

Deborah Hunn

## **‘A Subject Torn’ beside *The Waves* (Or: Another Act of Thievery Passed Off as Borrowing...)**

“Then I decided that this discomfort revealed by my desire to write on Photography corresponded to a discomfort that I had always suffered from: the uneasiness of being a **subject torn between two languages**, one expressive, the other critical...”

(Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida*, 8. Emphasis added)

She took the sharp left turn that the suddenness of the signpost demanded and steered the old green Holden station wagon into the parking area above the surfer's cove with surprising competency. The sound of gravel crunching steadily down to zero under the press of wheels gave the kind of peculiarly visceral satisfaction becoming adult conditions you to be ashamed of: like burping or picking a scab. How odd that this stolen car should have become, in the last few days, an extension

of her body in a way never achieved by all those she had legitimately acquired or occupied over the years.

**In the introduction to *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, Mieke Bal comments: “Memory can be so habitual that it appears to be automatic, just as it can be manipulated by others.” (Bal, vii) Indeed, as memory theorists have frequently argued, one of the reasons that memory is susceptible to manipulation is precisely *because* it appears to be automatic: perceived as a natural phenomenon spontaneously expressing in the mind a “true”, unmediated experience of the past. What is thus obscured is that memory (most particularly in those public discourses about the past that work to produce what is known as “cultural memory”) is a representation.**

As she parked she noted that her arrival had barely raised a flicker of interest from the sparse blonde clumps of sea-gazing surfers who hovered by the rails that marked off the cliff or perched on warm bonnets, intently measuring the white pulse of the water. The sense of invisibility that their indifference bestowed upon her felt like a blessing, for so much of her everyday life was kept in check by the insistent network of scrutiny that goes under the name of family togetherness.

She opened the door to stretch out her legs and rested the heels of her bare feet on the yellowed, dusty ground, feeling in the process like a runaway kid, not a woman of forty-five with a husband and two children (but they were adults now, she reminded herself) of her own. A woman who had abandoned her family by means of a stolen

car driven fast enough to exceed the point of deniability, her image now indelibly imprinted on the film in at least one speed camera along the black ribbon of highway that brought her here; her phone - with its incessant bleating for attention - spinning out somewhere beside it into the harsh, incessant barrage of scrub.

**As a product and a bearer of dominant ideologies, cultural memories played a crucial role in constructing the modern subject by naturalising, and/or rooting in tradition, hegemonic categories of gender, sexuality, ethnicity and race, thus facilitating a homogenised and seemingly timeless national identity. At the same time, burgeoning subcultures –such as the avant-garde lesbian and gay communities that emerged in late nineteenth and early twentieth century urban Europe and America- sought to forge oppositional identities through counter discourses of cultural memory. For many writers, as Elaine Marks has noted, the key locus of lesbian intertextuality was - and indeed remains - the life and works of Sappho (Marks, 353-377) and this is nowhere better exemplified than in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, where Sapphic allusions provide a ghostly counter discourse to the hegemonic cultural memory disseminated by the regulatory regimes of British patriarchy.**

She had stolen the old car from the garage of her brother-in-law's house. Of course 'stolen' is not a word that will be used in conjunction with her action, once her crime has been exposed to her husband. No. Any word specifically denoting the act of theft, (after all, she did know where the spare keys were, after all he was away

cruising the Bali beaches) or that other crime, the one that really was a the heart (or in her case lack thereof) the matter - abandoning her family - will be substituted (and here she knows too well the principal spokesperson, the PR agent *par excellence* for family matters will be her own immaculate, pearl rinsed mother) for such sympathetic phrases as "just borrowed", "all a misunderstanding "or "quite a bit of stress recently." This last, however, will only be used if needed, and then in a whisper (such is required at the Bridge table while hands are busily shuffling) to defuse any formal authority which might have been prematurely alerted to the problem, or to a troublesome neighbour or a friend whose queries resisted deflection with easier platitudes.

Only Scott, her brother-in-law, would refuse to comply with the script; would be bloody-minded enough to demand explanations, to sniff out bullshit and name it. Perhaps that was why she envied the guy; enacted her restlessness through his possessions.

**In developing her constructivist theories of the body and of the performative self,**

**Judith Butler has given some emphasis to the role of played by the discourses of memory. In *Excitable Speech* Butler grounds her argument in Bordieu's reading of the "habitus" – a term describing the psychic locus and social practice of collective mnemonic rituals. "The body" Bourdieu writes, "believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. It does not represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it enacts the past, bringing it back to**

life.”(Bourdieu, 73)

A brisk wind whipped through the still half-open door. She closed it, reluctantly, and, shivering, leaned over to the back seat to grab an old whitening-blue denim jacket bundled there. Scott's probably, but maybe a relic of some passing guy he'd fucked and forgotten. Momentarily the pungent murmur of queer sex - what she assumed to be the specificities of its sighs and scents - mingled with the sensations of the sea air to trace the aura of the illicit onto the jacket and, by transference, as she slipped into it, onto her own skin.

She brushed down the sleeves and turned up the collar, an action that reminded her of her youth. Of the time she'd taken a jacket like this that she'd found slouched across a chair in her brother's room and worn it to the pictures to show off to a friend. Therese her name was. To show off to Therese. Another act of thievery passed off as borrowing.

**Butler comments on the performative power of such acts: “the body does not merely act in accordance with certain regularized and ritualized practices; it is this sedimented ritual activity; its action, in this sense, is a kind of incorporated memory.” (Butler, 154) Drawing on Butler’s notion of incorporated memory, and on other recent work in the field of cultural memory, I want to approach Woolf’s use of Sapphic intertextuality as a form of sedimented ritual activity, played out through the representation of the “falling” lesbian body of Rhoda, whose trauma of failed identity subversively**

**enacts a memory of lost lesbian love through a mimetic commemoration that resurrects the body of Sappho.**

She hadn't thought of that in years.

Then as she got older, she had acquired a boyfriend who'd had just such a jacket. The generic denim. He'd let her wear it, maybe on cold nights, walking home from the beach or some neighbourhood party, draped it around her in a clumsy act of tenderness or a brand of ownership - a reward, perhaps, after a desultory roll and fumble in the dunes.

Maybe, she thought, as she brushed down the worn soft sleeves again with the palm of her hands, that had been the real thrill - not what passed for sex or for romance - but slipping on the jacket afterwards, like slipping on a new skin, a new possibility self. A kind of transformation, although one that remained - like an old spinster's debutante ball memento - unused, wrapped within its delicate folds.

**In *Acts of Memory* Bal uses a seemingly commonplace example to underscore the centrality of memory in the formation of subjectivity, and also to distinguish what she terms “habitual” memory from “narrative” memory:**

**When walking in a wet street, for example, one avoids stepping into a puddle, not because of a conscious decision but because “somehow” one knows that not avoiding the puddle results in wet feet. This knowledge comes from memory. Such background memories help the**

subject survive in a community where the behaviours they inform become part of “normal” life...the underlying “rule” that determines such unreflexive acts can surely be reconstructed as an Ur-narrative, learned in childhood, enforced by discipline, and carried along in later life...If you don’t avoid the puddle, your feet get wet, you catch a cold (or so we are told), you can’t go to school, you fall behind, and so on: a narrative chain of little miseries. But such minimal protonarratives remain buried in routine; they contain no events that stand out...(Bal vii)

Bal goes on to define narrative memory as a process in which the subject isolates, intensifies and unpacks the minimal protonarratives implicit in such routines:

Narrative memories, even of unimportant events, differ from routine or habitual memories in that they are affectively coloured, surrounded by an emotional aura that, precisely makes them memorable...Proust’s *A la recherche du temps perdu* is composed of such memories, including even those involuntary memories that surface when the narrator hits upon them by some gesture, some ordinary sense perception that evokes them...The grey, unnoticed memories become affectively coloured by the narrator’s response to them. Proust’s work illuminates [that] memory is active and is situated in the present. (Bal, viii)

Therese.

They lost contact after leaving school. But once, many years later, quite accidentally, they had run into each other at the Night Zoo, each walking their children through the butterfly house. She remembered little of the conversation - the usual suspects of birth, death and marriage, no doubt. What had impressed itself upon her mind was the way that, as they walked together, a flutter of white lace butterflies had settled in the surrounding air and spun a luminous, almost parodic, veil around Therese's dark hair.

Therese meanwhile, oblivious to her own metamorphosis, laughed and pointed to, "a beautiful tortoise shell on your shoulder. Look..."

But although she spun around and around she was like a cat chasing its tail, propelled by the teasing hint of a wing tip in the corner of her eye, yet perpetually disappointed.

Afterwards ice-cream, murmured dates, times, possibilities.

But they had never met again since.

**Anyone who has read *The Waves*, that mnemonically charged 1930 novel by Proust's great contemporary (and enthusiastic reader) Virginia Woolf must surely register a connection, of sorts, between Bal's example and the oft quoted episode in which the young Rhoda is confronted by the problem of crossing a puddle:**

**'There was a star riding through clouds and I said to the star, "Consume me". That was midsummer, after the garden party and my humiliation at the garden party. Wind and storm covered July. Also, in the middle, cadaverous, awful, lay the grey puddle in the courtyard, when, holding an envelope in my hand, I carried a message, I came to a puddle. I could not cross it. Identity failed me. We are nothing, I said, and fell' (TW 47).**

She fumbled in the pocket of the jacket. Found some fluff, a bus ticket, a condom. A crushed pack of red Marlboroughs. Three left - a bit creased and flaky, but still pungent, still smokable. She hadn't lit up for years, but now she instinctively scrambled finger-tips amidst a loose collection of auto manuals, greasy rags and tapes in the glove box hoping for a hint of a match box, a lighter. Found something small, squarish, hard, wrapped in a rag. Unveiled it. A camera. Small. Cheap. A tacky disposable. Then remembered the existence of car lighters. To heat, push in. She did, and was soon rewarded by the cigarette's sharpness, the perverse jolt of life into her lungs, the slow velvety stream of exhaled smoke kissing her goodbye.

After a few seconds she decided to explore the dash a little more. Her fingers settled on the keys of the old style radio - strolled across a procession of replicant rap singers, drive-by crooners and vacuous, over produced TV starlets until they hit the oldies channel and - it was too absurd - locked into, of all things, the near girlish harmonies of The Beach Boys singing "Little Surfer". She ground the dying cigarette into the car ashtray then palmed the camera, tossing the rag onto the passenger seat. She needed anonymity. Needed a mask, like some cat burglar in a B film, or a grand 18<sup>th</sup> century lady: all wig, powder and décolletage scanning for a

well-turned calf at the opera with an easy, predatory gaze.

From the car window a sliver of the blue bay was visible. Occasional bursts of surfers wandered past her - some grouped, some solo - and descended the blonde wood staircase that crawled down the cliff face to the shore. Their bodies were clad in the black androgynous rubber armour of their tribe, their boards winging out from their sides, like primitive birds – motley humanoid hybrids of pelicans, stalks, Baudelarian albatrosses - disproportionate yet somehow spreading out to greet the promise of that incongruous, sublime grace the blue of water would bestow. On their sleeves or chests she noted small, brightly coloured brand logos - like tribal markings... like butterflies.

**Although Rhoda does finally manage to skirt around the puddle, the traumatic fracture of identity signalled at this moment continues to ripple throughout the text through similar angst-ridden speculations, often framed by repeated tropes of crossing and falling, the latter foreshadowing her ultimate fate of a suicide leap. Thus Rhoda's textual articulation, forged as it is around these moments, can be well summed up by Bal's phrase: 'narrative chain of little miseries'. Of course, Rhoda's puddle crossing does not accord exactly with Bal's example. Rhoda's trauma, after all, appears to be the consequence of an acceleration, rather than a failure, of memory: an accumulation of unstated, culturally inscribed warnings so profound as to result in both psychic and physical paralysis. What I want to suggest, however, is a double discourse in which**

\Rhoda's paralysis – her sense of failed identity as falling- signifies the effects of a kind of cultural amnesia on the character, whilst simultaneously acting as a mnemonic relic, an echo of Sappho's suicide leap. Through this character's ontological crisis Woolf seeks to dramatise the effects upon lesbian subjectivity of the erasure of lesbian discourse from cultural memory by the regulatory mechanisms of British patriarchy: most specifically, the enforced forgetting of Sappho. Paradoxically, however, the trope of falling hints at the Sappho legend, so covertly offering a counter discourse of cultural memory by drawing on an oft repeated, deeply sedimented, lesbian intertextual thread. Thus, although Rhoda cannot forge an identification with lesbian discourse, the informed reader can infer her lesbian desires through identifying her with it.

She opened the car door and walked to that part of the rails where a rickety pine-wood staircase wound down to the beach, broken halfway by a platform balcony of sorts that jutted slightly out over the bay. Gingerly she descended the stairs, feeling the cool, smooth wood spread beneath her palms as if it were a current of the water itself, not part of a frame, until she reached the safety of the platform. Shrugging further into the old jacket as a protection against the insistent spikes of wind, she leaned over the protective rails and glanced down. Stretching away - bobbing surfers, surly shags soldered onto rocks, a few stray dogs snapping madly at the wind's provocation, a family group engaged in a desultory game of Frisbee and a lone girl bravely sun-bathing in a bikini top and shorts within the shelter of a broken teeth wheel of rocks, reading a book. A surf widow, she surmised, training Scott's

baby camera upon her, the forefinger and thumb of the right hand bracing it like a monocle sizing up the shot possibilities with an appearance of cool expertise.

Beneath the surface, though, unruly twisting nerves locked her gut into the unpredictable rhythm of the waves.

Rhoda difficulty in negotiating the puddle to deliver the message she carries can be interpreted as symbolically resonant of her failure to make a smooth crossing into normative adult femininity. Although this aspect of the character has led to interpretations of psychosis and hysteria (Pinkney, 183) it can also been deemed as a resistance (albeit a rather bleak one) to full interpellation into the heterosexual matrix of desire. Thus the episode is connected to Rhoda's acknowledgement of her inadequacy at what might, perhaps, be rather ironically termed conventional "coming out": the debutante's round of social rituals, characterised by wearing white, and by garden parties: "That was midsummer, after the garden party and my humiliation at the garden party. As Rhoda progresses to dances and to the whirl of courtship her social insecurity is contrasted with her friends Susan and Jinny, characters who have been seen to express, respectively, "maternal and sexual" narrative stereotypes. (Laurence, 145)

Susan, with her strong affinities to nature, expresses an almost preternatural understanding of the speech acts of courtship: "for soon in the hot midday when the bees hum around the hollyhock my lover will come. He will stand under the cedar tree. To his one word I shall answer my one word" (*TW* 73).

The flirtatious Jinny, whose language is described as being "the bodies" and

effortlessly recites the rituals of heterosexual romance, 'O come, I say to this one, rippling gold from head to heels. "Come", and he comes towards me' (TW 78). Rhoda, by contrast, flounders in her performance of the highly ritualised speech and bodily acts of heterosexual romance: 'I must take his hand; I must answer. But what answer shall I give? I am thrust back to stand burning in this clumsy, this ill-fitting body, to receive the shafts of his indifference and his scorn, I who long for marble columns and pools on the other side of the world where the swallow dips her wings' (TW 78).

Suddenly, her attempt at focus was broken as a pair of surfers with sea-bleached blonde shoulder length hair trotted nimbly past her. Perhaps it was the sudden glint of sun on their hair that confused her, but for a split second she was overwhelmed by a double vision in which two blond heads blurred into one body, like some myth-freak-narcissus. Then it struck her that the pair must be identical, either biological twins, or else spiritual ones - moulded to mirror images through that strange symbiosis of mateship that she had observed before in young men wedded by a shared passion for sport.

And yet...?

It was only as they progressed below her, now in graceful, lopping strides - two stairs at a time- that her vision suddenly clarified and she registered that one of the black figures was subtly more nuanced, the hair softer, the movements ever so slightly more delicate.

The image of pools and marble columns is a recurrent motif drawn upon throughout the text to obliquely evoke Rhoda's longing for a world antithetical to that of bourgeois, heterosexual British femininity. As a number of critics have noted the imagery is subtly suggestive of the homoerotically laden Greco-Roman tradition in general, and of Sappho in particular, thus providing a subtext that hints at Rhoda's repressed lesbian desires. (Oxindine, 207-208, Laurence, 140). The use of Sapphic intertextuality was, of course, by no means a new phenomenon in Woolf's writing. Swinburne's version Sappho's "Ode to Aphrodite" is overtly drawn on in Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915) to hint at desire between women, whilst Sappho provides as exemplar of literary excellence for Woolf in such commentaries upon cultural traditions as her *New Statesman* letter debate with Desmond MacCarthy in the early 20's. However, what is notable in *The Waves*, is the extraordinarily covert mode of articulation: Sapphic themes and tropes appear only as oblique and free floating fragments. In this regard I would agree with the view that the text evinces, and may even engage with, the effects of the 1928 prosecution of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* for obscenity. Thus, for instance, Annette Oxindine, drawing on the original drafts of *The Waves*, has persuasively connected this contextual climate of censorship to Woolf's eventual removal of scenes involving Rhoda's schoolgirl passion for a girl called Alice. (Oxindine, 218) This censored textual pre-history is then obliquely recalled in the finished novel, in part through Sapphic fragments. *The Well* trial also provoked concerns by Hall's supporter's (including Woolf) about the effects which such juridical intervention upon the archive of literary texts might have. A letter of protest to the press assembled by Hall sympathisers, to

which Woolf was a signatory, argues that the criteria of obscenity could well make it "equally impossible to defend most of the masterpieces of English literature, from Shakespeare's sonnets to *Tess of the D'urbervilles*." (Publishers note, *Well*, 1929) By imagining a world in which Sapphic relics persist across a culturally enforced forgetting (like an amnesiac, Rhoda searches for, and is motivated by, something that she does not quite recollect) Woolf subversively continues her long standing engagement with the censorship implicit in dominant discourses of cultural memory.

The jacket hugs her like a lover. She hitches up the camera again and - adrenaline pulsing over the shutter button - starts to trail her prey, till she feels herself idling above the moment - a perfect moment, unpredictable yet, as it unfolds in front of her, somehow inevitable, pre-ordained. Then, at the bottom of the stairs the book-ended pair peel apart suddenly. The boy surfer continues, his feet flexing over the myriad white pockets of sand, in a straight line until he enters the froth of the shore, mounts the white thick board and begins the slow, powerful rotation of arms. The girl surfer breaks left, hops across the pillowy sand with her vast span of white wing tucked beneath her arm and wheels towards the young woman sun-baking by the rock.

The heart lurches slightly, with the kind of tension she assumes hunters may feel, anticipatory, focused, almost erotic. The sunbathing girl turns, squinting slightly, props on her elbow and the two chat animatedly for a few minutes, the pages from the sun-baker's book whipping wildly in the breeze. The scene seems so commonplace - girl surfer and surf widow gossiping like kids in a playground, about clothes, about boys, about "whatever" - yet it is this casual, commonplace intimacy,

coupled with her own expectation, her own need for something to happen, that excites her.

The camera trembles a little, as if with a will of its own, to close off the moment, but she keeps it in check. Holds it - holds it....

And then the surfer girl sways forward slightly - as if this move is simply part of the ritual process of leave taking - sways forward and with an intimacy suggestive of sure familiarity, lightly slides the strap of the bikini top sideways with her finger tip, bends close and kisses the sunbathing girl, swiftly, gently, on the soft blond flesh, tender below the left shoulder.

The girls have parted now: the girl surfer moves to meet the water, the sun-baker turns back to her book. But they are no longer of interest. She has what she wants, and has already secreted it away in her pocket - a talisman against the ordinary life to which she now knows she must return.

She squeezes the cheap camera tightly, as if she can, merely by her wishes, develop it, transforming coal to diamond. Yes, she will have to go back. Yes she will have to explain. To tough out the shameful comments, the looks of perplexity, the polite suggestions of help from interested parties. But she has this. She has captured some other life that goes on, running parallel to her own, a life she might have had, but doesn't, and won't now.

Throughout *The Waves*, Woolf relentlessly destabilises the ontological fixity of the autonomous unified subject, exploring, instead, a fluid, relational model of the self, constructed through cultural discourses, including those of memory. So Bernard, safely ensconced as a student at University, comments: “Every hour something new is unburied in the great bran pie...I have to effect different transitions; have to cover the exits and entrances of several different men who alternately act their part as Bernard.” (TW 56). As the archeologically resonant verb “unburied” suggests, in this model of the self, identity and memory – cultural as much as personal memory - are inextricably entwined. Bernard, for instance, rehearses various selves through reference to an archive of past literary models which his education has made available to him “Once you were Tolstio’s young man; now you are Byron’s young man; perhaps you will be Meredith’s young man.” (TW 64) Equally, and perhaps more tellingly, the homosexual Neville is a passionate advocate of Catullus, the Roman translator and imitator of Sappho. Although Neville’s situation is not without angst and closeting, he does benefit from British patriarchy’s greater tolerance to (high cultural) male homosexual discourse. Rhoda, who does not attend University or follow a profession, has no such archive of possible speech acts through which to articulate a self, or to voice desire. Instead, she must memorise and enact the rituals of the debutante ball, describing her role as: “fixed here to listen. An immense pressure is on me. I cannot move without dislodging the weight of centuries” (79). This fixing of the body, deeply ingrained through the traditions of institutional practice, is surely worthy of Butler’s phrase “sedimented ritual activity.”

But she can, at least, develop the photo.

She looks quietly for a minute at the number of shots recorded on the camera; realises there are six left, and, hands trembling, begins snapping with terrier wildness at anything around her – tops of sea-bushes, car bonnets, passing birds, the jag of rocks.

Then, as she finishes her task a fear comes over her. Perhaps she will develop it and find that nothing is there: that there were no girls, no kiss - that she has plucked something from the air to suit her own needs? Or perhaps - more absurd still, like fairies at the bottom of the garden, these figures are un-photographable, will simply not register on her film: all she will see are the primitive circle of rocks bordered by sand and sky; or perhaps, two young women simply talking; or worse, that these young women, so free of shame, so vital, so comfortable in the pleasure of each other's skins - will register instead as ghosts -cancerous negatives -of Therese and herself.

Absurd of course, utterly absurd, and yet it is a thought she cannot shake from her mind as she begins her stumbling trek up the frail winding stairs and back to the stolen car...

**As I have noted in reference to Bal's comment that memory can be manipulated, memory is construction, a representation of the past, the possibilities of which are structured by ideologically charged discourses. Richard Terdiman has coined the useful term "institutions of memory" to describe those practices and institutions which he proceeds to posit as**

ideological apparatuses crucial to the shaping of modernity. Drawing on the phenomenon that the Frankfurt School called the “culture” or

“consciousness” industry” Terdiman points to such developments as:

the rise of the media, embracing an educational system, an increasingly massified press, an increasingly programmed collective experience in shopping, in entertainment, in sports, and in national political ceremonial...(Terdiman, 30)

Woolf’s critical engagement with the practices of institutions of memory, apparent throughout her writing, is perhaps nowhere more pronounced than in the central thesis of *A Room of One’s Own*, in which she takes issue with the versions of the past legitimated by pedagogical institutions, such as Universities. Thus, Woolf notes the failure of historical discourse to record the lives of ordinary women and opposes a male dominated literary canon with a call to women to commemorate a tradition of women writers: “For we think back through our mothers if we are women.” (*Room*, 76)

Such thinking back proposes a new form of cultural memory. Woolf refers only covertly (and, it should be noted, through a veiled commentary on *The Well* trial) to the centrality of lesbian desire to her proposed feminine aesthetics. (*Room*, 81) Equally, the tradition she attempts to celebrate is British. Its hardships are exemplified by the imaginary figure of Shakespeare’s sister, who she envisages as being reborn through collective the commemoration of women writers: ‘the dead poet who was Shakespeare’s sister will put on the body she has so often laid down’ (111), ‘for great poets do not die; they are

continuing presences; they need only the opportunity to walk among us in the flesh.' (111). Such lines imply an enactment of memory that crosses temporal boundaries and takes on a corporeal dimension. However, in substance, *Room* continues an earlier debate with Desmond MacCarthy in which Woolf's advocacy of Sappho is clear and crucial. She contests MacCarthy's claim that women are 'inferior to men in intellectual power' ('Intellectual Status of Women' 33) by making direct reference to Sappho: 'I cannot claim that I know Greek as Mr Bennett and Affable Hawk know it, but I have often been told that Sappho was a woman.' ('Intellectual Status of Women' 34) MacCarthy's response was to dismiss the claims of Sappho on the grounds of both temporal distance and limited textual evidence: 'This was a long time ago. Perhaps when Herculaneum gives up its treasures her works will be found; at present we only possess two short odes and fragments preserved in quotation, or fragments of fragments stuck like the wings of flies in the solidified glue of ancient grammarians.' (34)

With tactical irony, Woolf draws upon this fragmentation as an intertextual aesthetic that commemorates Sappho as a "continuing presence" in *The Waves*. Rhoda becomes "Sappho's young woman", and is subtly interconnected with the dead poet through the metonymy of marble columns and through the repeated trope of falling which finds ultimate realisation in the mimesis of Sappho's death leap. Thus, the body of Sappho evades erasure from cultural memory and finds symbolic textual instantiation through a mode of incorporated memory. A (re) membering of the lesbian body which, laden with affect, is more than mere imitation. To reiterate, in Bourdieu's terms: 'The body believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. It does not

**represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it enacts the past,  
bringing it back to life.'**

Her heart is erratic, is pumping madly, so madly pumping, that she....

...can't quite...

breathe

....and thinks momentarily...

(for surely, surely, this is a passing gust of hysteria?)

... that

...her heart may be...

temporarily

.....affected.....

And then...cold sweat soaked...gut plunged...

(and with a flutter of relief? )

knows ...

that she can't quite, can't quite...

balance...and can only,

simply

hope to

fall...

\*\*\*\*\*

*"Watching the boat sail and the waves break, we have time to open our minds wide to the beauty and register on top of it the queer sensation -- this beauty will continue, and this beauty will flourish whether we behold it or not."*

Virginia Woolf, "The Cinema" (270)

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