

Queering *To the Lighthouse*

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Virginia Woolf's 1927 *To the Lighthouse* is an iconic text of the early twentieth century. In it, Woolf breaks away from traditional novel-writing conventions to experiment with modernist techniques such as free indirect discourse and multiple, sometimes indistinct, narrators. Freed from the conventions of the Victorian novel, Woolf is able to explore ideas of homosexuality and homosocial relationships, critique the gender roles enforced by a heterosexist society, and experiment with the idea of queer time. An examination of these queer elements of the novel, with links to Woolf's own life, provides an insight into early twentieth-century views on homosexuality and relates to discussions of sexuality in contemporary queer theory.

Queer literary theory rose to prominence in the 1990s and deals with ideas of gender and sexuality, looking at how these ideas are portrayed and explored in literary texts. Queer theory is a reaction against a society that is seen by many as heterosexist and homophobic, and resists the "ideological and institutional practices of heterosexual privilege."¹ Queer literary theorists "identify lesbian/gay episodes in mainstream work,"² exploring depictions of same sex relationships and challenging readings that "ignor[e] or denigrat[e] the homosexual aspects of the work."³ They "set up an extended, metaphorical sense of 'lesbian/gay,'"⁴ which means that the term "queer" can be applied to any instance of crossing boundaries or transgressing heteronormative systems of behaviour and interaction. In this essay, the terms "heterosexism" and "heterocentrism" refer to the privileging of heterosexual lifestyles and experience. "Heteronormative" refers to behaviour that adheres to heterosexist notions of gender

¹ Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, 2nd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995, 2002), 140.

² *Ibid.*, 148.

³ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.

and sexuality, while “queer” is used in its extended sense of anything that challenges heteronormativity. Queer theory and terms provide the opportunity to re-evaluate Woolf’s portrayal of relationships, sexuality, and gender in *To the Lighthouse*.

In *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs. Ramsay’s positive view of marriage adheres to heteronormative ideals of marriage and romance. The novel revolves around the central figures of the Ramsay family, and is specifically concerned with the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. This focus on marriage and family adheres to traditional novelistic and heterosexist conventions, and Woolf likens the relationship between husband and wife to “that solace which two different notes, one high, one low, struck together, seem to give each other as they combine.”⁵ This phrase uses musical imagery to illustrate the harmony of the Ramsay’s marriage, continuing the idea that marriage creates a stable and positive union between two people. This honouring of marriage is reflected throughout the novel in Mrs. Ramsay’s belief that “people must marry; people must have children” and her repeated insistence that “William and Lily should marry” (67, 31). This emphasis on marriage and childrearing adheres to heteronormative discourse that privileges these actions, “strengthen[ing them] by legislation, religious fiat, media imagery, and efforts at censorship.”⁶ Blau du Plessis suggests that in *To the Lighthouse* “community . . . depends extensively on couples and the bait of romance.”⁷ This suggests that one of the central concerns of the novel is romance between men and women, which is the basis of heterosexual society. Mrs. Ramsay’s belief in marriage as a productive and unifying bond between a man and woman adheres to the traditional notions of sexuality that were prevalent at the time, and which were highly heterosexist.

Woolf’s portrayal of the tensions within the Ramsay marriage, however, disrupts the idealistic view of marriage that is a foundation of heterosexist discourse. In the

⁵ Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (London: Penguin Books, 1927, 1992), 44. [Hereafter cited in text].

⁶ Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2001), 1763.

⁷ Rachel Blau du Plessis, ““Amor Vin –”: Modifications of Romance in Woolf” in *Virginia Woolf: a Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Margaret Homans (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1993), 130.

opening pages of the novel, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay take very different approaches to relating to their son James. Mrs. Ramsay assures James that “if it’s fine to-morrow” he can go on his “expedition” to the lighthouse (7). On the other hand, Mr. Ramsay enters and declares that “it won’t be fine,” which belittles his wife and evokes such hatred in James, who thinks his mother is “ten thousand times better in every way than [Mr. Ramsay],” that he envisages “gash[ing] a hole in his father’s breast” (8). Mr. Ramsay shows a lack of respect for his wife’s intelligence throughout the novel, admitting later that he “liked to think that she was not clever, not book-learned at all” (131). This denial of female intellectual capacity links Mr. Ramsay to the heterosexist male in Adrienne Rich’s “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” who “withhold[s] from [women] large areas of the society’s knowledge.”⁸ Rich argues that this restriction of women’s ability to access knowledge is a way that heterosexist society perpetuates “male power.”⁹ Lily describes Mr. Ramsay as “a tyrant,” suggesting that he abuses his control and power within his marriage to the extent that he “wears Mrs. Ramsay to death” (29). The inequality of power and knowledge within the Ramsay marriage undermines the heteronormative ideal of marriage as a “natural fusion,” a “union of man and woman [that] makes for the greatest satisfaction, the most complete happiness.”¹⁰ Woolf’s inclusion of this inequality suggests that she, like Rich, believes that the institution of marriage can be used to maintain and strengthen heteronormative models of behaviour.

The development of the relationship between Minta Doyle and Paul Rayley throughout the novel presents the reader with a negative account of marriage, which further disrupts heteronormative ideals. In “The Window” section of the novel, Paul feels that Mrs. Ramsay “made him [propose]” to Minta, and by the end of the novel the marriage begins to deteriorate (86). The reader learns that “[Paul] had taken up with

⁸ Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality,” 1767.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1765.

¹⁰ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* (London: Penguin Books, 1928, 2004), 113.

another woman . . . Far from breaking up the marriage, that alliance had righted it. They were excellent friends" (189). This reiterates the idea that Paul and Mint are unsatisfied within their marriage, while suggesting that their relationship has been repaired by their becoming "friends." The fact that it is their friendship rather than their marriage that holds the Rayleys together undermines the heterosexist belief in the power of marriage to unite men and women in a romantic and sexual union. In Woolf's own life, her marriage to Leonard Woolf survived her intense emotional, and physical, relationships with a number of women. Woolf describes her affair with Vita Sackville-West as "rather a bore for Leonard, but not enough to worry him."¹¹ The Rayleys, like the Woolfs, defy traditional ideas of a monogamous marriage and so undermine the heterosexist ideal. They get married to conform to the wishes of heteronormative society, embodied in the novel by Mrs. Ramsay, but then invert the established model of a male-female relationship by basing their marriage on friendship, while romance, the traditional foundation of marriage, is experienced outside of the marriage. Woolf's depiction of the Rayley's relationship questions heteronormative notions of marriage, and offers a way to outwardly conform to heterosexist society while actually living in a queer way.

Lily Briscoe and Mrs. Ramsay's daughters oppose heterosexist discourse by rejecting the female subordination inherent in traditional notions of marriage. Despite Mrs. Ramsay's repeated attempts to get Lily and William Bankes to marry, Lily refuses to submit to the societal pressure to do so and sees marriage as a "degradation" (111). Although Lily believes that "[Bankes'] friendship had been one of the pleasures of her life," they do not follow the Rayley's example of getting married to uphold society's ideals (192). By remaining single, they become characters that disrupt the novel's heteronormative emphasis on family and marriage. The queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick describes the role of the bachelor as "a role that allowed certain men to avoid

¹¹ Anne Olivier Bell, ed., *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: Volume Three 1925–1930* (San Diego: Harvest, 1981), 117.

the rigorous demands of the compulsorily heterosexual society in which they lived;”¹² Bankes lives as an unmarried man and so adheres to this idea. There is no similar position, however, offered for women and the pressure placed on Lily, an unmarried woman, to conform to heterosexist society by getting married can be seen in her anguish at not being able to fulfil the role of wife and comforter to Mr. Ramsay after his wife’s death: “[s]he ought to have floated off instantly upon some wave of sympathetic expansion . . . she remained stuck” (165). Lily’s rejection of the role of comforting wife is reflected in the way that “Prue, Nancy, Rose – could sport with infidel ideas which they had brewed for themselves of a life different from [Mrs. Ramsay’s] . . . not always taking care of some man or other” (10). By refusing to take care of men, these women refuse to conform to societal expectations that dictate that they get married and provide love and reassurance for their husbands. The alliteration of the phrase “infidel ideas” increases the phrase’s power, while its evocation of ideas of heathenism shows that this behaviour transgresses heteronormative roles and goes against Mrs. Ramsay’s own beliefs about gender and marriage. Woolf’s inclusion of characters that refuse to adhere to traditional behaviour, and challenge heterosexual society’s emphasis on marriage, suggests that she does not altogether share Mrs. Ramsay’s advocacy of marriage and female subservience.

The deaths of Prue and Andrew Ramsay hint at the destructive nature of society’s emphasis on adhering to heteronormative roles. The reader is told that “Prue Ramsay died that summer in some illness connected with childbirth” in brackets in the section “Time Passes” (144). The link here between childbirth and death suggests a link between motherhood and death, and so connects Prue’s adherence to the heteronormative role of mother with her demise. The reader is then told that “a shell exploded. Twenty or thirty young men were blown up in France, among them Andrew Ramsay,” which is a reference to the First World War and shows that Andrew’s death is

¹² Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, 2nd ed. (Harlow: Prentice Hall, 1999), 181.

a direct result of his position as a soldier, a position that was associated with male strength and courage at the time (145). These passages can be seen to reflect the deaths of Woolf's sister and brother, Stella Duckworth and Thoby Stephen, who died in similar circumstances; Stella died due to complications during childbirth, while Thoby died of Typhoid contracted on a trip to Greece¹³. Although not due to war, Thoby's death can be linked to an adherence to gender normative roles because, in the early twentieth century, travelling to foreign countries alone was the preserve of men rather than women. These connections between Woolf's life and fiction, as well as explaining the elegiac tone of the "Time Passes" section, illustrate the idea of a link between gender normative roles and death in her mind. This association causes gender normative behaviour, and the heterosexist society that imposes it, to be shown in a negative light. This linking of death and heteronormativity is a radical way to explore the damaging effects that heterosexist society can have on an individual's freedom.

Woolf offers an alternative to stereotypical and restrictive gender roles in her exploration of ideas of androgyny. Androgyny is the combination of male and female attributes within one person. This transgresses heteronormative views on gender that see male and female as distinct binary opposites. Sedgwick stated that "'queer' challenges all gender and sexual essentialisms," which means that androgynous people are queer subjects because they challenge the heterocentrist view that someone is essentially either male or female.¹⁴ In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf introduces the idea of androgyny when Mrs. Ramsay thinks of "the manliness in [her daughters'] girlish hearts (11)." This expresses an anti-essentialist view of gender that acknowledges integration between aspects of the male and female within a person's character. The controversial idea that androgyny should be seen as the human ideal, rather than the heteronormative view that a person should behave as either masculine or feminine depending on their

¹³ Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Vintage, 1996, 1997), 139; and *Ibid.*, 230.

¹⁴ Bennett and Royle, *An Introduction to Literature*, 180.

physical sex, appears in Woolf's 1928 *A Room of One's Own* when she suggests that "if one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her."¹⁵ In her fantastical 1928 novel *Orlando*, Woolf shifts the sex of her protagonist from male to female during the course of the narrative: "Orlando had become a woman there is no denying it. But in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as he had been [as a man]."¹⁶ The fact that this device is used in a novel that has been described as a "private message for Vita Sackville-West" suggests that Woolf saw the idea of androgyny as a way to bring about a "sexual revolution," to question and destabilise heteronormative notions of gender and sexuality.¹⁷ The inclusion of the idea of androgyny in *To the Lighthouse*, an idea that is developed in other works by Woolf in the same period, provides an alternative to the heteronormative roles and attitudes that are undermined within the novel.

The most obvious example of same-sex desire in the novel is that of Lily for Mrs. Ramsay, which adheres to conventional ideas of lesbianism due to the emphasis on a wish for physical and emotional intimacy: Lily has "much ado to control her impulse to fling herself (thank Heaven she [has] always resisted so far) at Mrs. Ramsay's knee and say to her—but what could one say to her? 'I'm in love with you?'" (24). The words "impulse" and "fling" suggest overwhelming emotion, but Lily resists her impulse and instead uses her painting as "a way to know Mrs. Ramsay, to 'spell out' the secret she locks up inside her."¹⁸ This restraint implies that heterosexist society exerts such an influence on Lily that she sublimates her own desire, justifying it by saying "'I'm in love with all this,' waving her hand at the hedge, at the house, at the children" (24). However, the depth of her feeling is revealed in "The Lighthouse" when she is remembering Mrs. Ramsay and exclaims "to want and not to have—to want and want—how that wrung

¹⁵ Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 113.

¹⁶ Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1928, 1995), 67.

¹⁷ Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, 13.

¹⁸ Marianne Hirsch, "The Darkest Plots: Narration and Compulsory Heterosexuality" in *Virginia Woolf: A Selection of Critical Essays*, ed. Margaret Homans (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1993), 203.

the heart, and wrung it again and again! Oh Mrs. Ramsay!" (194). The repetition of the words "want" and "wrung," and the inclusion of exclamation marks heighten the impression of Lily's grief at Mrs. Ramsay's death, and Hermione Lee suggests that "Lily's longing for Mrs. Ramsay in the novel was coloured by [Woolf] missing Vita."¹⁹ The desire that Lily shows for Mrs. Ramsay reflects Woolf's feelings for Vita, and Lily's grief expresses the pain felt by not being able to declare queer feelings in a heterosexist society.

The relationships between Mrs. Ramsay and her daughters are an example of the non-sexual relationships between women that Rich includes in the lesbian continuum. Rich suggests that there is "a range . . . of woman-identified experience, not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman."²⁰ It is suggested in the novel that there is "some deep, some buried, some quite speechless feeling that one has for one's mother at Rose's age," which implies strong emotion and adheres to heteronormative notions of the mother as primary childcare provider (89). However, the fact that this relation is defined in terms of what a female child feels for her mother, as it is distinctly separate from James' feelings for Mrs. Ramsay, means that it is part of the lesbian continuum. The notion of a "speechless feeling" is reminiscent of the silence surrounding lesbian existence, which connects the mother-daughter bond to the wider realm of female-female bonding. This link between the initial female-female bonding of mother and daughter and a lesbian existence can be seen in Woolf's own search for a maternal figure after the death of her mother. She describes Vita's "maturity & full breastedness," an image of fertility, and says that "she lavishes on me the maternal protection which . . . is what I have always most wished from anyone."²¹ Rich's notion of female interaction existing as a range of experience,

¹⁹ Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, 500.

²⁰ Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality", 1774.

²¹ Bell, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, 52.

rather than the heteronormative fondness for distinguishing between straight and queer, is shown in *To the Lighthouse* through mother-daughter relationships.

The implicit nature of many of Woolf's ideas surrounding heteronormative roles and homosocial and homoerotic bonds illustrates Adrienne Rich's idea of "lesbian invisibility and marginality."²² Rich laments the silencing and overlooking of lesbian voices within heterosexist society, and suggests that in some cases lesbianism has been seen as not existing at all. These ideas are expressed in the novel when Lily believes that her painting of "Mrs. Ramsay reading to James" shows "something more secret than she had ever spoken or shown" (58). It is during its creation that the reader learns about Lily's wish for "unity" and "intimacy" with Mrs. Ramsay, which suggests that Lily's "secret" is her love of Mrs. Ramsay. The alliteration of the "s" sound here heightens the impact of the phrase, but also creates a poignantly sorrowful tone that invokes the reader's empathy. When Lily thinks about "sitting on the floor with her arms around Mrs. Ramsay's knees," she realizes that "Mrs. Ramsay would never know the reason for that pressure," which again suggests a silencing of lesbian feelings (57). In these passages, it is Lily herself who enforces the suppression and concealment of her feelings for Mrs. Ramsay. This self-censorship is expressed in Rich's essay as "internalizing the values of the colonizer and actively participating in carrying out the colonization of one's self and one's sex."²³ In other words, the extent to which homosexuality has been silenced and condemned by heteronormative society means that the individual begins to internalise these feelings and then cannot fail to apply them to their own thoughts and actions. This explains the way in which Lily repeatedly represses and hides her feelings for Mrs. Ramsay throughout the novel. At the time the novel was written, British society upheld traditional belief in marriage and heteronormative roles, meaning that writers had to explore ideas of lesbianism, if they did so at all, either by implicit reference or by

²² Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality," 1774.

²³ Kathleen Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1979), 172 quoted in Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality," 1772.

“displac[ing] . . . the homosexual into the heterosexual.”²⁴ By exploring ideas of lesbianism implicitly in *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf illustrates society’s ability to silence queer discourse, but, by addressing such issues in the first place, she adheres to Rich’s idea of challenging the silence surrounding lesbianism.

The idea of queer time can be seen in Woolf’s depictions of time generally, and of specific significant moments, in *To the Lighthouse*. In her chapter on queer space and time, “Queer Temporality and Postmodern Geographies,” Judith Halberstam states that “queer uses of time . . . develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction.”²⁵ This suggests that heterosexist society is based on an understanding of time that gives preference to family dynamics and childcare, and thus is heterosexist in focus. In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf explores the pressure of heteronormative time with the phrase “the lights coming out one by one seemed like things that were going to happen to [Paul Rayley]—his marriage, his children, his house” (85). Here, Woolf expresses the heteronormative desire to measure life in terms of family, and to count events that further the heterosexual relationship or the creation and upbringing of children as the most significant lifetime markers. Queer time, on the other hand, rejects these traditional lifetime markers of birth, marriage, and death, in preference for moments of consciousness or awareness of self. Halberstam suggests that “family time refers to the normative scheduling of daily life (early to bed, early to rise),” and is an aspect of heteronormative time because it is based on an “imagined set of children’s needs.”²⁶ This notion of family time regulating the sleeping patterns of most of society is seen in the novel when the reader is told that “one by one the lamps were all extinguished” in the Ramsay household; the guests and the Ramsay family adhere to the societal conventions of sleeping at certain times that are governed

²⁴ Suzanne Raitt, *Vita and Virginia: the Work and Friendship of V. Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 93.

²⁵ Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York Press, 2005), 1.

²⁶ Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 5.

by heteronormative discourse (137). However, the reader is also told that “Mr. Carmichael . . . liked to lie awake a little reading Virgil” (137). This suggests that Carmichael does not adhere to family time, but rather inhabits a queer time that is structured around his own needs and wishes rather than those dictated by heteronormative society. Woolf explores the ways in which different people relate to and inhabit a model of time that is based of family and childcare, a model that is described and challenged in Halberstam’s essay.

To the Lighthouse conveys the notion of time and the importance of different events in a radical way that moves away from traditional story-telling. Traditional novels about family life chart the progression of heterosexual romance by creating a narrative that relies on heteronormative lifetime markers to develop the story and move it forward, normally to the marriage of two characters. However, in *To the Lighthouse* Woolf rejects using these markers and instead begins to deal with ideas that Halberstam would define as queer time. Woolf’s radical move away from traditional novelistic conventions is most pronounced in her descriptions of the deaths of the three Ramsays in “Time Passes,” which are reported in brackets (140, 144, 145). This suggests that they are less significant than the shifting seasons and the decay of the Ramsay house, and indicates that Woolf’s focus has shifted from heteronormative time to “a style that reverses the usual relations between margin and centre.”²⁷ Woolf shifts the focus of the novel from heteronormative lifetime markers to ideas of the passing of time and personal experiences. The free indirect discourse technique employed by Woolf allows her to portray time in a queer way because it places emphasis on the individual’s thoughts and emotions rather than external events. Instead of ending the novel with a significant event, such as the traditional wedding or birth, Woolf uses the completion of Lily’s painting to end the novel: “[y]es, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme

²⁷ Margaret Homans, ed., *Virginia Woolf: a Collection of Critical Essays* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1993), 3.

fatigue. I have had my vision" (226). The replacement of a heteronormative marker with Lily's painting suggests that Woolf wishes the reader to see that Lily's artistic fulfillment is as valid and important as more traditional lifetime markers such as marriage. Woolf's displacement of heteronormative lifetime markers for moments of heightened consciousness and artistic achievement provides an alternative to heteronormative views on time and productivity.

In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf contrasts the heteronormative need to "create longevity as the most desirable future" with an emphasis on the present that is associated with queer concepts of time.²⁸ Mr. Ramsay is constantly preoccupied with whether or not his work will be remembered by future generations. He worries about "his own books—will they be read, are they good" and "depend[s] so much . . . upon people's praise" (128, 27). This preoccupation with how one will be remembered in the future, after death, illustrates the need for longevity that heteronormative culture advocates both in terms of work and reproduction. Mr. Ramsay adheres to this quest for stability through both his writing and his "welter of children" (26). Woolf juxtaposes this heteronormative model with a queer acceptance of transience through Lily's character, who does not care if her painting is "hung in attics . . . [or] destroyed" (225). For Lily, the "moment's flight between the picture and her canvas" is more important and exhilarating than the idea that her work will be highly prized and respected (23). Halberstam explains the queer acceptance of transience by suggesting that "horizons of possibility have been severely diminished by the AIDS epidemic . . . creat[ing] a new emphasis on the here, the present, the now."²⁹ However, the fact that this idea of "a specifically queer temporality that is . . . [a] sort of persistent present" can be found in Woolf's novel, written over half a century before the western AIDS epidemic of the 1980s, suggests that an awareness of AIDS is not the only factor in embracing and

²⁸ Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 4.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

valuing the moment.³⁰ In the beginning of the twentieth century the First World War and the Spanish Flu pandemic made people aware of their own mortality and the ephemeral nature of their existence in a way that is similar to the AIDs epidemic that Halberstam discusses. Woolf was also affected by mental health problems that reappeared with varying intensity throughout her life, and in 1925 “[s]uddenly in midsummer there was a crash . . . she was very unwell, and deeply frustrated that she could not get on with *To the Lighthouse*.”³¹ This suggests that the threat of ill-health led Woolf to value the present in much the same way that AIDs led writers in the late twentieth century to review their own acceptance of the fragility of life and health. Woolf’s acknowledgment of the transience of life links her to a queer view of time that emphasises the present rather than the heteronormative quest for longevity.

A queer exploration of *To the Lighthouse* uncovers radical and surprisingly contemporary ideas about gender and sexuality. Woolf explores positive and negative aspects of the institution of marriage, anti-essentialist notions of sexuality and gender, and the complex relationships that exist between women. The aim of queer criticism is to “sustain the unfinished and perhaps unthought thoughts about desire that are otherwise defeated by the roar of conventionality or heteroculture.”³² Ideas from queer theory expose aspects of the novel that are overlooked in heterocentrist criticism. Re-examining the novel using queer theory uncovers alternative readings of motherhood, friendship, marriage, time, and gender roles. Woolf’s own life in Bloomsbury and her relationships with other women gave her “the gift of tolerance, of seeing the many fair erotic possibilities that homosexual relations called forth.”³³ Combining Woolf’s own life, ideas from queer theory, and the language and themes of the novel, creates a sense of the

³⁰ Stephen M. Barber and Davis L. Clark, ed., *Regarding Sedgwick: Essays on Queer Culture and Critical Theory* (London: Routledge, 2002), 2.

³¹ Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, 497.

³² Lauren Berlant, “Two Girls, Fat and Thin” in Stephen M. Barber and Davis L. Clark, *Regarding Sedgwick*, 73.

³³ Blau du Plessis, ““Amor Vin –,”” 117.

evolving concepts surrounding sexuality, and the continued assault on the foundations of heterosexist society.