¹⁴ on the value and use of the experience of art, the American philosopher Noël Carroll proposes that the experience of art should predominantly be considered in relation to the content of the artwork. In order to establish why, he first uncovers a number of faulty approaches to the experience of artwork. Carroll warns about the dangers of the ‘valuing approach.’ He writes that “the valuing approach does not seem to have a way of rendering such experience intelligible.” (“Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience” 166) The ‘valuing approach’ is an approach which understands the singular process of ‘performing’ the artwork as an event that contains intrinsic cognitive value. Carroll writes that understanding the value of the aesthetic experience as an independent affective response to the artwork is, theoretically speaking, a dead end. It is uninformative, because as an affective reaction alone, Carroll believes, it is impossible to grasp the transition from affect to cognition, which is necessary in order to consider the experience of an artwork a process of cognition. The problem with affirming an intrinsic, cognitive, or affective, value in the aesthetic experience is thereby a problem of theory. Carroll is unable to accept the intrinsic value in the performance of artworks, as the beginning for theoretical consideration – in the sense of the word that it is methodologically reproducible and thereby academically relevant. Carroll writes that “if aesthetic experience is ultimately about valuing the ‘having’ of the experience for its own sake, then how would one tell someone else to go about doing that? ... The formula is stunningly uninformative.” (“Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience” 168). What is important, however, is that Carroll does recognise that there is something at stake in the experience of a work of art in relation to knowledge, but he is wary with how to give this type of knowledge a theoretical value.

What Carroll ultimately suggests, is to understand the aesthetic experience as an experience of credibility in relation to the artwork’s content. To Carroll, with the experience of

¹⁴ Carroll, Noël. “Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 70.2 (2012): 165–77. Web.

the artwork, there follows one question of importance: Is the experience of the artwork credible and is this experience in line with the message of the content? In order to clarify his position, Carroll uses the example of a story about an infanticide. If the murderer in the story comes across reasonable and likeable, even though it was the artist's *intention* to make a moral judgement against infanticide, then the artwork fails as an aesthetic object (Carroll, "Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience" 175). Failing as an aesthetic object means that the artist fails to create affect to support his artwork, the artwork fails in getting its message across successfully. He writes that "a work is *formally* or *aesthetically* defective if it attempts to embody or realize the point or purpose of a work in a way that is inappropriate or that impedes it." ("Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience" 176 my emphasis) It is, in other words, the immediate emotional and affective response to the artwork that enables the use of the experience of the artwork in a scholarly discourse. This experience is only relevant in as far as it is able to help develop a deeper understanding of what the artist in general is trying to convey with the artwork. According to Carroll, the relevance of the artwork's performance of knowledge in relation to scholarship, is a matter of affect, form, and most importantly whether or not these factors convey a sense of credibility. This results in the performance of knowledge being a matter of judging whether or not affect and form confirms the artwork's overall argument (Carroll, "Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience" 176–7). Carroll understands the experience of the artwork to be relevant for thinking, only in so far as it is able to confirm the point or purpose of the artwork.

It is theoretically speaking problematic to relate the "point or purpose of the work" (Carroll, "Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience" 173) back to the author's intention. If the value of the experience of the artwork is only relevant in relation to the purpose of the work as the author perceived it in the moment of creation, then the experience is irrelevant to any theoretical work that goes beyond biographical considerations. Literary readings that depend

on the author's intention is today, by and large, considered irrelevant in relation to a literary theory – mainly because of the difficulty of verifying the knowledge that one can get through the artist's intention, but also because the artist's intention is irrelevant in relation to what message the artwork actually conveys in its singular performance.¹⁵ There is, however, a different way of conceptualising the *point* or *purpose* of the artwork, namely as the point that the reader wishes to infer. In other words, the reader becomes the authority on what the point or purpose of the artwork is. The book *Art in Mind* (2005)¹⁶ by the Dutch literary scholar Ernst van Alphen, is an example of this approach. Investigating how Van Alphen relates the experience of the artwork to his own expectation to the point or purpose of the artwork, enables me to explore to which extent Carroll's 'content approach' can actually be employed in the investigation of the experience of the work, without reverting to the author fallacy.

In *Art in Mind* Van Alphen acknowledges the intrinsic value of the experience of the artwork in relation to abstract thinking. Without much of introduction, Van Alphen begins the first paragraph of the first chapter by investigating "Art as Thinking" (1). Van Alphen specifies that he, by following the theoretical framework of Hubert Damisch, understands art to partake in a broader production of knowledge, as the beholder "is invited to think 'with' the work of art, ... to start a dialogue with it by articulating questions of a more general—for instance, philosophical, political, or social—nature." (4) In this sense Van Alphen is in line with both Carroll and Gourgouris in considering the artwork to be a performance, which helps, he argues, with the construction of important questions. In *Art in Mind* Van Alphen uses works of art to investigate a plethora of important questions, such as the position of the women within modern culture (99-119), gender and sexuality (120-39) and the important question of how to remember the holocaust (180-203). Van Alphen writes, however, that this mode of thinking comes about

¹⁵ See Roland Barthes: "Death of the Author" (Barthes, Roland. "Death of the Author" *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch et. al. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2001 [2010]. 1322-26. Print.

¹⁶ Van Alphen, Ernst. *Art in Mind*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2005. Print.

in a juxtaposition to art history's historicification of art. Damisch "redefines the role of history in art history by showing again and again that only a theoretical perspective enables us to see works of art as a history of *something*." (4) Van Alphen is here effectively arguing that only by engaging the artwork in relation to an already established theoretical framework, – as a history of 'something' – is it possible to approach the thinking at stake in the artwork within an academic discourse. He brackets the performance as well as the artwork's content in order to use the experience of fiction as a way to visualise an argument. What is important for Van Alphen, is defined by the purpose of the theoretical discussion which the reader is engaged in. In this sense, the experience of the artwork fails to become a performance of the artwork in the sense that it is not performed and thinking is not at stake in the reading. Instead the artwork partakes in a mode of thinking which is already at stake in the beholder. In other words, according to Van Alphen, the thinking, in which the experience of art partakes, is a matter of the beholder's predetermined theoretical framework. Understood like this, art again remains stuck at the level of representation. Art is then a philosophical discourse and the thinking at stake in art becomes a matter of intention. Not the intention of the author, but the intention of the beholder. The title of the first paragraph: 'Art as thinking,' confirms the intermediary character of art in Van Alphen's conceptualisation. The main problem with Van Alphen's use of the experience of artworks in *Art in Mind*, which echoes my problem with Carroll's theoretical framework (and that of Banfield), is that he overrides the performance as an experience that is a singular event. The singularity is making the experience of the artwork intrinsically valuable. The experience of art is an anarchistic 'possibility to think' outside an already established discourse. The performance of the artwork opens a singular and independent field of interpretation, but both Carroll and Van Alphen are unwilling to grasp these fields of interpretation theoretically. To them the experience of the artwork always refers back to parameters that are outside the experience of the artwork itself. Theoretically speaking, Van

Alphen is unable to point to any reason intrinsic to the artwork, that justifies why art should be perceived as thinking. “Art as thinking” seems to stipulate that it could just as well be other things. “[T]his ‘visual thought’” Van Alphen writes about a portrait by Rineke Dijkstra “is ... undeniably a demonstration of thinking and, specifically, of thinking history.” (47) I agree with Van Alphen that art is an alternative modus of thinking – in the sense that thinking is taking place – but without a development of an independent theoretical framework for art’s thinking, it will remain impossible not to get stuck in the subject’s discovery of an object. An understanding of knowledge at stake in art that, like Banfield’s- and Carroll’s reading, is unable to transgress the dominance of the subject’s ‘I.’ Van Alphen’s interpretations are personal readings that are violently forcing a context through which the artworks are to be understood. In order to understand how art *is* thinking, instead of understanding art *as* thinking, I turn to the intrinsic value in the *aesthetic* experience as the Danish philosopher Dorthe Jørgensen conceptualises it. I will demonstrate how Jørgensen conceptualises the experience of art, as free and creative cognition, which relates the world around us as knowledge.

Similar to the two previous thinkers, Jørgensen investigates the special character of knowledge at stake in the experience of art. Her point of departure is that the experience of art takes part in an alternative, or expanded, mode of thinking (“Sensoriness and Transcendence” 68)¹⁷. The main difference between her approach to the experience of art and that of Van Alphen and Carroll, is that Jørgensen explicitly tries develop a theoretical framework for understanding the thinking which is at stake in the experience of art as a singular and independent event. To Jørgensen, thinking (and cognition) is not “an act, but an event” (“Sensoriness and Transcendence” 67). The knowledge at stake in the experience of art, can not be knowledge which is defined by a subject investigating an object. The result of this is that knowledge can neither be understood as intended by the author nor by the reader. There is a form of creation

¹⁷ Jørgensen, Dorthe. “Sensoriness and Transcendence.” *Transcendence and Sensoriness: Perceptions, Revelation, and the Arts*. Ed. Geir Tryggve Hellemo et al. Leiden: Brill, 2015. 267–268. Web.

of knowledge in itself at stake in the *experience* itself and the experience is therefore absolutely crucial. In this way, Jørgensen also answers Carroll's critique of understanding the experience of the artwork as an experience of intrinsic value. This means that the experience of art is valuable even though it is not reproducible. Jørgensen argues that the knowledge at stake in art is always singular, which also makes the knowledge at stake in art new in the broader sense word. To Jørgensen, the artwork accommodates an alternative mode of thinking that is per definition always new, and therefore more difficult to grasp in language, but none the less more giving in praxis.

In order to develop a theoretical framework for understanding the relation between art and thinking, Jørgensen argues that "as human beings, we have aesthetic experiences, and these experiences call for interpretation" ("Why do We Need Philosophical Aesthetics" 31)¹⁸. Jørgensen conceptualises 'experience' differently than for example Carroll. To Jørgensen any experience, is only considered to be a proper experience when the experience gives rise to cognitive value ("The Experience of Immanent Transcendence" 35)¹⁹. Experience proper separates itself from mere impression by kindling cognition as well as the senses. Jørgensen writes that "an impression doesn't leave any lasting trace in the person who has it, apart from the recollection of the mental 'dent' it may have left behind. ... [E]xperiences bring about changes, and consequently occasion wondering and also reflection, although the individual may not be conscious of 'thinking'." ("The Experience of Immanent Transcendence" 37) The knowledge at stake in mere impression, is a knowledge that becomes a question of a form of correspondence between the subject's mental image and an actual object in external world. "Cognition is thus regarded as a mental act, performed by a mind that in order to execute its act of cognition consciously reaches out for something other" (Jørgensen, "Sensoriness and

¹⁸ Jørgensen, Dorthe. "Why Do We Need Philosophical Aesthetics." *Transfiguration: Nordic Journal of Religion and the Arts* 3.1 (2010): 17–34. Web.

¹⁹ Jørgensen, Dorthe. "The Experience of Immanent Transcendence." *Transfiguration: Nordic Journal of Religion and the Arts* 5.1 (2011): 35–52. Web.

Transcendence” 67). The cognition at stake in the ‘proper’ experience of the artwork, however, is of a different nature. In the experience of the artwork cognition takes form as an event that happens *to* the subject. “[C]ognizing is something that happens to the subject” as an experience proper, “instead of being something that it is in charge of.” ... “The event that this comes to be is both the cognition, and the truth about what shows itself” (Jørgensen, “Sensoriness and Transcendence” 67). This is the reason, according to Jørgensen, for it being detrimental for the act of thinking to grasp the performance of knowledge in the artwork as either corresponding to the author’s intention or an already established theoretical discourse. The knowledge at stake in fiction is according to Jørgensen an event that can only *happen* to the subject, given that the subject awards attention to the event. She does not hesitate to define this more open and erratic form of knowledge as actual “true knowledge” (“Sensoriness and Transcendence” 67) in a more traditional and philosophical sense, because it is a form of knowledge that creates something new.

This understanding of the aesthetic experience is different than the most common conceptualisations today. In Carroll’s article, the specifically aesthetic part of an experience is merely that the experience has been raised by an *aesthetic* object – meaning an object that is considered to be an artistic object. Jørgensen writes, however, that the term ‘Aesthetica’ was by H. G. Baumgarten coined as a term relating to the Greek *aisthanomai*, designating the possibility of obtaining knowledge through experience. Drawing on Baumgarten’s definition Jørgensen labels the alternative process of thinking for ‘beautiful,’ because the processes of thinking begin in relation to the concept of beauty. “[B]eautiful [is] everything that has a value in itself, and which thus differs from the useful by having its purpose in itself” (Jørgensen, “Sensoriness and Transcendence” 66). Consequently, one is thinking beautifully, when the process does not have a goal outside itself (Jørgensen, *Den Skønne Tænkning* 45)²⁰. The product

²⁰ Jørgensen, Dorthe. *Den Skønne Tænkning*. Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2014. Print.

of beautiful thinking is an independent form of reflection, which takes its point of departure in the experience of the artwork, without letting either representation or performance dominate. Beautiful thinking is characterized by receiving meaning and cohesion in the reflective process the performance of the artwork instigates. But because the experience in itself does not offer knowledge as a finalised body of thought, the experiences of cohesion and meaningfulness require interpretation. In a sense, interpretation is precisely what already differentiates experience proper from mere impression – experience proper is a reflexive, transgressive, openness, as opposed to the objective character of the ‘dent’ of impression. The cohesion and meaningfulness being experienced are symbolic, which demands a conscious reflexive interpretation on the part of the individual having the experience. Experience proper relates to a reality which is not immediately accessible, in the sense that it is not “a fact in the empirical sense, instead it is a hypothetical interpretation of what is” ... “Or, more precisely ... [we] have the very experience in common that a feeling of cohesion and meaningfulness is possible, however different the individual manifestation of the feeling [we] remember may be.” (Jørgensen, “The Experience of Immanent Transcendence” 37–8) The reader has to be open to the symbolic character of the artwork. Not understood as a transcendental symbol that transgresses the artwork, but rather as something which is always immanently available in the experience of the artwork. The difference between the interpretative move, which is suggested by Jørgensen, and that which I have been criticising earlier in Banfield’s and Van Alphen’s work, is that Jørgensen requires that the investigation in the experience of the artwork. Jørgensen suggests a hermeneutic approach, which takes the experience serious as that which is valuable in itself. In this sense the experience should be understood as an event, which with an openness toward new knowledge, dissolves the schism between the interrogating subject and the interrogated object (Jørgensen, “Sensoriness and Transcendence” 74). In this sense, the experience dissolves knowledge, which is understood as that of an enlightened subject instead,

and this is where Jørgensen's approach is dovetailing nicely with Modernism's simultaneous use of both representation and performance to start reflection.

III – III *Time is changing*

In the above chapter, I laid out how modernist fiction should be understood as being both a performance of thinking as well as a representation of thinking. I have tried to follow this train of thought in order to be able to investigate the relation between *The Waves* and epistemology. Jørgensen, Van Alphen and Carroll, all understand art, and the experience of the artwork, as an important factor in the process of thinking. For Carroll and Van Alphen, however, the experience of the artwork remains external to the process of thinking at stake in fiction. To them the experience is more a support rather than an act of thinking in itself. Carroll channels his interest toward the content of the artwork (“Defending the Content Approach to Aesthetic Experience” 172)²¹ and Van Alphen claims that art thinks, while all the thinking seems to take place everywhere but in the experience of the artwork. Van Alphen expects thinking in art, without developing a framework for how art thinks. He employs the thinking which is going on ‘in’ art, in order to expand on an already established theoretical framework. Jørgensen argues that the reader has to be open for the thinking that is at stake in the performance of fiction. The reader has to interpret the symbolic nature of the experience as that which ‘shows itself, as itself in itself’. To my estimation, both Carroll and Van Alphen fall short of entering into a genuine relation with the knowledge producing experience of the artwork, because they try to employ the experience of the artwork, without letting the experience be the point of departure in their work. As a result, they focus excessively on the theory that they are developing, rather than the content of their experience. In other words, the performance of fiction, a part of the actual

²¹ Carroll, Noël. “Defending the Content Approach to Aesthetic Experience.” *Metaphilosophy* 46.2 (2015): 171–188. Web.

experience of the artwork, becomes a by-product of the theoretical framework they employ – in this way the experience itself is bracketed by the experience's relationship to theory.

Carroll calls his approach to the experience of art a 'content' approach ("Defending the Content Approach to Aesthetic Experience" 172). He writes that insofar an "aesthetic experience is an experience, it has content. One straightforward way of attempting to get at the nature of aesthetic experience is to attempt to circumscribe that content." ("Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience" 173) The circumscription of the experience is of critical importance and Carroll points toward art's 'qualitative dimension' as the main parameter for aesthetic experience. Under art's qualitative dimension, Carroll considers the 'anthropomorphic'- or affective properties to be the most relevant, e.g.: "the joy in the orchestral music" ("Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience" 173). According to Carroll there are two ways of dealing with these 'expressive properties' or 'properties of intensity': "either [we] attend to the sadness in the dance or we may attend, at one remove, to the way in which the organization of the elements of the choreography elicits the impression of sadness from us." ("Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience" 173) Attending to the aesthetic experience, is, in other words, a matter of both attending to the affect that the artwork transfers and to the way in which this affect, formally speaking, comes about. This creates two issues that a Carrollian analysis has to make clear. First, what are the text's expressive properties? – Meaning, which elements in the text invoke affect (Carroll, "Defending the Content Approach to Aesthetic Experience" 174). Second, how are these properties coming into being? These two questions then have to be related to the artwork's point or purpose, because only then is it, according to Carroll, possible to argue that the aesthetic experience has a place within scholarly discourse. I will now attempt to explore the practical difference between Carroll and Van Alphen's approach and Jørgensen's attention to the experience itself. I will be testing the two modes of reading with a short passage

from *The Waves*. Let me start by elucidating the first parameter in relation to the text, by investigating my own experience of sadness and melancholy in the following passage:

‘And Time,’ said Bernard, ‘lets fall its drop. The drop that has formed on the roof of the soul falls. On the roof of my mind time, forming, lets fall its drop. Last week as I stood shaving, the drop fell. I, standing with my razor in my hand, became suddenly aware of the merely habitual nature of my action (this is the drop forming) and congratulated my hands, ironically, for keeping at it. Shave, shave, shave, I said. Go on shaving. The drop fell. All through the day’s work, at intervals, my mind went to an empty place, saying, “What is lost? What is over?” And “Over and done with,” I muttered, “over and done with”, solacing myself with words. People noticed the vacuity of my face and the aimlessness of my conversation. The last words of my sentence tailed away. And as I buttoned on my coat to go home I said more dramatically “I have lost my youth”. (Woolf, *The Waves* 153)

Bernard is here confronted with a new experience of time. Not because time itself changes, but Bernard’s perception of time changes – time becomes a finite entity that slowly sieves away, drop for drop. At the moment Bernard realises how time shifts toward irretrievability, “the merely habitual nature of ... [his] action[s]” (Woolf, *The Waves* 153) exposes the present as a composition of past and future. Bernard is lamenting the loss of youth and the radical possibility youth contains. Throughout *The Waves*, Bernard dreams of becoming a poet. In his youth Bernard is not shy to pre-emptively quote his own future biographer or of comparing himself to Byron (Woolf, *The Waves* 61-3). But while shaving Bernard loses his until then natural relation to the world, because his urge to represent changes as he experiences time bifurcate. Bernard no longer experiences the same necessity to represent the world. His once ‘beautiful speech’ has left him and he starts questioning the nature of language and even the relevance of description. Bernard asks: “[W]hy describe a man in trouble with his mule?” only to immediately retort that: “It is over” (Woolf, *The Waves* 156). It is as if the altered relationship with the present makes description wholly irrelevant. Bernard’s youthful hubris defines the sadness of the passage. The dreams of a young man invoke a sense of possibility, but in combination with the same man’s desperation at not fulfilling his potential, they invoke a sense

of sadness and melancholy. Let me now try to move beyond my immediate response to the passage, in order to get a better understanding of the experience.

At the moment we encounter Bernard in the passage above, the passing of time is increasingly becoming a more central part of the story. The importance of time surges after two important events take place – the sun reaching its zenith in the fifth interlude and the death of Percival (Woolf, *The Waves* 121-4). The sun reaching its zenith can be read allegorically as if the life of the six has peaked. This occurrence, in combination with the death of their dear friend Percival, forces the characters, not only to contemplate death, but also their own extended process of dying. This extended process of dying is accentuated by the repetitive nature of everyday life – “Shave, shave, shave, I said. Go on shaving. The drop fell.” (Woolf, *The Waves* 153) The unrestricted present is inherent and the possibilities of time in youth have bifurcated toward a restricted and finite future, defined the inability to living up to the dreams of the youth. The main shift in the passage is a shift in Bernard’s relationship with time. Before Bernard’s new relationship with time he still has ideas and dreams of a future. But these ideas or dreams are of a kind that relate to the present. For example, just after starting at college Bernard dreams of his own future: “Let me suppose that I am asked to stay at Restover, King’s Laughton” (Woolf, *The Waves* 64). In youth Bernard dreams, not of a future, but rather of a present. The ‘future’ is not a relation to a possible future reality, but rather a wish for a different present. The same with the past, it is not a relation to something that has passed, but rather a hope to relive experiences.

Before Bernard’s experience of the bifurcation of time in the passage quoted above, the future and the past are a sort of implicit, not-yet-realised or already-realised, present. At the moment we meet the middle-aged Bernard, however, we encounter him in the process of discovering a new relationship with- and perception of time. The future and the past are no longer conditions of the present. The initial shock pertaining to the new form of time is

disregarded with an ironic gesture, as Bernard is congratulating his hands for “keeping at it” (Woolf, *The Waves* 153) in the face of his discovery. Irony, however, is unable to hold back a new reality and a new experience of time. Bernard conceptualises the experience as a drop hanging from the “roof of the soul.” The singular and repetitive way in which water drops, is being used as a metaphor for how the passing of time manifests itself to Bernard. By using the drop as a metaphor, time develops from being a series of singular presents to bifurcate into a past and a future. To Bernard time is now irreversibly conditioned by the past and the future. The past designates the missed opportunities of youth and the future conversely highlights the demise of the present. When time is characterised by a future-past dichotomy the creative process also ceases to hold power. Bernard’s literary masterpiece has not yet materialised and with the development of a time that is an indication of past-future, Bernard also loses the opportunity to let it materialise in the future. The new perception of time strips him of his identity as a writer – this loss must be the instigator of my sense of sadness and melancholy.

I have tried to focus the short analysis on the specific theme in the passage quoted above. I hope to have revealed how the changing experience of time results in Bernard losing his identity as a writer and poet, which in turn instigates sadness and melancholy. It is an attempt at an analysis, which conforms to Carroll’s expectation of the aesthetic experience. What Carroll then proposes the scholar working with aesthetic experience to do, is to focus on the affect that the experience produces and its formal condition – the feeling of melancholy produced by time and the formally speaking different role of time – and relate them to the point or the purpose of the text. It is, however, in relation to the purpose of the text that Carroll’s use of the aesthetic experience becomes problematic, because if the text’s purpose is defined from the perspective of the writer’s intention, which Carroll suggests, it is not possible to use the aesthetic experience in any other circumstance than in biographical readings. As mentioned above, the author’s intention is today, by and large, considered irrelevant in relation to a literary

theory – mainly because there is no way of confirming knowledge, scholarly speaking, that has to invoke author intention. I will in the following, similar to what Van Alphen does in *Art in Mind*, try to adapt my reading of the text to a point or purpose which relates to already established theory.

As explained earlier, Banfield proposes that Woolf's fiction is a representation of a Russellian epistemology. If the aesthetic experience, an experience of melancholy and sadness – an experience formally speaking conditioned by a shift in the representation of time and a dissolving identity – is of relevance in Banfield's analysis, it can only be in relation to whether or not the aesthetic experience authorises the moments in her analysis where melancholy and sadness take part. In other words, it is necessary to find the place in the theoretical framework where the specific aesthetic experience is relevant. The aesthetic experience can then affirm the reliability of her analysis. Banfield's theoretical framework on Woolf's fiction, however, does not include feelings of melancholy or sadness. But Banfield does argue that Woolf's fiction is to be read as a modern elegy, an elegy to the lost members of her family and the loss of innocence in modernity (*The Phantom Table* 236).

Woolf's elegiac form is ... prose fiction she qualifies as "modern." Its modernity partly lies in its not flinching before the reality of death in all its starkness[.] ... It does not suffice for the modern elegy to set down the brutal reality, it must also *end mourning*. The call to weep must become that to "weep no more." (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* 236-7, my emphasis)

According to Banfield, Woolf's fiction disavows sadness and melancholy. But if we are to take my experience serious, then it goes against Banfield's reading of Woolf's modern elegy, because the modern elegy is a departure from melancholic preoccupation with that which has been lost. Banfield finds that Woolf's Modernism is a "work of mourning" which enables the reader to move beyond the egotistical preoccupation (*The Phantom Table* 237). In this sense, there seems to be little or no consistency between Banfield's analysis and my aesthetic experience, as I have laid it out above. There is, to use Carroll's words: "a gap between what

the work mandates and what it makes affectively available.” (“Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience” 176) And though Carroll here relates to the gap between the intention of the author and what the author puts forward in the text, the same applies for Van Alphen’s imposition of theory over the text.

What I hope to have made clear in the previous, is that the way in which Carroll and Van Alphen try to use the aesthetic experience within academic writing, always reduces the experience of the artwork to being an auxiliary argument. The experience can either confirm or disprove relations, but it is not valued as an alternative process of knowledge in itself. Using the experience of the artwork as a supporting argument, is a detrimental reduction considering the cognitive potential Jørgensen proposes the experience to contain. To Van Alphen and Carroll, the aesthetic experience is merely *useful*, but as an experience of value – as an intricate moment of creative thinking in itself – both Carroll’s- and Van Alphen’s aesthetic experience fail to add anything original.

I will later return to the critical nature of the reduction of the aesthetic experience, but first I will offer a reading of the passage above by trying to approach the aesthetic experience as an experience in itself valuable. I will let the experience conduct the development of the argument as a mode of thinking in its own right. In the passage Bernard’s perception of time develops in crucial manner. The experience is not one that points toward something of material nature, but it is rather an experience that relates to his sense of his place in the world (in this sense, the passage above is in fact a representation of Bernard having an aesthetic experience). The experience renders him momentarily incapable of relating to his own body as a part of himself – together with his identity he loses his subjectivity. He is distanced from himself in the sense that his natural relation to the world, becomes a relationship of misfiring intention – “People noticed my vacuity of my face and the aimlessness of my conversation.” (Woolf, *The Waves* 153) It is hard for Bernard to pin-point the specific nature of his new relationship with

time. What he is able to establish, however, is that the experience is of a nature that irretrievably changes his relation to the world – “I have lost my youth” (Woolf, *The Waves* 153).

What Bernard experiences as a loss of youth, is in fact a loss of a natural relationship between language (description) and reality. Throughout *The Waves* Bernard lives through descriptions of the external world – he states that he “only comes into existence when the plumber, or the horse-dealer, or whoever it may be, says something which sets me alight.” (Woolf, *The Waves* 109) Bernard’s natural impulse is to interpret reality through words. The fact that life, to Bernard, consists of a natural urge to interpret reality through description, offers an interesting emphasis on the relationship between representation and performance. Before being confronted with the influence of time, Bernard’s literary descriptions consist of creative representations. When arriving in London by train, Bernard describes the city as following: “‘How fair, how strange,’ ... ‘glittering, many-pointed and many-domed London lies before me under mist. Guarded by gasometers, by factory chimneys, she lies sleeping as we approach.’” (Woolf, *The Waves* 91) His description of London includes creative additions as well as general anthropomorphisation, but most importantly Bernard is unable not to mix *representation* and *imagination*.

When he is confronted with the bifurcation of time, we learn that the natural equilibrium between representation and language (form) is disturbed. Bernard discovers his own mortality and he loses his immediate descriptive relation to reality. Creative representation no longer offers Bernard a trustworthy vent of his interpretative urge, and his descriptions become pure representation that are essentially empty of a true creative impulse. Language has become fake and it is exposed in its impotence when he attempts to increase the theatricality: “And as I buttoned up my shirt coat to go home I said more dramatically, “I have lost my youth”.” (Woolf, *The Waves* 153). Before the bifurcation of time, the descriptive interpretation of reality was characterised by an equilibrium between representation and pure creation. But as Bernard

discovers that his perception of time has changed, the equilibrium is eschewed. Description becomes pure representation, which he over-dramatizes in an attempt to regain the force which his descriptions had earlier. Description and representation are exposed in their emptiness. In this sense, by experiencing the bifurcation of time, Bernard's urge to describe is exposed as a lost struggle between reality and representation, a struggle that he discovers reality to have lost long ago.

Bernard's relation to time is absolutely crucial for his being in the world. It changes his ability to interpret and create a reality around him and it forces him to reevaluate his own position as a subject in relation to the external world. The change that Bernard experiences, beautifully exposes the importance for reflecting on the role of time in life. Is time a matter of past/future or an unconditional present? It is at any instance important to reflect on this essential matter in life, in order not to be swept off your feet by a tidal wave of change. Such reflections are difficult to begin with and they are not made easier by trying to relate to time through its scientific conceptualisations. In physics, time is relevant to your position in a gravitational field. Earth's gravitational field offers a time we have defined by the 24 hours it takes the earth to spin around its own axis in relation to the sun. The consequences of the time that physics confronts us with is endlessly difficult to think through, it is therefore necessary to conceptualise it differently. Bernard's discovery of his own relation to time in *The Waves*, is one such attempt to think it through differently. An attempt which forces the reader to reflect on the very abstract manner through which we experience time.

In the previous I attempted to let my analysis be guided by my own experience of the text. In order to let the analysis, remain free I have only sporadically connected it to the ongoing discussions of this thesis. I have, however, attempted to stay focused on the fact that fiction contains two parallel series that both have to be included, because it is when these series intersect that knowledge occurs. In this sense, I have tried to accommodate the thinking at stake

in modernist fiction by attempting to keep the series of representation out from the series of performance. These two series both form the experience of the artwork, but at the same time they are still independent from each other. I will in the following and last chapter elaborate further on using the experience in the reading of a text, as well as I will discuss the relationship between representation and performance further.

IV – Waves and series – Knowledge at stake in *The Waves*

In the previous chapter, I investigated Carroll's, Van Alphen's, and Jørgensen's approach to the experience of art, in order to establish a way to approach the knowledge at stake in the experience. I found that the three thinkers all agree that the experience of art brings about something more, something that within a naturalistic epistemology can be defined as knowledge. There are, however, big discrepancies between the way the three thinkers relate to the knowledge at stake in the experience of art. I argued that Van Alphen fails to engage the knowledge at stake in the experience of the artwork itself, because he uses art as a means to visualise and justify various theoretical positions and different theoretical developments in thinking. Carroll and Jørgensen, on the other hand, try to engage and develop the knowledge at stake in the experience of art within an academic discourse. But the two thinkers approach this knowledge in very different manners. Carroll proposes that the reader is to approach the formal characteristics of the text and put them in relation to the point or purpose of the text. By doing so, Carroll is not able to substantiate what the point of an artwork is, and the method seems to impose external considerations on both the representational level as well as the performative. Jørgensen on the other hand, proposes that art demands a free and imaginative – hermeneutic – approach, in order to facilitate the thinking inherently at stake in the experience of art. *Free* in the sense that if art's cognitive potential is taken seriously, it must not be reduced to proving a point in another argument, because then the knowledge fails at being truly new. *Imaginative* in the sense that it is only by approaching the artwork with an open imagination that there will be a possibility for knowledge to develop and establish itself in the meeting between the object and the subject. Taking Jørgensen's framework as something to be developed further, I attempt to uncover how knowledge is experienced in and through *The Waves*.

If Modernism is more intimately related to epistemology than other artistic movements, this is a consequence of, as I have argued above, the way in which the modernist fiction makes

representation and performance interact, more than it is a product of either one, or the other aspect of fiction. The performance of the artwork is irreducible, it is always becoming and never a representation of exclusively external factors. With this framework in mind, I will approach the epistemology of Modernism anew. The two factors I will pay close attention to in the reading of Woolf's text, are how the series of representation and of performance interact to create a singular experience of fiction. In *The Waves* the two series are closely related to each other. On the level of representation, Bernard is deeply invested in an exploration of the possibilities (and debilities) of language. Bernard's struggle with language is theoretically interesting, because his struggle, as it is represented by Woolf, is mirroring the reader's struggle in the experience of modernist fiction. In effect I will follow the connections and questions that arise in reading the text, in order to attempt to interpret these experiences in relation to the possibility of grasping the knowledge at stake in the *The Waves*. This approach is clearly hermeneutic, but instead of basing itself on an investigation of a transcendent truth or meaning inherent in the artwork, the truth which is at stake in this form of reading is the experience itself ("Sensoriness and Transcendence" 69). In this sense the approach broadens from being a narrow close reading, to become an investigation of the way in which knowledge comes to be in the experience. I will attempt to continually return to the representation of Bernard's struggle with the role of language in life, as well as my personal struggle with language in the experience of the text.

This approach will enable me to respond to the questions that have been posed in this thesis. Namely, to which extent knowledge is transferred in *The Waves* and how. The approach will help me explore how Modernism foregrounds questions – not only as representations of questions, but rather as a compound of performance and representation of questions. I do not expect that this approach will harness the knowledge at stake in fiction and thereby propose one single unified argument. Instead I expect that the production of knowledge at stake in the

experience of fiction to be erratic, multifaceted, and diverse, which makes it my work as a literary scholar to grasp and accentuate the experiences that can become one argument.

IV – I Rhythmic fiction – modernist fiction?

As explained in the above chapters, in *The Waves* Woolf writes about the lives of the six friends through an external narrator's short declaratory interjections. The reader experiences the story through the private perspectives of internal monologues. These character-bound internal monologues are framed by the interludes that are set in free indirect discourse. As a reader, I gain access to a world, which is seemingly fragmented and filled with the idiosyncrasies of each speaker, but at the same time there is an external, objective, world outside each speakers' private perspective. In the introduction to the Oxford University Press edition of the novel, Gillian Beer writes about the alternative setup of the novel that: "Woolf ... make[s] it clear that this [*The Waves*] was to be experimental work, work that would fundamentally challenge the bounds of fiction." (xv) Beer tries to make the reader appreciate that *The Waves* is not a traditional work of fiction, in the sense that it does not follow established or traditional narrative patterns. Instead, *The Waves* follows individual perceptions, scattered events that form several interjecting and intersecting series. Beer states that this mode of storytelling is modernist, because its experimental mode of narration tries to grasp what is left out by traditional storytelling. She qualifies this by arguing that *The Waves* "would test the established demarcations between individual and communal experience. It would extend the reach of language and suffer its debilities. It would follow a *rhythm*, not a plot." (Beer xv, my emphasis) The rhythm that Beer discovers in *The Waves*, is Woolf's contribution to modernist fiction. It is an alternative mode of storytelling. As a rhythmic novel, *The Waves* develops less toward one final and unified story and more toward a general development of singular parts that accompany each other to form a pattern. Percival's death is a good example of this alternative

mode of rhythmic storytelling: Percival dies suddenly, not within the story, but rather in the six speakers' experience of his death. Whereas Neville is devastated with grief, he recognises his death immediately: "He is dead" said Neville. "He fell. His horse tripped." (Woolf, *The Waves* 124) Rhoda approaches Percival's death in a more indirect manner: "Now the shadow has fallen and the purple light slants downwards." (Woolf, *The Waves* 130) To Louis, Percival's death is recalled somewhat parenthetically and only in relation to his own comparable position in society: "Percival has died ... Susan has children; Neville mounts rapidly to the conspicuous heights. Life passes." (Woolf, *The Waves* 140) The death of Percival is more a distinct event in the ongoing rhythm, than it is a development of the plot. The event deeply influences every speaker, without any of them witnessing the physical occurrence. The event gains immense importance as the characters continuously revisit his death through their meeting with the world. Percival's death is, instead of a development of the plot and a distinct element of closure, or an element that is opening the story further, a phantom which rhythmically returns throughout the novel. In this sense, each character represents a unique rhythm and each of these rhythms intersect and interact with the other at several instances. Every rhythm is made up by singular events and sometimes the same event partakes in all rhythms, such as Percival's death. Understood as a rhythm, Woolf's experimental fiction can be read as an attempt to accommodate the, in Deleuzian terms, serial nature of the experience of the real world.

A novel that follows a rhythm rather than a plot, is a challenge directed against the traditional nature of prose – as Beer writes: *The Waves* "would bring into question what gets left out when life is described." (xv) Modernist prose must have, as Beer quotes Woolf for writing in "The Narrow Bridge of Art" "something of the exaltation of poetry, but much of the ordinariness of prose. It will be dramatic, and yet not a play. It will be read, not acted." (xxi) Woolf's experimental fiction is an attempt to transgress the status of language as a mean of representation. Language is to Woolf a problematic barrier between the external world of the

reader and the fictional world of the text. Following a rhythm rather than a plot is an attempt at diminishing the difference between the reader's experience of the external world and his or her experience of the fictional world. In this sense, Woolf's rhythmic fiction is not at first something which *foregrounds* questions of an epistemological nature, but rather an attempt to make the experience of fiction more in tune with the experience of objective reality – an attempt at disrupting the barrier between the subject and the text. The rhythmic nature of *The Waves* forces the reader to perform the novel on a different level than a plot-based novel. It is as a different type of performance that *The Waves* becomes epistemologically relevant, it is as a rhythm that Woolf's modernist fiction is closer related to the experience of the real world.

Jørgensen explains that Western culture is dominated by an ocularcentric paradigm, which effectively makes it impossible to disregard the subject of the reader ("Sensoriness and Transcendence" 71). Ocularcentricism is, like logocentrism, a negative aspect of the Western Enlightenment ideals that Modernism is trying to depart from. Jørgensen suggests that the multisensory peripheral vision and a more tactile being-in-the-world, should be emphasised as an analytical tool. The rhythm at stake in *The Waves* is, opposed to representation, a multisensory experience that accommodates the nature of peripheral being-part-of. As a rhythm, Woolf represents the story in *The Waves* as something different from the logocentric, one-dimensional, plot-based representation. By employing rhythm Woolf relates neither to the mind nor the body, the rhythm creates a *being-part-of*. The rhythm makes the performance of modernist fiction dovetail with that which is being represented. This collaboration accentuates the fact that *The Waves* perform an anti-logocentric epistemology.

By emphasising the rhythmic nature of *The Waves*, I have returned to the question of how epistemology is at stake in Modernism. The fact that Modernism is better understood as a performance of knowledge rather than a form of fiction that represents epistemology, opens up for a discussion regarding how *The Waves* relates the knowledge at stake in the experience of

it. I have just argued that the knowledge at stake in *The Waves* depends more on the experience of a rhythm rather than a plot. The rhythmic nature of the novel implies that it is important to investigate the specific way in which rhythm is present in our experience of reality and production of knowledge. In other words, by employing rhythm as a way to tell a story, *The Waves* is maybe closer related to the way in which we obtain knowledge from the external world than other novels.

IV – II Language, sense and rhythm

In order to do so I turn to *The Logic of Sense* (1969)²² by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, in which he investigates the relationship between sense and knowledge. Deleuze explains that “[s]ense is never only one of the two terms of the duality which contrasts things and propositions, substantives and verbs, denotations and expressions” instead sense is always an “articulation of the difference between the two terms, since it has at its disposal an impenetrability which is its own and within which it is reflected.” (35) Sense, Deleuze explains, is always “at the frontier, at the cutting edge” – it is the event of the coming together of the aforementioned dualities. Sense is, however, not something which necessarily has to be thought hard and long about, because “one is established ... within sense.” (Deleuze 35) This means that sense is not a question of the subject’s intentional ‘sensing’ of the world, rather “[s]ense is like the sphere in which I am already established in order to enact possible denotations, and even to think their conditions” (35). What makes Deleuze’s conceptualisation of the production of knowledge in sense relevant for this thesis, is that according to him the moment of sense is an event, and the event is a part of a series. As events within series, sense necessarily always already *makes* sense (35). The sensual impression of the external world is simultaneous with

²² Deleuze, Gilles. *The Logic of Sense*. Trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale. 2004. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014. Print.

the experience's making-sense of the external world. Sense and making sense are series that run parallel to each other, but at the same time they interact, interrelate and intersect to such an extent that the two series are, analytically speaking, not interesting if untangled (38). This means that the experience of the external world, such as the young Bernard's urge to describe the world in his meeting with it, is impossible to conceptualise and imagine as nonsense. At the same time his urge to describe is also an abstraction from a world that necessarily already makes sense on in itself.

In order to elucidate in which way I believe Deleuze's conceptualisation of sense is relevant for *The Waves* I will delve further into Bernard's life and his relation to description. Bernard has intense difficulties with his experience of reality and the way in which reality is represented in language. As mentioned above, Bernard has, from an early age already a relationship with representation, which is different from the other speakers in *The Waves*. Already in their childhood Susan becomes aware of this character trait and she says: "Now you trail away ... making phrases" (Woolf, *The Waves* 12) in an attempt to stop Bernard from entering a world of fiction. She stops him, because while 'making phrases' Bernard loses an immediate relationship with the external world, a relationship that already makes sense without being represented. Bernard's relationship with the external world is conditioned not only by his ability to describe it through language, but also by his need to describe it. In this sense, to Bernard reality is an abstract assemblage of representation and presentation, in which representation seems to play a larger role than for the other five speakers. It is necessary for Bernard to filter his experiences through language, in order for him to *be* in the external world.

This relationship sometimes comes off as problematic, because Bernard again and again gets sidetracked in his descriptions. In the following, Bernard and Jinny are escaping the others, but his urge to represent sidetracks his attention as well as conditions their escape:

'Let us now crawl,' said Bernard, 'under the canopy of the currant leaves, and tell stories. Let us inhabit the underworld.' ... "This is our universe, the others pass down the

carriage-drive. The skirts of Miss Hudson and Miss Curry sweep by like candle extinguishers. Those are Susan's white socks. Those are Louis' neat sand-shoes firmly printing the gravel. Here come warm gusts of decomposing leaves, of rotting vegetation. We are in a swamp now; in a malarial jungle. (Woolf, *The Waves* 16)

First Bernard is representing the real world, but soon his urge to use the potential immanent in language takes over. Bernard is driven to "tell stories" and "inhabit the underworld." The underworld is a world of representation, which Bernard creates and inhabits as a barrier against the real world and a space within which he can live. In the world of language, the young Bernard escapes both Miss Hudson and Miss Curry as well as being tied down into "neat sand-shoes" or "white socks." But even the world of representation breaks down as Bernard is overwhelmed by the smell of "decomposing leaves" and "rotting vegetation." Bernard first reacts against the sensation of his sight, but when the peripheral vision, the smells and the being-in-the-world overwhelms him, Bernard severs the contact with the real world completely. Bernard's imagination takes him dreamily away from the immediate world into the 'malarial jungle.' Bernard uses both language as a means to distance himself from the norms and expectations of the real world and as a means to grasp the world fully. He, however, loses himself in the rottenness of his own imagination, as he gets caught in an imaginary "swamp" and "malarial jungle." (Woolf, *The Waves* 16) Bernard's continual interpretation of the external world, is a mode of being. A sublimation of the real through representation. It is a form of being that organises his relationship with the real. Bernard's relationship to representation shows that language is not a tool to distance himself from the real world, instead language and representation is a way in which he lives in the world. It is a way for Bernard to experience reality. The epistemology of Modernism is in this sense internal in the performance of representation rather than a consideration of external factors.

The relationship with reality, however, changes in Bernard's abovementioned meeting with time while shaving. The changing experience of time and the breakdown in Bernard's natural relationship with the world is crucial, because after the breakdown language loses its

ability to create an alternative world, Bernard can no longer represent and interpret the world sufficiently. It becomes necessary for Bernard to employ language differently in order to re-establish a relationship with reality. Young Bernard's descriptive urge stems from a need to see objective reality as imbued with radical possibility. Nothing is as it first seems. The problem which occurs to the older Bernard, is that he discovers that his interpretative urge is in fact only draping something which is there already. By employing beautiful language, he represents what is already there, language does not add anything as such. Bernard's use of language leads to a disequilibrium in the relationship between the *being-of-the-possible* and the *being-of-the-real*.

Deleuze explains that the sense which the individual is always established within a being that he conceptualises as having two forms: There are "two sorts of [sensible] beings, the *being of the real* as the matter of denotations and the *being of the possible* as the form of signification" (42, my emphasis). The being-of-the-possible has no less being than the being-of-the-real, and both beings come into relationship with the individual through sense. The two forms of being correspond to two specific moments in the individual's relation with the external world. The individual grasps the external world as a compound of being-of-the-real and being-of-the-possible. No matter how extraordinary the external world might be, it always denotes itself explicitly as a being-of-the-real, and it is explicitly grasped through the senses. But at the same time, as a being-of-the-possible, the external world continually signifies anew. In the experience of the external world, the being-of-the-real has prominence over being-of-the-possible, because the external world is established through subjective experience.

This relationship, however, is different in fiction. Whereas fiction is an object in the external world, and the individual thereby relates to it as a being-of-the-real (it has objective matter that denotes itself), the individual predominately relates to the content of fiction as a being-of-the-possible – understood in the way that fiction continually inscribes new meaning in the experience of it. The knowledge produced by fiction is a 'becoming' sense, within an

intricate relation between being-of-the-real and a being-of-the-possible, this time dominated by the being-of-the-possible. This process of signification in fiction is volatile and unstable and it always starts over, but it is at the same time anchored in the text's physical, denoting, reality.

Deleuze's 'sense' is an empirical epistemology, similar to that of Russell's. It is in the nature of sense to be immediately at work in every experience of the external world. Sense and knowledge are made up of singular events that in turn make up various series of repetitive patterns, at the same time as continual development within the series themselves. Bernard's urge toward representation is therefore peculiar, because his experience of the external world is already a form of knowledge, sense that makes sense. But he keeps on representing the world through language. The reason for this is that language has a different compound relation to being than that which makes up the real world. Representation is similarly made up by events that take place within repetitive series on several different levels, but it sparks a production of knowledge that is at first characterised by a continual becoming. Representation continually becomes. Deleuze emphasises the different role of language and representation in the production of knowledge. Language is the ontological "genesis" of knowledge (Deleuze 137). In this sense, both the production of fiction as well as the experience of fiction is an event of becoming real through the event that is the performance of language. This becoming is not related to the specific production of the artwork, or an artistic object as such, but rather the event in the performance itself. The experience of fiction, therefore, does not take place in a vacuum, but it is taking place in continual interaction with the object always inscribing new signification on it as well as the denoting physical object. Every time fiction is actualised in the experience of it, the actualisation is becoming, just as the events in Lewis Carroll's novels, as Deleuze explains – "a pure becoming without measure, a veritable becoming-mad" (3). The production as well as the experience of fiction is a becoming which is always set within the series of language and within the series of the work itself. It is a becoming of the virtual and an

actualisation of possibilities, they form occurrences within an immanent sphere. To Deleuze, becoming is always an actualisation of the possibilities that are already immanently present in the world. The *virtual* designates a potential reality, but not a reality which is, for that reason, any less immanent in this world than the real (*What Is Philosophy* 156)²³. The value of fiction, is that it designates an inherently unstable intermediary position between denotation and signification. It is both the being-of-the-real and at the same time always *becoming* qua it is also being-of-the-possible. The experience of fiction, and that of art in general, is progressive as it is always becoming denotation, always becoming knowledge.

In order to get a better grasp of how knowledge is at stake in *The Waves*, I intend to investigate the series that Woolf lays out for the reader to get acquainted with through the rhythmic return. By following Deleuze's interpretation of being, Woolf's modernist fiction creates a mode of being that in the experience always is on the frontier, a *becoming* knowledge. Or in other words: It is "the articulation of the difference between" being-of-the-real and being-of-the-possible that knowledge comes into play (Deleuze 35). It is the open-endedness of *becoming* that defines the difference between Woolf's modernist fiction and the external world, and it makes clear that the knowledge at stake in fiction is similarly defined by the same becoming. Whereas the external world is characterised by a compound which is always somewhat stable, modernist fiction is inherently unstable. The pure event that fiction sets into motion is "neither private nor public, neither collective nor individual" (Deleuze 41), instead modernist fiction is the coming together of the present and the virtual in one singular moment in time – "sense ... is an incorporeal, complex, and irreducible entity, at the surface of things, a pure event which inheres or subsists in the proposition." (Deleuze 19) In other words, the reality of fiction, the intermediary position between being-of-the-possible and being-of-the-real, is

²³ Deleuze, G., Guattari, F. *What is Philosophy*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. print.

structured as an event that is never reduced to the denotation of an event, but at the same time it is also not reducible to only signification.

James Williams explains in the book *Gilles Deleuze's logic of sense: a critical introduction and guide* (2008)²⁴ that Deleuze's discovery in the *Logic of Sense* is that the concept of series, i.e. the structures of reality, always contain other series within them (15). But as every series contain other series, one series is unable to disclose anything final, and therefore, when series in this way always intersect and multiply and contain series within them, Deleuze needs the event in order to be able to think. It is in the relation between events and series that knowledge of the external world takes place. As every series is a repetition of fixed patterns and as there are series within series at every level of any investigation – as Deleuze writes: “The serial form is thus essentially multi-serial” (44) – the singular event through which the individual gain knowledge about the series becomes important. As I argued above, every event is made up of a compound of being-of-the-real and being-of-the-possible. The fixed patterns that make up series are made up by numerous homogeneous events, though every event within the pattern is singular. The continual repetition of almost homogenous events always reveals a divergence that transforms every series through its always ongoing repetition. The way in which series always shift and develop, but at the same time stays largely the same, means that “[n]o living problem is clear-cut and no strict distinction ever really solves a problem in life.” (Williams 8) The fact that within every series there is another series, and that every series is made up by an infinite number of events, offers a way in which to understand the special nature of knowledge at stake in *The Waves*, because, in the plot based novel, the author has committed him- or herself to investigating one part of one series only – the plot-based novel is an attempt at representing one single chain of events, but it disregards the fact that these events always already are a part of something larger. Woolf, who takes the possibility of knowledge at stake

²⁴ Williams, James. *Gilles Deleuze's logic of sense: a critical introduction and guide*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008. Print.

in fiction very seriously, attempts in *The Waves* to represent the world in accordance with the series and events that make up our lived experience. She does so by not reducing the open character of the serial nature of reality. Reality is multiserial and open ended just as *The Waves*. I will now develop further on the way in which *The Waves* uses series and events to expand on reality.

IV – III Series in *The Waves*; a stylisation of becoming

If we approach the knowledge at stake in the experience of *The Waves* from the perspective of the being-of-the-possible, signifying, and being-of-the-real, denoting, it is possible to approach the novel as a work of fiction that investigates the events taking place as the ontological origin of knowledge. *The Waves* is a stylisation of the continual becoming of knowledge.

Thematically speaking the reader is experiencing the becoming of life throughout the novel as the speakers are never reduced to simple, one dimensional beings who designate *one* single allegorical or symbolic meaning. Instead they are continually inscribing their own presence on the world as well as discovering it. The six speakers are always *becoming* human. *The Waves* mirrors Deleuze's *event-becoming* epistemology on a formal level too. Woolf's experimental and innovative mode of storytelling – following a rhythm rather than a plot – is a project that accentuates the original becoming of the knowledge. By employing rhythm, Woolf recognises that it is impossible to reduce life to its result or contain a final story within one single plot. A novel based on a plot rather than rhythm develops according to the end of the story, not according to a natural development of the singularity of being. In the plot-based novel everything is valued in relation to the development of the plot itself. Following a rhythm instead, Woolf accommodates a form of fiction which in fact foregrounds a free performance and creation of knowledge – within the always becoming being-of-the-real from the being-of-the-possible – in a manner which is different but still similar to the way in which sense creates

knowledge in reality. I will elaborate on this perspective of *The Waves* at a further stage, but first it is necessary to point out how the event, the coming together of being-of-the-real and being-of-the-possible, relates to the arching structure of series.

Until now I have, in every reading I have performed of *The Waves*, done my best to focus on the representation of events taking place in the novel. It is an event when Bernard looks himself in the mirror and discovers that he is undergoing a transition toward old age, as well as it is an event in every speaker's life when Percival dies. But as events take place within series, I will now attempt to investigate how Woolf employs series to relate the events of *The Waves* to knowledge of the external world in a more complete sense. *The Waves* reaches its apex in Bernard's final monologue. Bernard's last speech covers around fifty pages, a fifth of the novel, and it incorporates several of the stories the reader already knows from the previous soliloquies. In this final monologue Bernard articulates the impossibility of representing life as a final and graspable "globe, full of figures" (Woolf, *The Waves* 199). Bernard explains that it is impossible for language to encapsulate life in its totality. In this way, when attempting to retell the story of his life Bernard is confronted with the impotence of representation. But language is still – in spite of "all its debilities" as Beer puts it – according to Deleuze the genesis of knowledge. Bernard decides to revisit his life through varied events that make out the same series of occurrences. He attempts to retell his life as series. What he does differently is to let the story expand through singular events that all are awarded space and time without being organised by external narrative factors. Bernard experiments with the form of representation that also Woolf experiments with in *The Waves*, and his new narrative strategy is a way to "challenge the bounds of fiction" (Beer xv). He does so in order to make language again become a meaningful vessel of knowledge. The soliloquies that make up the novel, until Bernard's last, are all singular events – or to use Woolf's own words: singular waves – that make up the rhythmic nature of the book. In Bernard's final monologue the intensities in all the events of the novel are being

revisited and the events make up one final wave. It is a super wave, through which Bernard hopes to achieve a form of fragmented mode of representation which is capable of doing what he has always failed to do: to represent the communal identity of modern life.

Bernard starts out by describing how he discovered his own identity as a young boy, when the division between himself and his friends was not yet clear to him. He recalls that they all felt like being one communal being and that they “suffered terribly when [they] became separate bodies.” (Woolf, *The Waves* 202) Bernard’s first problem in relation to representation is the problem of identity. It seems to him, that identity is something which is created through sense perception. Bernard explains:

Then Mrs Constable raised the sponge ... squeezed it, and out shot, right, left, all down the spine, arrows of sensation. And so, as long as we draw breath, for the rest of time, if we knock against a chair, a table, or a woman, we are pierced with arrows of sensation—if we walk in a garden, if we drink this wine. Sometimes indeed, when I pass a cottage with a light in the window where a child has been born, I could implore them not to squeeze the sponge over that new body. (Woolf, *The Waves* 200)

Bernard here insinuates that sense is the origin of identity. The identity that Bernard is describing, however, is not yet an exclusive identity. Sense does not create an ‘I,’ but it creates presence, in the way that sense does not exclude being a part of a common, but the sensing body is created as a possibility for an ‘I.’ The creation of identity is taking place within a paradoxical space between the individual subject and the common subjectivity. This paradox is a possibility rather than a problem. In the passage above we learn that sense establishes presence. And with presence, the possibility of the ‘I’ is established. It seems, however that sense does not create either the ‘I’ or the common as it is only later in language that Bernard discovers his own being. The problematic relationship between identity and the common is to be found in language. Language is the genesis of knowledge and it is through language that the world becomes a part of logocentric knowledge. Language is then both the birth of knowledge and the birth of representation.

Through the paradoxical character of identity in *The Waves* it is possible to learn more about the relation between knowledge and fiction. Language is both a mode of deceit, as it is always already being representation, as well as the ontological origin of knowledge. In this sense language establishes the 'I,' the logocentric safeguard of a personal knowledge, but language also ensures that knowledge is communicable and common, which warrants that knowledge is in fact knowledge and therefore different from e.g. instinct. The discovery of identity is done through language, but it is a discovery which also unfolds the common. Knowledge is in this sense a constant battle between the identity of the 'I' and the communal and communicative experience of living. In the final soliloquy Bernard is constantly battling with this paradoxical nature of language and the way it creates identity. He is trying to set free the possibility of knowledge within representation, without transgressing the heterogeneous nature of identity as such.

The question pertaining to representation, which Bernard is posing in the last soliloquy, is a question regarding the possibility of representation without the dominant and phallic 'I.' Is it possible for Bernard to represent the external world, without succumbing to the logocentrism of language? Language places us within the paradox (Deleuze 86) and it is not a question of breaking free from the paradox or maybe even solving it, but it is rather a question of existing in (or indeed subsisting) within it. "The force of paradoxes is that they are not contradictory; they rather allow us to be present at the genesis of the contradiction." (Deleuze 86) What is at stake in language, both as logocentric representation as well as genesis of knowledge, is that the reader has to engage it as in effect interpretation. Representation continually has to adapt to the *becoming* knowledge. The interpretive process is characterised by a continual reciprocal motion of the creation of knowledge and the representation of this creation. In *The Waves* Bernard traces the paradox of language in the experience of individual/communal experience of life.

Bernard lives life through linguistic representation, hoping to grasp everything in language. But he realises that his “stories,” are made up from “ridiculous, flamboyant, beautiful phrases” (Woolf, *The Waves* 199). As Bernard recognises that representation is an empty gesture in itself, he becomes “tired” from “phrases that come down beautifully with all their feet on the ground!” (Woolf, *The Waves* 199). As a response Bernard starts narrating in a way that is fragmented and disjunctive, a form of representation that does not overwhelm the ‘genesis of knowledge’ with an authorial and logocentric ‘I.’ This mode of writing attempts to use language within its own paradoxical horizon and it tries to facilitate a continual interpretative movement. Repetition becomes the key for Bernard. He pays close attention to matters that repeat themselves, shaving, for example, is continuously highlighted as well as the passing of time – “Tuesday follows Monday, Wednesday Tuesday.” (Woolf, *The Waves* 218) By focusing on repetitive patterns, the logocentric ‘I’ slowly dissipates and Bernard finds that he is no longer one person. He discovers his own multifaceted identity “There are many rooms – many Bernards.” (Woolf, *The Waves* 217) Knowledge is no longer a “static body of facts but constitutes a dynamic process of inquiry” (Semetsky 443)²⁵ an inquiry which is always ongoing relation with the real through experience. Just as Bernard, in his childhood, suddenly discovers his own identity on account of one single compassionate feeling, “I felt my indifference melt. Neville did not melt. “Therefore,” I said, “I am myself, not Neville”, a wonderful discovery” (Woolf, *The Waves* 201) he also realises that he is not made of one single identity, but in fact many identities, by a sudden insight – “What I was to myself was different” (Woolf, *The Waves* 217).

In the final monologue Bernard narrates the discovery of his own identity and the subsequent loss thereof. Losing his identity in the many is a terrifying experience for Bernard,

²⁵ Semetsky, Inna. “Deleuze as a Philosopher of Education: Affective Knowledge/Effective Learning.” *The European Legacy* (2009): 443–456. Web.

an experience, as it similarly is a loss of 'Knowledge,' understood as the logocentric truth. Bernard experiences a form of fear that follows the loss of stable forms. There are no longer 'Knowledge,' instead there are 'knowledges.' This epiphany shakes Bernard and his position in society. It creates a fear in him that is nicely elucidated through his responsibilities as a father. Being pater familias demands an 'I,' it demands an identity that embodies sovereign power as well as 'Knowledge.' When Bernard loses his identity it forces him into desperation.

I returned, however, to my own snug home and was warned by the parlourmaid to creep upstairs in my stockings. The child was asleep. I went to my room.
 'Was there no sword, nothing with which to batter down these walls, this protection, this begetting of children and living behind curtains, and becoming daily more involved and committed, with books and pictures? Better burn one's life out...' (Woolf, *The Waves* 222)

The epistemology of Modernism proposes a form of knowledge that disregards truth. The 'I' and its logocentric truths are what Bernard is forced to struggle against in order to achieve redemption. Representation and language becomes a possibility for freedom, when they shed the inherent focus on truth and enters into a fruitful creation of knowledges. The final blow against the individuality of the 'I' comes as an experience of immersion. Bernard feels that the friends are all one. "[W]e had our bottle of wine, and under that seduction lost our enmity, and stopped comparing. And half-way through dinner, we felt enlarge itself round us the huge blackness of what is outside us, of what we are not. ... And who were we? We were extinguished for a moment" (Woolf, *The Waves* 231). The six friends now finally, though briefly, come together again in one single identity – each becoming parts in a series – though without at any point not also forming six individuals. The novel begins with each of the characters becoming individuals, with the creation of their own subjectivity, and it ends with Bernard experiencing his own subjectivity melting together with the others' into one. As Deleuze and Guattari comment in *A Thousand Plateaus* (2013)²⁶ from Woolf's *Ms. Dalloway*:

²⁶ Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Trans. Brian Massumi. 2013. London: Bloomsbury Academic. 2014. Print.

“Never again will I say “I am this I am that”.” (33) According to Bernard, the friends have seized being each a single fish, and instead they are becoming a school of fish (Woolf, *The Waves* 214). Bernard tries to represent the experience of being, without attempting to raise it to the level of ultimate truth. Instead he interpretively questions the experience repeatedly. “Was this, then, this streaming away mixed with Susan, Jinny, Neville, Rhoda, Louis, a sort of death?” (Woolf, *The Waves* 233).

I have previously established, that the epistemology at stake in Modernism, is an epistemology that comes to life as a compound of both performance of knowledge as well as representation. What happens in *The Waves*, is that Woolf’s experimentation with using a rhythm rather than plot as the main narrative structure, plays with the compound-nature of fiction’s being. Woolf’s modernist fiction is no longer dominated by representation and the false ideal of full disclosure. Instead Woolf is trying to emphasise the performative character of fiction and the nature of the experience of fiction. It is in this way that Woolf’s Modernism becomes a creation of knowledge. Modernism is representing as well as performing an investigation of ‘*knowledges*’ rather than one knowledge. There is no final truth, only processes of investigation and exploration that start in the experience of Woolf’s modernist fiction. This means that knowledge is at stake on two levels of fiction rather than it all comes down to a static presentation of *one* philosophical system. Modernism shifts the way fiction works and by, to a larger extent, demanding that the reader to perform the content of the book in a different way than what is at stake in the realist novel, changes that which is at stake in the experience. As the modernist novel is manifesting itself and becoming denotation, the experience of fiction becomes conditioned by the peripheral vision. Knowledge establishes itself through immersion and through a constant hesitation for the process of signification is performed through a similar relationship like that of reality. Woolf’s modernist fiction becomes a valuable tool in the becoming of new knowledges, in gaining perspectives on new situations. *The Waves* is a

practical exercise in the boundaries of language and representation. It is a laboratory of human behaviour. A laboratory that always is performing the same test on every one of its readers, and which always lets knowledges arise indiscriminately. This feature gives modernist fiction the ability to create *knowledges* about the world outside the text.

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