

The paper argues that Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* presents a "world seen without us," only to show how relentlessly that world is laced with human meaning. Even as the text gives us communally situated subjects, or the abstract process of thinking without a thinker, it nevertheless shows these modes to be circumscribed by the social discourses they would seek to efface. Attempts to respond ethically to the world, by re-imagining the human relation to the natural order, founder, Woolf seems to suggest, on the irreducibly Cartesian structure of our thinking.