The Mind Grows Rings

Mindscape, Landscape and the Biotic Community in Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves*

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1 Introduction

I hold a stalk in my hand. I am the stalk. My roots go down to the depths of the world, through earth dry with brick, and damp earth, through veins of lead and silver. I am all fibre. All tremors shake me, and the weight of the earth is pressed to my ribs. Up here my eyes are green leaves, unseeing (The Waves 5).

The idea of connectedness between human and nonhuman is demonstrated beautifully in the quote above where young Louis, hiding from his friends inside a shrub, senses the world as a shrub would – not relying on sight, but feeling the earth’s vibrations and its weight, moisture or dryness. Louis, one of the six voices in Virginia Woolf’s The Waves, blends into his environment completely, hearing “the other side of silence” of the nonhuman landscape. Diana L. Swanson discusses this “other side of silence” in her analysis of Woolf’s shift of emphasis that moved the human world further from “…the centre of her writerly universe” and instead brought into her writing the existence of nonhuman as itself rather than as a projection of human needs (Swanson 55). The connection between human and nonhuman has been increasingly the focus of interest for literary critics and environmental philosophers alike. Literary critic L. Elizabeth Waller uses the term “ecological dialogue” to describe how in Virginia Woolf’s novels “…the human characters engage directly and profoundly with nonhuman characters...” whereas Arnold Berleant, an environmental philosopher, describes the relationship between an individual and their environment, not in separate dualistic terms but rather as a continuum; there is no outside or inside (Berleant 6-7). There are strong nonhuman themes in The Waves, notably the bond between soil and trees with the characters, which will be the focus of this thesis.

There are good reasons to combine views from literature and natural sciences in order to listen to these ecological dialogues. Swanson cites Valerie Plumwood who believes that literature can assist us in finding solutions to ecological problems, especially those ethical concerns with “morality, rationality and imagination” (Swanson 55). The connection between human and nonhuman is therefore a vital subject to study in literature, because the relationship between the environment and the human population is changing all the time, in some aspects for the better with the expanding knowledge of the consequences of the human’s actions in the
environment, and in some aspects for the worse with the increasing pressure on our planet’s resources. We need to keep charting the change, and literature is as important a source of information as environmental politics or science in this process. Furthermore, the mental wellbeing of individuals who have from their point of view a meaningful connection to their surrounding landscapes whether it is in a city or country, benefits societies by enhancing social cohesion and individual happiness. Literature can help this to come about by bringing attention to the importance of appreciating the nonhuman as a thing itself and listening to it. Woolf wrote in her autobiographical collection stories, *Moments of Being*, that the most useful occupation for her was to write, instead of running a shop for example, and one of her valuable contributions to the literature is surely this channel of communication with “the other side of silence”.

Literature plays an important part in understanding otherness, whether it is human or nonhuman kind, and Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves* illustrates how the ecological dialogues could be listened to and participated in more profoundly (Swanson 54). Woolf’s novels were earlier studied from the feminist or pacifist angle, while reading Woolf from an ecocritical perspective has been very popular in recent years. Several literary critics writing on Woolf have studied her work in the light of ecological thinking and have found many of her themes relating to the nonhuman world. In particular Laci Mattison, Carrie Rohman, Diana Royer, Emily M. Hinnov, Louise Westling, Diana L. Swanson, L. Elizabeth Waller and Charlotte Zoe Walker have drawn attention to Woolf’s ability to open up a dialogue with the nonhuman and help her readers to realise that a more equal relationship with our landscapes, as members of the biotic communities rather than imperialistic rulers could bring a better balance to our world.

The connection between human and nonhuman has also interested scientists and conservationists such as Edward O. Wilson, whose theory of biophilia approaches the ecological dialogue from the evolutionary viewpoint. Similarly, Aldo Leopold’s thoughts on biotic community and land ethic, and Gregory Bateson’s theory on patterns that connect all living creatures both in mind and form share the concern to connect the mindscape and landscape in a way that could benefit the human and nonhuman world.
Woolf’s own philosophy of a hidden pattern, which is occasionally revealed to us via art, beauty or strong emotional events, shares similarities with Bateson’s theory of pattern that connects mental processes, music, grammar, movements in populations and elements of nonhuman such as symmetry of a leaf.

I shall show in my thesis how human and nonhuman, and mindscape and landscape are in a continuous conversation in Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves*. I shall support my argument with a discussion on recent studies on Woolf that support an ecocritical reading and demonstrate that her philosophy and writing shares similarities with scholars who approach the same topic from the field of natural science. The focus of my topic differs from previous works by concentrating on the biotic community of land and trees that interact with humans, and whom the humans interact with on some level, engaging mindscape and landscape into a silent ecological dialogue. It appears that the importance of soil in particular has been mostly overlooked in the readings of *The Waves* and therefore I will analyze the significance of soil, earth and land in my thesis.

I shall support my thesis with the studies of literary critics such as Charlotte Zoe Walker, Diana Royer, Carrie Rohman, Laci Mattison, Emily M. Hinnov, Diana L. Swanson, Christina Alt, Avrom Fleishman, Louise Westling and L. Elizabeth Waller who have discussed the aspects of Woolf’s writing from the ecocritical viewpoint, and draw connections from the literary ideas to the theories of the scientist, namely Edward O. Wilson, Aldo Leopold and Gregory Bateson, who have contributed to the conversation from their own perspectives.

In the Background and Theory section of 2.1 relevant terminology and the main concepts of ecocriticism, anthropocentrism and ecocentrism will be defined. Chapter 2.2 deals with the events in Woolf’s life that influenced her philosophy and affected the particular way she experienced both the human and nonhuman world. The various theories will be introduced in their own chapters before the section on analysis of the ecological dialogue, which takes place between the human and nonhuman. The discussion section draws together how the six characters respond to the nonhuman element and how the relationship or the lack of it shapes their life. Finally in the conclusion I will evaluate how this reading of *The Waves* supports my thesis that human and nonhuman, and mindscape and landscape communicate
silently but noticeably in the novel, and why I believe that conversation matters to all of us now and in the future.

2 Background and Theory

I was looking at the flower bed by the front door; “That is the whole”, I said. I was looking at a plant with a spread of leaves; and it seemed suddenly plain that the flower itself was a part of the earth; that a ring enclosed what was the flower; and that was the real flower; part earth; part flower (Moments of Being 84).

The realisation of the true nature of the flower was one of the “shocks”, of moments of being, that Virginia Woolf described as the foundation of her philosophy in life and writing. For young Virginia it was a shock of beauty, of making a discovery that she felt she could understand fully when she was older (85). She had seen a flower and understood the whole cycle of it; part flower, part earth, and found a reason that made her feel empowered. Woolf’s moment of clear insight concerning the flower and earth echoes Aldo Leopold’s ideas on land ethic and biotic communities, and therefore it appears appropriate to study her writing in companionship with naturalists. Another relevant theory is Edward O. Wilson’s Biophilia, in which he claims that biophilia, our natural affinity for life, connects us to the other species and is really the essence of humanity. Wilson explains that our affiliation with life is deeply coded in our mental development: “We learn to distinguish life from the inanimate and move towards it like moths to porch light” (Wilson 1). Wilson’s simile is a fitting to allusion to the working title of The Waves, which was The Moths (Rohman 12).

Anthropologist Gregory Bateson’s thesis of the metapattern that connects all living things is also interesting in relation to Woolf, and I will discuss the similarities between Bateson’s thesis and Woolf’s philosophy of hidden pattern and also how Leopold and Wilson’s theories relate to Woolf’s ideas. Arnold Berleant’s view of the environment shares similarities with the way Woolf’s characters, especially Louis and Susan, blend with their surroundings without clear boundaries between human and nonhuman world.

In this Background and Theory section I will also discuss the trends in natural history that prevailed at the time and consider which recent studies of Woolf
correspond with the ecocritical perspective. The fairly recent studies of Emily M. Hinnov, Diana L. Swanson, Carrie Rohman, Laci Mattison, Diana Royer, Charlotte Zoe Walker and Christina Alt show from their part how much there is still in *The Waves* that can be studied. Louise Westling’s article concerning Einstein’s influence on Woolf’s thinking, Gillian Beer’s essay about the pre-history in *The Waves* and Avrom Fleishman’s article Woolf’s autobiographical writings also continue to have relevance today. I shall first discuss the terminology and concepts of ecocriticism before going in to more detail with the theories and research.

2.1 Terminology

Sylvia Mayer explains how concepts of nature, culture and the human are politicized, and that Western societies regardless of political systems in place have defined these concepts in an environmentally harmful way. Language is a medium of thought and it can expand or restrict our view of the natural world, thus affecting the development of our ethical, political and legal establishments, and it can therefore shape the relationship between humans and nature (Mayer 112-13). Mayer refers also to the philosopher Val Plumwood who claims that the concepts of nature and culture are often politically motivated. Mayer points out that according to Plumwood “the rational human subject was defined as male and was given privilege over a feminized nature”. Plumwood draws concept pairs such as culture/nature, civilized/primitive, mind/body and reason/emotion, and by these pairs shows how the concepts have polarised and divided nature and culture unnecessarily into dualistic and opposing sides. According to Plumwood this leads to certain value judgements, for example that culture as opposed to nature is often seen as male-orientated and superior. Mayer argues that the environmental crisis is a cultural crisis, and that language and literature have played an important part in creating this crisis, because language guides our perception and interpretation of concepts (Mayer 112-14).

It is therefore important to find new ways to vocalize the human-nonhuman interactions and create new kinds of ecological dialogues. As Arnold Berleant points out, any strict boundaries between human and nonhuman are impossible and unnecessary to draw. He suggests that the relationship between humans and their environment is a continuum and illustrates the problem of the boundary by asking the
reader to draw the line: is it the landscape outside the window, or is it where our skin ends and clothes meet the skin. Air, water and food are part of our environment, so therefore when we breathe air, drink water and eat food, the environment enters us via air, food and drink (Berleant 6). Berleant’s idea of the blurred line between human and nonhuman is useful in opening up the ecological dialogues.

Ecocriticism is a fairly recent addition to literary theory. It explores the relationship between literature and environment, and seeks solutions to environmental crises. An earth-centred approach to literary studies tries to analyse texts and other cultural projects to see how they relate to the environment and whether they offer insights into dealing with both mental and physical challenges concerning human and nonhuman interactions (Garrard 3). Glotfelty considers ecocriticism to be a perspective on literature from an ecocentric point of view, whereas Kerridge has a similar approach to the theory but widens the definition to cover turning over the ecological ideas and texts in any cultural field, and measuring whether they can be beneficial in finding solutions for environmental problems (Garrard 4). More detailed criteria to define whether a text can be read as ecocritical include the following characteristics: that human history is implicated in nonhuman history, human interest is not the only legitimate interest, there is an ethical basis in the text that humans are accountable towards nonhuman environment and some indication of not taking environment as a constant but rather as an evolving process (Garrard 53).

Certain terms, such as anthropocentric and ecocentric, are used in ecocritical conversation frequently. This division charts the attitude someone has towards the world, and where they place themselves in it; are humans the centre of everything or are they part of everything. An Anthropocentric viewpoint takes for granted that humans have more rights than nonhuman organism or systems whereas an ecocentric philosophy believes that the nonhuman world has inherent value independent of humans (Armstrong and Botzler 309-408). There are two main types of ecocentrism: land ethic, which Aldo Leopold wrote in 1948 and deep ecology, which was Arne Naess’s premise (408). Leopold’s land ethic will be described in more detail below.

As “nature” can mean different things depending on the subjective interpretation, I will mostly use the term “nonhuman” rather than “nature” in my
thesis. I consider human to mean arts, consciousness and social interactions between humans, whereas nonhuman expands from nature to include also certain aspects of human life, such as survival instincts and death, because in death humans cease to be personalities when their consciousness shuts down. These distinctions are clearly not absolute, but rather there is a gradual shift from the one to the other. However, they indicate the basic premises that I write from.

2.2 Background

Virginia Woolf was introduced to natural sciences and literature from an early age, as was common practice with the intellectual aristocracy in the nineteenth century (Alt 122). Christina Alt suggests that Woolf’s background in natural sciences was the basis on which the nature symbolism in her writing grew. It was a typical Victorian hobby to collect and classify insects and plants, so in that respect Woolf’s luring of moths with the rum her mother bought the children was nothing unusual, but it was her skill in observing nature that made her such a sensitive writer (Alt 122).

Spending summer holidays in St Ives, listening to the waves breaking on the shore, and reading books while also being exposed to the various cultured friends of her parents gave her a broad experience in both nature and culture:

Who was I then? Adeline Virginia Stephen, the second daughter of Leslie and Julia Prinsep Stephen, born on the 25th January 1882, descended from a great many people, some famous, others obscure; born into a large connection, born not of rich parents, but of well-to-do parents, born into a very communicative, literate, letter writing, visiting, articulate, late nineteenth century world…[...] But I do not know how much of this, or what part of this, made me feel what I felt in the nursery of St Ives (Moments of Being 79)

Woolf draws a quick but clear picture of herself as a member of a large literary community, which consists of her family and the outer circles of the family friends and other connections, and wonders how much that mindscape she inhabited affected how she experienced the world, the landscape around her. The important part her family and literary community played in her ability to see and feel the world in this way, was possibly the supporting atmosphere of the community. She was able to let these qualities of hers to develop in a literary upper-class family, where she did not have to work for her living or hide her sensitivity. What she felt at her nursery in St Ives were rich impressions of colour, shapes and sounds: “…what was seen would
at the same time be heard; sounds would come through this petal or leaf – sounds indistinguishable from sights” (Moments of Being 80). Young Virginia experienced sounds, colours and sights mixed together; they were of equal importance to her: “The buzz, the croon, the smell, all seemed to press voluptuously against some membrane; not to burst it; but to hum round one such a complete rapture of pleasure that I stopped, smelt; looked” (80). She was a sensitive and sharp observer and I believe she shared this skill with some naturalists who have had the patience and acute perceptiveness to keep all senses open.

For example, the scientist and forester, Aldo Leopold, observed wildlife in a similar fashion, when he lay in mud, trying to catch a glimpse of a shy grebe: “While my clothes absorbed local colour, my eyes absorbed the lore of the marsh” (Leopold 160). The beauty of the nonhuman moved Leopold and I suggest that he had a similar holistic skill to Woolf when observing the world. Lying in the mud, Leopold came to think that “…whereas I write a poem by mighty celebration, the yellow-leg walks a better one just by lifting his foot” (Leopold 160).

The use of language ties with Mayer’s argument above, that environmental and cultural crises are closely connected, and that the choice of words plays very important part in finding solutions to the critical relationship between the human and nonhuman world. Naturalists such as Leopold invented new ways to use language when writing about the nonhuman world and voiced a new ethical approach to it, and together with fictional writers such as Woolf, their words could possibly transform language to a more balanced direction, and therefore it is important to study both sides to find the common ground.

Woolf felt that the philosophy that she outlined in her “Sketch of the Past” was so instinctive that it was not made by her but given to her (Moments of Being 85). As a child she had three strong experiences, shocks of realisation that lead her to understand this philosophy of patterns (84). The first one happened when she had a fight with her brother Thoby, and while hitting him she suddenly wondered why hurt another human being. She let her brother continue hitting, and felt a terrible sadness. She became aware of the sadness of violence and it appears that she felt a surge of compassion, but at the same time felt helpless to change anything. The second was her understanding that the flower she saw by the front door in St Ives was more than
just the edges of the flower; a ring enclosed the flower and this holistic vision of hers was the real flower: part flower, part earth. The third moment was when she heard that a family acquaintance had committed a suicide, and soon after she went for a walk in the garden. As she walked past an old apple tree she felt the horror of the news intensely as she looked at the grey bark of the apple tree and these two became intertwined forever in her mind (Moments of Being 84). The process of writing them down made her realise that of these three moments, the discovery of the whole flower made her feel satisfied; she had found a reason. The act of writing, of transforming the experiences into words, and by joining the loose ends together and the making it whole was the greatest pleasure to her. She enjoyed writing the world visible, and believed that “...behind the cotton wool is hidden pattern...” which all human beings are connected to, and this pattern forms our world. The world is like a big machine of art, and we all are cogs in this machinery, making it work: Hamlet, a Beethoven quartet or a Shakespeare sonnet are all parts of this pattern, and they reveal the truth of the world (Moments of Being 85). She was trying to do the same with her writing, revealing a part of the hidden pattern known to her. She believed that her shock of understanding the pattern, which is usually hidden behind the cotton wool of ordinary life, was given to her, and she was certain that it proved that humans were not confined to their bodies, but that we live our lives “...in relation to certain background rods or conceptions” (85). This instinct of the hidden pattern is similar to what Gregory Bateson’s theory on pattern that connects everything in our world (Bateson, Mind and Nature 11). There does not seem to be any indication of Bateson being influenced by Woolf’s philosophy, as his theories are based on anthropological studies. Thus the similarities can be interpreted as cases of co-evolving ideas, which link Woolf’s fiction to other sciences. I shall discuss the significance of Bateson’s theory of pattern and his claim of the importance of beauty, sacredness and consciousness in relation to The Waves in the section on theory below.

Woolf read Henry David Thoreau’s Walden and wrote an admiring review of the book in 1917 (Royer 180). There seems to be no evidence that she would have read Aldo Leopold’s A Sand County Almanac. However, Thoreau and Leopold are often discussed in the same contexts, as they both were naturalists who were capable
of writing inspirationally. A cover blurb from the San Francisco Chronicle on Leopold’s book says that “[w]e can place this book on the shelf that holds the writings of Thoreau and John Muir” and therefore I believe it is not impossible that Woolf would have heard of Leopold although I have not found any evidence to indicate that. Woolf was also familiar with the writings of Albert Einstein and discussed his theories with her friends in the 1920s (Westling 855). According to Louise Westling, Einstein’s physics made many modernists uneasy, but for Woolf they were an exhilarating proof of the universe she had intuitively been aware of (856). Westling points out how Einstein’s influence also shows in her writing when she defined “…perception as composed of atoms falling disconnectedly upon the mind”. Christina Alt explains how she also became familiar also with Charles Darwin’s The Origin of Species, although she was mostly brought up in the pre-Darwinian tradition of natural science, reading Reverend Francis Orpen Morris’s popular taxonomical but not accurate A History of British Butterflies and learning the idea of classification (Alt 123). Alt points out that the Victorians were encouraged to collect plants and insects as a useful imperialistic task and this was the tradition that was followed in Virginia’s household. Young Virginia and her siblings had their own Entomological Society and Museum as an educational hobby (Alt 122). Virginia had the post of name finder in their Society, but was not very enthusiastic about the accuracy required in her post, as Thoby, her brother, criticized her for being too slack (Moments of Being 113). Alt claims that rather than reading Woolf’s natural imagery as a predominantly symbolic, her references to nonhuman world were based on her childhood experiences and the scientific knowledge she acquired (Alt 121-22).

Thus it appears clear that Woolf was well informed in the competing and complementing theories concerning natural history of her time, and responded to the transition in scientific methods from classification of dead specimen to the ecology of observing living organisms with enthusiasm (Alt 134). A similar transition took place in her writing, when she experimented in 1920s with her short stories that delved into the world of nonhuman experience, notably in Kew Garden. Diana L. Swanson calls this change of worldview Woolf’s Copernican shift: humans were no longer at the centre stage, and thus she moved towards a perspective that we now describe as ecocentric (Swanson 53). As Swanson argues, literature and the reader’s
mind create emotional and mental spaces, which can give readers insights into experiences and emotions that would perhaps otherwise be unknown to them (Swanson 54). There are many complex levels of emotions that cannot always be written about directly, but literature can convey these “unspeakable” gaps by leading the readers towards them and letting them interpret the hidden tales (54). Swanson claims therefore that literature can make us understand the nonhuman otherness of those that do not use words, such as birds, insects and plants, without objectifying them. By objectifying Swanson means that the nonhuman world is often represented in literature merely as an echo of human beings and their feelings, something of use or beautiful to look at, rather than as helping human readers recognize the otherness of the nonhuman and understanding the ecocentric view, where the nonhuman world has the right to exist on its own, without being subjected to the needs of humans.

L. Elizabeth Waller uses a term, an ecological dialogue, where human characters connect on a deep level with nonhuman characters in Woolf’s novels, and I will demonstrate that especially with the characters of Louis and Susan, there are many ecological dialogues present in *The Waves*. These ecological dialogues are my main interest, but there are also other types of interactions between the human and nonhuman worlds, such as the biotic communities Bernard creates with the willow tree and the red carnation. The strong nonhuman themes throughout the novel are the bond with soil and the trees. The soil theme extends into pre-history and pre-narrative in Louis’s memories of the sand in the banks of Nile. Gillian Beer analyses the role of pre-history in Woolf’s texts, and speculates that especially Darwin’s early writing excited Woolf to explore the primeval origins as a narrative device (Gillian Beer 110). Beer argues however that Woolf’s interest in origins, causality and judgement was lessened by her realisation that pre-history continues to present day, in layers of landscape:

> The continued presence of sea, clouds, leaves, stones, the animal form of man, the unchanged perceptual intensity of the senses, all sustain her awareness of the simultaneity of the prehistoric in our present moment. This absolves her from the causal forms she associates with nineteenth century narratives (Beer 111)

I would add to Gillian Beer’s list also soil as there are many references to soil, earth, mud, sand and clay in *The Waves* which will be discussed in chapter 3.2 Susan, Louis and the Land Ethic below. The elements of nonhuman nature have their
own time scale which is at the same time comforting in its continuity and frightening in its vastness.

Woolf said herself that she wrote to a rhythm, not a plot (The Waves, Introduction, v). The sound and rhythm of the waves can be felt both as a literal structure of the text, with different voices rising up and going down, letting another voice continue, and also with the metaphorical use of the waves which are used to emphasize the feeling of continuity, of recurring emotions. Emily M. Hinnov considers that the wave-like function is most evident in the character of Bernard (Hinnov, To Give the Moment Whole 215). Avrom Fleishman notes how one of Woolf’s ideas was to have “[a] mind thinking”, rather than a telling a conventional story (Fleishman 612).

The wave-imagery and the wave-like structure is obviously an integral part of The Waves, but it has already been discussed in many previous studies. I will therefore concentrate on the themes of soil, trees, patterns, and the dialogues between these nonhuman and human worlds, with an emphasis on soil.

2.3 The Willow Tree and Biophilia

Edward O. Wilson’s theory of biophilia provides interesting explanations to some of the circumstances that have affected the development of the interconnectedness between the human and nonhuman world over the course of evolution. Wilson presents evidence on why human beings prefer certain types of landscapes in favour of others, and why trees are such a dominant feature in our mindscapes. “Biophilia” is a term Wilson gave to a phenomenon where one life form has an urge to affiliate itself with other forms of life, reaching out to even very different species from its own (Wilson 85). Although Wilson admits that his proposition has not been subjected to all the scientific methods of testing to prove its validity, he nevertheless argues that ‘biophilia’ is present in our everyday life and in the choices we make in habitat selection and pet animals many of us live with, for example. Wilson points out that life of any kind is always more interesting than dead matter: “The poet-in-biologist will add that life is an exceedingly improbable state, meta-stable, open to other systems, thus ephemeral – and worth any price to keep” (85). “Biophilia” is therefore both biological and cultural preference for the authentic, and for life in all
its ramifications. According to Wilson, the evidence of biophilia is shown in our stories, fantasies and repetitive patterns of culture, which can be found in most societies, as anthropologist have noticed. Indeed Gregory Bateson, whose theory of pattern will be discussed below in chapter 2.5 The Cosmic Pattern, has made this same discovery through his research.

The relevance of “biophilia” to the connection with mindscape and landscape may be explained partly by Wilson’s comparisons between art and science, and the role of symbolism in the equation. Wilson quotes Yeats who said that “in the universe of the mind, ... no symbol tells all its meanings to any generation. Only by discovering the ancient symbols can the artist express meanings that cross generations and open the full abundance of nature” (Wilson 80). Wilson explains that the symbolism provides a means of continuity, which our mental structures support and pass down to other generations in the form of myths, such as the origin of the world, rebirth, and the battles between light and darkness. He observes how “… human mindscape is idiosyncratic and yet ultimately obedient to biological law”. Wilson means that our mind is biologically formed in a manner that moulds our way of perceiving the world, and our “poetic species, the human beings, literally live … by symbols, particularly words, because the brain is constructed to process information almost exclusively in their terms” (Wilson 74). The landscape human mind evolved in has had a strong impact on our mindscape, and this is where one of the aspects of biophilia, our affection towards trees, comes in. Trees are often a kind of focal point in literary landscapes, also in The Waves, as will be seen from my analysis below.

As Edward Wilson explains, there is a reason why sitting under a tree feels so normal to people. A preferred early habitat for humans for nearly two million years has been a savannah type landscape with open views, few scattered trees, groves for shelter and some access to water (Wilson 108-118). The body of the human being is well suited to life in the savannah with bipedal locomotion and free-swinging arms (109). According to Wilson, living and evolving in a savannah also affected the development of the brain to prefer landscape as close to a savannah as possible and he argues that cultural evolution has done little to change our aesthetics preferences. He asks whether the mind has also evolved to appreciate a landscape similar to
savannah and poses a question “[Can beauty in some fashion] be said to lie in the genes of the beholder” (109).

Wilson refers to studies done by Gordon Orians, Yi-Fu Tuan and Rene Dubos, which appear to confirm the connection between the landscape of our evolutionary past to our present day behaviour, that people “…respond to a deep genetic memory of mankind’s optimal environment…” and that if they can choose, they settle on to open grassland dotted with trees and overlooking water (Wilson 110-12). Wilson considers this preference, which he calls the “savannah gestalt”, as one aspect of biophilia, a human being’s natural affinity for life. It seems that Wilson’s theory of biophilia shows a clear interconnectedness between mindscape and landscape, which manifests in Woolf’s - quite possibly unconscious - choice of the willow tree as one of the central places in The Waves.

According to Wilson, even in densely populated cities humans try to create the “savannah gestalt” as best as they can, and I will discuss how this relates to Louis in chapter 3.1 The Willow Tree in the Mindscape. Wilson stresses the significance of habitat selection: if you get to the right place, everything else is likely to be easier (Wilson 106). Similarly, Leopold argues that the properties of soil and human history are in direct communication or influence interaction with each other as I discussed above (Leopold 207).

Properties of soil and literature may seem to be far from each other, but there are connections that can be drawn to link them as will be shown in my analysis of Susan and Louis in chapter 3.2, Susan, Louis and the Land Ethic. Furthermore, the unity Woolf felt when she realised that the flower she looked at in the garden at St Ives was “part earth, part flower and that the flower extended also to the earth around it, binds part with whole (Moments of Being 84). As Laci Mattison points out, Woolf combined ordinary life with art and therefore it is understandable that one of her meaningful moments of being happened by a flowerbed (Mattison 75). Mattison’s ideas on Woolf’s philosophy and art are also relevant to Gregory Bateson’s theory of pattern, and I will therefore return to Mattison more in chapter 2.5, The Cosmic Pattern, below.

Charlotte Zoe Walker is another Woolf scholar who is interested in the connection between art and nonhuman in Woolf’s novels and she proposes that
“...Woolf’s characters and through them her readers, relate sensuously to nature, often receiving through it the shocks that bring them out of the “cotton wool” ... of daily life and into the state of creativity that leads to transformation and to art” (Walker 149). Walker’s claim is similar to what Laci Mattison suggests and I agree with both of them in this, although not all the characters react in a sensuous way to the nonhuman: Neville for example does not appreciate fields or leaves (The Waves 28). Walker also refers to Vita Sackville-West, who would have liked to have asked her friend about the recurring imagery of leaves, but forgot when she still had a chance (Walker 149). Walker agrees with Sackville-West about the leaves being a repeating theme in many of Woolf’s book, also in The Waves, and suggests that maybe the leaves and pages have a playful connection in Woolf’s imagination. I will return to the symbolism of the leaves in chapter 3.4, The Mind Grows Rings.

2.4 The Land Ethic and Biotic Community

Earth, land, soil, clay and turf are often considered fairly mundane subjects to discuss and they are habitually taken for granted. In The Waves clay, turf and fields are, however, significant elements, that actively touch the life Susan and symbolically affect Louis, and thus have a relevance to both the land ethic and biotic community. Human history and land history have intertwined during the course of evolution and continue to do so: fertile soil supports humans better than unfertile. On the other hand, human activities can improve the soil, deplete it or destroy it by pollution. Aldo Leopold observed this interconnectedness between land and human history both academically and personally on his own farm. Leopold’s experiences and observations resulted him writing a collection of essays on the importance of land ethics and the biotic community, among other issues concerning nature conservation.

Aldo Leopold’s land ethic grew from both a practical and poetic perspective; writing on Darwin’s influence on the course of civilization he regretted its lack of effect:

We know now what was unknown to all the preceding caravan of generations: that men are only fellow-voyagers with other creatures in the odyssey of evolution. This new knowledge should have given us, by this time, a sense of kinship with fellow-creatures; a wish to live and let live; a sense of wonder over the magnitude and duration of the biotic enterprise (Leopold 109).
Leopold wondered why the evolutionary knowledge had not made humans appreciate the nonhuman members of our biotic community as their equals. Leopold felt kinship towards other species, which is essentially the same notion that Wilson “biophilia”, a natural affinity and empathy towards all living things.

Leopold’s holistic approach on human and nonhuman communities culminated in his land ethic. He was an American forester, conservationist, educator and philosopher who observed the changes in his environment, and through his work and private study began to understand the importance of a new kind of ethic needed to readjust the relationship between the humans and the environment (Botzler and Armstrong 412). Leopold defined the ecological ethic as a balance between action and freedom in the process of evolution’s battle of existence (Leopold 202). He came to an understanding that when the land is seen purely in economic term without any responsibility towards it, it would harm the human-land-relationship in the long term (203). He proposed that “[e]thics are possibly a kind of community instinct in-the-making” and extends the ethic to cover nonhuman elements: soils, waters, plants and animals, which he collectively calls the land (203-4). Leopold claimed that humans are only members of the biotic community, and that many historical events have been determined by the biotic interactions between humans and land, giving as an example the development of Kentucky bluegrass which helped humans to settle there successfully with their cowherds, whereas in the Southwest the same kind of livestock grazing resulted in gradual erosion of plants and soils (204-6). Leopold argues that “…the plant succession steered the course of history; the pioneer simply demonstrated, for good or ill, what successions inhered in the land” (207). Thus a biotic community means a biotic interaction between human and nonhuman (205). This relates to Susan in *The Waves*, who has grown up on a family farm, and has developed a strong bond with it. She creates a biotic community with the land as will be shown in chapter 3.2. Louis is also drawn to the earth, but in his case it is not specific to a certain place, but rather a universal biotic community, or cosmic community, which spans from past to present, and possibly future. Bernard, in his struggle towards self-knowledge, creates a biotic community with the willow tree.

Woolf’s understanding of the importance of the connection with land shows in the characters of *The Waves* and her observations on the nonhuman world bear
similarities with Leopold. Woolf’s intuitive realisation of the whole flower as part earth, part flower echoes with Leopold who writes that “[l]and, then, is not merely soil; it is a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals” (Leopold 216). The energy from the sun travels in chains from soil to plant, animals and then humans (216). Louise Westling quotes environmental philosopher Michael Zimmerman to support her argument on the role of Woolf’s fiction in changing the direction of ecological thinking and its influence on fiction, acknowledging that

…humanity emerges from and is thus part of the rest of life; affirmation that life is a self-organizing web that we must cease controlling mechanically; acknowledgement that the Earth community is itself sacred; realization that morality must be attuned to the ‘languages’ of the larger Earth community; recognition that we must encourage the flourishing of all life, human and nonhuman (Westling 857)

The terms differ slightly, but essentially Zimmerman’s belief of Earth community, which includes its nonhuman members, and a need for the morality developed to hear the silence of the nonhuman world, corresponds with Leopold’s land ethic and Woolf’s philosophy. As Diana L. Swanson suggests, the need to hear and interpret the silence of nonhuman inspired Woolf, who wanted to give a language to the silent world, and translate the nonverbal and nonhuman element via the characters of Susan, Louis and Jinny to something which could be understood by those who lack experience of nonhuman otherness (Swanson 55).

Woolf herself was close to the nonhuman throughout her writing career, writing in a lodge at Monk’s House while her husband Leonard would tend the garden (Caroline Zoob 83). Their garden at Monk’s House in Sussex was a peaceful but industrious haven, a contrast to their busy social London life, providing both aesthetic and edible nourishment for the Woolfs. Virginia helped Leonard with the garden, but was not particularly interested in gardening herself, although she enjoyed the atmosphere of gardens, and both her childhood garden at St Ives and the garden at Monk’s House inspired her prose. Although she was fascinated by a wide scope of phenomena in physics and natural world in a philosophical sense, her knowledge of the details in horticulture and nature were patchy, and some readers were critical of her mistake of placing rooks and elms in Hebrides when there were none there (Zoob 92). It appears that she wanted to capture the atmosphere and larger scale of life and its patterns, and was not bothered to learn all the correct names and facts: “…if only I
could remember the names of flowers that Leonard is proud of this summer, it would be like one of old Miss Jekyll’s letters, minus the common sense” (92). Woolf felt that St Ives was always more vivid in her memories, even as an adult, and that she saw the garden at Monk’s House through her memories of Talland House (Moment of Being 80). Those memories of her mental landscape have clearly weighed heavier in the writing process, overriding the need to be factually correct. While writing The Waves, Woolf worked either in garden tool shed at Monk’s House, or when it was too cold, in a sitting room upstairs of the house with the view over the garden: “…Leonard’s garden really has been a miracle – vast white lilies, and such a blaze of dahlias…” (Zoob 76). The landscape she lived in while writing strongly influenced her prose, and the atmospheres of both the Woolf’s busy London home and peaceful county retreat are evident in the alternating landscapes of Louis’s London or Susan’s farm in The Waves. Virginia’s affection was divided between her love of countryside and city, but Leonard preferred the quiet solitude of the country life and believed it beneficial to Virginia’s mental health (Zoob 134). Interpreting Aldo Leopold’s ideas on land ethics, it can be suggested that Virginia, Leonard and their garden formed a biotic community by forming both a mental and physical bond with it, by walking the paths, eating fruits and vegetables that had grown in its soil, and developing a deep affection towards it. The significance of biotic communities in The Waves will be discussed below in chapters 3.1, 3.2 and 3.5.

2.5 The Cosmic Pattern

Gregory Bateson had a theory on the pattern that connects everything in nature. His thesis was that everywhere in the world patterns connect with other patterns and form a meta-pattern (Mind and Nature 11). Bateson takes music as one example of a pattern in nature that resonates with Woolf’s ideas. She writes that “we are the words, we are the music, we are the thing itself” (Moments of Being 85) which strikes a chord with Bateson when he explains how in livings things, such as humans or crabs, the anatomy is like music, because it is repetitive and rhythmical, and furthermore the repetition appears with modulation which happens often in music (Mind and Nature 7-19). Bateson proposed that such a wide range of matters as “the

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1 Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) was an influential British horticulturalist, garden designer, artist and writer (Uglow 242-5)
patterned arrangement of leaves in a plant, the escalation of an armaments race, the process of courtship, the nature of play, the grammar of a sentence … and the contemporary crises in man’s relationship with his environment…” are linked by their form, and that they are part of the ecology of ideas, or the ecology of mind (Steps to the Ecology of Mind xxiii). He argued that the ecology of mind is also the ecology of pattern, because the arrangement of the mind’s material parts allows thought processes and patterns to function according to the material basis. Bateson claimed that mind and its material base cannot be taken dualistically apart, as has traditionally been done. His theory was that mental systems could consist of more than single organisms, and that in the evolutionary battle of survival “…the unit of survival is always organism and environment’ (Steps to an Ecology of Mind xi). It appears that this theory translates in literary terms as a close interaction between mindscape and landscape, thus humans and their landscape form a unit of survival. In Leopold’s words Bateson’s claim that “the unit of survival is always organism and environment” refers to the biotic community of the human and nonhuman world, whereas Wilson points out that being in the right environment enhances the chances of human survival. Therefore all these different ideas and theories refer to the same phenomena, that mindscape and landscape, human and nonhuman form a unit of survival and thus also a unit of living. There is also a parallel here with Woolf’s intuitive knowledge of the pattern which she felt was given to her: “It proves that one’s life is not confined to one’s body and what one says or does; one is living all the time in relation to certain background rods or conceptions” (Moments of Being 85).

Virginia Woolf believed in a kind of cosmic meta-structure, which she thought was behind ordinary life. A big shock of revelation for Woolf was that “behind the cotton wool is a hidden pattern” and by writing she felt she was able to make the pattern real and visible (Moments of Being 85). The character of Louis in The Waves appears to be trying the same with his effort to write one poem to give a reason to all. Woolf felt that ordinary life was mostly a state of non-being, or cotton wool, but that there occasionally were moments of being, shocks, which gave a glimpse of something else that would only surface at rare moments. She implied that this pattern could be accessed via a kind of collective consciousness and that artists
such as Shakespeare or Beethoven were able to draw something of the pattern for others to understand: “We are the words, we are the music, we are the thing itself” (Moments of Being 84-5).

Similarly, Emily Hinnov sites Madeline Moore that “…these ecstatic and violent shocks of being are potentially moments of mystical unity, where each person is connected to the other, and all are part of some inexplicable pattern…” and develops her analyses that Bernard’s identity moves like a wave, washing through all the other characters and joining them together into a symbolic whole (Hinnov, To Give the Moment Whole 215). Hinnov proposes that this wave-like pattern sliding from oneself to greater whole and back again reflect both the characters’ stories and also the structure of the novel, with the interludes of nonhuman nature alternating with the human. Hinnov also suggests, that “…nature’s influence possibly reveals some cosmic wholeness that is broader than the human universe, as well as yearning for lost unity and human connectedness in the midst of it all” (217).

Woolf, Hinnov, Rohman and Bateson all share the theme of music as both metaphorical and in Bateson’s case scientific expression, connecting nonhuman and human nature. Hinnov proposes that the ending of The Waves with its “…symphonic moment suggests the possibility of rebuilding community out of the metaphor of art” (Hinnov 217). According to Hinnov, the community of the six characters and others joining them “…transcends time and death to create a symphony, with its concord and its discord and its tunes on top and its complicated bass beneath...” (217) while Carrie Rohman discusses the themes of music, Jinny’s vibrating flower-like sexuality and the way Jinny connects with nonhuman, making life (Rohman).

As Diana Royer suggests, it is likely that among other authors, reading Henry Thoreau’s Walden influenced Woolf (Royer 180). “Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in” writes Thoreau (181) while Woolf compares an idea to a fish in a river in A Room of One’s Own as will be discussed in chapter 3.4, The Mind Grows Rings. Diana Royer notes how Thoreau opens his mind to observe and blend into nature to better understand both nature and humanity. Royer analyses Thoreau’s technique in Walden and compares it to Woolf’s works in which the characters have a close connection to nature, in order to show how both authors equate self exploration with natural phenomenon (181).
Royer also finds similarities in the way Woolf shares with Thoreau a skill to see the essential beauty in the most ordinary things and appreciate them from a new angle, to not take things for granted. Thus it appears that Thoreau’s “to be awake is to be alive” is essentially the same notion as Woolf’s moments of being, which stand out from the cotton wool life of non-being (Royer).

Patterns, order and humans as a mass population or as a part in the machinery of life are mentioned repeatedly in *The Waves*; “our ring here ... hint at some other order” (21), “marching and forming fours ... life comes; life goes; we make life” (98), “the sequence returns” (86), “meeting and parting, we assemble different forms, make different patterns” (95) and Bernard’s musing on human assemblies and armies (139). This corresponds with Woolf’s hidden pattern and also Aldo Leopold’s explanation that in animal populations there are patterns of behaviour that are unknown to any individual animal, but the animal performs them as part of the population. Leopold draws a comparison to human populations, proposing that perhaps human populations have behaviour patterns, which we do not know of, but we nevertheless follow (Leopold 186). Leopold questions, whether “mobs and wars, unrests and revolutions, are cut of such cloth”. He suggests that there is a possibility that humans as a species have got hidden population behavioural patterns which have not become evident yet, because there has been no such situation which would have given rise to them (186). Similarly, Woolf pondered how she saw herself “…as a fish in the stream; deflected; held in place; but cannot describe the stream…” meaning that society and class-status shape people, and that society itself changes gradually and it is difficult for any individual to analyse its influence on them at the time; changes and influences can be often seen only from a distance the passing time gives (Moments of Being 92). Woolf has written the characters, especially Louis and Bernard, to wonder on this same idea that is also a part of Woolf’s philosophy of the hidden pattern I will examine the examples mentioned above from *The Waves* in detail in the analysis below. The character of Jinny, on the other hand, follows behavioural patterns of a human social scene and interprets signs and symbols to guide her, as will be analysed in chapter 3.3 below.

Laci Mattison suggests that Woolf’s de-institutionalizing of art and her philosophy of “moments of being” allows anyone to become an artist by learning to
perceive things as they are in themselves, rather than for some purpose, and this appreciation of things as they are, without action or direct benefit from them, gives a chance for those intuitive moments. Thus, understanding for example the unity of flower and earth as Woolf did, connects one to the realm of art, be it literature or some other art form, and via art one can connect to the nonhuman, to the biotic community and even to the cosmic community. This correlates with Bateson, who claims that the only way to escape from crude materialism is to seek beauty, sacredness and consciousness (*Mind and Nature* 232). Bateson argues that we need to find a meaningful connection with the nonhuman elements around us to develop as human beings because we are “part of each others environment” (*Steps to an Ecology of Mind* xi).

3 Analysis

What motivates my reading of *The Waves* is the interconnectedness between inside and outside, mindscape and landscape and human and nonhuman. In the free flowing soliloquies the six characters share their inner life with the reader and intuitively also with each other. Woolf’s distinctive style of writing, the stream of consciousness, was a new way of literary expression both for Woolf and her contemporaries. She worried whether *The Waves* was too much of a challenge for her readers, but at the same time she was happy to have found her own style (*The Waves* vi).

As children the six characters – Louis, Rhoda, Susan, Jinny, Neville and Bernard - live in the present moment and there is no strict boundary between their mindscape and landscape:

“A shadow falls on the path,” said Louis, “like an elbow bent.”
“Islands of light are swimming on the grass,” said Rhoda. “They have fallen through the trees.”
“Birds are singing up and down and in and out all round us,” said Susan (*The Waves* 4)

The children feel their surroundings as an uncomplicated and continuous stream in which they swim. The first shock to this happy and uncomplicated existence is when Jinny shatters Louis’s solitude in the hedge by kissing him and bringing a reminder of them growing up and becoming sexual, complicated human
beings. The novel follows these characters growing up, growing apart from each other and also further away from the nonhuman state of being where one can forget oneself and the pain of being only oneself, of being lonely. All six characters strive to connect to the current of life, the nonhuman universal community to lessen the pain of their loneliness and the inconceivability of other people. The death of their friend, Percival, shocks them into seeking solace each in their own ways, because his death rips a hole into their ordinary life, into their “cotton wool living”.

Susan and Louis both experience a strong bond with land and landscape both in history and present time, as will be discussed in chapter 3.2. The other manifestations of nonhuman elements in the characters of Louis, Susan, Jinny, Bernard, Rhoda and Neville are also analysed with the emphasis on the ecologic dialogue and the concept of a biotic community between human and nonhuman world. I will also discuss the biotic community of red carnation and its role as a metaphor for the friends’s love towards Percival. Furthermore, there are some moments in which the patterns of nonhuman element are present in a notable way that are worth a closer study. Percival’s death is a central theme in *The Waves* and it can be argued that Percival’s and also Rhoda’s death are a connection to the nonhuman, because in death the human element dies and the body becomes part of the nonhuman cycle of energy and matter.

Woolf explores many themes close to ecocriticism in *The Waves*: the stress caused by environmental disconnectedness in Louis, Susan’s almost symbiotic bond with her farm and the importance of the properties of landscape surrounding us; whether there are trees and views over fields to look at or narrow streets and tall buildings blocking the view. Another important theme is the characters’s shared yearning to connect with something larger than themselves, something that makes life worth living. The landscape that the characters in *The Waves* feel at home in varies, and much of their mental wellbeing depends on how well they have adjusted to the landscape they have settled in as adults.

In chapter 3.1 the analysis concentrates on the significance of the willow tree to Bernard and his friends. Chapter 3.2 deals with the connection to the land and the biotic communities that can be created between human and nonhuman, affecting mindscapes of those humans involved. Chapter 3.3 charts the connections
between patterns in the mind and the environment, and explores the idea that the unit of survival is the organism and its environment, and its relevance to this reading of *The Waves*. In 3.4 the connection between Bernard’s development and tree’s growth is discussed in relation to Woolf’s own mindscape. The symbolism of leaves is also analysed. Chapter 3.5 deals with the biotic community created around a red carnation as the friends gather to give Percival a farewell party, and death as an element of the nonhuman. I shall also discuss other aspects of nonhuman in the six characters, especially Louis and Susan, but also Bernard, Jinny and Rhoda and Neville, and how their attitudes towards the nonhuman affect their lives: how the ecological dialogue between their mindscape and landscapes shapes their lives by either positive or negative way.

3.1 The Willow Tree in the Mindscape

Bernard is a storyteller who strives to make sense of his life, but is painfully aware how impossible it is to unearth the undercurrents of how the world works. He is searching for his own story, something to hang on to, and as a young student is drawn to sit under a willow tree near the college grounds, by the river. It is a popular meeting place for Bernard and his friends, a focal point in the landscape. The landscape where Bernard and his friends like to gather to spend their free time is very similar to that of the “savannah gestalt” Edward O. Wilson describes as a preferred environment for humans: there is a willow tree that grows by the river, with open cricket fields spreading before them. The cricket fields resemble the savannah, with the willow tree and river providing shelter and a calming landscape within in a busy city.

I was saying there was a willow tree. Its shower of falling branches, its creased and crooked bark had the effect of what remains outside our illusions yet cannot stay them, is changed by them for the moment, yet shows through stable, still, and with a sternness that our lives lack. Hence the comment it makes; the standard it supplies, and the reason why, as we flow and change, it seems to measure (142).

The willow tree, with its weeping branches and ruff bark, may seem unaltered by Bernard’s human point of view but in reality the tree changes according to its own slow pace of growth, and the time-scale is such that humans can see it only in
hindsight, thinking back, so it is easy to mistake a tree as an unchanging figure. Against this silent, nonhuman tree-time Bernard’s own human time feels restless: he changes from Hamlet to Shelley, to Napoleon and Byron in his search for an understanding of himself, philosophy or science and his search for a partner (141). He recognises the relative permanence in the willow tree and seeks shelter under it. According to Wilson’s theory this could be interpreted as a genetic human predisposition of seeking safety in the “savannah gestalt” landscape. The willow tree is a presence against which Bernard tries to make sense of his friends, his own place in life and life itself. Sitting under the willow with Neville he is challenged with Neville’s view of life as something clear and simple, which he could momentarily see with him, before it disappears:

The scene was cut with such intensity and so permeated with the quality of his vision that for a moment I could see it too; the punt, the bananas, the young man, through the branches of the willow tree. Then it faded (142).

Neville prefers humans to nonhumans. He is not interested in the willow branches, but focuses on what is seen through them, the busy street life with the punt, the bananas, and the young man. Neville takes life as it is, or as he thinks it is, and proceeds according to that in a rather direct and successful line, whereas Bernard lacks Neville’s solid foundation in life and clear goal of searching for academic knowledge. Nevertheless, as a young man even Neville likes to sit under the willow tree with his friends although he is clearly not interested in nonhuman trees or water:

Should I seek out some tree? Should I desert these form rooms and libraries … for woods and fields? … But nature is too vegetable, too vapid. She has only sublimities and vastitudes and water and leaves. I begin to wish for firelight, privacy, and the limbs of one person (28)

Neville feels passionately about Percival, but cannot share his thoughts with Bernard, because he would make a story of it, sitting under the willow tree with his audience, or Louis who is “too cold and too universal” (27) Neville does not want to be part of Bernard’s storytelling circle or the willow tree’s biotic community. Neville’s preferred landscape is in books, libraries and human comforts, not the nonhuman, dull world of trees and rivers. Neville’s question of “should I seek out some tree” seems sarcastic in this context. For Neville, poetry and one intimate
person to share it with forms the basis of his mindscape, and libraries, studies and theatres are his landscape:

To follow the dark paths of the mind and enter the past, to visit books, to brush aside their branches and break of some fruit (100).

Neville compares his mindscape, his “dark paths of the mind” to a forest, where he can study the past, and nourish himself with books that are like fruit, refreshing his mind and packed with seeds of knowledge that can be passed on, enriching the humanity. Nonhuman is not enough for Neville intellectually, although he appreciates the aesthetics of a rose: “It is better to look at a rose, or to read Shakespeare…” than inflict one’s own moral values on others (111). Neville searches for the truth and beauty in poetry, the same as Louis does. However, their approaches to life differ enormously due to their backgrounds, which have shaped their mindscape along with their opportunities in life. Neville is a confident Englishman, presumably with a prosperous enough family to pay for his university. He has established himself as an academic, whereas Louis feels always the odd one out, ashamed of his Australian accent and his father, the banker in Brisbane. Louis has to work as a clerk, and is shut outside the studious and cosy world of old yews and college grounds: “I shall envy them their continuance down the safe traditional ways under the shade of old yew trees while I consort with cockneys and clerks, and tap the pavements of the city” (36). Wilson’s argument that the right landscape matters applies to Neville in a positively, because he finds comfort in his surroundings, whereas Louis struggles: he is not in the right place, and everything is always more difficult to him. Louis is painfully aware of not fitting in, afraid of being ridiculed because of his accent, being out of sync with his surroundings (52).

When Louis comes to sit under the willow tree with Bernard and the others, he has transformed from a boy who hides inside a shrub and feels like a stalk to a young man who would not sit on the bare ground: “…when he let himself down on the grass, cautiously spreading … a mackintosh square, made one acknowledge his presence” (143). He impresses Bernard with his street-wise knowledge of London with mean streets and drunken women. Bernard tells us that Louis’s landscape has squealing trams, acrid factory fumes and men with bowler-hats and that his caustic tongue makes Bernard feel inadequate and small:
I had the intelligence to salute his integrity; his research with bony fingers wrapped in rags because of chilblains for some diamond of indissoluble veracity (143).

Bernard’s willow tree and its biotic community are too small and cosy for Louis, as he searches for a grand reason in life, something that explains everything and gives meaning to his life, apart from being a clerk. In his search for a reason Louis tries to interpret patterns and rhythms in the landscape and in poetry, as I will discuss further in chapter 3.3 below. Trapped in his city life, Louis retires to his small attic room with a view over the city roofs, to feel less anxious looking at the roofscape, or visiting the river, rather than staying at the suburban house he has acquired as part of his promotion: “...there I watch the rain glisten on the tiles till they shine like a policeman’s waterproof…” (94). Roof tiles, shining wet with rain, transform the cityscape to something more close to nonhuman and universal, and resemble both the “savannah gestalt” and the sea, with wet tiles glistening like waves.

With Rhoda, the willow appeared to grow by the grey desert and her fear of life would horrify even the tree: “The leaves shrivelled as she looked at them, tossed in agony as she passed them” (143). Rhoda is afraid of life and other people and she has to wait until she is alone in bed before she can be herself and feel safe: “There are hours and hours … before I can let my tree grow, quivering in green pavilions above my head. Here I cannot let it grow. Someone knocks through it” (30). Rhoda is acutely aware of her problem with life: “There is some check in the flow of my being, a deep stream presses on some obstacle; it jerks; it tugs; some knot in the centre resists (30). Even when her stream - of consciousness perhaps - flows free she is at loss on what to do with her energy: “I will give; I will enrich; I will return to the world this beauty ... Oh! To whom?” (30-31). When Percival dies, it is to him that Rhoda offers her flowers, perhaps as a metaphor of her yearning to give herself to him. She senses the masculine power of life in Percival as a pure vitality, which attracts her although she is unable to connect with him in reality (91). As it is, Rhoda is disconnected from and scared of the human world, and the only person she can let close is Louis (157). Rhoda’s death, a lonely suicide, is very different from Percival’s accidental death as a young man. Rhoda shares with Louis a profound distrust and fear of being mentally injured by other humans. However, the
connection with Louis and the feeling of unity with him does not save Rhoda from committing suicide, possibly because Louis is so similar to her that he is unable to make her hold on to life, only understand her anguish of other humans: “Rhoda, with whom I shared silence when others spoke, she who hung back and turned aside when the herd assembled...” (114). Rhoda seeks refuge first in the nonhuman world of trees and leaves, and then finally in nonhuman death, because she cannot bear other human beings:

Oh, life, how I have dreaded you … oh, human beings, how I have hated you! … So terrible was life that I held up shade after shade. Look at life through this, look at life through that; let there be rose leaves, let there be vine leaves – I covered the whole street, Oxford Street, Piccadilly Circus, with the blaze and ripple of my mind, with vine leaves and rose leaves. (115).

Rhoda struggles to shelter against the restless cityscape with the images of rose and vine leaves to protect her mind. The connection between mindscape and landscape is made very clear here with Rhoda suffering from being in a landscape her mind cannot cope with. As Wilson argues, finding the right place is crucial for survival, and a large part of the structure of the brain and sensory system is tuned to determine the most suitable habitat for each species, humans included (Wilson 106). Rhoda keeps looking for a place she could feel safe and let “her tree grow” (The Waves 30) but fails and commits suicide in the end, drowning in the waves: “Rolling me over the waves will shoulder me under. Everything falls in a tremendous shower, dissolving me” (116). The source of unhappiness for Rhoda is that she cannot connect to either human or nonhuman life: “…I am broken into separate pieces; I am no longer one” (58). She is afraid of people and life. Thus she can paradoxically only connect to life in death, in her suicide.

“Now I will relinquish: now I will let loose. Now I will at last free the checked, the jerked-back desire to be spent, to be consumed” (91). Rhoda cannot find a meaningful purpose for herself to secure a place in a community she lives in, to fit in and be accepted. It seems that there is a relation between Rhoda’s yearning to connect with something bigger than herself and Bateson’s suggestion that people try to “escape from the crude materialism” with the aid of spiritual, religious or magic experiences which Bateson nevertheless deemed futile as they offer only a faint copy of something sacred (Mind and Nature 229). Rhoda fails to find comfort in
nonhuman elements of trees, or hear the “other side of silence” and she is equally unable to communicate with humans.

It is noticeable that Susan will not come to sit under the willow tree. When she is at school with her friends, she constantly aches for her farm and after finishing her studies returns there, not wanting to leave again apart from a few rare occasions, such as Percival’s farewell dinner and the friends’s reunion at Hampton Court. When Susan is homesick at the school she finds comfort in the landscape seen from the dormitory window: “There are some trees I like; the cherry tree with the lumps of clear gum on the bark; and one view from the attic towards some far hills” (24), thus she searches the “savannah gestalt” wherever she can.

Jinny for her part enjoys the urban landscape as her natural habitat. She flutters through the parties she is invited to in the city with ease: “I am native here. I tread naturally on thick carpets … I now begin to unfurl, in this scent, in this radiance, as a fern when its curled leaves unfurl” (56). Jinny is happiest among men, admired in parties where she reads gestures, glances and body movements as her native language (56-7). Rhoda’s deathly desolation is the total opposite of Jinny, who vibrates with life and its renewing force with her sexuality, as Bernard experiences it.

She made the willows dance, but not with illusion; for she saw nothing that was not there. It was a tree; there was the river; it was afternoon; here we were; I in my serge suit; she in green. There was no past, no future; merely the moment in its ring of light, and our bodies; and the inevitable climax, the ecstasy (143).

Jinny moves through life following her instincts. She expresses pure human lust, “the natural happiness” that Louis lacks. I suggest that Jinny’s “natural happiness” is a nonhuman element of nature, one manifestation of the current of life, and a chance to feel connected to some other life form than herself, and therefore an example of Wilson’s biophilia, which is a hardwired behavioural pattern in all creatures. Jinny’s sexual freedom is an honest and simple affinity for life. For Jinny, the willow tree is a tree, nothing less and nothing more; the tree is neither good nor bad, but the tree itself.

Bernard, who has a need to objectify everything around him, makes up a story of each of his friends in relation to the willow tree. The willow dances for Bernard when Jinny approaches, “like a crinkled poppy” whose passion momentarily
lights up the willow. Bernard forms a biotic community with his friends and the willow tree, and mirrors their qualities to the tree, which appears permanent to him:

On the outskirts of every agony sits some observant fellow who points; who whispers as he whispered to me that summer morning in the house where the corn comes up to the window, “The willow grows on the turf by the river. The gardeners sweep with great brooms and the lady sits writing.” Thus he directed me to that which is beyond and outside our own predicament; to that which is symbolic and thus perhaps permanent, if there is any permanence in our sleeping, eating, breathing, so animal, so spiritual and tumultuous lives (141).

The subjective permanence of the nonhuman willow tree, and the human act of writing are both elements that are outside the normal automatic living, the “cotton wool life” of eating, sleeping and breathing. Bernard is seeking something permanent and symbolic, which raises him above the existential pain of searching for his own voice and meaning in life that he suffers from. He tries to find it both in the universal nonhumanity of the willow tree and in the art of writing, in a similar way Louis or Neville, or indeed Woolf herself did, who felt that writing was the most important thing to do for her (Moments of Being 86). Throughout her writing career Woolf gardened with her husband Leonard in their much loved garden at Monk’s House in Sussex (Zoob) and the influence of her own landscape can be sensed in The Waves and especially in the character of Bernard, with the symbolism of gardens, combined with writing running through the novel from the writing lady of Elveden to the willow tree. According to Emily M. Hinnov, “Woolf focuses ... on the cosmic pattern that transcends distinctions between the past, present, and future and advocates a larger, more communal awareness of our connection with others and the natural world that envelops us all” (Hinnov, “To Give the Moment Whole” 214). Bernard is looking for the symbolic in the cosmic community, the pattern behind the ruckus of the everyday life. He reaches towards the cosmic, but instead creates a biotic community with the willow tree, perhaps because of the inbuilt preference for the “savannah gestalt” which is less frightening step to take than much larger cosmic community. Louis, on the other hand, who is characterized by his friends as cold and universal, withdraws alone to his attic room to search for the reason that explains all, to reach towards cosmic unity. The biotic community of Bernard and the willow tree are too small for him. For Bernard the willow tree and the his friends form a meaningful community however, helping him to see more than he would on his own:
How strange”, said Bernard, “the willow tree looks seen together. I was Byron, and the tree was Byron’s tree, lachrymose, down-showering, lamenting. Now that we look together, it has a combed look, each branch distinct, and I will tell you what I feel, under the compulsion of your clarity (The Waves 46).

The times under the willow tree, observing his friends and practicing to see the world from their perspective help Bernard to realise something of himself and life:

But I, pausing, looked at the tree, and as I looked in autumn at the fiery and yellow branches, some sediment formed; I formed; a drop fell; I fell – that is, from some completed experience I had emerged (143).

Ecologic dialogues with the nonhuman willow calm the restlessness in Bernard, allowing him to settle into his life, although they do not solve his quest for his identity completely.

3.2 Susan, Louis and the Land Ethic

Susan is Louis’s opposite: whereas Louis has had little natural happiness, Susan has had almost too much. The vitality of her productive life often overwhelms her and weighs her down: “So life fills my veins. So life pours through my limbs ... I am glutted with natural happiness; and I wish sometimes that the fullness would pass from me...” (96). Susan and her farm prosper together; they grow pears, potatoes, cabbages, onion, ham, roses and children. Susan’s farmer husband is rarely mentioned even though he is there, silently almost like the farm. Susan has got so much natural happiness it almost drowns her in her silent farm where she reads with the husband in a sleeping house, where “...the fields sigh close to the door...” (96). Susan copes with her isolation on the farm by connecting to the nonhuman, biotic community, for example by imagining that she can see through a rook’s eyes: “Or I go to the window, I look at the rook’s high nest; and a pear tree. “His eyes will see when mine are shut,” I think” (96). She does not want to leave the farm, but a certain restlessness overcomes her at times, because motherhood has altered her close bond with nonhuman she experienced as a young girl: “But I never rise at dawn and see the purple drops on the cabbage leaves; the red drops in the roses ... The butcher calls; the milk has to be stood under a shade lest it should sour” (96).
Susan and her farm have a symbiotic bond, which works well for her because as Wilson argues, the right place makes everything easier. Leopold believes that bonds between human beings and land have influenced the course of history, and I suggest that they matter also on an individual level, such as with Susan, who is grounded and safe in her farm. It seems that the bond with her farm protects her mind. She finds Jinny intimidating and is ashamed of her roughly cut fingernails, hiding them from Jinny when they all meet at Percival’s farewell dinner, and tries to summon her farm for protection:

And I, though I pile my mind with damp grass, with wet fields, with the sound of rain on the roof and the gusts of wind that batter at the house in winter and so to protect my soul against her, feel her derision steel round me, feel her laughter curl its tongues of fire round me and light up unsparingly my shabby dress, my square-tipped fingernails, which I at once hide under the tablecloth (67).

Susan’s biotic bond with the farm, with images of damp grass and wet fields, cannot completely protect her mind from the contempt Susan experiences from socially confident Jinny. She is however attempting to comfort herself with the mental support from her nonhuman community that at other times gives her safety, and will protect her again once she returns to her farm. According to Leopold, biotic connections take place between humans and land, and Woolf’s characterisation of Susan is an example of this kind of ecological dialogue that L. Elizabeth Waller has recognised in Woolf’s novels. There are many instances with Susan where these dialogues with “the other side of silence”, as Swanson calls them, describe the deep connection with the nonhuman:

At this hour, this still early hour, I think I am the field, I am the barn, I am the trees; (53). I think sometimes … I am not a woman, but the light that falls on this gate, on this ground. I am the seasons, I think sometimes, January, May, November; the mud, the mist, the dawn (54).

I shall lie like a field bearing crops in rotation; in the summer heat will dance over me; in the winter I shall be cracked with the cold. … I shall be lifted higher than any of you on the backs of the seasons (73).

The connection with soil, with fields and mud, trees and seasons give her a strong sense of being in the right place and being connected to the universe. There is also an element of spirituality in Susan’s relationship with the nonhuman, which will lift her high “on the backs of the seasons”. Bateson’s idea of the importance of
sacredness, beauty and consciousness are all echoed in Susan, who instinctively rests her consciousness in the sacredness and beauty of the passing seasons, finding the meaning of life for her without looking for it, just living through life honestly.

Wilson’s “savannah gestalt” is also evident in Susan’s mindscape, as she feels suffocated by the cramped space at her school, and tries to find familiar landscape to comfort her: “There are some trees I like; the cherry tree with lumps of clear gum on the bark; and one view from the attic towards some far hills” (24). She misses how “…the hay waves over the meadows…” at her home farm and seeks similar landscape with the attic view to ease her homesickness. Being separated from the farm and staying at school has caused her almost physical pain: “They have been crippled days, like moths with shrivelled wings unable to fly” (28). Separated from her silent father and the safety of the nonhuman farm, she struggles to cope at the school: “All here is false; all is meretricious” (17). She promises that when she returns home after finishing school she will never spend a night in London or send her own children away to boarding school (33). Not everything is positive with her relationship with the nonhuman though: “I am fenced in, planted like one of my own trees” (107). The feeling of being trapped is also evident as she laments how “[l]ife stands round me like glass round the imprisoned reed” as she remembers her dead friends, Percival who loved her, and the troubled Rhoda and feels “…the waves of my life tossed, broken round me who am rooted; and hear cries, and see others’ lives eddying like straws round the piers of a bridge…” (108). Susan is rooted to the ground like a willow growing on the bank of a river, with waves of floodwater swirling around her and dragging other less solid people helplessly in the waves. Susan feels possibly a tug of guilt about not been able to help Rhoda, but apart from these twinges of discord she walks on her field with her sons quite satisfied with her lot. Her personal and family histories are closely intertwined with the fields as she shares her life with the farm. She becomes part of the chain of energy of the thriving farm, growing and eating the crops she cultivates, of potatoes, ham, lettuce and honey; part human, part earth, part plants, much like Woolf saw the flower as a child; part flower, part earth.

Another character who has a strong connection to soil is Louis. As a child he hides in the garden and feels the tremors and pressure of the earth, imagining himself to be a stalk, with leaves as eyes, roots going down to dry earth (5). Louis hears “the
other side of silence” and merges into nonhuman, as if into an embrace of a mother Louis never mentions. He often refers to “his father, a banker in Brisbane” throughout the novel, but does not say anything about his mother, and this lack of a mother is possibly reflected in Louis’s inability to interact with women, beginning from the shock Jinny gives Louis when she kisses him in his shrubbery hiding place (6) and instead seeking the embrace of the soil. Separated from his family and human roots, Louis seeks shelter and answers from the nonhuman earth community, reaching a knot of oak roots:

My roots go down through veins of lead and silver, through damp, marshy places that exhale odours, to knot made of oak roots bound together in the centre. Sealed and blind, with earth stopping my ears, I have yet heard rumours of wars; and the nightingale; have felt the hurrying of many troops of men hither and thither in quest of civilisation like flocks of birds migrating seeking the summer; (52).

Louis’s roots search for oak roots, which represent something solid and respected. The oak roots are bound together as a further sign of strength. As in his childhood hideaway inside a shrub, with leaves as his eyes, so it is in this passage that Louis cannot see with his eyes, but rather with his inward knowledge. However, even though his eyes are blind and ears are filled with soil, he can hear of wars and birdsong and feel the beat of the footsteps of men searching for signs of a civilisation. Louis’s bond with soil is on a symbolic level compared to Susan’s, who tends her land, works and walks on it. Louis’s dreamy images of roots travelling through lead and silver, and of him digging the pre-historic relics from the sand by the Nile represent perhaps his yearning for his mother and his origins, as Gillian Beer reflects on the role of pre-history in Woolf’s novels. Beer suggests that the loss of her mother when she was twelve was connected with her interest in pre-history and origins. As Beer points out, this element of pre-history is present in Woolf’s novels as a continuing element, especially with Louis who digs sand from ancient times to find himself:

I have live a thousand lives already. Every day I unbury – I dig up. I find relics of myself in the sand that women made thousands of years ago, when I heard songs by the Nile and the chained beast stamping. What you see beside you, this man, this Louis, is only the cinders and refuse of something once splendid (71).
Furthermore Beer comments how on an earlier version of *The Waves* Woolf “…wrote of the waves sinking and falling, many mothers, and again, many mothers, and behind them many more, endlessly sinking and falling” (Beer 111). These many mothers, sinking and falling appear to echo Louis’s task of unearthing, digging relics from the sand that Egyptian women had made of him. Louis has turned into cinders, while the relics could suggest an early childhood memory of himself as a baby with his mother. Symbolic connection with soil is a way of coping with loneliness for Louis, a community of nonhuman life to compensate for the lack of a human community.

3.3 The Machinery of Life and the Cosmic Pattern

Woolf’s idea of the hidden pattern, consisting of art, beauty and something mysterious connecting humans, the notion that ‘we are the words, we are the music, we are the thing itself’ (*Moments of Being* 85) is an underlying theme in *The Waves*. Woolf makes Jinny, Neville, Louis, Rhoda and Bernard all approach this theme of hidden pattern in their own way. Neville sees it in Shakespeare’s plays and books while Bernard recognises the machine working in busy cities with people forming patterns, making the hum of life. Rhoda is looking for something real underneath the “likeness” of things. Louis searches a reason in both poetry and nonhuman world. Jinny, however, appears to be able to live in a moment, embracing life with honesty.

Carrie Rohman discusses Darwin’s theories on the role of music and birdsong in sexual selection and explores how Jinny behaves “as a force of creative rhythm” and in that way connects instinctively to the nonhuman element and life’s vibration (Rohman 18). Birdsong is present in the intervals, but also in Jinny’s courtship at dances she attends, attracting men in her wake. She is like a plant: “I stream like a plant in a river, flowing this way, flowing that way but rooted, so that he may come to me (…) I now begin to unfurl, in this scent, in this radiance, as a fern when its curled leaves unfurl” (56) or like dragonfly or bird: “Now my gold signal is like a dragonfly flying taut. Jug, jug, jug, I sing like a nightingale…” (98-9). Rohman interprets Jinny’s sensual courtship as her human side opening to take part in the nonhuman (Rohman 23). Rohman suggests that Jinny understands how life is art and we all create it everyday, in various forever-changing patterns:
In one way or another we make this day, this Friday, some by going to the Law Courts; others to the City; others to the nursery; others by marching and forming fours. A million hands stitch, raise hods with bricks. The activity is endless. And tomorrow it begins again, tomorrow we make Saturday. ... One may die tonight. Another will beget a child. From us every sort of building, policy, venture, picture, poem, child, factory, will spring. Life comes; life goes; we make life (The Waves 98).

Jinny sees human activity as one big machine, which Bernard also recognizes, when he is shocked of the news of Percival’s death he remarks how “[o]ne cannot live outside the machine for more perhaps than half an hour” before life starts to signal one back (86). Jinny’s perception of life reaches global dimensions as she muses how humans make life by their constant movement of building, dying, writing poems, marching in formations and having children. Jinny’s source of natural happiness is her fluent connection to her environment:

Lifts rise and fall; trains stop, trains start as regularly as the waves of the sea. This is what has my adhesion. I am native of this world, I follow its banners (110).

She lives in a flow of creating each day again, together with people around her. Jinny’s native landscape is the city, which for her follows the same patterns as nonhuman nature: trains leave the station like the waves of the sea and Jinny herself is “…flung up, and flung down ... like a ship on the sea (98) and says that she is “…native here. I thread naturally on thick carpets” (56). Jinny’s mindscape and landscape are connected in an uncomplicated and mutually supportive way and she is clearly conscious of the way she interprets life and people as patterns and symbols. Jinny enjoys wearing beautiful dresses and practices successfully her skill in observing other people in the social situations and parties she attends: “Thus, in a few seconds, deftly, adroitly, we decipher the hieroglyphs written on other people’s faces” (97). She gives a sign and someone always comes; she reads signals from other bodies and connects with them, because she wants to feel life’s energy in those other bodies and in their lust together:

For now my body, my companion, which is always sending its signals, the rough black “No”, the golden “Come”, in rapid running arrows of sensation, beckons. Someone moves. Did I raise my arm? Did I look? Did my yellow scarf with the strawberry spots float and signal? He has broken from the wall. He follows (98).
Jinny operates in the social landscape of a city like an animal that follows a certain behavioural pattern echoing Aldo Leopold’s discussion on the role of an individual in a population. For Jinny life is a kind of machinery in which humans communicate with symbols and signs, and she acts her part in it with honesty and integrity. Unlike Leopold’s example of a rabbit, an individual animal that in unaware of the pattern it is part of, or Woolf herself feeling like a fish in a stream, but unable to see the stream, Jinny is very much aware of it: “When I came in just now everything stood still in a pattern” (71). She participates calmly in “making life”.

Jinny and Louis share some similarities in their outlook of life as changing patterns, which can be seen for example in how Louis observes the hum of human and nonhuman movement:

The clouds change perpetually over our houses. ... Meetings and partings, we assemble different forms, make different patterns (95).

However, unlike Jinny, Louis is not content with his life, as it has turned out for him. His organic childhood connection with earth has been severed at school and he feels rootless and adrift in England. Therefore he keeps searching for a new connection with both nonhuman and human world, referring to clouds changing and people meeting and parting, making patterns. Louis seems to view the human and nonhuman on the same terms. In his loneliness he distances himself from other people and interprets their behaviour in machinery-like terms. Jinny shares Louis’s view partly, but she differs from Louis’s distant and universal perspective by being able to connect with humans via signs and symbols.

The idea of patterns, signs and symbols, and humans functioning as a kind of machine has connotations with Aldo Leopold, who raises a question whether it is possible that human populations may have behavioural patterns that individuals are not aware of, although they are part of the patterns, such as wars and revolutions (Leopold 186). Leopold develops this idea by wondering if there are also some hidden behavioural patterns in humans, which could be revealed in certain new circumstances. The idea of hidden tendencies in human beings echoes with Louis’s prehistoric mindscapes of the Nile – Louis is searching for something hidden, carrying a lamp from cell to cell:
That I remember the Nile […], that I feel myself woven in and out of the long summers and winters that have made the corn flow and have frozen the streams. I am not a single and passing being. My life is not a moment’s bright spark like that on the surface of a diamond. I go beneath the ground tortuously, as if a warder carried a lamp from cell to cell (The Waves 114).

Louis’s evolutionary memory connects him to the passing seasons and the cycle of growth with streams freezing and corn flowing. Louis feels affinity towards the soil, searching for the truth below the ground. The soil and water carry the memory of evolutionary history in Louis, but it is a cold comfort, leaving Louis isolated and aloof, unable to interact with people in the city within the socially accepted norms. He craves to be part of some human community, but does not fit in as he reads poems in the eating-house with his book propped against the bottle of Worcester sauce, and leaves too large a tip, causing the waitress to scorn him (The Waves 52-3). Therefore he seeks comfort in the nonhuman world, with a leaf, snail or the image of Susan’s house where “…the corn sighs close to the window and gives me safety” (53).

As Gillian Beer observes, pre-history is present and accessible in The Waves as a continuous stream (Beer 102). Woolf wished it would be possible to invent a device which could directly access the strong memories of oneself, wondering if especially strong experiences would have an independent existence somewhere, in a collective consciousness perhaps (Moment of Being 81). According to Beer, Woolf explored “pre-history” also as a technique in which the characters in a fictional text acquire “a non-linguistic, prior presence” and a pre-narrative, which does not fit into a plot but gives a feeling of continuity that extends the narrative (Beer 103). In Louis’s case the pre-narrative goes far back in pre-history, to the banks of the Nile, to the dry soil, to the veins of lead running in the ground, a nonhuman and non-linguistic past that Louis however experiences very strongly throughout his life as an anchor against the waves of humanity that leave him isolated when he seeks “the protective waves of the ordinary” (The Waves 52). Soil and the repeating patterns of the nonhuman universe, such as clouds, leaves and trees give him some consolation. As a young boy he also had the friendship of Susan, Jinny, Rhoda, Bernard and Neville to seek shelter from:

Now grass and trees, the travelling air blowing empty spaces in the blue which they then recover, shaking the leaves which then replace themselves, and our ring here,
sitting, with our arms binding our knees, hint at some other order, and better, which makes a reason everlastingly (21).

Louis tries to save this precious moment forever by writing it down, so that it cannot break. He is searching for meaning and order, which reaches beyond this ring of arms and knees, and grass and trees, and hopes to find something more valuable and lasting. The clouds parting and joining, the leaves stirring and settling, the circle of friends who make another circle with their arms around their knees seem to promise to Louis that there is something else, perhaps a hidden pattern which explains everything: “Let us suppose that I make a reason of it all – one poem on a page, and the die” (The Waves 114). Louis is striving towards some universal truth, which he believes can be found by studying poetry and though self-discovery of connecting to the pre-history, of digging the sand to re-find himself, and searching the meaning hidden beneath the ground, carrying the lamp of truth to light his way: “I have lived a thousand lives already. Every day I unbury – I dig up. I find relics of myself in the sand that women made thousands of years ago” (71).

Aldo Leopold’s theories on behavioural patterns in populations have a connection also with Bernard’s musings on the behavioural patterns taking place in life and directing both individuals and masses:

We grew; we changed; for, of course we are animals. We are not always aware by any means; we breathe, eat, sleep automatically. We exist not only separately but in undifferentiated blobs of matter. With one scoop a whole brakeful of boys is swept up and goes cricketing, footballing. An army matches across Europe. We assemble in parks and halls and sedulously oppose any renegade (Neville, Louis, Rhoda) who sets up a separate existence. And I am so made that, while I hear one or two distinct melodies, such as Louis sings, or Neville, I am also drawn irresistibly to the sound of the chorus chanting its old, chanting its almost wordless, almost senseless song that comes across courts at night, which we hear now booming round us as cars and omnibuses take people to theatres (139).

Bernard points out our basic needs that were share with other animals - breathing, eating and sleeping - and questions the possibility of an individual choice in a world. He thinks humans only a part of the machine, which organises itself from a mass of matter into playing sport, fighting wars and chanting the hum of humanity which can be heard in a busy cities. The anarchists who sing their own songs, such as Louis, Rhoda and Neville, are disliked and distrusted as they threaten the smooth workings of the human pattern formations. Aldo Leopold and Gregory Bateson have
both studied these patterns, which can be found equally in human and nonhuman subjects. Leopold approached the patterns from a behavioural perspective whereas Bateson proposed that everything in our world and universe is connected with patterns and meta-patterns. Bateson believed that as humans recognise these symmetrical patterns in our world this intuitive knowledge raises feelings of respect and admiration, for example when a beautiful landscape or work of art touches us. This applies especially to Neville, who appreciates a rose or a Shakespeare play, Jinny with her love of beautiful dresses, flowers and the patterns of dancing and human courtship, Louis with his love of poetry and respect for order, and Rhoda as she searches for “the thing”, some truth or reality, which is hidden behind the “likeness” of the true form. Rhoda asks “…what is the thing that lies beneath the semblance of the thing” (90). Percival’s death helps her to see the structure: “…we have made oblongs and stood them upon squares” (91). The death of her friend frees her to see the world as it is from her perspective: people are the oblongs, standing on the squares of ground, milling round in the city rather pointlessly, colliding with Rhoda. This seems to be the moment when Rhoda’s decision to commit suicide is formed in her mind:

Wander no more, I say; this is the end. … Now I will relinquish: now I will let loose. … We will gallop together over desert hills where the swallow dips her wings in dark pools and the pillars stand entire … into the wave that flings its white foam to the uttermost corners of the earth, I throw my violets, my offering to Percival (91).

Rhoda understands that she will never find her place in the world or connection with other people who are like players in chess, and she can see this clearly in her mind. She throws her “penny bunch of violets, torn up by the roots from the pavement of Oxford Street” to Percival whom she admired and sets out on her final journey towards her own death which to her is a logical conclusion after the structure of the world has become visible to her.

Neville questions both Louis’s insistent search for a reason, and Rhoda’s fanatic flight towards the perfect truth: “They say that one must beat one’s wings against the storm in the belief that beyond this welter the sun shines; the sun falls sheer to the pools that are fledged with willows” (111). Neville does not understand Louis and Rhoda in their ascetic and self-punishing mission for truth, as he describes their struggle against the elements and wonders why they are not content with normal
life: “They want a plot, do they? They want a reason? It is not enough for them, this ordinary scene” (111). For Neville, the ordinary scene is found in books and in theatre, which he loves. For Neville, watching a play by Shakespeare or appreciating nonhuman art in a swirl of rose petals is what matters in life, not worrying about the opinion of others, as Louis does, or going into extremes like Rhoda. However, they all try to reach the hidden pattern that is permanent and beautiful.

3.4 The Mind Grows Rings

“The mind grows rings; the identity becomes robust; pain is absorbed in the growth” says Bernard as an adult, blending the mind’s development and tree’s way of growing yearly rings into a fitting metaphor combining nonhuman growth and mental process (145). Mindscape and landscape interconnect both on a small scale with an individual mind and tree, and on the larger scale with population movement in a landscape, such as is discussed in the previous chapter with humans being part of this machinery of making life.

The character of Bernard appears to be in some aspects closest to Woolf herself, because she uses similar metaphors in A Room of One’s Own, which I consider to suggest that it is her personal thinking, not just her characterisation of Bernard. In A Room of One’s Own there is an insightful comparison of thought and idea with the fishing line and fish:

Thought … had let its line down into the stream. It swayed, minute after minute, hither and thither among the reflection and weeds, letting the water lift and sink it until – you know the little tug – the sudden conglomeration of an idea at the end of one’s line… (30)

The metaphor of fishing for ideas in the stream of consciousness demonstrates Woolf’s skill in linking the workings of the mind with the environment together, the mindscape corresponding with the landscape. The example above also shows how Woolf was influenced by Henry Thoreau’s philosophy, as discussed above in chapter 2.5. She practiced this quality of keen observation of the nonhuman already as a child, lying in her bedroom in St Ives, listening to the waves and having moments of realisations on the nature of flowers, being part flowers, part earth (Moments of Being 85). Trees and leaves are a recurring theme in Woolf’s writing,
and they appear repeatedly in *The Waves*. Bernard’s development from a child to an old man is likened to a tree:

Tuesday follows Monday; Wednesday, Tuesday. Each spreads the same ripple. The being grows rings, like a tree. Like a tree, leaves fall.

A space was cleared in my mind. I saw through the thick leaves of habit (159).

Bernard compares himself to a tree, growing rings both in his mind and here also in his body. The imagery of leaves is used here as something that was clouding Bernard’s understanding, similar to Woolf’s comparison of the everyday fluff of cotton wool that stops us from seeing the hidden pattern of meaning in our universe. The leaves of habit fall, revealing the structure of the tree, and the landscape round the tree.

Leaves also are mentioned as Louis’s eyes or hair, and in his search for patterns with leaves parting and joining (21) and in Rhoda’s efforts to stay safe by covering her mind with leaves, as already discussed above. There are also the currant leaves that offer children a hiding place in their childhood garden (11). Louis comments how Percival “was laid in the earth with all his braches still sighing in the summer wind” (114), dying too young. Leaves represent safety, patterns, vitality and inner knowledge, where one can see without eyes. However, they can also hinder seeing as in Bernard’s “thick leaves of habit” above shows.

3.5 The Seven-sided Carnation and Death

As the seven friends gather for a farewell dinner in a London restaurant before Percival travels to India, they already feel how different they really are and how far they have moved from each other, because they are no longer woven together by the mundane and repetitive days of studying and sharing their day-to-day life. Their friendship is however still alive, and after initial awkwardness and careful approaches the friends can re-connect. The seven-sided carnation on the restaurant table is a visible symbol of their togetherness and friendship, which Bernard makes into a small story:

We are drawn into this communion by some deep, some common emotion. Shall we call it, conveniently, “love”? Shall we say “love of Percival” because Percival is going to India?
No, that is too small, too particular a name. We cannot attach the width and spread of our feelings to so small a mark. We have come together … to make one thing, not enduring – for what endures? – but seen by many eyes simultaneously. There is a red carnation in that vase. A single flower as we sat here waiting, but now a seven-sided flower, many-petalled, red puce, purple-shaded, stiff with silver-tinted leaves – a whole flower to which every eye brings its own contribution (70).

The red carnation is part flower, part a symbol of love and the friend’s temporary community. Therefore the seven-sided carnation is also a symbol for a biotic community of the friends, their love and friendship, combining their perspectives and qualities of both human and nonhuman (Mattison 75). The carnation community is however in flux, as is the willow tree, depending on who is surrounding it. Bernard and his friends are creating the community temporarily – it is a moment of being for them (72). Creating a biotic community of a carnation and his friends is most important to Bernard of them all, because he needs others who listen to his stories; without them he feels hollow (The Waves 44). When the friends meet again once more at Hampton Court, Bernard refers to the carnation they once circled with Percival in a restaurant in London, saying that it “...is become a six-sided flower, made of six lives” (129). The final meeting at Hampton Court with its mystery of companionship and interconnectedness profoundly affects the six friends with its atmosphere, and they share a moment of unity, made from their lives and all that is contained in them:

A mysterious illumination, said Louis, visible against those yew trees.

Built up with much pain, many strokes, said Jinny.

Marriage, death, travel, friendship, said Bernard; town and country; children and all that; a many-sided substance cut out of this dark; a many-faceted flower. Let us stop for a moment; let us behold what we have made. Let it blaze against the yew trees. One life. There. It is over. Gone out (129).

The moment is sweet but short, and afterwards they must return to their individual lives, to the machinery of life Neville refers to when he says that “[t]he machine works” (128). Bernard wonders on this “streaming away” with his friends, speculating if it has changed something permanently. The momentary loss of his own identity, being merged with his friends feels almost like death to him although it is exhilarating at the same time (157). Interestingly, this sounds very similar to a state of consciousness called samadhi, which means a state of meditative concentration in
Buddhism (Varela 41). The same moment is described again later, although the trees are not yews but a cedar tree here:

Against the gateway, against some cedar tree I saw blaze bright, Neville, Jinny, Rhoda, Louis, Susan and myself, our life, our identity. (...) But we – against the brick, against the branches, we six, out of how many million millions, for one moment out of what measureless abundance of past time and time to come, burnt there triumphant. (...) And then Neville, Jinny, Susan and I, as a wave breaks, burst asunder, surrendered - to the next leaf, to the precise bird, to a child with a hoop, to a prancing dog, to the warmth that is hoarded in woods after a hot day, to the light twisted like white ribbon and rippled water. We drew apart; we were consumed in the darkness of the trees, leaving Rhoda and Louis to stand on the terrace by the urn (157).

Bernard and the other three friends are unable to stay in the moment for long and have to connect back to the simple elements of life: a prancing dog, day’s stored warmth in the woods. The experience of shared identity, of collective consciousness is intense and memorable for all them, but only Rhoda and Louis are able to rest in the moment for longer, possibly because they are so accustomed to loneliness and silence. The friends gathering together to remember Percival creates a fleeting moment of unity, which comfort the friends against the identity-swallowing death. As Hinnov analyses, Bernard’s wave of identity washes over the others and unites them, connecting the human and nonhuman into cosmic wholeness (Hinnov, To Give the Moment Whole 215).

Hinnov proposes that Percival, the silent character in The Waves, is a proto-fascist and imperialistic character and that his death has an equalising message to the others, showing that there is no hierarchy in death (216). She claims that Woolf offers a healing message against fascism and imperialism by the death of Percival, who symbolises a colonizing hero, riding a “flea-bitten mare” and falling subsequently from the back of the mare to his death (Hinnov, Each is Part of the Whole 4). While I agree with Hinnov that Percival’s journey to India is most likely an imperialistic act, I suggest that the significance of his death among his friends is not political victory over imperialism. They mourn the death of a friend and a loved one, and against the shock of his death they revalue their own lives and ambitions in life. Percival’s death is a shock of non humanity to them in their “cotton wool [life] of non being” and it echoes one of Woolf’s own childhood shocks, that of her experience of the suicide of the family friend, Mr Valpy, and Woolf’s association of
the apple tree intermingled with the memory of death (*Moments of Being* 84). Avrom Fleishman comments how it has often been assumed that Percival’s death is connected to Woolf’s brother Thoby who died young (Fleishman 613). Reading Woolf’s diary passages, Fleishman notes that after completing *The Waves*, Woolf wrote how she “…[has] been sitting these 15 minutes in a state of glory, and calm, and some tears, thinking of Thoby…” (612-3). Thus writing *The Waves* may have been a healing experience for Woolf, whose mother and brother died when she was young. Percival’s death can also be interpreted as an element of the nonhuman world, because in death humans lose their identity and become part of the nonhuman world, in Hinnov’s words: “the cosmic whole of which we are all a part” (*To Give the Moment Whole* 216). Bernard mourns Percival and glorifies him in his memories:

> He would have done justice. He would have protected. About the age of forty he would have shocked the authorities. No lullaby has ever occurred to me capable of singing him to rest (138).

Bernard’s belief that Percival “would have shocked the authorities” conveys an image of Percival as a morally strong person, and speaks against Hinnov’s interpretation of Percival as a fascist character. It is possible though for both interpretations to be true, in that young Percival might have embraced his imperialistic activities as Bernard muses at the farewell dinner: “By applying the standards of West, by using the violent language that is natural to him, the bullock cart is righted … The Oriental problem is solved” (75). However, “by the age of forty” he would have grown up to defend the poor Indians, beaten dogs and unhappy children as Bernard believes his dead friend would have done (138). The importance of sincerity is vital to Bernard, as he cannot tolerate “comparing Percival to a lily” when he sits with Jinny on a sofa, reminiscing about Percival. Suddenly the sacred moment is broken and he has to leave, for tarnishing Percival with lily-sweet glue and meaningless phrases is worse than the blasphemy of laughter (150). Bateson touches on this problem of the impossibility of finding the true concept of the sacred in *Mind and Nature* and posits that this is why we have religions, as a pale shadow of the sacred. At the very end of *The Waves*, it is against death that Bernard still manages to battle:
Death is the enemy. It is death against whom I ride with my spear couched and my hair flying back like a young man’s, like Percival’s, when he galloped in India. [...] Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death! (167).

Death is frightening, because it is nonhuman and impersonal, but it is also a relief for Rhoda, who finds the freedom of life only in death. Bernard struggles to hold onto his identity, and the identities of his friends within him. He does not want to give up his human identity to a nonhuman death yet, and the exultant feeling of life’s cyclical motion rises in him: “And in me too the wave rises” (167). Bernard finds hope in the hum of life, with dawn breaking, birds chirping, mist gathering – the nonhuman universe comforts him and makes him rise to the challenge, show his human worth before death. Fleishman observes that the last sentence of *The Waves*, “[t]he waves broke on the shore”, is a “…universal symbol of the rhythm of life and death...” (Fleishman 613). The shore is also the meeting point of sea and land, bringing together the two significant elements in *The Waves* as a fitting completion to the novel.

4 Discussion on Mindscape and Landscape

To sum up, as Bernard does in the last chapter of *The Waves*, I propose that the relationship between the characters’s mindscapes and landscapes in *The Waves* affects their mental well being in life and their attitude towards death, which I consider to be a nonhuman element. Discussing the characters one by one, this chapter evaluates the relation between their mindscapes and landscapes, and some of the consequences of that relationship.

Susan is content with her natural happiness, with her sons and daughters who will carry her on. She will live on both in her children and in the work she has done for her farm. Susan is in harmony with her rural landscape and her silent mindscape, and it appears reasonable to assume that as she is at ease with the nonhuman world of soil and plants, of giving birth and planting trees, she will not be afraid of death when the time comes for her. Susan craves a landscape resembling “the savannah gestalt” when she is at school, away from her home farm: “But from one attic there was a blue view, a distant view of a field unstained by the corruption of this regimented, unreal existence” (70). Jinny is similar to Susan in her attitude towards
the nonhuman, although her preferred landscape is the opposite of Susan’s rural idyll. Jinny is native in an urban landscape. She enjoys the natural happiness of socialising and being with men, reading the signs and gestures of bodies and sending her own signals to see who comes. When Susan looks at the dawn sky to predict weather, Jinny interprets body movements and glances. Jinny is in her element in a city which works like a machine, a nonhuman hum of “circular, blue sound” (75) to quote Louis. Jinny is content with her urban landscape and she understands the nonhuman side of humans, stripped bare of everything except the gestures, the feel of each other’s skin and their scent – the essentials to make life. Jinny’s landscape and mindscape are connected together. Her attitude is to take life and death as they come.

Rhoda cannot bear human beings, and the landscape she sees around her is equally bleak. She cannot find anywhere to thrive, but travelling abroad gives her perhaps a little relief. Rhoda’s sense of being an outsider is possibly less intense in another country, because it would be normal to feel out of place in a foreign county. Therefore travelling is a coping strategy for Rhoda, seeking other landscapes to escape from the ones she feels threatened in. Returning from her travels back to her home country probably intensifies Rhoda’s feeling of alienation, and in the end she travels for the last time, to commit suicide. Rhoda wanders aimlessly in life and has no meaningful connection to anything human or nonhuman, apart from Louis who is an equally unhappy outsider. The only landscape she is drawn to was something distant with pillars in a faraway land, where swallows dip their wings in pools, glimpsed over people’s heads. She is detached from any real landscape, and it corresponds with her bleak mindscape. As a child she could dream and escape the reality but for adult Rhoda the dreaming does not sustain her, and the only solution she sees for herself is death.

Rhoda’s companion in life is Louis, an Australian boy who has never felt accepted into the traditional British society. He was happiest as a young boy when he was surrounded by the nonhuman world; hidden inside a shrub he felt rooted and safe. Growing up, Louis has little “natural happiness”, although Rhoda is his lover, coming to meet him in his small attic room. Louis outwardly leads a respectable life as a clerk, gets promoted and is given a house in the suburbs, although he still prefers to stay in his attic room with a view over the roofs. There he searches for a reason, a
pattern or explanation. If he could write it down, maybe one poem, he would be content to die. Unlike Rhoda, Louis is able to cope despite living in an urban landscape he does not particularly like. His dissatisfaction in life is however more to do with his mindscape, the feeling of always standing out as a socially clumsy and reserved character. His attic room is a place of safety for him, and his quest in life gives him something worth living for. He is able to cope with the grim urban landscape, because his mindscape expands to prehistory, to the banks of the river Nile, to a task he feels was his destiny: to weave together human and nonhuman memory, correct the irregularities and find a reason for all. Louis reduces the others to order as Bernard words it: “And one day, taking a fine pen and dipping it in red ink, the addition will be complete; our total will be known; but it will not be enough” (50-2). Louis tries to implement order and rhythm in the chaotic human world that to him appears aimless and worthless.

Neville’s landscape and mindscape are within a room with armchairs, books, fireplace and a close friend to share it. Neville loves Percival and after his death tries to console himself by finding other men, whose personalities do not seem to matter much, to keep him company. He values human art, especially Shakespeare and theatre, over the nonhuman world, but can also see the beauty of a rose. Trees and rivers were too dull and the nonhuman landscape is too vast, leafy and watery for him. Neville has become a successful academic. He does not understand the fanaticism of Rhoda or aloofness of Louis, as he sees them, but nevertheless he is also searching for a perfect poem, and would be ready to abandon everything if the chance came upon him. For him, the salvation for humans is to be found in art, and not in the nonhuman landscape. He is content enough in the safety of his room full of books.

Bernard needs company, for he is a storyteller who feels complete only with an audience. Alone he is lost and lonely. Bernard’s own mind is not enough for him and he prefers a room full of friends or theatre to a landscape with “trees or moon”; they are to him “dullness and doom” (151-2). To him the nonhuman is either frightening or boring and he cannot understand Susan, who has chosen life at her farm instead of being with Percival who loved her. When they were children, he made a story of everything, drawing the others to listen to stories inside a currant
bush: “Let us now crawl … under the canopy of the currant leaves and tell stories” (11). When he followed Susan, who was upset about Jinny kissing Louis, to the woods, he made it into an adventure tale, with the mysterious Elvedon where the lady sits writing and the gardeners sweep the lawn: “There is a ring of wall round this wood, nobody comes here” (8). Bernard spins stories as easily as he walks: “Now you trail away,” said Susan, “making phrases. Now you mount like an air-ball’s string, higher and higher through the layers of the leaves, out of reach … you have escaped me” (9). As a student Bernard sits underneath the willow tree, seeking companionship and safety from both the willow and his friends, measuring life against the tree and telling stories to anyone who is willing to sit down on the turf and listen. Adult Bernard lives in a city, presumably London, and to him the urban landscape with human culture makes life meaningful. Bernard believes that art and theatre lift humans above the dullness of the nonhuman:

Also I like to find the pageant of existence roaring, in a theatre for instance. The clay-coloured, earthy nondescript animal of the field here erects himself and with infinite ingenuity and effort puts up a fight against the green woods and green fields and sheep advancing with measured tread, munching (153).

The balance and connection between the human and nonhuman, of reaching harmony with one’s landscape but with a human identity and intelligence, with art lifting us up but not letting us escape too far, like “the air-ball’s string” of Bernard that Susan loses in the woods – this is what Bernard battles with.

This summary of the characters’s relationship with their surroundings demonstrates how important it is in the novel to find their own landscape where their mindscape can be in tune with it. As Wilson states, if you are in the right environment, everything else is just easier: living in a stress free place you like, finding work to make life worth living, feeling safe and having supporting people around yourself. Susan and Jinny, Neville and Bernard for the most part achieve this, and Louis copes even though he struggles, but Rhoda gives up the search for something worth living.

The nonhuman element can be present both in a rural or urban landscape. It is important to note that the nonhuman is not good or bad in itself. However, the attitudes of the characters in The Waves towards the nonhuman, including death, affect their mindscape and how they see death, whether it is with Neville’s
indifference, being puzzled and afraid like Bernard, taking it in their stride as Jinny, facing it calmly like Susan and Louis, or rushing towards it like Rhoda. The balance or imbalance between the nonhuman landscape and human mindscape has a big impact on their quality of life, as my reading of *The Waves* shows. Woolf depicts the nonhuman via her characters as both a dull and non-intelligent force, as well as a meaningful connection to a cosmic unity, a dialogue with the other side of silence. The question of Woolf’s own mindscape and its relation to her landscapes, the Cornish seaside of her childhood, the busy London scenery and the country garden at Monk’s House cannot be settled for certain. However, she did leave some clues in her letters, for example in the one she wrote from Cornwall:

> There is no moon, or stars … and one can see trees on the ridge of the road, and the shapes of everything without any detail … One gradually sees shapes and thinks oneself in the middle of a world … It is very melancholy to be shut up in London again (Fleishman 608).

Fleishman suggests that the Cornish landscape was to Woolf “a country of the mind” which inspired her to find her own style of expressive writing (608).

5 Conclusion

Virginia Woolf, Aldo Leopold, Edward O. Wilson and Gregory Bateson all believed that interconnectedness is vital for all human beings and perhaps other sentient beings as well, to feel connected to other species and even beyond them, to some universal unity. Woolf’s philosophy of the hidden pattern, which can be seen and sensed via art corresponds with Bateson’s theory of patterns that connect all living things be they grammar, the symmetry of leaves, wars or art. Biophilia, Wilson’s theory, is one aspect of this, as is Leopold’s land ethic: the bond between land and human works mostly unnoticed, and Leopold raises the question of hidden behavioural patterns in human population that might not have emerged yet. Nothing should be taken for granted. Everything should be questioned as Neville does, yet when “the door opens accept absolutely” and create poetry. The act of writing, making poetry, is what Neville, Louis and Bernard are striving towards, and what Woolf was doing: trying to save the world with words even when at the time of her active writing career there was the approaching threat of the second world war.
I suggest that the ecocritical perspective in literature will play an increasingly important part in our world, both locally and globally as the problems with humans and their environment alter the position of humans as part of what Leopold calls the biotic community. Rather than behaving like owners, Leopold suggests that we should see ourselves as members, or citizens, of the land-community and to understand that the biotic interactions between human and nonhuman nature have wide reaching consequences. I feel confident that Virginia Woolf would have agreed with Aldo Leopold on this and I believe that ethics in literature is developing as a part of cultural evolution. Literature can have a dialogue with environmental ethics, and an ecocritical approach can help us see these dialogues. Together they may help create a new way forward in dealing with the environmental crisis that will have consequences in all fields of life. Although there has been a growing interest towards aspects of the nonhuman world as a research subject among Woolf scholars in recent years, there is scope for further ecocritical studies both on The Waves and Woolf’s other works, in particular In Between the Acts, Orlando and To the Lighthouse.

Throughout my master’s thesis I have demonstrated how Woolf was tracing in The Waves the outline of a hidden pattern which the characters form a part of, and my reading supports the idea that her philosophy of moments of being is connected to a concept of biotic community in which the mindscape and landscape share the same hidden patterns. According to Leopold, the environmental ethic, or land ethic, is still developing and is possibly best described as a “community instinct in-the-making”, something that changes as we change, and it never stops, because it is connected to evolution and learning, which go on. As Bateson states, evolution and learning are the two stochastic processes that carry life forward. We need to constantly relearn to connect with the nonhuman part of the world, as we change, and one way to emotionally reconnect to nonhuman is via literature, or other forms of art, to have an ongoing ecological dialogue with the other side of silence. Wilson highlighted the importance of protecting the human spirit while balancing the survival instinct and conservation ethics, creating thus a new way forward with both human extension and stewardship of the nonhuman world.

I have shown in my thesis how the mindscape and landscape are flowingly interconnected in The Waves and how human and nonhuman can merge into the
vibration of life and the stream of creativity toward which all life forms have a natural affinity to strive. Woolf’s philosophy of life and writing, which she felt intuitively, echo interestingly the ideas of Bateson, Wilson and Leopold, as I have analysed above. Woolf’s writing weaves together a biotic community in which both human and nonhuman elements can occasionally connect under the sheltering willow tree which draws the friends to meet under its boughs, with the shared history of humans and land as is evident with Susan and Louis’s bond with soil, or the universality of connecting patterns and the reason Louis and Neville are searching through writing poetry or with the seven-or-six-sided carnation, momentarily lighting up the separate identities into cosmic unity. *The Waves* is a manifestation of the hidden pattern, those words, that music which Woolf believed we are all part of.

The presence of the nonhuman element is at the same time a welcome relief from the separateness of human feeling, but also a frightening prospect of losing oneself in death or death-like state of being without the self: “But how to describe the world seen without the self?” asks Bernard in the end. In the end though, it is the nonhuman nature, solitude, “…the eternal renewal, the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again” which spurs Bernard forward: “And in me too the wave rises”. The waves and breathing, living in a moment of being; the nonhuman in human brings peace and hope to Bernard, and maybe to us all.
Works Cited


